



COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Media Release

Volunteer visitors key to a safer, better youth justice system

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Volunteer visitors from diverse communities are offering vital support to children and young people in detention, working towards a safer, better youth justice system in Victoria, according to the Commission for Children and Young People, which is today celebrating its Independent Visitor Program for [National Volunteer Week](#) (20–26 May).

‘The [Independent Visitor Program](#) is a critical part of the monitoring of Victoria’s youth justice system, giving independent voice to children and young people to inform changes that support their wellbeing, uphold their rights, and improve their prospects of rehabilitation,’ said Commissioner for Children and Young People, Liana Buchanan, today.

Through the program of monthly visits to youth detention centres, children and young people in detention have the opportunity to speak privately with volunteers trained and supported by the Commission to raise issues of concern that can be escalated for resolution at the appropriate level, whether that’s with youth justice centre staff and management, the Secretary of the Department of Justice and Community Safety, or the Minister for Youth Justice.

In recruiting volunteers, the Commission is always on the look-out for a diversity of backgrounds that reflects the diversity of children and young people in detention.

‘With Aboriginal children and young people starkly over-represented in Victoria’s youth justice system, it is crucial that they are able to share their concerns and have them addressed in a culturally safe way,’ said Meena Singh, Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, today.

The program is complemented by a confidential phone line to the Commission, which allows children and young people in youth detention to speak directly with Commission staff who understand and can work to address their concerns. The Commission also receives incident reports from youth justice as part of its broader oversight and monitoring role in youth justice.

‘Our dedicated volunteers have a key role in keeping our eyes and ears on a system in which we know the rights of children and young people are particularly vulnerable,’ Commissioner Buchanan said.

‘We know that mental and physical health, participation in education, and cultural safety are all vital to address the past trauma of many children and young people in youth justice detention. It needs to be more widely recognised that these factors are also vital to rehabilitation and improved community safety,’ Commissioner Singh concluded.

The Independent Visitor Program first commenced in 2012 following the recommendation of a 2010 report by the Victorian Ombudsman into the youth justice system.



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Volunteers are available for media comment on their experience in the program, the rewards of working with children and young people in detention, and how the program has evolved since it began.

For interview:

Liana Buchanan
Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People

Meena Singh
Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People

Media contact:

Bree Furlong (Liana Buchanan)
0438 346 029

Darren Lewin-Hill (Meena Singh)
0437 046 360