



Commission for Children
and Young People

Annual report

2024–25



COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE



The Commission respectfully acknowledges and celebrates the Traditional Owners of the lands throughout Victoria and pays its respects to their Elders, children and young people of past, current and future generations.

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The cover artwork was published in the Commission's *In our own words* systemic inquiry report into the lived experience of children and young people in out-of-home care. The painting, created by a nine year-old child living in foster care, depicts a happy memory that involved a rainbow and balloons. It was submitted during Child Protection Week 2018.



COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE

6 October 2025

The Hon. Lizzie Blandthorn MP
Minister for Children
Level 22, 50 Lonsdale Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Minister

In accordance with the *Financial Management Act 1994*, I am pleased to present the
Commission for Children and Young People's annual report for the year ending 30 June 2025.

Yours sincerely

Meena Singh
Acting Principal Commissioner
Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People

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Definitions

Language in this report

The term ‘Aboriginal’ used in this report refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Case studies and thematic studies

Case studies and thematic studies have been included to illustrate the work of the Commission for Children and Young People (the Commission) and key themes. Pseudonyms have been used and details have been altered to protect personal privacy.

Rounding

In tables and figures in this report, rounding may result in percentages not adding up to 100.

Abbreviations and acronyms

ACCO	Aboriginal community-controlled organisation
AMAF	Asset Management Accountability Framework
ANZCCGA	Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates
AO	Authorised Officer
CCYP Act	<i>Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012</i>
Charter	<i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i>
CIMS	Client Incident Management System
Commission	Commission for Children and Young People
CV	Corrections Victoria
CRIS	Client Relationship Information System
CSO	Community Service Organisation
CWSA	<i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005</i>
CYFA	<i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005</i>
DE	Department of Education
DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
DGS	Department of Government Services
DH	Department of Health
DJCS	Department of Justice and Community Safety
Expert Working Group	South Sudanese Australian Youth Justice Expert Working Group
FOI Act	<i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>
FRD	Financial Reporting Directions
IVP	Independent Visitor Program
Marrung	Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026
OC spray	Oleoresin capsicum spray
QARD	Quality Assessment and Regulation Division
SAFER	SAFER Children Framework
Scheme	Reportable Conduct Scheme

SIDS	Sudden Infant Death Syndrome
SUDI	Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy
Standards	Child Safe Standards
VIT	Victorian Institute of Teaching
VRQA	Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority
WIV	Wage Inspectorate Victoria
WWCC	Working with Children Check



From the

Acting Principal Commissioner and Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People



Meena Singh

*Acting Principal Commissioner and
Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People*



**Our advocacy agenda – as always –
is ambitious, grounded in evidence
and guided by real-world experience.**

The past year has been one of change and transition for the Commission for Children and Young People. Significantly, we farewelled Liana Buchanan who finished a nine-year term as Principal Commissioner in March. Through her steadfast advocacy, intellect and eternal drive, Liana has made an enormous contribution to children's rights, safety and wellbeing in Victoria (described further on page 13). It was a pleasure to work alongside her in our shared pursuit of better outcomes for Victorian children and young people.

I know that one of Liana's proudest achievements has been embedding young people's views, experiences and expertise into the fabric of the Commission. This year, we continued to add staff roles specifically for young people with lived experience of the systems we advocate for change in. We also strengthened the role of our Youth Council in all aspects of our work. Members now routinely speak, present and advocate for change alongside Commissioners and senior staff at conferences, events, inquiries, key meetings and in the media. The Youth Council also led the *What matters most* online platform to inform its priorities; inviting children and young people across Victoria to share what is important to them.

We continue a busy program of oversight and monitoring work. This was our first year of a new function allowing us

to advocate on behalf of individual children and young people in out-of-home care, which we exercised in relation to 38 children and young people. We continued to progress systemic inquiries looking at the experiences of young children in contact with the criminal justice system and the effectiveness of referrals made by Child Protection in managing risk to children and young people. We have also established an individual inquiry into services provided to an Aboriginal young person in out-of-home care in response to concerns we held about how risks to their safety and wellbeing were managed. We completed 37 child death inquiries, to explore any steps that could have been taken to better support children and young people known to child protection services in the 12 months preceding their deaths. Taken together, this work maintains pressure for systemic changes that realise children's rights.

However, progress is hard-won and rarely linear. It is frustrating to see a continued drift away from what we know works to keep communities safe, often fanned by irresponsible media reporting calculated to provoke knee-jerk political responses. Disappointingly, the Victorian Government walked back its commitment to raise the age of criminal responsibility to the internationally recognised age of 14, again leaving Australia an international outlier in this area. Ever-stricter youth bail laws are touted to give an



It is frustrating to see a continued drift away from what we know works to keep communities safe, often fanned by irresponsible media reporting calculated to provoke knee-jerk political responses.

illusion of community protection, at the expense of addressing what actually lies at the heart of the problem – ensuring every child is safe at home, engaged at school and feels included in the broader Victorian community.

The Commission continues to contribute to the Victorian Government's South Sudanese Australian Youth Justice Expert Working Group, with a strong focus on amplifying the lived experience of young people – who are too often stereotyped, racially profiled and dehumanised in policy conversations. Sadly, I see First Nations children and young people, families and community, encounter the same barriers and stereotypes. We have hosted a range of youth forums in partnership with African Australian organisations, created a Youth Advisory Group comprised of South Sudanese people with lived experience of the youth justice system and conducted one-on-one consultations with South Sudanese and other African Australian young people in youth detention. These consultations are pointing to the need for community-led programs and initiatives that counteract discrimination and social exclusion and keep young people connected to school, work and positive role models.

We also continue to strengthen safety in organisations through our regulatory functions under the Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme. These schemes ensure thousands of organisations centre the safety of children and young people and take active steps to prevent harm and abuse. This year, we increased our enforcement of the Child Safe Standards; initiating compliance activity in relation to 140 organisations who may not have taken all the required steps to keep children safe from harm. The Commission continues to educate,

support and guide organisations to prevent and respond appropriately to child abuse, including by releasing new guidance materials on creating cultural safety for Aboriginal children and young people.

The Commission's administration of the Reportable Conduct Scheme also continues to drive improvements in how organisations respond to complaints and concerns relating to child safety. With the Commission's oversight focusing on improving understanding about grooming and sexual misconduct, we are starting to see more sophisticated responses from organisations, with substantiation rates for sexual offences and sexual misconduct increasing over time as community understanding grows and organisations' investigation processes mature. However, we still observe pockets of reluctance to substantiate matters even where the findings would be open, making continued education necessary to build confidence and capability within organisations to respond to these harms.

With the release of the Government's Rapid Child Safety Review in mid-2025, the oversight of the Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme will move to the Social Services Regulator, to sit alongside the Working with Children Check scheme. With the promised financial investment and delivery of changes to legislation long advocated for by the Commission, I trust the government's decision will support genuine improvements to children's safety building off the gains generated by the work of the Commission. We stand ready to ensure a smooth and effective transition of these functions, and will continue to advocate for children's safety to remain at the centre of any reform efforts.



My special and direct thanks are reserved for the many children and young people who inform our work... Many of you have been failed by governments and institutions, making your trust in the Commission particularly special.

The Commission will retain its unique role as the only independent body focused on the rights and needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people, particularly those engaged with child protection and youth justice systems. We continue to closely monitor the Victorian Government's commitments to reform in response to our recommendations, particularly in improving safety and educational outcomes for children and young people in the out-of-home care system – noting that progress can be patchy and unacceptably slow. As Victoria progresses towards a statewide Treaty, we continue our call for the established benefits of self-determination and community-led approaches to care, safety and wellbeing to flow to Aboriginal children and young people – consistent with their cultural rights. Our advocacy agenda – as always – is ambitious, grounded in evidence and guided by real-world experience.

Our staff confront difficult and painful truths about our society's treatment of children and young people every day, and this weighs heavily on compassionate hearts. Sometimes this grief goes beyond the professional to the personal, with the death of Jackie Stephens, a former member of our Youth Council. Jackie is fondly remembered by the Commission for her wit, strength and drive for improving the lives of children and young people in care. We have also mourned alongside South Sudanese Australian community members who have been devastated by the violent deaths of a number of young people – some of whom are also personally known and missed by us. We share in their community's heartbreak, anguish and determination for change.

I stepped into the Acting Principal Commissioner role in March following Liana's departure, while maintaining my responsibilities as Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People. This has required me to juggle two busy roles. I simply could not have done justice to either without the strong support of the entire team at the Commission, led by the indefatigable Leanne Barnes as Chief Executive Officer. We look forward to welcoming our next Principal Commissioner, who will no doubt bring new insights and momentum to our work.

My special and direct thanks are reserved for the many children and young people who inform our work – across our staff, advisory groups and consultations. Many of you have been failed by governments and institutions, making your trust in the Commission particularly special. All your brimming ideas and ambitions for change invigorate and challenge me to keep forging ahead, even on the hard days. Together, we continue to push for a world where every young person feels safe, loved and connected.

Spotlight:

Liana Buchanan



Liana Buchanan

Over nine years of dedicated service as Principal Commissioner, Liana Buchanan proved herself as a fierce champion for the rights and safety of all children and young people.

Liana recognised the Commission needed to lead by example in empowering children and young people in decisions and policymaking and began a steady process of embedding their views, voices and perspectives at every opportunity. In doing so, she took great care to ensure engagement was genuine and meaningful. This involved listening, refining and challenging the Commission to live its values in being informed by lived experience.

Across two terms, Liana led the Commission through a period of rapid growth, as it became Australia's first dual regulator of legislated Child Safe Standards and a Reportable Conduct Scheme – both designed to improve safety within institutional settings. Through a deft combination of carrot and regulatory stick, these schemes have driven much needed change to make child safety a non-negotiable priority within Victorian organisations.

Her tenure was defined by a strong commitment to evidence and rigour. The Commission tabled 11 major systemic inquiries in Parliament, undertook many more individual inquiries examining service responses to vulnerable children and young people and completed

over 300 child death inquiries – providing the basis for clear actions for change and improvement. In finalising reports, Liana would stress test findings and recommendations, bringing her remarkable intellect to bear through searching questions and weighing findings from multiple perspectives.

Liana was careful to avoid the Commission becoming a distant and high-minded regulatory and oversight body, divorced from practical realities on the ground. Routinely listening to children and young people, families and carers, workers – and the many organisations that support them – kept her knowledge current and tethered to reality. She was always fair-minded in her approach, recognising good practice and acknowledging real-world challenges where they arose – particularly for frontline workers doing their best under difficult circumstances. She was unapologetic in calling out failures, injustices, bad policy and their real life impacts on children and young people where she saw these.

Liana was uncompromising in her vision – one in which every Victorian child and young person grew up safe, loved, respected and understood. She did not fall victim to the common drift towards cynicism, apathy or fatalism. She never narrowed her big-picture ambitions. While pragmatic enough to recognise that major change is often a frustrating mix of steps forward and back, she remained dogged and methodical in laying the groundwork for lasting reform.

Liana led with compassion and integrity. She invested deeply in those around her, including Commission staff and the many children and young people who inform our work. As the Commission farewells Liana, who steps into a new role continuing her service to the public good, it does so with deep gratitude. Her legacy of courage, clarity and heart leaves an enduring foundation on which we will keep building.

From the

Commission Youth Council



Since its inception in 2020, the Youth Council has expanded both in membership and responsibilities but continues to represent a group of diverse backgrounds, lived and living experiences. We exist to make sure that the perspectives and lived experiences of children and young people are present in all the Commission does.

This past year we have continued to evolve to become a group which is deeply embedded in the Commission's work. Our work has taken many forms, including influencing systemic inquiries focused on child protection and legal systems, co-authoring policy submissions, and developing content to promote child safety in organisations.

Over the year we increased the number of public appearances we made as representatives of the Commission. A standout was members speaking on a panel at the Child Safe Standards Community of Practice forum. Our involvement reinforced to us the importance of young people's experiences and ideas being embedded in all forums. We hope to continue to challenge the way adults engage with children and young people through this work.

We also launched our flagship project *What matters most*. The project invited young people to tell the Commission what is most important to them, instead of approaching children and young people on topics the Commission thought mattered. This was a new approach to engagement which resulted in submissions from children and young people across the state on a range of topics



Our work has taken many forms, including influencing systemic inquiries focused on child protection and legal systems, co-authoring policy submissions, and developing content to promote child safety in organisations.

including racism, having their voices heard, mental health, and the importance of community and recreational activities.

We would like to extend our gratitude to everyone involved in *What matters most*. It wouldn't have been possible without the involvement of so many incredible individuals from across the Commission. We would also like to acknowledge the children and young people who took the time to share what mattered to them. We will amplify what we heard and continue to develop the project over the next twelve months while also creating new ways to engage with and hear from children and young people.

By giving children and young people chances to have their voices heard, and listening to those voices, we enrich our society. Working with young people helps us solve many challenges our society grapples with and shape a future that benefits everyone. The Youth Council will continue to elevate the views and expertise of children and young people to the benefit of our wider community.

We will continue to share stories that may not have ever been heard, present solutions that may not have been considered, and inject energy into the spaces that are often heavy. By continuing to challenge the status quo and welcoming children and young people into our spaces, we are building a future that is promising, and one we can all be excited about. The work of the Youth Council matters and is the best way of supporting all Victorian children and young people to feel safe, valued and respected in a society that often makes decisions for them.



We hope to continue to challenge the way adults engage with children and young people through this work.

About the

Commission for Children and Young People

We are an independent statutory body that promotes improvements in policies and practices affecting the safety and wellbeing of Victorian children and young people.

We have a particular focus on Aboriginal children and young people and all children and young people in the out-of-home care and youth justice systems.

What we do

At the Commission we:

- promote the rights, safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- provide independent scrutiny and oversight of services for children and young people, particularly those in the out-of-home care, child protection and youth justice systems
- advocate for best-practice policy, program and service responses to meet the needs of children and young people
- promote the views and experiences of children and young people to increase the awareness of government and the community
- support and regulate organisations that work with children and young people to prevent abuse, respond appropriately to allegations of child abuse and make sure these organisations have child-safe practices.

Our vision

That children and young people in Victoria are supported to live safely and thrive, and their rights are respected and upheld.

Our values

- We put the rights of children and young people at the centre of everything we do.
- We are strong, fearless and determined.
- We are transparent and accountable.
- We know diversity of people, experiences and perspectives makes our work stronger.
- We accomplish more as we are a united team.

Legislation

Our objectives, functions and powers are outlined in the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012* (CCYP Act) and the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (CWSA).

Our priorities

The Commission's work focuses on the five outcomes set out in our *Strategic Plan 2022–2025*.

Outcome 1

Impacts for children and young people are understood and prioritised when government designs services, makes decisions and creates new laws.

Outcome 2

The Commission leads by example in ensuring the views and lived experiences of children and young people are sought, heard and acted on.

Outcome 3

Organisations keep children and young people safe, well and free from child abuse.

Outcome 4

Children and young people live free from systemic and institutional racism.

Outcome 5

There are fewer children and young people in out-of-home care and youth justice, and those in contact with these systems have their rights upheld.

Highlights: our year in review

Collaborating with South Sudanese Australian young people to drive youth justice reform

The Commission continued to elevate the experiences and expertise of South Sudanese Australian young people to drive reforms to reduce the over-representation of South Sudanese Australian young people in Victoria's youth justice system.

The Commission worked in partnership with the Department of Justice and Community Safety on the second year of the Victorian Government's South Sudanese Australian Youth Justice Expert Working Group project. We continued to host the Youth Advisory Group comprising 12 young people with lived experience informing recommendations centred on the voices of South Sudanese Australian children and young people closest to the issue.

More than 300 young people engaged with the project through a series of five youth forums across Victoria co-hosted with local African youth-led organisations. In addition, 20 South Sudanese and other African diaspora young people drew on their first-hand experiences of youth justice custody during consultations at Parkville and Cherry Creek Youth Justice Centres.

This important work highlighted key issues South Sudanese Australian young people experience and reinforced that reducing over-representation requires not just holding individuals accountable, but also broader changes in schools, communities and systems to better

support at-risk young people and address racism and bias. This feedback is now shaping the project's recommendations to government.

Amplifying the voices of children and young people

The Commission continued to evolve and expand opportunities for children and young people to be involved in our work so that solutions to service system issues are guided by their voices and experiences. The creation of a new strategic youth project officer role, joining our existing youth project officers, strengthened our commitment to embedding the voices of children and young people within our organisation.

We also introduced new ways to hear from more children and young people, with the Youth Council creating and leading the *What matters most* project – a platform for children and young people around Victoria to share their thoughts with us about what matters most to them.

Youth Council members and youth project officers represented the Commission in various forums, including with senior department representatives. As well as sharing their ideas, knowledge and experience on the issues affecting them and their peers, they advocated alongside our commissioners for system improvements. Their powerful contributions provided invaluable insight to shape decisions impacting children and young people.

Critical scrutiny of systems impacting children and young people

This year the Commission continued vital independent scrutiny and oversight of the systems critically impacting children and young people including child protection, out-of-home care, education and youth justice.

The 37 child death inquiries completed this year highlighted good practice as well as critical opportunities for improvement in areas including: assessment of risk, practice in relation to infants, responses to neglect and cumulative harm, premature or inappropriate case closure, and coordination and collaboration between services. The Commission made 14 recommendations for improvements.

To support transparency and accountability, we published a *Wrap-up report card* summarising progress by government and departments on our past inquiry recommendations. This report highlights important initiatives and reforms, and identifies where critical investment and system improvements were still needed to address risks of harm and prevent the need for crisis intervention.

Drawing on what we continue to see in our work, we established a systemic inquiry into Child Protection referrals. When a report to Child Protection does not meet the threshold for it to intervene, the child's family may be referred to other support services. Our work this year explored whether these referrals protect children and young people from harm.

The Commission also established an inquiry into the services provided to a young person in out-of-home care following serious and ongoing concerns. The inquiry will recommend changes to support lasting improvements to their care as well as system improvements for other young people.

In line with our court-authorised role, we continued to monitor a young person's care in a restricted environment and provide reports to the court to ensure their rights and

wellbeing. We conducted regular visits with the young person, monitored their care decisions, advocated for recovery-focused care, and elevated their voice and rights in decision making.

We monitored and expressed significant concern about the Victorian Government decisions in youth justice policy to toughen bail laws and backtrack on raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 by 2027. These changes move away from supporting children and young people's rights, safety and wellbeing and the evidence base on what works. Because we continue to see service failures that lead to children being criminalised at a young age, we established an inquiry into the experiences of children under 14 years of age who are in contact with, or at risk of contact with the criminal justice system. As well as making recommendations to the Victorian Government, a key aim of the inquiry is to help improve community understanding of the issues and solutions by elevating the voices of children and young people.

Advocating for children in contact with Child Protection or out-of-home care

On 1 July 2024, new laws commenced that gave the Commission more powers to support children and young people who are in contact with the child protection or out-of-home care systems. This individual advocacy function was in response to recommendations from our 2019 *In our own words* inquiry and the Victorian Ombudsman's 2020 investigation into complaints about assaults of five children living in Child Protection residential care units. This function provides a unique and critically important avenue for children and young people's concerns to be heard and acted upon.

Despite the absence of dedicated funding to deliver this legislated function, the Commission advocated for 38 children and young people in the child protection and out-of-home care systems to achieve positive impacts in their lives. We continue to seek funding to resource this much needed and unique function so we can help more children and young people.

Key activities

Advocating, overseeing and recommending system improvements

Inquiries and recommendations

37

completed inquiries into deaths of children known to Child Protection

14

new child death inquiry recommendations made

3

inquiries initiated into systemic issues and services provided to children and young people

Service issues impacting children and young people

460

issues raised and progressed for resolution for young people in youth justice centres

2

reviews finalised into the use of force within youth justice settings, and the provision of food within residential care, with a focus on children and young people's rights, safety and wellbeing

11,627

incidents involving children in out-of-home care reviewed

38

children and young people supported through our individual advocacy function

Supporting and regulating child-safe organisations

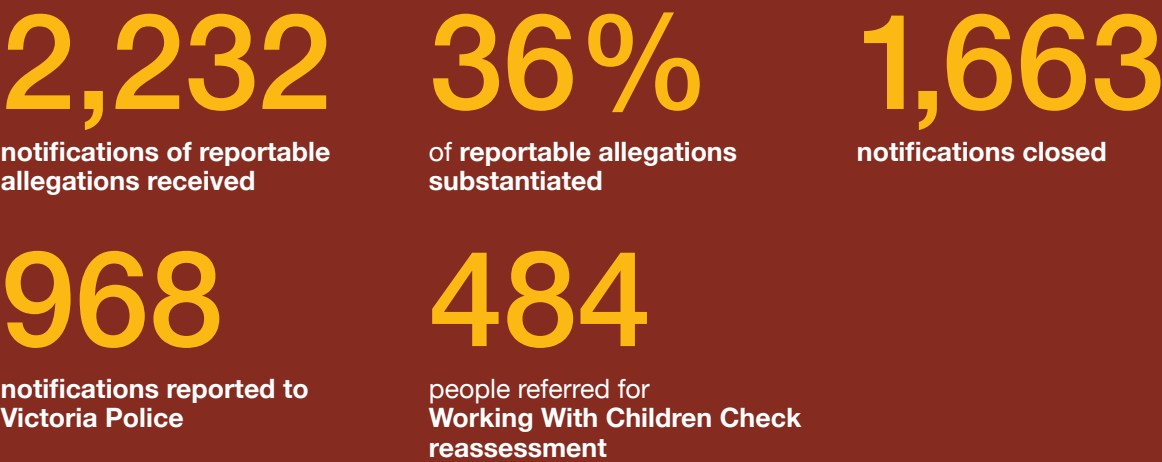
Commission website and publications



Child Safe Standards



Reportable Conduct Scheme



Holding organisations accountable
for keeping children safe

Reflecting a strategic focus, the Commission continued to hold organisations accountable for their obligation to rigorously investigate allegations of abuse and misconduct, and to keep children and young people safe. Influenced in part by this work, substantiation rates for sexual offence and sexual misconduct allegations have seen an increase since the commencement of the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Scheme) in 2017.

In 2024–25, more than half of sexual offence allegations and almost half of sexual misconduct allegations were substantiated (51 per cent and 48 per cent respectively). The substantiation rate for sexual offence allegations has substantially increased over the life of the Scheme, rising from 15 per cent in 2018–19 to 51 per cent in 2024–25.¹ The substantiation rate for sexual misconduct allegations has continued to increase steadily since 2018–19, rising from 21 per cent to 48 per cent in 2024–25. These substantiation rates are significantly higher than the 30 per cent average for all conduct types since the start of the Scheme.

The Commission noted improvements in some organisations identifying and investigating these conduct types. However, concerning instances continued where organisations appeared reluctant to substantiate allegations as ‘sexual misconduct’, even where these findings were open on the evidence. There was also apparent reluctance to characterise behaviour as ‘sexual misconduct’, despite there being proven patterns of overly personal and intimate conduct towards children or conduct that seriously crossed professional boundaries.

In 2024–25, 484 individuals found to have committed substantiated reportable conduct were referred to the Department of Government Services to assess whether they should retain a Working with Children Check.

¹ This does not reflect the outcomes of criminal investigations and charges.

Driving child safe cultures in
organisations

This year, the Commission continued to drive child-safe cultures in organisations working with children through our work as a regulator of the Child Safe Standards (Standards). We published new guidance materials to support organisations in implementing Child Safe Standard 1. The *Understanding cultural safety for Aboriginal children and young people: A guide for implementing Child Safe Standard 1* was downloaded approximately 2,880 times. The guide, along with supplementary resources and tools, supports organisations to meet their legal obligations under the Standards.

The Commission also significantly increased its compliance activity this year, initiating action in relation to 140 organisations for potential non-compliance with the Standards, and closing compliance action with 233 organisations. This was a significant increase on previous years’ activity, with much of the work focused on raising awareness about obligations and requiring action to be taken to address serious risks of abuse to children in organisations.

Strengthening the engagement and participation of children and young people

Strengthening the engagement and participation of children and young people

Children and young people have a right to be heard and involved in decisions that affect them. Providing opportunities for them to understand and contribute to decisions about their lives not only benefits them personally, but also makes systems more responsive and able to engage children and young people for longer.

In 2024–25 children and young people shaped and informed our work, while we continued to build on our approaches to embedding their influence and amplifying their voices to inform critical system improvements.

Embedding youth voice

The Commission's Youth Council brings together children and young people with diverse experiences, identities and views to influence our work and facilitate the participation of other children and young people to have a say in decisions impacting them.

This year the Youth Council led the delivery of the first series of *What matters most*. This project was created by the Youth Council as a way of strengthening how the Commission connects with children and young people across Victoria. Round one invited children and young people to tell the Commission in their own way, including written, audio, video and creative expression, the issues most important to them. Submissions will inform the Commission's work to drive system improvements.

The Commission also hosted the Youth Advisory Group, comprising 12 South Sudanese Australian young people with lived experience of the youth justice system to actively guide the work of the Victorian Government's South Sudanese Australian Youth Justice Expert Working Group. The Youth Advisory Group continued to operate alongside an advisory group convened by the Department of Justice and Community Safety. Together, these groups are responsible for advising on all aspects of the project and its recommendations to government. Find more information about this important project on page 53.

Our youth engagement project officer roles, created last year and staffed by young people, were again integral in shaping and delivering the Commission's workplan.

As part of our ongoing approach to evolving and expanding opportunities for young people to be embedded in our work, in 2024–25 we built on these roles by introducing a new part-time strategic youth project officer position. This position, designated for a young person between the ages of 18 and 25 years, enhances the influence of young people across the Commission and acknowledges the strategic role young people play both within our organisation and across the systems that impact them.



Youth Advisory Group members for the South Sudanese Australian Youth Justice Expert Working Group project.

Reflections from Youth Council members

'Being part of the Youth Council has been an incredibly rewarding journey. A particular highlight for me was seeing the launch of the "What matters most" project, which was led by the Youth Council. This project serves as a reminder to me of the true value we, as young people, hold in driving change.'
– Riya, Youth Council Member

'Being part of the Youth Council is one of the best opportunities I've experienced. I get to connect with people who I otherwise would never meet, but have the same passion for helping other children and young people in Victoria.'
– Noah, Youth Council Member

Reflections from youth engagement project officers

'The way the Commission creates space for youth voices should be commended. And it should be a fundamental part of all organisations that impact the lives of young people if they want to bring about positive change. I'm excited to see just how far we can take it with our role here at the Commission.'
– Missi, Youth Engagement Project Officer

'When organisations create space for the voices of children and young people, we can drive change and nudge systems. To me, the youth project officer roles and Youth Council aren't symbolic but are deliberate structural commitments to the rights of children and young people. It's on all of us to embed our leadership, not as an afterthought, but as a core to how our systems should work.'
– Conor, Youth Engagement Project Officer



Youth Council members with Commissioner Meena Singh and Commissioner Liana Buchanan at a Youth Council workshop day.

Empowering children and young people to directly influence our work

Over the past 12 months, children and young people contributed to and critically influenced the Commission's work in a variety of ways across a range of areas impacting child rights, safety and wellbeing. This included:

- leading and providing input into Commission policy submissions on issues including social media restrictions, government consultation processes and support for victims of crime
- influencing and supporting two systemic Commission inquiries aiming to drive improvements to Child Protection referrals and to understand the experiences of children under 14 years of age in contact with the criminal justice system, or at risk of that experience
- creating video content about the Reportable Conduct Scheme to inform their peers and the public about the Scheme and its importance from a youth perspective
- building the capacity of organisations to keep children safe by sharing their experience and expertise with the Child Safe Standards Community of Practice Working Group and presenting at the Community of Practice
- promoting the Commission's *Child and Youth Engagement Framework* to support organisations to embed engagement in their context which resulted in approximately 650 downloads
- creating content for the Commission's social media channels to celebrate days of significance and bring attention to the rights of children and young people.

Amplifying children and young people's voices to influence systems

Now in its fifth year, the Youth Council model continues to mature and play a greater role, both in supporting our work directly and influencing beyond the Commission.

Over the past year Youth Council members have presented at various forums both individually and alongside commissioners and Commission staff, including youth engagement project officers. This work has seen them engage with senior members of Victorian Government departments as well as a broader range of organisations working with and for children and young people. Youth Council members drew on their diverse backgrounds and life experiences, and brought a unique perspective to the issues impacting them and their peers. The feedback from these forums has consistently highlighted that having young people involved in important discussions and hearing from them directly is incredibly powerful, and is invaluable to creating solutions that respond to their needs.

Youth Council members also brought attention to issues impacting children and young people and solutions to these issues by publishing articles on their Youth Voices platform. This year, members penned four pieces about family violence, cultural safety for Aboriginal children and young people, and out-of-home care that resulted in over 1,900 views.

Reflections from Youth Council members

National Family Safety Summit

The 2024 National Family Safety Summit brought experts and professionals together to focus on tackling family and domestic violence and child abuse.

'During my time as a Youth Council member, I had the opportunity to deliver a keynote presentation alongside former Principal Commissioner Liana and Youth Engagement Project Officer Conor at the National Family Safety Summit in Perth. We shared our experiences of having to navigate a system that still overlooks children and young people, and the impacts of falling through these gaps. We called for action to address the absence of accessible support for young people under 18 who are experiencing violence in the home.'
– Kita, Youth Engagement Project Officer



Commissioner Liana Buchanan presenting alongside Youth Council Member Kita and Youth Engagement Officer Conor at the National Family Safety Summit in Perth.

Child Safe Standards Community of Practice

The Youth Council and youth engagement project officers designed and delivered a session on bringing young peoples' voices into organisational recruitment processes at the May Child Safe Standards Community of Practice.

'I was extremely grateful to share my insights about the importance of creating safe environments for children and young people at this year's Community of Practice, speaking on the keynote panel along with my fellow Youth Council members.'

– Riya, Youth Council Member



Youth Council members, with Commissioner Meena Singh, presenting at the Commission's May 2025 Child Safe Standards Community of Practice.

Power to Kids launch event

The Youth Council brought the voice of young people to the launch of the Power to Kids program, run by MacKillop Family Services. Participating on a panel, a Youth Council member challenged the audience to see young people as experts in their own lives.

'Speaking on the Power to Kids panel was an incredible opportunity to represent perspectives from a young person and contribute to vital conversations about children's rights, safety, and education around sexual abuse and respectful relationships. Being part of the panel reminded me how powerful it is when young people are trusted as experts in their own experiences. It is this kind of participation that truly makes real and lasting change feel possible.'

– Wana, Youth Council Member

Oversight and monitoring of child protection

The Commission is responsible for monitoring and oversight of the child protection system. We do this by:

- reviewing the services provided to every child who was involved with Child Protection in the year prior to their death
- conducting inquiries into systemic issues affecting children in child protection
- conducting inquiries into service responses to individual children
- hearing directly from members of the public about concerns they have for children and young people in the child protection and out-of-home care systems
- advocating for individual children and young people in the child protection and out-of-home care systems.

In 2024–25, our work in this area included:

- completing 37 child death inquiries, making ten new recommendations for action by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and four new recommendations directed to other government agencies and community service organisations
- identifying common themes and issues that arose from our child death inquiries
- monitoring the progress of recommendations from our child death inquiries and systemic inquiries
- responding to 525 approaches from the public
- providing individual advocacy for 38 children and young people.

Driving systemic reform in the safety and wellbeing of children and young people

Inquiries provide important insights into the experiences of children and young people in the child protection system. Our findings and recommendations aim to drive system reform, and promote continuous systemic improvement, and we monitor progress in implementation over time. In 2025, the Commission prepared a *Wrap-up report card* (available on our website here: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/inquiries/monitoring-of-implementation-and-recommendations/>) summarising progress against the recommendations in four past systemic inquiries.

The Commission observed the significant efforts made to improve the way Child Protection, and child and family services more broadly, respond to better meet the needs of children and young people. These efforts include major statewide initiatives and reforms, and local practice-focused efforts.

The Child Protection operating model was reviewed in 2024, resulting in a refreshed Child Protection workforce structure that aims to improve working conditions, practice quality and staff retention. The *Framework for trauma-informed practice*, published in 2023, aims to support all parts of the child and family services sector and the family violence sector to understand and respond to trauma in children, young people and their families. Further, the expansion of the role of Aboriginal agencies delivering child protection functions from 1 July 2024 through the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care initiative is a critical step in supporting self-determination.

However, through all its inquiries, the Commission continues to see the impacts of a system that is severely under-resourced to respond to the level of abuse and neglect of children that exists in the community. While in some cases, the Commission sees excellent practice despite system constraints, in many others, children and young people are exposed to a range of serious harms over many years, often with limited intervention.

High workforce turnover and high practitioner caseloads affect the quality of risk assessments and decision-making. Pressure on the child protection system means that concerns of neglect and cumulative harm are often deprioritised to respond to children and young people facing immediate safety risks. Children and families referred to the voluntary service system are often unable to be engaged and become the subject of further reports to Child Protection.

The Commission will continue to highlight these challenges and the impact on children and young people in its inquiries, and to advocate for an adequately funded child and family service system that can respond earlier and more effectively to prevent or intervene in the harms experienced by children.

Systemic inquiries

Child Protection referrals inquiry

In November 2024, the Commission established a systemic inquiry into the effectiveness of referrals by Child Protection to services in managing risk to children and young people.

We established this inquiry because in our work we have seen that when a report to Child Protection doesn't meet the threshold for statutory intervention, the child's family may be referred to other support services, but that these referrals are often unsuccessful. This can be because services are unable to make contact with a family or, where contact is made, unable to engage them. This results in children and young people being left in unsafe situations and continuing to experience harm.

Often, these children are again reported to Child Protection, and the cycle continues, with many children exposed to cumulative harm over many years without any meaningful intervention. In our *Lost, not forgotten* inquiry, we called this the 'refer and close roundabout'. Despite the recommendations made in that inquiry, and some changes in policy and practice since, the issue persists.

The inquiry provides a critical opportunity to tackle this issue and advocate for a stronger child and family services system that truly works to maximise children's safety and wellbeing. The inquiry's terms of reference are to:

- examine the service response to children and young people whose circumstances are assessed as not meeting the threshold for statutory intervention, including:
 - the effectiveness of referrals to support services
 - the number of referrals that are closed and result in re-reports, the reasons for closure, and the outcome, including whether there are further re-referrals to the same service
 - the types of harms and risk experienced by the children and young people in these situations including any escalation of risk
- examine service system responses in other jurisdictions where risk falls short of the threshold for statutory intervention, but where risk is significant or likely to escalate without adequate support
- make recommendations to improve responses and ensure that children and young people at risk and those experiencing cumulative harm are provided with appropriate supports.

The final report will be tabled in the Victorian Parliament in November 2025.

Child death inquiries

Under the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012* (CCYP Act), the Commission must conduct an inquiry into the services provided to every child who dies and was known to Child Protection in the 12 months before their death. These inquiries seek to identify opportunities for change in the service system to improve the experiences of children and young people in the future. While the death of a child is a trigger for an inquiry, the Commission makes no findings as to the cause of death. Our legislated focus is on services provided to a child before they died.

Child deaths reported to the Commission 2024–25

The Commission was notified of the deaths of 38 children in 2024–25, including eight Aboriginal children. This represents the continued over-representation of Aboriginal children in child deaths where the child was known to Child Protection.

Table 1. Child death notifications received by the Commission by Aboriginal status 2020–21 to 2024–25

Aboriginal status	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Non-Aboriginal	32	33	31	35	30
Aboriginal	13	4	5	8	8
Total	45	37²	36	43	38

The category of death identified in the following tables is based on information from the Coroner, where available to the Commission, or through Child Protection files. Only a Coroner can determine the formal cause of death. In 2024–25, the largest category of death was accident (12), followed by illness (8) and suicide (8) (Table 2). The Commission will continue to examine any themes that have arisen in these cases as inquiries are finalised.

Table 2. Child death notifications received by the Commission by Aboriginal status and category of death 2024–25

Category of death	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Accident	3	38	9	30	12	32
Drug/substance-related	0	–	0	–	0	–
Illness	2	25	6	20	8	21
Non-accidental trauma	0	–	1	3	1	3
SIDS/SUDI ³	1	13	1	3	2	5
Suicide	1	13	7	23	8	21
Unascertained (by Coroner)	1	13	1	3	2	5
Unclear from file	0	–	5	17	5	13
Total	8	100	30	100	38	100

² The Commission's 2021–22 Annual Report identified two children as Aboriginal and 35 as non-Aboriginal. These have been subsequently corrected as they had been misidentified either by services or family members.

³ SIDS – Sudden Infant Death Syndrome; SUDI – Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy.

Table 3 and Table 4 provide further detail about category of death, Aboriginal status, and age of children at death. Of note this year is that the largest number of child death notifications fall into the adolescent group (18), and the birth to five-month grouping (11).

Table 3. Child death notifications received by the Commission by Aboriginal status and age 2024–25

Age	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0–5 months	3	38	8	27	11	29
6–11 months	0	–	0	–	0	–
1–3 years	0	–	5	17	5	13
4–12 years	2	25	2	7	4	11
13–17 years	3	38	15	50	18	47
Total	8	100	30	100	38	100

Table 4. Child death notifications received by the Commission by category of death 2017–18 to 2024–25⁴

CCYP Category of death	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Accident	2	8	8	9	14	9	10	12
Drug/substance-related	1	1	2	0	0	2	2	0
Illness	13	10	20	10	8	11	16	8
Malnutrition	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Non-accidental trauma	0	3	5	2	7	1	2	1
SIDS/SUDI	6	7	2	8	2	1	0	2
Suicide/self-harm	1	3	6	6	2	7	5	8
Unascertained (by Coroner)	1	1	8	8	4	4	5	2
Unclear from file	2	1	0	2	0	0	3	5
Total	26	34	51	45	37	36	43	38

Completed child death inquiries

In 2024–25, the Commission completed 37 child death inquiries. These inquiries related to children who died between June 2022 and January 2025.

As in previous years, most (30) children were living at home with their parent or parents when they died. The children whose lives we reviewed through our child death inquiries had been the subject of, on average, three reports to Child Protection, with 16 children (or 43 per cent) having only one report. The highest number of Child Protection reports made in relation to a child who subsequently died was 20. Child Protection had an open case at the time of death for 22 children and young people.

⁴ Where numbers in this table differ from equivalent numbers published in past annual reports, this is because information has been received, including from the Coroner, that causes us to record an updated category of death for a child.

Based on the inquiries completed this year, we made 14 new recommendations. Consistent with previous years, the majority of recommendations were directed to DFFH, and most recommendations were accepted (see Table 5 and Table 6). This year, ten recommendations were directed to DFFH and four to other departments or services, all designed to improve practice in relation to children and young people experiencing vulnerability. Six of these recommendations were accepted, two were accepted in part, and six are yet to receive a response.

Of the 108 recommendations made in child death inquiries over the past five years, 55 have been fully implemented, including 13 implemented in 2024–25.

Table 5. Total number of recommendations by responsible agency 2020–21 to 2024–25

Responsible Agency	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	Total
Aboriginal community-controlled organisations	1	0	0	0	0	1
Community organisations ⁵	1	0	1	1	1	4
Department of Education	0	3	2	1	0	6
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	14	15	19	11	10	69
Department of Health	4	2	1	1	1	9
Department of Justice and Community Safety	0	0	0	1	0	1
Health services	0	3	2	0	2	7
Multiple agencies ⁶	3	4	2	2	0	11
Total	23	27	27	17	14	108

Table 6. Responses to recommendations 2020–21 to 2024–25

Response	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	Total
Accept	17	21	23	11	6	78
Accept in part	1	1	2	0	2	6
Accept in principle	3	1	1	1	0	6
Not accepted	2	4	1	5	0	12
Not yet responded ⁷	0	0	0	0	6	6
Total	23	27	27	17	14	108

⁵ Community organisations does not include Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, as this has been categorised separately. The category includes a range of non-government organisations that provide services to children and families.

⁶ Some recommendations have more than one responsible agency, particularly where collaboration is required to effect change. In these instances, DFFH is one of the responsible agencies, alongside another government department or community organisations.

⁷ When an inquiry report is finalised, the Commission requests a response to any recommendation be provided within six weeks of the receipt of the report.

Practice themes and issues of concern

This year's completed child death inquiries highlighted both good practice and critical opportunities for improvement in areas including:⁸

- assessment of risk
- practice in relation to infants
- response to neglect and cumulative harm
- premature or inappropriate case closure
- coordination and collaboration between services.

Assessment of risk

As acknowledged in the *Child Protection Manual*, risk assessment is essential to child protection practice. It forms the basis of decisions about action to be taken to increase child safety. It is therefore vitally important that risk assessments are supported by evidence and clearly articulated. The Commission considers that further work is essential to ensure risk is appropriately assessed.

Since DFFH released the SAFER Children Framework (SAFER) in November 2021, ongoing training and guidance have been rolled out to support its implementation. SAFER aims to guide stronger risk assessment in child protection based on the collection of information according to seven essential information categories that relate to the child, their parents or caregivers, and their broader family, community and environment.

Over the past five years, the Commission has made 21 recommendations to DFFH that have aimed to improve risk assessment practice within Child Protection. Most commonly, these recommendations related to the need for improved risk assessment practice in the context of family violence, cumulative harm and infants or adolescents. Of the 19 recommendations accepted by DFFH, ten have been fully implemented.

This year, the Commission observed positive practice in risk assessment by Child Protection in seven cases. In five of these cases there was a clear correlation between good service collaboration and information sharing, and comprehensive, well-informed risk assessments. For example, in response to one case involving a young child who was at risk of harm due to his father's drug use and family violence, Child Protection conducted a comprehensive SAFER assessment and, based on this, appropriately issued a protection application, remained closely involved with the family and made several referrals to address the identified risks. Child Protection also closely liaised with other services to assess whether there were any changes to risk and safety.

In 18 completed inquiries this financial year, however, the Commission found that the risk of harm to children and young people had been inadequately assessed. This included situations where risk assessments were based on inadequate information gathering, an inadequate consideration of the pattern and history of harm (focusing on the current report to Child Protection in isolation of previous reports), or where risks were known but not adequately considered in the formulation of the risk assessment. For four of these children, there had been an inadequate assessment of family violence risk. The Commission considers that further work is essential to ensure risk is appropriately assessed, so children and young people receive the protective responses they need.

Practice in relation to infants

The Commission has, over many years, raised the need for improvement in the way Child Protection assesses and responds to risks to infants. The *Child Protection Manual* recognises that 'the fragility and developmental dependence of young infants significantly increases their vulnerability to potential harm.'⁹

Over the past five years the Commission has made 19 recommendations that have aimed to improve practice within the health and child protection sectors in relation

⁸ The numbers of instances of particular practice in our thematic analysis do not add up to the total number of reports as multiple issues and themes were identified across all of our reports.

⁹ <https://www.cpmmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/children-specific-circumstances/infant-risk-assessment-and-response>

to infants. Eleven of these have been fully implemented. The Commission welcomes and acknowledges efforts to improve practice in this area, including learning and development opportunities and case recording improvements, a local area compliance audit of relevant practice and reflection within a specific hospital leading to improved policies and procedures.

Despite the progress made, there is more work to do. This year, practice in relation to infants was found to be lacking against the standards and advice outlined in the *Child Protection Manual* in ten child death inquiries. This included a failure in one case to respond to repeated reports of neglect of very young siblings and, in another case, inadequate discharge planning for a premature newborn who had been in hospital where there was a history of drug use and removal of other children. In two cases, the infant was identified as being at high risk of harm and that an infant intensive response was required, however practice was not consistent with the risk identified and the harm was not adequately addressed.

Case study:
Billy's story

Billy was two months old when he died from SIDS. Child Protection became involved after concerns were raised about significant and longstanding parental drug use, their limited engagement with treatment services and Billy's sibling previously being removed from their parents' care.

The Commission found that Child Protection's risk assessment did not accurately reflect the high risk of harm to Billy in parental care and relied too heavily on Billy's mother's claim that she had ceased drug use, despite strong evidence to the contrary. Child Protection allowed Billy to remain in the care of his parents, which left him at an unacceptable risk of harm. A protection application was needed to ensure Billy's immediate safety and protection from harm, based on the severity and history of the protective concerns relating to both parents and Billy's vulnerability as a newborn infant.

In response to the Commission's recommendation, Child Protection ran a reflective practice session about Billy's experience to strengthen practice working with and conducting SAFER risk assessments for high-risk infants.

Response to cumulative harm and neglect

The *Child Protection Manual* explains that ‘pattern and history of harm should always be considered as part of the initial assessment of every report’ and that ‘past abuse or neglect in a family is a key indicator of current and future risk of harm to a child’s safety, development or wellbeing.’¹⁰ However, the Commission often finds in its inquiries that cumulative harm and/or neglect are not being adequately considered in Child Protection’s risk assessment and decision making.

This year, the Commission found evidence of this issue in relation to 11 children. In these cases, the cumulative impact of previously reported protective concerns was not adequately considered. This meant that risk assessments were not always accurate, collaboration and information sharing with other services was not always complete, and cases were often repeatedly closed. In one case, a school-aged child with special needs had been the subject of seven reports to Child Protection over her lifetime. One report was investigated when she was two months old, but all others were closed at intake, with inadequate consideration given to the cumulative harm to which she was exposed and with repeated referrals to services to manage concerns, despite previous non-engagement.

Over the past five years the Commission has made 13 recommendations to DFFH that have aimed to strengthen consideration of and responses to cumulative harm experienced by children and young people. Only four of these have been fully implemented. The Commission welcomes the department’s work underway to consider how Child Protection can more effectively respond to cumulative harm, with consideration given to the range of our recommendations on this topic.

The Commission completed an individual inquiry in 2024 (‘Georgia’ – discussed in the 2023–24 annual report) that raised similar concerns in relation to responses to cumulative harm. The inquiry found that Child Protection’s response to multiple reports over many years in relation to Georgia and her siblings did not adequately consider the individual risks to each child, including the risk of

cumulative harm to Georgia. It also found that allegations of inappropriate physical discipline/abuse and the children’s sexualised behaviours did not receive an adequate response. The Commission recommended DFFH strengthen Child Protection practitioners’ knowledge and understanding of and responses to sexual abuse, including enhancing workforce capacity to recognise early warning signs indicative of familial sexual abuse. In response, DFFH has since taken steps to enhance Child Protection practitioners’ knowledge and understanding of child sexual abuse and children who present with harmful sexual behaviours, through strengthened professional learning.

¹⁰ <https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/intake/re-reports-advice>

Case study:

Liam's story

Liam was a young person with complex disability who required a high level of support with communication, movement, feeding and self-care. He was one of several children in a family with multiple and complex needs.

Starting in his early years, Liam was subject to multiple Child Protection reports that raised concerns relating to family violence, parental substance abuse and the parents' capacity to respond to their children's needs, including Liam's disability support needs. The reports related to child disclosures of physical and sexual abuse and provided detailed examples of neglect.

Child Protection closed most of the reports in intake with referrals to Child FIRST/The Orange Door, despite a pattern and history of services being unable to engage with the family. The Commission found that there was a distinct lack of focus and understanding in relation to Liam, and the poor quality of care and disability support he was receiving at home. Further consultation and information sharing with relevant professionals was needed to determine the risks to Liam's safety and wellbeing.

The Commission recommended that the department strengthen Child Protection's intake response to children with disability and complex medical needs and require practitioners to consult with at least one appropriate and involved service so that children and young people with disability and complex care needs remain central to the assessment and decision-making process in intake.

Premature or inappropriate case closure

While acknowledging the significant pressure on Child Protection given the large and growing number of reports made about concerns for children's safety and wellbeing, the Commission frequently finds that Child Protection closes cases prematurely.

Premature case closure often occurs where there have been inadequate efforts made to gather appropriate information about risks to the child and services involved with the family to make a fully informed decision about the need for Child Protection involvement and which services might be required to meet a child or family's needs. Sometimes closure occurs without sufficient safety planning in place.

In cases where risk to a child is deemed not to meet the threshold for statutory intervention, Child Protection may refer the family to another service to provide support and address risks to the child and close the case. The Commission observes that this can occur without considering the likelihood of engagement with support services and often despite services previously being unable to engage the family. The Commission continues to see too many cases where this leads to further reports and cumulative harm to children and has previously discussed the long-term impact of this in our *Inquiry into issues of cumulative harm and suicide in child deaths and Lost, not forgotten*. In other cases, no referrals are made before closing the case.

This year, the Commission found that Child Protection closed reports prematurely in relation to 15 children and young people. In three cases, there had been insufficient information gathering before the case was closed. In another three cases, these were closed without ensuring the right supports were in place to support the child and their family. In one case involving significant neglect, Child Protection intervened by taking legal action but ceased its involvement before risks had been adequately addressed. Consequently, the young siblings remained at ongoing risk of harm.

In the past two years, the Commission has made five recommendations across four cases that have specifically sought to address the identified issue of Child Protection closing reports and referring to The Orange Door, despite a high likelihood that referrals would not result in support. Of these recommendations, two were not accepted and the remaining recommendations are being considered by the department or are in the process of being implemented. Further analysis of this issue and targeted recommendations will be contained in the systemic inquiry into the effectiveness of Child Protection referrals, to be tabled in the Victorian Parliament in November 2025.

Coordination and collaboration between services

Effective coordination and collaboration between services can be critical in protecting children and improving outcomes for them and their families. It can help to ensure that children receive the right supports, based on an accurate and shared understanding of their needs, and that these supports are provided in a coordinated way. Where this does not occur, children can miss out on being connected to relevant services that may work with families to help keep them safe from harm.

Over the past five years, the Commission has made 18 recommendations that have aimed to improve collaboration and information sharing between a range of services for the benefit of children and young people. The majority of these (14) have been fully implemented. In response to the Commission’s recommendations, we have seen targeted training in relation to information sharing in schools and hospitals, and case reflection to consider ways to improve collaboration between services.

This year, the Commission identified positive examples of collaboration and coordination in relation to 18 children. Positive practice was highlighted where services regularly communicated with each other to share key information and updates about a family, where Child Protection or other agencies liaised with services to gather and share information – including about whether there were adequate supports in place – to inform risk assessment and decision making. In one case, Child Protection worked proactively with a range of services involved with

a pregnant mother experiencing vulnerability to ensure supports were in place in the lead up to the birth of her child.

At the same time, this year the Commission also observed inadequate consultation or collaboration in relation to 18 children and young people in our child death inquiries. These cases often related to Child Protection and other services not proactively gathering (12) or sharing (7) information, including a child’s mental health or risks associated with family violence. In one case involving a mother with multiple children in her care, the Commission identified that Child Protection did not convene meetings with services involved with the family during any of the 20 reports to Child Protection. Meeting with services, along with the mother, would have supported information sharing, service coordination and planning for the most appropriate intervention and support.

Responding to the needs of individual children and young people

Advocating for individual young people in the child protection and out-of-home care systems

Legislation came into effect on 1 July 2024 giving the Commission stronger powers to assist and advocate for children and young people known to Child Protection or in out-of-home care. These new powers were introduced in response to multiple recommendations, including the Commission's 2019 *In our own words* inquiry¹¹ and the Victorian Ombudsman's 2020 Investigation into complaints about assaults of five children living in Child Protection residential care units.¹² These inquiries pointed to challenges in the care system that can have devastating and harmful impacts on children in care. They recognised that in a system impacted by high vacancy rates and turnover within the Child Protection workforce, a high proportion of children in care do not have an allocated worker,¹³ and it is difficult for many children to raise concerns and have their issues addressed.

The Commission's individual advocacy function provides a unique and critically important avenue for children and young people's concerns to be heard and acted upon. Unfortunately, the Commission did not receive any funding for this function in the 2025–26 State Budget announced in May, which has resulted in a highly constrained approach to its implementation. The Commission continues to call on government to resource this much needed and unique function, which can have powerful outcomes for some of the state's most vulnerable children and young people.

To the best of its capacity, the Commission has continued to respond to children and young people who come to us for assistance under the new powers. Drawing on existing resources, this year we have advocated for

38 children and young people and had a positive impact on their outcomes.

Case study: Belinda's story

Belinda was school age when we were first contacted about her care. Belinda has a disability and complex medical needs which were significant to her daily needs and care requirements. There were concerns that Belinda's needs weren't being met at home as she was coming to school each day with signs of neglect and poor hygiene and was increasingly being hospitalised. Multiple reports were made to Child Protection, who had closed Belinda's case following investigation.

The Commission advocated for Child Protection's intervention and increased medical oversight of Belinda's wellbeing in her parent's care. Child Protection engaged services to support Belinda's family to meet her daily care needs and address safety risks in the home. Belinda's parent and NDIS carers were specifically trained in her care. With our advocacy, these services remained involved with the family for an extended period to ensure the concerns for Belinda's welfare at home were adequately addressed and she remained safe and well.

¹¹ *In our own words*, Commission for Children and Young People, recommendation 6.

¹² Victorian Ombudsman, Investigation into complaints about assaults of five children living in Child Protection residential care units, 29 October 2020, 13.

¹³ *In our own words*, finding 8.

Case study:
Amira's story

Amira was a teenager living with her mother and siblings. An intervention order was made that prevented Amira's father from having contact with her and her siblings. The intervention order aimed to protect Amira, but Amira was adamant that her father was gentle and kind to her. Not being able to see her father was having a serious impact on Amira's mental health. A report to Child Protection was made, although nobody from Child Protection contacted Amira. This prompted Amira to call us.

The Commission helped connect Amira with support from her school counsellor, and a lawyer who helped her change the intervention order so that she could see her father. The Commission also contacted Child Protection. Court Orders were in place affecting Child Protection's ability to make decisions. Child Protection opened an investigation and recognised that Amira's voice had not been given adequate attention. The Commission assisted to ensure that Amira was heard and supported.

Amira was finally reconnected with her father.

Approaches from the public

In addition to advocating for individual children and young people, the Commission responds to a wide variety of approaches and complaints from the community, mostly about the safety and wellbeing of children and young people known to Child Protection or in out-of-home care.

Without the legislative authority to investigate these matters, the Commission provides an information and referral response with a focus on promoting the rights of children.

This year the Commission responded to 525 approaches, an increase of six per cent on the previous year (497).

Most approaches came from family members (282) and the most common reason for contacting the Commission was to report suspected child abuse (87) or raise safety concerns about a placement decision (57). Twelve per cent of approaches were about Aboriginal children and young people.

Oversight and monitoring of out-of-home care

The Commission is responsible for monitoring and oversight of the out-of-home care system.

In 2024–25, our work in this area included:

- establishing an individual inquiry into the services provided to a young person in out-of-home care
- monitoring the progress of recommendations from previous systemic and individual inquiries
- court ordered monitoring of a young person in a restricted environment
- monitoring serious incidents and identifying systemic issues in out-of-home care
- conducting onsite inspections of residential care services.

Driving systemic reform in the safety and wellbeing of children and young people

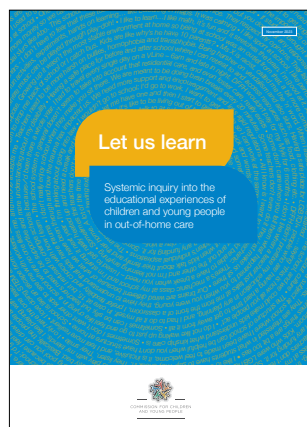
Individual inquiry into services provided to a young person in out-of-home care

In late 2024, the Commission initiated an inquiry into the services provided to an Aboriginal young person, removed from parental care and with an extensive history in out-of-home care. Since 2021, the Commission has exercised a range of oversight, monitoring and regulatory powers to address the serious and ongoing concerns that have brought this young person to the Commission's attention. The matters this young person faces, including mental health concerns and acute risks to safety, combined with the Commission's strong commitment to their safety and wellbeing, has led to the initiation of this inquiry. The inquiry will consider the services provided to the young person while in residential care, and where appropriate, may make recommendations for policy and practice improvement.

The inquiry will be finalised in the 2025–26 financial year.

Due to the serious concerns about the safety and wellbeing of this young person, while the individual inquiry is undertaken, the Commission continues to monitor their experience in care to elevate their voice in planning, care and placement decisions.

Let us learn:
Systemic inquiry into the educational experiences of children and young people in out-of-home care



On 16 November 2023, the Commission tabled its inquiry *Let us learn: Systemic inquiry into the educational experiences of children and young people in out-of-home care* in the Victorian Parliament. The inquiry examined how living in out-of-home care impacts children and young people's experiences of education. The inquiry also explored young children's participation in early education services and the effectiveness of Victorian Government initiatives in supporting children and young people in care to stay engaged in education.

The inquiry revealed substantial disparities in educational outcomes for children and young people in care compared to their peers. It made 47 recommendations to clarify roles and responsibilities, strengthen responses by Child Protection and schools, increase resourcing and support different agencies to work together effectively to meet the needs of students in care.

The Victorian Government accepted most of the recommendations – 25 in full, 19 in principle and two in part. One recommendation is to be considered further. The government's response is available here: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/inquiries/systemic-inquiries/education-inquiry/> and a more detailed implementation plan was provided to the Commission in January 2025. The government's self-reported progress against each of the recommendations to 30 June 2025, and the Commission's assessment of this progress, is captured in the recommendation progress table, available on our website.

The Commission welcomes the government response and the early investment in support of several of the report's recommendations. The 2025–26 State Budget committed \$30.7 million over four years to further strengthen educational supports for children and young people in care. This included continued funding for:

- the Education Support for Children in Care pilot program to provide one-on-one tutoring to children and young people in care who are disengaged or at risk of disengaging from school
- educational needs analysis to ensure the needs of students in out-of-home care are properly understood and to inform the supports they receive to engage in the classroom
- the continuation of essential LOOKOUT Centre capacity to work with schools.

Further, from 1 January 2026, all Victorian children and young people under 18 years, including those living in care, will receive free public transport anywhere in Victoria. This funding builds on the Victorian Government's commitments in last year's budget to fund education-related initiatives for children and young people in care, including progressing the integration of data systems, and increasing resources for LOOKOUT learning advisors and early childhood learning advisors in high demand areas of the state.

The Commission acknowledges the significant progress that the government has achieved on several of our recommendations but calls for urgent action to reduce the

use of exclusionary practices for students in care, such as modified timetables and suspensions, in response to challenging behaviours. *Let us learn* found that higher rates of exclusionary practices for students in care are indicative of an education system not providing appropriate responses to students who need interventions and support. Relatedly, the Commission reiterates the recommendation to ensure all government schools implement a ‘whole school’ approach to trauma, noting this will also benefit the broader student population.

The Commission also calls for urgent action to increase care allowance payments for kinship and foster carers. The Victorian Government’s prioritisation of this recommendation is long overdue.

Previous inquiry into service responses to a vulnerable child in out-of-home care

The individual inquiry in relation to WD – discussed in some detail in last year’s annual report – sadly highlighted how Victoria’s most vulnerable children can be failed by the systems designed to protect and support them. The inquiry identified several areas for improvement in relation to supporting children in out-of-home care, particularly those with complex presentations that may include trauma, disability, mental health concerns, high risk behaviours and exposure to harm when missing from care. The inquiry made 19 recommendations to drive systemic change, all of which were accepted.

The Commission is pleased that improvements to critical incident monitoring have now been introduced to better acknowledge the risk of harm children face when they go missing from care, which may include sexual exploitation. The Commission will continue to assess the impact of the improvements through its ongoing incident monitoring function.

Work is also underway across departments, agencies and services that will address other areas identified for improvement in the inquiry, including work to:

- improve DFFH guidance and approval processes in relation to contingency care arrangements, which are made for a child in exceptional circumstances when other care options are unable to meet the specific needs of that child
- strengthen procurement and oversight processes for out-of-home care providers
- improve responses to child sexual exploitation, including by:
 - enhancing police capabilities to detect and respond to sexual exploitation
 - improving intelligence sharing between DFFH and Victoria Police
 - driving whole-of-sector improvement through child sexual exploitation practice forums
 - identifying ways to better support children with complex trauma and disability to access forensic medical examinations, including outside of normal business hours
- strengthen Child Protection’s internal and multi-agency responses to children in out-of-home care who are experiencing high and escalating levels of risk.

The Commission encourages ongoing efforts in these areas, and other areas identified through the inquiry – including trauma and mental health supports for children in out-of-home care – and will continue to closely monitor progress against the recommendations made.

Ongoing monitoring of WD’s treatment and care

In 2024, following the Secretary of DFFH seeking court orders to allow ongoing restrictions to WD’s movement, the Commission sought leave to intervene in court proceedings as *amicus curiae* (friend of the court). Following the court authorising WD’s placement in a secure facility and the use of other restrictive practices, the court also authorised the Commission to monitor WD’s care and report to the court on the services provided, to ensure that her rights and wellbeing are supported. The

court order provides that DFFH give the Commission access to WD, the premises she lives in, and documents and information to enable the Commission to perform this monitoring role. This is the first time the Commission has intervened in court proceedings in this way.

In 2024–25, the Commission continued its critical role monitoring WD’s care, reporting to court in detail on the services provided to her. The Commissioner’s monitoring role has highlighted the unique circumstances of WD’s placement and the significant challenges to rehabilitation this has presented. Concerningly, this has included delays in Child Protection’s decision-making and a lack of collaboration in her care team around matters critical to future community reintegration, including rehabilitative opportunities and the progressive reduction of restrictive practices. At times, WD has not been spoken of as a child with rights, but as a risk to be managed.

Given the significant harm faced by WD while within the child protection and out-of-home care systems, and the failure of these systems to protect and support her, the Commission would like to see a coordinated focus on approaches that will foster optimal opportunity for WD’s recovery and reintegration into the community.

Monitoring of out-of-home care

Incidents reported in out-of-home care

The Commission monitors incidents in out-of-home care to identify trends and opportunities to advocate for systemic improvement to policy and practice.

There was an eight per cent decline in the number of out-of-home care incidents reported in 2024–25, compared with the previous year (Table 7). Despite this decline, the Commission remains concerned that the DFFH Client Incident Management System (CIMS) does not capture all serious incidents impacting children and young people in out-of-home care, as raised in *Out of sight*.

The Commission acknowledges that DFFH has updated its CIMS incident type categories, introducing new categories, including ‘sexual exploitation–grooming’ and ‘sexual exploitation–suspected’, amongst other changes.

The Commission has advocated for specific category types that better capture the level and impact of harm on children and young people. The development of child sexual exploitation incident categories provides for greater awareness of this issue. The increased focus on specific reporting of this as a standalone category allows for greater understanding of prevalence and associated harm to guide systemic improvements.

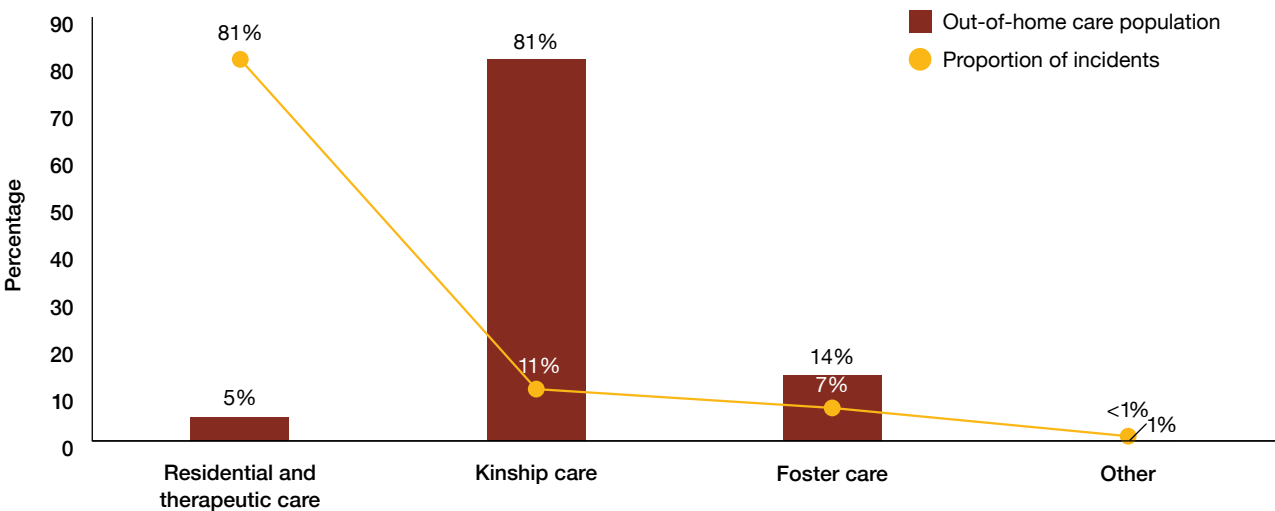
The greatest proportion of incidents reported in out-of-home care continue to come from residential care (81 per cent), despite this group of children and young people making up only five per cent of the out-of-home care population (Figure 1). The Commission continues to conduct on-site monitoring activities in residential care in reflection of its marked and ongoing over-representation in incidents affecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people (see Rights-based monitoring of residential care, page 49).

Table 7. Incidents in out-of-home care (all care types) by incident type 2022–23 to 2024–25¹⁴

Incident type	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	Percentage change 2023–24 to 2024–25
Absent client	3,603	4,517	5,309	18
Inappropriate physical treatment	701	682	780	14
Medication error	991	1,697	750	-56
Injury	482	620	646	4
Physical abuse	665	624	572	-8
Dangerous actions – client	1,238	1,267	477	-62
Self harm/attempted suicide	1,068	946	335	-65
Sexual abuse	343	342	334	-2
Emotional/psychological harm	190	232	319	38
Emotional/psychological abuse	301	360	309	-14
Self-harm	n/a	n/a	282	–
Serious risk	n/a	n/a	247	–
Inappropriate sexual behaviour	154	190	156	-18
Poor quality of care	319	341	144	-58
Sexual exploitation – grooming	237	190	143	-25
Sexual exploitation – suspected	n/a	n/a	97	–
Neglect	n/a	n/a	61	–
Attempted suicide	n/a	n/a	47	–
Financial abuse	5	7	9	29
Death	2	4	2	-50
Escape from a secure facility	3	1	1	–
Total	10,302	12,020	11,020	-8

¹⁴ These figures are extracted from DFFH's live database, and small data variations may occur against last year's annual report figures. As noted, in December 2024, DFFH implemented an update to the categorisation of CIMS incident types. This has led to some new incident types being introduced including serious risk, neglect, sexual exploitation–suspected and the division of self harm/attempted suicide into separate incident types.

Figure 1. Out-of-home care population and proportion of incidents by care type 2024–25



Section 60A of the CCYP Act requires the Secretary of DFFH to provide the Commission with information about all adverse events involving children in out-of-home care. The Commission reviews each incident report to identify significant incidents and particularly vulnerable and at-risk children and young people in out-of-home care, and to identify systemic issues that require the department’s attention.

This year, the Commission reviewed 11,627 incident reports¹⁵ and initiated 82 incident queries. Aboriginal children and young people were involved in over a third of our incident queries. Most of our incident queries (89 per cent) related to children and young people in residential care.

Many of our incident queries sought to understand the strategies in place for children and young people who were away from placement for significant periods, reported to be involved in dangerous situations, or experiencing sexual abuse. As shown in Table 8, almost one third of our queries related to children and young people absent from placement, one sixth involved sexual abuse, and ten per cent were about children and young people reported to be in dangerous situations. Many of the sexual assault and abuse incidents occur when children and young people are absent from placement and can often be within the broader context of child sexual exploitation.

¹⁵ The number of incidents reviewed by the Commission is higher than the number of incidents reported in out-of-home care as the Commission will not receive some incident reports by the end of the financial year and therefore, some incidents reviewed in the current financial year occurred in the previous financial year.

Table 8. Out-of-home care incident queries by the Commission 2024–25

Incident type	No.	%
Absent/missing person/absent client	25	30
Sexual assault/sexual abuse	13	16
Dangerous actions – client	8	10
Physical assault/physical abuse	6	7
Suicide attempted	6	7
Physical assault – client > client	4	5
Sexual exploitation/sexual exploitation grooming	3	4
Sexual exploitation/sexual exploitation	3	4
Injury/injury	3	4
Emotional/psychological/emotional /psychological abuse	3	4
Self harm	3	4
Physical assault – other > client	2	2
Poor quality of care	1	1
Emotional/psychological/emotional/ psychological trauma	1	1
Neglect	1	1
Total	82	100

Issues identified through monitoring

Through our review of out-of-home care incident reports, the Commission identifies trends or themes and raises these with DFFH through discussion or formal correspondence with the aim of improving service responses to children and young people in out-of-home care.

Children and young people as victims of sexual exploitation

The Commission has held long-standing concerns about the sexual exploitation of children and young people in out-of-home care. In particular, the Commission has previously raised concerns about the underreporting of such incidents, and the impact of this on appropriate and timely responses. Following conversations with the Commission, the introduction in 2024 of new CIMS

incident categories, ‘sexual exploitation – grooming’ and ‘sexual exploitation – suspected’, represents an important step towards strengthening information about the prevalence of child sexual exploitation. However, sexual exploitation and grooming incidents remain high, and in need of ongoing disruption.

The Commission acknowledges DFFH’s extensive work on child sexual exploitation in 2024–25, including the introduction of sexual exploitation practice leaders, changes to the case management system, increased resourcing, and work towards greater intelligence in the identification of persons of interest. We look forward to further work in collaboration with Victoria Police to respond to persons of interest and support the disruption of the abuse of children and young people in the system.

Use of secure care and management of higher risk young people

Through our system monitoring, the Commission observes the repeated admission of some young people to Secure Care, a highly restrictive closed environment, for intensive care and protection.

Secure Care is often used as a circuit breaker and protection from harm. Admission to Secure Care acts as a disruption strategy, an opportunity to take stock and undertake assessments and develop plans when young people are at very high risk of harm. Placement in Secure Care often occurs in the context of risk associated with poor mental health, alcohol and other drug use, and child sexual exploitation.

Although the Commission acknowledges the need for the safe care of high-risk young people, we are concerned that repeated or extended placements in Secure Care are highly restrictive and carry their own risks to children and young people through isolation, restrictive practices and separation from the community. It is critical that alternative placement options are considered so Secure Care placements are for the shortest time possible, and exit planning is coordinated and informed by the voices of the affected children and young people.

Case study: Jenna's story

Jenna is an adolescent Aboriginal girl who has spent a significant period of time in Secure Care.

Jenna's persistent mental health presentation and associated engagement in violence towards others presented significant risk that could not be mitigated in the community. Yet Jenna did not meet criteria under the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022* for involuntary admission into a mental health facility.

In 2024–25, Jenna was placed in Secure Care for multiple months, despite its intended use for short-term care. For much of this time she was in isolation from other young people due to her presentation.

Jenna's case highlights the challenges experienced by young people in care with presenting mental health issues and the limited placement and service options available.

The Commission closely monitored Jenna's placement and management throughout the year and is pleased to see that alternative placements are now planned.

Access to age-appropriate services

The Commission continues to see issues in both supply and access to age-appropriate therapeutic treatment services for children and young people, in particular alcohol and other drug treatment services and mental health services. We continue to observe cases in which wait times or the lack of availability of services significantly affects the outcomes for children and young people at risk in the out-of-home care system. Considering the complex trauma backgrounds of those in care, it is essential that service responses reflect the challenges for such children and young people in their ability to engage. The Commission continues to advocate for the greater availability of age-appropriate treatment services to meet demand and notes the necessity of such services embedding an approach to engagement that is responsive to trauma.

Rights-based monitoring of residential care

The Commission conducts onsite monitoring of a selection of residential care homes annually, drawing on the Charter for children in out-of-home care (the Charter)¹⁶ for specific themes for discussion. We are grateful to the children and young people who welcome Commission staff into their homes and share their thoughts and experiences with us.

Provision of food

In late 2024, the Commission conducted a statewide residential care monitoring activity to understand children and young people's experiences of the provision of food while living in residential care. Commission staff met with 19 children and young people living in eight randomly selected residential care homes across Victoria.

Overall children and young people told the Commission they had access to healthy food, were able to rely on staff to provide them with food regularly and could choose to participate in shopping, meal preparation and cooking. The Commission found some inconsistency across services in children and young people's experiences with takeaway nights, eating out and ordering lunch at school.

¹⁶ Section 16(1)(f) of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (CYFA) identifies that the Secretary DFFH, has a responsibility to publish and promote a Charter for children in out-of-home care to provide a framework of principles to promote the wellbeing of those children. See 'Charter for children in out-of-home care', <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/charter-children-out-home-care>.

The Commission also found that learning to connect to community and culture through food is important to children and young people.

The report identified three key opportunities for improvement directed at DFFH, including:

- 1) improving consistency across services to provide children and young people in residential care with similar experiences of eating that might be afforded to children living at home, including:
 - promoting consistency in the frequency of takeaway nights and ensuring a reasonable and equitable amount of money is provided for takeaway food
 - ensuring that service providers pay for takeaway night out of allocated funds, and not out of children and young people's pocket money
 - providing children and young people with opportunities to experience eating out as a group and ordering lunch at school
- 2) strengthening opportunities for children and young people to learn and connect to their community and culture through food
- 3) further informing children and young people about their rights under the Charter.

DFFH advised that it would consider these improvement opportunities and share the findings with residential care providers.

Progress against past systemic inquiries

This year, the Commission has published a *Wrap-up report card* to make a final assessment of progress against recommendations from three of its historical inquiries into the out-of-home care system (along with *Lost, not forgotten: Systemic inquiry into children who died by suicide and were known to Child Protection*):

- *In our own words: Systemic inquiry into the lived experience of children and young people in the Victorian out-of-home care system* (2019)
- *Keep caring: Systemic inquiry into services for young people transitioning from out-of-home care* (2020)

- *Out of sight: Systemic inquiry into children and young people who are absent or missing from residential care* (2021).

The report card can be found on our website: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/inquiries/monitoring-of-implementation-and-recommendations/>. After four years of recommendation-by-recommendation progress monitoring and reporting, the report card refocuses government and public attention on the progress made in response to our inquiries, as well as the persistent gaps in progress and action on some key issues of concern.

Key areas of progress acknowledged in the *Wrap-up report card* include significant government investment to tackle sexual exploitation of children missing from care, more therapeutic residential care options, better identification and responses to the health and disability needs of children in care, and greater support for care leavers.

The Commission welcomes these and other areas of progress, but the *Wrap-up report card* also identifies several areas requiring further work and government investment. For example, the Commission strongly advocates for:

- every residential care unit to be therapeutic in its design and delivery
- a stronger whole-of-government response to child sexual exploitation
- system improvements that allow for earlier intervention that drives down demand for Child Protection and out-of-home care.

While recommendations from these inquiries are being retired after a reasonable lifespan, the Commission will continue to monitor the key issues raised by these inquiries through more recent and forthcoming inquiries, and continue to advocate on key issues where progress continues to lag.

Oversight and monitoring of youth justice

When children and young people are detained in closed environments such as youth justice centres, independent oversight of the conditions of their confinement and their treatment is critical.

In 2024–25, our work in this area included:

- establishing an inquiry into the experiences of children under 14 years of age in contact with the criminal justice system
- working in partnership with the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) on the Victorian Government's South Sudanese Australian Youth Justice Expert Working Group project
- advocating for systemic improvements in youth justice centres
- operating a monthly Independent Visitor Program (IVP) at each youth justice centre, including the Cherry Creek Youth Justice Precinct
- monitoring incidents in custodial settings, as well as incident trends and the use of force, isolation and lockdowns
- providing a standby function in case children are detained by Victoria Police in preventative detention under the *Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003*.

Driving systemic reform in the safety and wellbeing of children and young people

Systemic inquiry into the experiences of children under 14 in the criminal justice system

In December 2024, the Commission established a systemic inquiry to understand the experiences of children under 14 years of age in contact with the criminal justice system, or at risk of that experience.

We established this inquiry because we continue to see service failures that lead to children being criminalised at a young age. This puts them at a higher risk of becoming entrenched in the criminal justice system as adolescents and adults.

The terms of reference for the inquiry are to:

- understand the experiences and characteristics of children under 14 years brought into contact with the criminal justice system and the range of behaviours that brings them into contact with the system
- understand the existence and availability of service supports for children under 14 years currently in contact with the criminal justice system
- recommend any changes to policy, practice, legislation or the delivery of services for this cohort.

As well as making recommendations to the Victorian Government, a key aim of the inquiry is to help improve community understanding of the issues and solutions.

Hearing directly from children and young people about their experiences, lives and ideas for change, is central to this work. This engagement with children and young people was a focus of the work during 2024–25, as well as gathering data and information from government departments and agencies.

This project will continue in 2025–26.

South Sudanese Australian young people guiding improvements to youth justice

This year, the Commission continued to work in partnership with DJCS on the Victorian Government's South Sudanese Australian Youth Justice Expert Working Group project. The project commenced in May 2022 and is tasked with developing solutions to reduce the over-representation of South Sudanese Australian young people in Victoria's youth justice system.

Over the past year, the Commission led initiatives to ensure South Sudanese Australian young people's voices directly informed the Expert Working Group's work, including:

- supporting a Youth Advisory Group of 12 South Sudanese young people with lived experience of the youth justice system to advise the project
- completing a series of five youth forums across Victoria (co-hosted with local African youth-led organisations), engaging over 300 young people
- consulting with 20 South Sudanese and other African diaspora young people in Youth Justice custody (at Parkville and Cherry Creek), to hear first-hand about their experiences
- hosting a screening and youth panel discussion for department and non-government stakeholders of *Reclaimed Voices*, a documentary that challenges stereotypes and media representation about youth crime
- using what we heard from young people – alongside data and case evidence – to develop practical recommendations for government.

Youth Advisory Group

The Commission's Youth Advisory Group (YAG) has played a critical role in guiding the project. Hosted by the Commission, this group of 12 young people with lived experience of the youth justice system has met regularly to discuss emerging issues, review project materials, and provide advice on solutions to the issues identified. Together with the DJCS Adult Advisory Group, they also took part in workshops on key themes including education, intergenerational trauma, and family support, helping refine the project's findings and recommendations. Notably, this project has also built the skills of the YAG members. For example, one member has since been employed by the Commission as a project officer, and another is now working as a lived-experience mentor supporting young people after their release from custody. The Commission acknowledges the significant contribution of our advisory group, and is grateful for the time, honesty and bravery they have shown in sharing their experiences and shaping solutions for a better future for the next generation.

At a series of community youth forums held by the Commission, young people spoke about challenges they face including racism and discrimination, struggles at school and work, poverty and financial hardship, family and cultural pressures, mental health issues, and the impacts of alcohol and other drugs. These discussions provided crucial context to understand why some young people become involved in offending. In May 2024, the Commission released the 2023–24 Youth Forums Report 1, which highlighted key themes and ideas from the first three forums. With all five forums now concluded, a second report will be published towards the end of 2025. The knowledge gained through these forums is directly informing the Expert Working Group's recommendations.



Sobur Dhieu facilitating a youth panel discussion with Sabir Banek, Robiel Abraham, Machar Machar, Lueth Akue and Maw Koue following a screening of *Reclaimed Voices*.

In addition to community forums, the Commission engaged with young people who have current contact with the justice system. Between September 2024 and March 2025, Commission staff visited Parkville and Cherry Creek Youth Justice Centres to consult with 20 South Sudanese and other African diaspora young people in custody. These one-on-one discussions allowed young people to speak openly about their experiences and what might have helped them avoid or exit the justice system.

Young people in custody spoke about many of the same underlying issues as their peers in the community. They highlighted:

- experiences of racism and bias in education settings, disengagement from school and lack of support in the education system
- unstable family environments and intergenerational conflict
- financial hardship limiting positive opportunities
- experiences of bias and racism and being unfairly targeted by police
- limited access to mentors, programs or safe community spaces
- distrust in services and a feeling that the justice system is not supportive.

The consultations reinforced that reducing over-representation requires not just holding individuals accountable, but also requires broader changes in schools, communities and systems to better support at-risk young people and address racism and bias. This feedback is now shaping the project's recommendations to government.

The Expert Working Group's report is expected to be delivered to the Victorian Government in late 2025.

Advocating for system improvements in Youth Justice

This year, the Commission continued to identify and raise concerns about a range of issues impacting children and young people's safety and wellbeing in Youth Justice custody, including:

- changes to bail laws, with flow on effects for young people in custody
- high rates of behavioural isolations and lockdowns
- programs and services for the dual track sentenced population
- use of force processes and reporting
- support and access to community services for young people released on bail.

Impacts of bail amendments

The population in youth justice centres continues to rise (see Figure 2). The Commission is concerned that changes to bail laws will continue to increase the population and lead to a broader group of children and young people being remanded. Youth Justice has advised that there has already been an increase in young people remanded into custody for the first time. In March 2025, the Commission issued a public statement about these amendments, expressing its strong concerns about the Victorian Government's changes to toughen bail laws which would result in more young people being put into custody (see page 72).

The Commission acknowledges that the reforms come with a range of funding to open additional beds at youth justice centres, recruit frontline staff, and expand rehabilitation, health care and support services, amongst other measures. However, the Commission has significant concerns about the impacts of the laws on children and young people in Youth Justice including:

- reduced placement options for young people inside youth justice centres resulting in potentially unsuitable placements, restrictive conditions and a greater risk of incidents
- stretching existing services and staff which may reduce access to appointments, programs and visits essential to health, access to justice and community connection
- potential increases in the use of isolations and lockdowns due to staff shortages
- a new cohort of young people being exposed to custodial environments with more serious offenders, posing risks of becoming entrenched in the system.

In 2024–25 there were a number of significant increases in incidents within youth justice centres, including:

- a 114 per cent increase in client-on-client physical assaults (from 7 to 15)
- a 100 per cent increase in client on staff physical assaults (from 15 to 30)
- a 211 per cent increase in behaviour – dangerous incidents (from 9 to 28)¹⁷
- and poor quality of care incidents reached their highest in four years, rising 275 per cent (from 4 to 15).¹⁸

These trends already raise concerns about the safe operation of youth justice centres now. The Commission is deeply concerned how these potential issues will be exacerbated as the implication of bail amendments unfold. There is now no greater time to consider the impact of bail laws on the experiences of young people in custody and whether these are more likely to create positive or negative outcomes for children and young people and the

community following their release from Youth Justice custody. We know that spending time in custody is likely to enhance the risk of further offending and challenge the position that the changes to bail laws will lead to greater community safety. We are particularly concerned about the impact on children and young people with less serious offending histories who will be exposed to negative influences and experiences that are not rehabilitative.

The Commission will continue to closely monitor the ongoing impacts of the increased custodial population and impact of the new bail laws on young people's experiences in youth justice centres.

High rates of behavioural isolations and lockdowns

Youth Justice practices that contain children and young people in their rooms for extended periods can have a serious and detrimental impact on mental health and well-being, access to education, exercise, fresh air, recreational activities, cultural and social support.

'I feel like a caged animal – I haven't been off the unit for days.'

'I want to get out of my room.'

'[It triggers] trauma from when I was a child who would be locked in the bedroom.'

¹⁷ Behaviour dangerous incidents include incidents involving high risk behaviour that threatens or impacts the safety and security of the centre.

¹⁸ Poor quality of care incidents includes actions or behaviour by staff where the care of children and young people is concerning, may breach procedures or policies and may impact or cause harm to children and young people.

Isolations

Episodes of ‘behavioural’ isolations typically occur in response to an incident. The *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (CYFA) allows a child or young person to be held in a locked room, separate from others and away from the normal routine of the centre when:

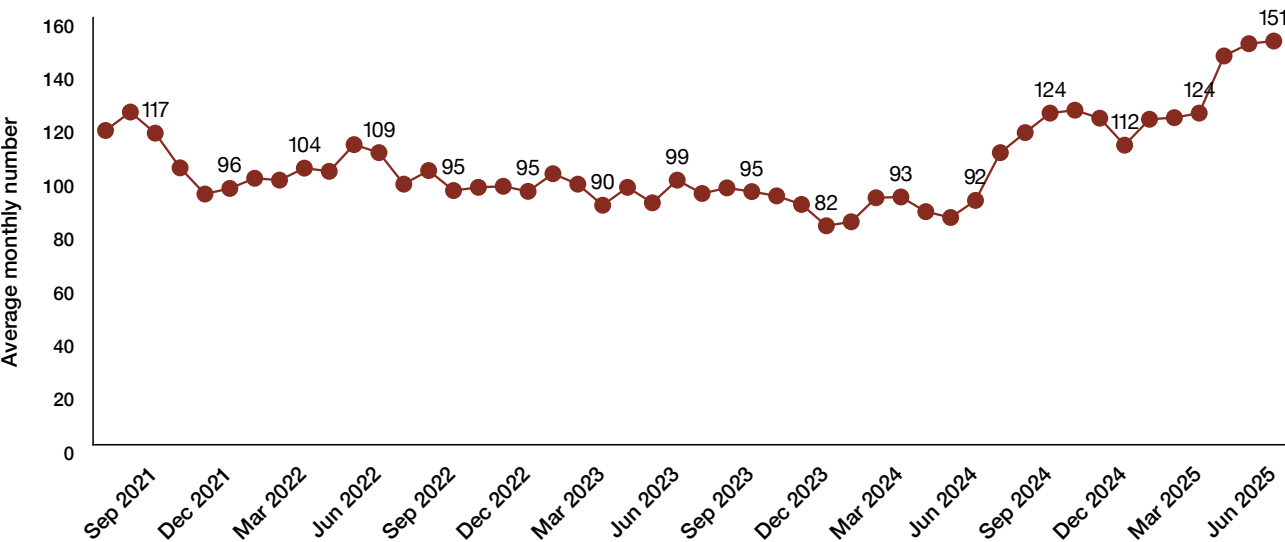
- all other reasonable steps have been taken to prevent the person from harming himself or herself or any other person, or from damaging property, and
- the young person’s behaviour presents an immediate threat to themselves or others or property (section 488(2)).

This year, isolations under section 488(2) of the CYFA continued to increase. There was a 77 per cent increase in the number of isolation episodes from 2023–24; this increase outstripped the growth in average monthly population numbers which only increased by 41 per cent

over the same period. The number of isolation episodes this year (7,085) is more than the previous three years combined (6,141). While the average monthly number of children and young people in Youth Justice custody has increased (Figure 2), the rate of isolation episodes per individual child or young person isolated also increased from 20 to 23 episodes for the year (Figure 3).¹⁹

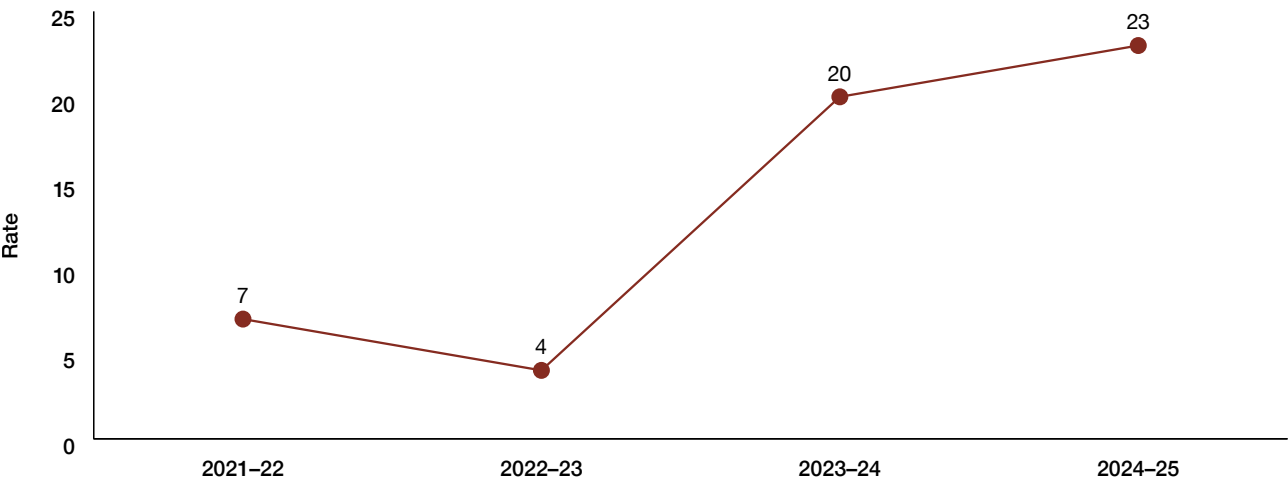
Youth Justice has advised that behavioural isolations are largely impacted by the complex range of factors that impact young people’s behaviour both in the community and in custody. They note that there has been an increase in complexity over the last 12 months, which has impacted incident numbers and immediate risk of harm, resulting in use of isolation. Noting the use of isolations to address a more complex population, we urge Youth Justice to continue to explore alternative responses to managing complex behaviour.

Figure 2. Average monthly number of children and young people in youth justice custody July 2021–June 2025



¹⁹ These figures are extracted from DJCS’ live database. Small variations in data have been reported by DJCS compared to other published data.

Figure 3. Annual rate of isolations for behavioural reasons per unique child or young person per year under section 488(2) of the CYFA 2021–22 to 2024–25²⁰



This substantial increase in behavioural isolations is concerning. The CYFA is clear that isolation is only to be used in certain circumstances (section 488(2)) and not as a punishment (section 487(a)).

In particular, the Commission is extremely concerned about the use of extended isolation where children are held in isolation for extended periods of time. During the 2024–25 financial year there were 72 episodes of a continuous period of 22-hour plus isolation, in which a young person’s period of isolation commenced before or continued beyond overnight lockdown reaching 22 hours in total.²¹ However, we are aware that when cumulative, rather than consecutive, isolation periods of 22 plus hours are counted (and the young person has two hours or less out of their room over a 24 hour period), the actual incidence of extended isolations is much higher. The Commission has long standing concerns about the mental health impacts of extended time spent in effective solitary confinement in bedrooms.

The Commission notes Youth Justice advice that all young people who experience extended periods of isolation are engaged in meaningful human contact to support their mental health and wellbeing.

We understand that these 72 isolations were in response to 15 high-harm critical incidents at youth justice centres that resulted in a total of 31 unique young people experiencing episodes of extended isolation. The use of extended isolations following a critical incident suggests a notable gap in response options following high-risk situations. It suggests a lack of alternative responses that can mitigate risk in a less harmful way to children and young people. The Commission urges Youth Justice to consider more therapeutic responses to serious incidents to reduce the use of long-term isolation periods for vulnerable children and young people.

²⁰ During 2021–22, another type of isolation was in use to assist in the detection, prevention, or mitigation of COVID–19 in custody (‘section 600M isolations’). These isolations contributed to a decrease in s488(2) behavioural isolations in that year. Section 600M was repealed in April 2022.

²¹ According to Youth Justice, the calculation of a period of isolation commences from when a young person is placed into their room outside of the usual operational lockdown hours and in accordance with s488(2) or s488(7) of CYFA. The isolation period is finished when a young person exits their room. The definition of a 22-hour plus isolation is a single, continuous period of isolation, that exceeds 22-hours where a young person does not exit their room. This includes time ordinarily spent by a young person in their room overnight and sleeping. Of these, there were three unique young people that had 22-hour or longer of isolation due to infection control protocols as per section 488 (7) of the CYFA.

This year the Commission raised concerns with Youth Justice about the increasing use of isolations in response to incidents and the increasing reliance on isolations as a behavioural management tool. While we acknowledge that over the last year, Youth Justice has sought to reduce the length of episodes of isolation, increased scrutiny of isolations by senior staff and senior leaders, strengthened its focus on capacity building for staff, and continued to embed behaviour support responses, this has unfortunately not reversed the increasing trend in isolations. The Commission is particularly concerned about the rate of 22-hour plus isolations and the over-representation of Aboriginal and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) young people who experience extended periods of time in isolation.

The Commission urges Youth Justice to:

- finalise the completion of its behavioural isolation policies, which have been under review since 2022
- build a skilled workforce with appropriate expertise to respond to and manage challenging and complex behaviours

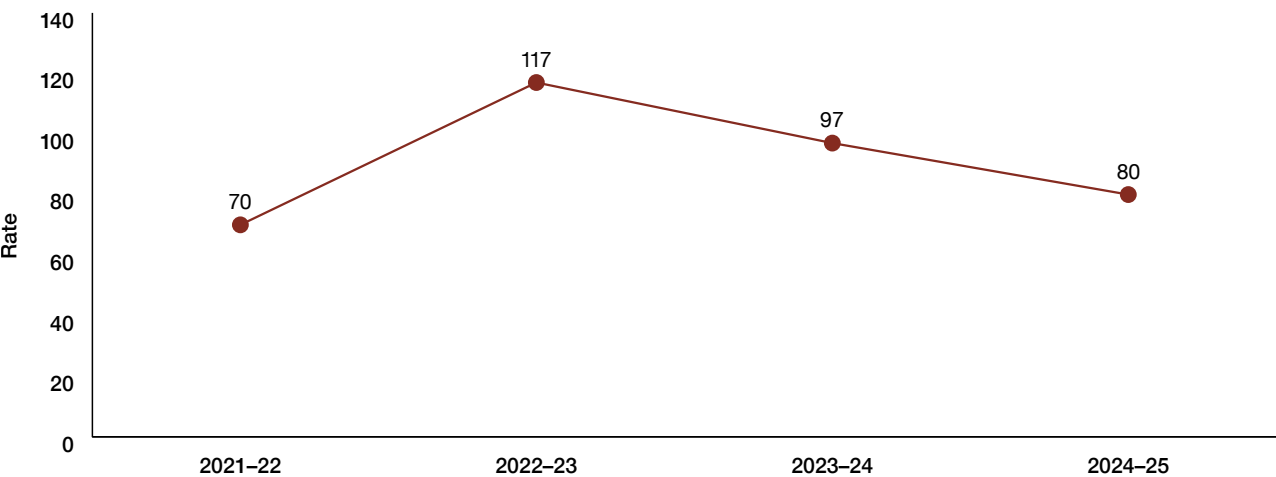
- take all steps necessary to reduce the use of isolation
- ensure reviews of the use of isolation are regularly conducted to ensure practice is consistent with policies and the human rights of the child or young person.

Lockdowns

The CYFA also allows a child or young person to be held in their room or in an isolation cell when it is in the interests of the security of the centre (section 488(7)). These are referred to as ‘lockdowns’.

This year, there was a decrease in the rate of lockdown episodes from 97 to 80 per unique child or young person (see Figure 4). Although there was a six per cent increase in the number of isolations under section 488(7) of the CYFA from 30,788 episodes in 2023–24 to 32,730 episodes in 2024–25, there was also an increase in the average monthly number of children and young people in Youth Justice custody (see Figure 2). While the decrease in the rate of lockdowns per child or young person is welcome, lockdown rates remain unacceptably high.

Figure 4. Annual rate of isolations for security reasons per unique child or young person per year under section 488(7) of the CYFA 2021–22 to 2024–25²²



²² During 2021–22, another type of isolation was in use to assist in the detection, prevention, or mitigation of COVID–19 in custody (‘section 600M isolations’). These isolations contributed to a decrease in s488(2) behavioural isolations in that year. Section 600M was repealed in April 2022.

Programs and services for dual track sentenced population

Young people aged between 18 and 20 years of age who are sentenced to a youth justice centre from the adult court jurisdiction as part of 'dual track' sentencing have been assessed as having good prospects for rehabilitation. The dual track program has historically had a strong focus on rehabilitation and training. After the closure of Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre in November 2023, the dual track program was moved to Parkville Youth Justice Centre.

In March 2025, largely based on feedback from young people, the Commission formally raised concerns with Youth Justice about the dual track model, including availability and access to programs and education since the program moved from Malmsbury to Parkville. Feedback from young people raised the lack of opportunities for age-appropriate learning and life skills development:

'[T]here is more in 'adults'. YJ is embarrassing.'

'There are a lot of unfulfilled promises from moving the dual track boys from Malmsbury to Parkville including the following: TV out of the box, toilet seats, carpets in bedrooms. It almost feels as if there is little to no change after moving and there has been an abundance of empty promises that were never followed through after almost 12 months.'

'No kid has ever come out of here qualified.'

Through the continued advocacy of the Independent Visitor Program (IVP), the Commission highlighted the voices of dual track sentenced young people and their experiences. Subsequently, Youth Justice has worked to strengthen the delivery of pre-release programs, volunteer and vocational training, infrastructure, and opportunities for the development of adult life skills. Dual track sentenced young people have since spoken positively about improvements in the programs and education being offered.

'Things are ticking along and it's good to see things finally moving.'

Exploration of further opportunities for education and skills pathways for dual track young people continues. The Commission welcomes Youth Justice's ongoing work in this area and will continue to monitor future improvements.

Use of force desktop review

In October 2024, the Commission finalised a desktop review of use of force processes and reporting in Youth Justice. This was based on a review of records related to 49 instances of unplanned uses of force in the month of January 2024.

Some of the key findings included:

- in approximately one quarter (24 per cent) of unplanned use of force incidents, there was no incident report generated (as required by Youth Justice policy)
- there were no observation records for nearly four out of the ten (39 per cent) young people placed in isolation after a use of force
- in only approximately one quarter (24 per cent) of use of force instances, was there a record that a wellbeing check occurred afterwards
- there were four instances in which young people were not medically assessed immediately after an oleoresin capicum spray (OC spray) deployment.

Since the review was submitted, the Commission has welcomed the initiatives undertaken by Youth Justice to improve its oversight of use of force and enhance practice. This includes increased resourcing of its internal review function, staff capacity building, ongoing review of training, commencement of an occupational violence strategy and updated use of force legislation which has been embedded in the *Youth Justice Act 2024*. Youth Justice has also committed to introducing routine medical assessments and notifying family when higher risk use of force techniques are used.

In 2024–25, there has been a dramatic increase in the incidence of unplanned uses of force, a 123 per cent increase on the previous financial year. This is an average of four instances of unplanned use of force each day (total of 1,498 instances) and more than the previous two years combined (655 and 455). In this context, it remains critical that robust mechanisms are in place to provide checks and balances to every use of force.

The Commission encourages Youth Justice to continue to build the capacity of staff to take a trauma-informed approach and de-escalate situations using non-contact options where possible. We also encourage Youth Justice to review whether material improvements have been made in incident reporting, observations and wellbeing checks following a use of force since the finalisation of the desktop review, to ensure that all uses of force have appropriate documentation, oversight and follow up.

Support for young people released on bail

In 2024, the Commission completed an individual inquiry (referenced in the Commission’s 2023–24 annual report) into services provided to Jamal, who died shortly after leaving Youth Justice custody. The inquiry identified significant issues that impacted Jamal’s ability to access and engage with support services and comply with his Youth Justice requirements. The Commission made several recommendations including that DJCS:

- seek to strengthen future Youth Justice practice, including in relation to mental health, cultural connection, housing options and proper oversight for approval of plans for young people exiting youth justice,
- consult with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) on options for Multi-Agency Panels – which bring together delegates from DFFH, Department of Health, Victoria Police and DJCS – to include senior representation from Homes Victoria and/or the housing and homelessness sector for young people who are referred to Multi-Agency Panels with complex housing needs
- revisit training and development opportunities for the Youth Justice workforce, including in relation to supporting transitional planning for a young person’s release, risk assessment, cultural competency and trauma-informed practice.

DJCS has provided an action plan in response to the recommendations, but the Commission has sought further information noting that the proposed actions are unlikely to acquit the recommendations, and we continued to hear similar ongoing issues raised by young people through the South Sudanese Australian Youth Justice Expert Working Group. Further work is needed on transition from custody, and the Commission will continue to monitor and track progress.

Responding to the needs of individual children and young people

Independent Visitor Program

The Commission's Independent Visitor Program (IVP) has been visiting Victoria's youth justice centres since 2012 to talk to children and young people about their experiences in custody. The program continues to conduct monthly visits to Victoria's youth justice centres at Parkville and Cherry Creek and operates a phone line for young people to contact the Commission at other times.

During visits, our volunteer independent visitors observe conditions at the centres and talk to children and young people about their experiences in custody and report to the Commissioner after each visit. All issues are promptly raised with Youth Justice for resolution, with more serious issues escalated when required.

The IVP continues to provide young people with an opportunity to raise concerns, be heard, and be assisted by the Commission in the things that matter to them while in custody, as well as providing important connections to the community.

Issues raised

Children and young people raised 460 issues with the IVP during visits in 2024–25. Of these, 333 issues were raised at Parkville Youth Justice Centre and 127 issues were raised at Cherry Creek Youth Justice Centre. This year the Commission received 35 phone calls from children and young people in custody, predominantly in relation to restrictive practices and isolations.

Programs and education

Children and young people raised the greatest number of issues about access to programs and education. Programs and education concerns were raised by young people aged 14 to 18 as well as young people aged 18 to 23 who are part of the dual track system. The issues raised related to completion of courses that

assist in gaining meaningful employment when released from custody.

Building and environment

Issues raised about building suitability were predominantly raised by young people in dual track units. The issues raised related to the inappropriate infrastructure to support a dual track model and failure to replicate previous infrastructure at Malmsbury.

Youth Justice responded to some of the infrastructure needs of dual track young people, upgrading rooms to incorporate carpet on the floors, removing televisions from secure boxes and providing additional gym equipment.

Monitoring children under 18 years in adult prison

The Commission monitors the treatment of any child under 18 years serving a sentence in adult custody. Children in Victoria are placed in adult custody because of a transfer from youth justice to adult corrections by the Youth Parole Board, or after being sentenced to a term of adult imprisonment.

The Commission believes children should not be held in the adult prison system and has made repeated recommendations for legislative change to prevent this from occurring, including in our individual inquiry conducted in 2023 on a child held in adult prison.

This year, the Commission monitored a 16-year-old child who was transferred from Youth Justice to adult custody for a six-week period, before being transferred back to Youth Justice after his sentence expired and was still subject to Children's Court remand. Commission staff met regularly with Corrections Victoria (CV) to monitor the placement and treatment of the child in adult prison. However, due to resourcing, we were advised by CV that we could not be provided with daily reports that provide insight into the care and experience of the child while in adult prison, compromising the Commission's ability to adequately monitor the treatment of this child while in adult custody.

The Commission urges the government to ensure that adequate resources are allocated for the Commission to

effectively monitor all aspects of a child's transfer and placement to adult prison and placement in the future.

The Commission formally raised concerns with Youth Justice about the transfer of this young person to adult custody, the placement limitations for children who are transferred to adult custody (who cannot be placed with adults due to their age and vulnerability) and the impact that severe isolation regimes have on children when they are placed in an adult prison.

**Monitoring of other confined environments –
preventative detention**

In 2018, the Commission received powers to monitor the safety and wellbeing of children held in preventative detention in Victoria pursuant to a police detention decision or preventative detention order under the *Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003*. The Commission's powers include monitoring the treatment of a child detained in the above circumstances, promoting the interests of the child, accessing any document or information relating to the child's treatment while in detention and providing advice to the Attorney-General, other relevant ministers or the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police about the child's treatment while in detention.

Legislation requires that we report the number of times the Commission has performed its monitoring function as per the *Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003* in the relevant financial year and any general observations or conclusions the Commission may want to include in the report in relation to performance of its function. In the 2024–25 financial year, the Commission did not exercise its preventative detention function.

Improving outcomes for Aboriginal children

At the Commission, we see the incredible creativity, strength, talent and vibrance of Aboriginal children and young people. We know that most Aboriginal children are happy and healthy in safe and loving homes with their Aboriginal families. However, we also witness the continued legacy of colonisation and its devastating impact on too many Aboriginal children and their families. The intergenerational trauma caused by the forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their families is a contributing factor to the subsequent, continued over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in the child protection, out-of-home care and youth justice systems. We know that Aboriginal children and young people continue to face an increased risk of abuse in organisations and remain over-represented as alleged victims of child abuse under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Our role is to ensure that the Commission's advocacy is focused on ending the structural, systemic, and institutional racism they face. In 2024–25, the Commission's advocacy for better outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people included:

- leading consultations with Aboriginal children and young people about their experiences, including experiences of racism
- elevating the voices and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people at government and community forums
- engaging with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) to exchange information and strengthen mutual understandings of the issues affecting children and young people
- a focus on Aboriginal children and young people in our systemic inquiries
- supporting organisations to establish culturally safe environments in the implementation of Child Safe Standard 1
- providing advice into government and community sector consultation processes
- monitoring the implementation of recommendations from past inquiries
- reviewing requests to de-identify children identified by Child Protection as Aboriginal.

In this context of over-representation and harm, our advocacy focuses on ending the structural, systemic, and institutional racism they face. In 2024–25, the Commission's advocacy for better outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people included:

Strategic advocacy

Elevating the voices and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people

Engagement and connection with Aboriginal children, young people and their communities is the foundation to the Commission's advocacy. Wherever possible we seek to include Aboriginal children and young people in spaces where their voices can influence government and the community. In June 2025, this included inviting our Youth Council member Noah, a proud Gunaikurnai and Taungurung man, to share his experiences with the National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People to inform their current and future functions.

Experiences of racism project

In 2023–24, the Commission initiated a series of consultations with Aboriginal children and young people and their communities about their experiences of racism. This project was sparked by what the Commission heard in consultations during the *Let us learn* inquiry, as well as concerns raised by community in the wake of the 2023 referendum. This work continued in 2024–25, with the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Meena Singh leading consultations at Elisabeth Murdoch College. Aboriginal children and young people at the college were proud to give Meena a tour of their school. They showed her projects they implemented to make their school feel culturally safe and express their pride in who they are and where they belong. Sitting in a large circle with the young people, Meena explained her role as Commissioner and conversations followed with the young people sharing their experiences of racism, both within school and in community. Talking about experiences of racism is challenging for Aboriginal children and young people, and Meena was proud to hear from the students about how they care for one another as a collective. They shared the benefit of youth groups in the area, and their goals to connect more with Aboriginal students from other schools.

Consultations about young people's experiences of racism have deepened the Commission's understanding of how racism affects children's safety, wellbeing, and participation in community life. The insights shared by young people have informed the Commission's work in advocacy, inquiries and Child Safe Standards (Standards), ensuring that we address both the personal and systemic impacts of racism.



Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Meena Singh visits Elisabeth Murdoch College.

A youth-led individual inquiry

This year the Commission commenced an individual inquiry into the services provided to an Aboriginal young person in residential care (see page 42). From its inception, the Commission prioritised engagement with the young person at the centre of this inquiry to ensure their voice and experience were central to the process and outcomes of the report. Commissioner Singh prioritised meeting in person with the young person to discuss the purpose and intent of the inquiry and Commission staff have regularly engaged with the young person throughout the year, yarning, cooking and eating meals in the residential care home, sharing cultural items, and reflecting on the strengths that Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture holds. This engagement with a young person directly involved in the shaping of how their story is told, represented a new way of conducting individual inquiries at the Commission. The report is currently being drafted

with care, and the young person's voice, reflections and insights are woven throughout its findings.

Informing Yoorrook for Transformation report recommendations

The *Yoorrook for Transformation* report, tabled in July 2025 makes it clear that present inequities and adverse outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people cannot be disconnected from Australia's colonial and racist history of systemic oppression. In last year's annual report, we spotlighted the evidence given to Yoorrook by Commission Youth Council member Elias Jarvis, a proud Djab Wurrung, Kirrae Wurrung, and Gunditjmara man. Elias gave a powerful testimony about the findings from the Commission's *Let us learn* inquiry and his own experiences of racism in schools as an Aboriginal young person. We are pleased to see the Commission's evidence and Elias's testimony reflected in the recommendations made by Yoorrook, including the need to prioritise cultural safety, embed Aboriginal-authored content and First People's perspectives across the curriculum, mandate truth-telling and anti-racism education for teachers, and reform disciplinary policies that disproportionately impact Aboriginal students.

The education system is among the most powerful tools at our disposal if we are to improve outcomes and break the entrenched cycles of disadvantage unjustly imposed on Aboriginal children and young people. In *Let us learn*, the Commission recommended a specific anti-racism policy for Victorian schools. We were pleased to see in July 2025, the Department of Education released a policy for preventing and responding to racism, including a zero tolerance for racism in Victorian government schools.



Meena Singh at Yoorrook Justice Commission public hearing.

Supporting organisations to establish culturally safe environments in their implementation of Child Safe Standard 1

Over the past 12 months, the Commission has progressed our work to support organisations in the regulation of Child Safe Standard 1. Child Safe Standard 1 requires organisations to establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued. It also requires organisations to address racism. This year, our Acting Principal Commissioner, Meena Singh, led the development of a joint statement from the Commission and its co-regulators about regulating Standard 1 in a way that best serves and prioritises the experiences of Aboriginal children and young people. This statement followed questions from a range of ACCOs about how the Commission is intending to regulate Child Safe Standard 1 and includes our principles for assessing compliance.

The Commission also published videos to support organisations in their regulation of the standards this year, including one that features speakers at the Child Safe Standards Community of Practice on implementing Child Safe Standard 1. Both resources are available on our website. (See page 77 for more information about the

Commission supporting and regulating child-safe organisations).

System reform for Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care

Our advocacy to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children in out-of-home care is grounded in ensuring that government systems understand their experiences of care, uphold their rights, and provide adequate responses and support.

Current reforms influenced by the Commission's systemic inquiries

The Commission's previous inquiries, *Always was, Always will be Koori children* and *In the child's best interests*, found that systemic failures and inadequacies in Child Protection practices contributed to the vast over-representation of Aboriginal children in the child protection and out-of-home care systems. The Commission delivered 133 recommendations across both inquiries. To date, 64 of 79 recommendations have been acquitted within *Always was, always will be Koori Children*, and 40 out of 54 recommendations have been acquitted within *In the child's best interests*.

Several reforms have occurred as a direct result of these inquiries. This includes legislating all five elements of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle within the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (CYFA), establishment of the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC) program, and significant investment into the transfer of resources and decision-making to Aboriginal communities. The Commission welcomes and celebrates these reforms as integral to Aboriginal children and young people's cultural rights. Further, the Commission is pleased to see investment in reforms led by Aboriginal communities to ensure safe, strong, and culturally connected Aboriginal children and young people. Of these reforms, the ongoing implementation of the ACAC program across the state is a key area of focus for the Commission.

The Commission continues to support ACCOs as they become authorised under section 18 of the CYFA with the ACAC program. Since April 2024, the Commission has attended an ACAC Quality and Safeguarding Expert Advisory Group with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and ACAC providers to address policy and practice issues arising from the transfer of child protection responsibilities to ACCOs. Throughout this process the Commission has assured ACAC providers that we will work collaboratively with ACCOs to support their understanding of our advocacy and oversight processes.

Tackling over-representation in the child protection and out-of-home care systems

Current data shows that across all age groups, the rate of Aboriginal children receiving child protection services remains unacceptably higher than that of non-Aboriginal children.²³ The Commission's systemic inquiries reinforce the need for further reform in the out-of-home care system. While it is great to see the positive outcomes for children through ACAC, the Commission continues to hear from Aboriginal families that they are not provided with the support they need to care for their children at home. To lower over-representation in the child protection and out-of-home care systems we must see increased funding and focus on early intervention and prevention. The Commission advocates for earlier and more effective community-based services designed in partnership with Aboriginal communities that support families to keep their children and young people at home.

Accountability against agreements between the Victorian Government and Aboriginal community

Through our membership and participation in the Aboriginal Children's Forum and various working groups, the Commission advocates for increased engagement with Aboriginal children and young people in care in service design and reform. We also support work towards Closing the Gap targets and commitments made under the *Wungurilwil Gapgapduir Aboriginal Children and*

²³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Child Protection Data Tables: Table S5.1: Children admitted to out-of-home care, by age group, Indigenous status and state or territory, 2023–24 (number and rate).

Families Agreement and advocacy priorities including addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people who have experienced both Child Protection and Youth Justice involvement. The Commission continues to support work towards addressing issues of Aboriginal family violence and advocating for services that are responsive to Aboriginal children and young people through our membership in the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum. We also advocate for action to reduce Aboriginal children and young people’s experiences of racism in schools through our membership on the Marrung Central Governance Committee.

System reform for Aboriginal children in the criminal legal system

The criminalisation and disproportionate incarceration of Aboriginal children and young people fundamentally alters and negatively affects communities across generations. Our advocacy to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children in the criminal legal system is grounded in addressing over-representation, ensuring that their views and experiences are raised with government decision makers and that their rights are upheld. Unfortunately, we continue to see legislative reforms that will disproportionately impact on Aboriginal children and young people, and which will see them experience the criminal legal system earlier and for longer.

Refusal to raise the age to 14, only 12

In August 2024, the Victorian Government announced it would abandon its commitment to raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 by 2027. The Commission made a public statement raising deep concern about the backtrack, including that it would draw more Aboriginal children and young people into the criminal legal system. The Commission continues to advocate for responses to children and young people that are developmentally appropriate and divert children and young people away from the criminal legal system (see page 72).

²⁴ United Nations General Assembly. (1989, November 20). Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 37. United Nations Treaty Series, 1577, 3.
²⁵ *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* s23.

Recent reforms to bail laws in Victoria

The Commission is deeply concerned about the disproportionate impact that Victoria’s new bail laws are having on Aboriginal children and young people. For Aboriginal children and young people, who are already over-represented in the criminal legal system, the impact of tighter bail laws capturing a broader cohort of young people is particularly alarming. It also risks undoing the progress made under Closing the Gap Target 11 to reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention by at least 30 per cent by 2031.

The Commission strongly urges the Victorian Government to reform bail laws and ensure they uphold the best interests of the child, in line with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*. This includes ensuring that no child is held in custody unless as a measure of last resort,²⁴ and that justice responses are developmentally appropriate for a child’s age.²⁵ Without urgent reform, we risk entrenching the very inequalities that Closing the Gap seeks to address. Through our participation in the Aboriginal Justice Forum, the Commission will continue to support the Aboriginal Justice Caucus and Koorie Youth Council to collectively encourage the government to work with the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal children and young people to develop and implement solutions that provide therapeutic support and address the underlying causes of offending behaviour.

Current reforms influenced by the Commission’s systemic inquiries

Several reforms have progressed since the release of the Commission’s *Our youth, our way: Inquiry into the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in the Victorian youth justice system* in 2021. In particular, the Commission welcomes the passage of the *Youth Justice Act 2024* (YJ Act), which establishes a new framework for the progressive transfer of functions and powers from the Secretary of DJCS to registered Aboriginal community organisations. It also requires DJCS to develop an Aboriginal-led Early Diversion Group Conferencing model and establishes an Aboriginal division of the Youth Parole Board. Further reforms under the YJ Act are scheduled to commence in September 2025 and 2026 and the Commission looks forward to implementation.

Further, the Commission is pleased to note several completed *Our youth, our way* recommendations, including the development of an Aboriginal Youth Social and Emotional Wellbeing Strategy to provide culturally informed therapeutic responses to Aboriginal children and young people at risk of suicide or self-harm in youth justice centres, prioritised investment in Aboriginal-led early intervention and prevention strategies, and the review and strengthening of Aboriginal liaison officer roles. The Commission commends *Wirkara Kulpa*, Victoria’s first Aboriginal Youth Justice Strategy for its continued role in centring Aboriginal knowledge to reshape the youth justice system. *Wirkara Kulpa* has been a partial conduit for *Our youth, our way* recommendation implementation, as 56 of the 75 actions in *Wirkara Kulpa* wholly or partially reflect recommendations of *Our youth, our way* following our previous Koori Youth Justice Taskforce partnership with DJCS.

In 2024–25, the Commission assessed progress against all recommendations in *Our youth, our way*. A recommendation-by-recommendation report is available on our website: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/inquiries/systemic-inquiries/our-youth-our-way/>.

Identification/de-identification of children and young people as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

Requests for de-identification in 2024–25

Accurate identification, and de-identification, is an important part of ensuring services for Aboriginal children and young people are available for and directed towards those children and young people intended to receive them. In 2024–25, the Office of Professional Practice in DFFH submitted de-identification requests for 71 children from 48 sibling groups to the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People. Of these 71 requests, 65 were endorsed for de-identification, which means their status on Child Protection records was changed to ‘neither Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander’.

The categories of error leading to requests for deidentification are outlined in Table 9.

With every request for de-identification, the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People looks at a number of factors:

- the nature of the error made in identification
- subsequent information provided
- the impact of identification on the child or young person, particularly considering their age and whether the child or young person is themselves identifying as Aboriginal
- whether the child or young person and their family is currently getting services from an ACCO
- the consent of the parents of the child or young person to de-identify the child or young person as Aboriginal.

It should be noted that endorsing a request for de-identification relates to Child Protection services only.

Table 9. Number of requests for de-identification by category of error 2023–24 and 2024–25

Error type	2023–24		2024–25	
	No.	%	No.	%
Administrative error ²⁶	8	12	8	11
Assumption or not asked – Aboriginal sibling group ²⁷	11	16	16	23
Assumption or not asked – other ²⁸	1	1	0	–
New information – family finding ²⁹	17	25	5	7
New information – family incorrectly self-identified ³⁰	18	27	32	45
New information – paternity ³¹	1	1	1	1
Reporter error or service provider error ³²	11	16	4	6
No error – retain status ³³	n/a	–	1	1
In progress ³⁴	n/a	–	4	6
Total	67	100	71	100%

²⁶ ‘Administration error’ refers to an administrative error in Child Protection record keeping – such as an incorrect click – that is made without any belief that the child may be Aboriginal.

²⁷ ‘Assumption or not asked – Aboriginal sibling group’ refers to Child Protection incorrectly assume a child is Aboriginal because they have Aboriginal siblings.

²⁸ ‘Assumption or not asked – other’ Child Protection make an assumption-based error that is not based on sibling group assumption.

²⁹ ‘New information – family finding’ refers to the family identify themselves as Aboriginal with a genuine belief that there is Aboriginal heritage in the family. Subsequent family finding work – formal or informal – later finds this not to be true, and the family consent to de-identification.

³⁰ ‘New information – family incorrectly self-identified’ refers to a family member identifies themselves as Aboriginal to Child Protection. This can be motivated by wanting to access Aboriginal-specific services.

³¹ ‘New information – paternity’ refers to where a father was incorrectly recorded following DNA paternity testing.

³² ‘Reporter error or service provider error’ refers to Child Protection recording a child as Aboriginal based on information provided by a reporter or information provided by a service, usually at intake.

³³ ‘Retain status’ refers to where the Commission has assessed there is not enough information to de-identify the young person.

³⁴ ‘In progress’ refers to where an assessment is still being undertaken.

Promoting the rights and interests of children and young people

The Commission’s functions include promoting the interests of children and young people in vulnerable circumstances, and providing advice to government on improvements to policies, practices and services that affect children and young people. We engage with government departments and ministers, write letters and submissions to government, and speak in the media and at conferences, forums and workshops to advocate for action to improve the lives of children and young people.

In 2024–25, our work promoting the rights and interests of children and young people included:

- calling for better approaches in youth justice policy, in response to disappointing decisions by the Victorian Government that fail to tackle the drivers of offending by children and young people or to effectively support prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation
- strengthening our partnership with the Commission’s Youth Council in advocating on a range of policy issues
- continuing to advocate for the safety of children and young people in residential care who are exposed to the risk of child sexual exploitation
- promoting improvements to child safety systems in Victoria and in other jurisdictions across Australia
- participating in joint advocacy with the Australian and New Zealand Children’s Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates (ANZCCGA)
- engaging with the public through the media and public appearances.

Youth justice advocacy

In 2024–25, the Commission commented on significant and concerning Victorian Government decisions in youth justice policy that moved away from supporting children and young people’s rights, safety and wellbeing and the evidence base about what works. These decisions related to the minimum age of criminal responsibility and Victoria’s bail laws.

Minimum age of criminal responsibility

The Commission continued to advocate for the need for Victoria to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14, which would facilitate a vital shift to community support for children under the age of 14, instead of criminalising them.

When the Victorian Government backtracked on its decision to increase the age of criminal responsibility to 14 by 2027, in August 2024, the Commission made a public statement expressing deep disappointment.³⁵

‘The decision to now abandon the staged move to 14 in 2027 has let children and young people down, particularly children from disadvantaged backgrounds, children who have experienced trauma, mental ill health or live with disability. These are the children, and their families, who need holistic supports so that criminal behaviour does not ruin their lives, and create more victims of crime’.
– Commissioner Meena Singh

In June 2025, the Commission welcomed the Sentencing Advisory Council’s 2025 report, *Sentencing Younger Children’s Offending in Victoria*, reiterating our call for developmentally appropriate approaches that address root causes, instead of punitive responses that entrench children under 14 in the legal system, and ultimately cause more harm.³⁶

³⁵ Commission’s 13 August 2024 media release, at: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/news/backflip-on-raising-the-age-of-criminal-responsibility-to-14-a-step-backwards-for-community-safety/>
³⁶ Commission’s 26 June 2025 media release, at: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/news/new-research-builds-case-for-different-approach-to-children-in-the-legal-system/>

The Commission is continuing its work in this important area through a systemic inquiry established in December 2024 (see page 52). The inquiry is looking into the experiences of children under the age of 14 who have been involved in the criminal justice system, so that we can improve understanding of the issues and solutions among the community, and policy and law makers.

While the age of criminal responsibility increased from 10 to 12 on 30 September 2025 in Victoria, there is a critical need to keep looking at the best response for children aged 12 and 13.

Bail laws

Over recent years, the Commission has advocated for changes to Victoria’s bail laws to create an age-appropriate, specialised bail system for children and young people – work that contributed to positive changes to the *Bail Act 1977*.

This year, in March 2025, the Commission expressed its strong concerns about the Victorian Government’s changes to toughen bail laws and put more young people in custody.³⁷ The commissioners highlighted the risk that, despite the government stating that the new laws would target repeated, serious behaviour, a much broader group of children and young people would be captured. In the months that followed, our monitoring of the youth justice centres saw signs suggesting that this risk occurred (see page 54).

In their March public statement expressing their concerns, the commissioners called for more investment by government to strengthen assessments, interventions and supports that tackle the drivers of behaviour and effectively support prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation.

Platforming the voices of children and young people

The Commission’s advocacy on policy issues continued to be strengthened in 2024–25 by including and promoting young people’s views and experiences. This work included:

- Youth Council members making a submission to the Victorian Government’s consultation on the impacts of social media and the proposed national changes to social media age limits
- supporting Youth Council members to share their experiences and views with the Victims of Crime Commissioner, for the Review of the *Victims’ Charter Act 2006*
- Youth Council members participating with Commissioner Singh in a Victorian Law Reform Commission consultation on Family Violence Intervention Orders
- the Commission and Youth Council members making a submission to a parliamentary inquiry into community consultation practices. This encouraged the inquiry to consider how government agencies can improve their consultation with children and young people and shared how the Commission is embedding engagement with children and young people in our work.

³⁷ Commission’s 21 March 2025 media release, at: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/news/new-bail-laws-will-undermine-community-safety-at-the-cost-of-vulnerable-children-and-young-people-childrens-commissioners-say/>

Sexual exploitation of children and young people

The commissioners continued their advocacy for stronger, coordinated action to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation of children and young people in residential care, through media (see pages 75–76), participation in forums and engagement with departments, agencies and practitioners.

During the year, previous advocacy was recognised by the UN Special Rapporteur for the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, in a report on her visit to Australia in October 2023.³⁸ The Special Rapporteur highlighted her concern about key issues we raised in our submission to assist her visit, including:

- sexual abuse and assault of children and young people by adults are common occurrences
- organised paedophile rings actively targeting children and young people in residential care
- harm to Aboriginal children and young people is compounded.

The Special Rapporteur also highlighted the findings of the Commission's 2021 *Out of sight* inquiry, reporting, 'that, in many cases, the current model of residential care does not meet the safety needs of children and young people and that many leave residential care only to find themselves exposed to risks of sexual exploitation'.

The review of Victoria's Reportable Conduct Scheme

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) tabled the final report of its Review of Victoria's Reportable Conduct Scheme (Scheme) in the Victorian Parliament on 2 May 2024. The Commission engaged with the department to urge action on the opportunities for reform identified in the final report, including to enable stronger information sharing between regulators to support child safety.

The Commission will continue to advocate for improvements to support the effective operation of the Scheme.

Informing child safety systems across Australia

The design of child safety systems has been a growing focus for governments across Australia, with jurisdictions including Tasmania and Queensland recently introducing or in the process of introducing a model of the Standards and Scheme. These states join Victoria, New South Wales (NSW) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) as jurisdictions with both schemes in place.

The Commission shared its experience and advice on supporting and regulating organisations with colleague regulators and relevant government agencies to support the design of their models, inform ways of improving the interface between Victorian and other schemes and to promote harmonisation between jurisdictions. This year, the Commission has informed child safety systems throughout Australia by:

- sitting as a member of the Queensland Family and Child Commission's Child Safe Organisation Steering Committee, together with the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian, that is providing strategic guidance to support the implementation of the Scheme and Child Safe Standards (Standards) in Queensland

³⁸ Mama Fatima Singhatheh, Visit to Australia—Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, UN doc A/HRC/58/52/Add.1, January 2025, p.14, available at: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/58/52/Add.1>

- supporting harmonisation and workshopping operational and policy challenges in oversighting child safety regulatory schemes by participating in the Child Safe and Reportable Conduct Interjurisdictional Forum in NSW and South Australia
- providing advice to the National Office for Child Safety's Child Safe Organisations Working Group on national harmonisation work including the proposed national reporting framework for non-government organisations and approach to evaluating implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

Joint advocacy

Both commissioners are members of the ANZCCGA. During 2024–25, joint advocacy by the ANZCCGA included:

- a joint statement from the First Nations Caucus, urging governments to uphold Aboriginal children and young people's rights and support evidence-based, community-led solutions that keep children connected to their communities, family and culture
- a joint submission to the Inquiry into Australia's youth justice and incarceration system, by the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs (alongside the Commission's own submission to this inquiry)
- a joint statement expressing concern over the rushed process that led to the legislation placing restrictions on social media use for children and young people under 16 years of age
- a joint statement calling on all jurisdictions to focus on solutions and action on child sexual abuse, rather than progressing another royal commission
- a joint statement during Anti-Poverty Week to raise awareness of the impacts of childhood experiences of poverty and to encourage governments across Australia to address child poverty through systemic action.

Public engagements

This year our commissioners continued their broad engagement with the media, with around 60 media reports across print, online, radio and television, and made many public appearances.

Media coverage

This year the Commission's media coverage built on strong themes from the previous year and expanded to include additional significant issues in the public debate.

Youth justice was again the prevalent theme, primarily focusing on the new harsher bail laws in Victoria. Related issues such as raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility were also considered.

This year also continued the focus on child sexual exploitation in residential care.

There was also welcome coverage of the Commission's *Let us learn* inquiry into the educational experiences of children and young people in care. This included an in-depth ABC television report, which was a highlight of this year's coverage, together with radio and online reports.

A cluster coronial inquest into the deaths of four children known to Child Protection also featured in this year's coverage, including the Principal Commissioner's submission and evidence to the inquest about the cases and relevant recommendations from our child death inquiries more broadly on which action is still outstanding.

The year ended with a focus on the Working with Children Check, and an in-depth ABC report and interview with our Principal Commissioner on the shortfalls in Victoria's system compared to other jurisdictions, and the need to progress previously recommended reforms by the Commission and the Victorian Ombudsman.

Individual media reports spanned a number of additional issues, including grooming, child victims of domestic violence, Scheme notifications in the education sector, and restraint and seclusion of children in schools. The

Promoting the rights and interests of children and young people

continued

Commission's 2023–24 annual report, tabled in October, drew widespread coverage on a range of these issues.

Public appearances

This year saw our commissioners engage in 35 public appearances to promote the Commission's work, engage with our diverse stakeholders, and advocate for reform across child protection, out-of-home care, youth justice, child safety, and stronger recognition of children's rights. In many events, the commissioners co-presented with young people, including members of the Youth Council and Youth Advisory Group (YAG) for the South Sudanese Australian Youth Justice Expert Working Group.

Some highlights included:

- Commissioner Buchanan gave a keynote address at the 2024 Castan Centre for Human Rights Law Conference calling for greater recognition of the rights of children in out-of-home care in education, health, culture and identity, protection from abuse and exploitation, and other areas of their lives, to address the disparities that children in care experience. Commissioner Buchanan also participated in a panel discussion alongside one of the Commission's Youth Engagement Project Officers on the participatory rights of children in care.
- Commissioner Singh and a Youth Council member spoke about racism and online bullying, as well as the power of social media to build movements and effect social change, at the National Council of Women of Victoria's annual student event, My Vote, My Voice.
- Commissioner Buchanan opened the Australian premiere screening of *Unanswered Calls* – a documentary presented by Safe Steps that shines a light on children and young people's experiences of family violence. Commissioner Buchanan, who features in the film, called for urgent action to create system responses that recognise and respond to children and young people as victims of family violence in their own right.
- Commissioner Singh delivered the keynote address at the Royal Children's Hospital Grand Round, speaking about the Standards, the importance of cultural safety for Aboriginal children and young people in health

settings, and how organisations can build and embed cultural safety and engage in a process of continuous improvement.

- Commissioner Buchanan co-presented with a YAG member at the 2024 Children and Young People at Risk Summit on children and young people at risk of abuse and involvement in the criminal justice system, and the work of the South Sudanese Australian Youth Justice project. The YAG member spoke powerfully about how children's experiences of abuse at home and exclusion at school can lead to behaviour that breaks the law.

In addition to their public engagements, the commissioners attended numerous meetings with government ministers, agencies, child-related organisations and other commissioners throughout the year.



Commissioner Liana Buchanan and Commissioner Meena Singh with Commission staff at the Australian Premier of *Unanswered Calls*

Supporting and regulating child-safe organisations

The Commission as child safety regulator

The Child Safe Standards (Standards) and the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Scheme) are critical components of Victoria’s child safety systems.

Victoria was the first jurisdiction to introduce both schemes to tackle child abuse in organisations. The Commission, as an independent statutory body focused on child safety and wellbeing, has been the regulator for the Scheme and the Standards since 2017.

In undertaking our role, we collaborate and co-regulate with other agencies who also have important roles in working with the Commission to support children’s safety. These agencies include Victoria Police, Child Protection, Working with Children Check Victoria, the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), the Department of Health (DH), Wage Inspectorate Victoria (WIV), the Department of Education’s Quality Assessment and Regulation Division (QARD), the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) and the Social Services Regulator (SSR).

In our work as regulator, we engage with hundreds of organisations each year to support them in creating safer environments for children and young people and to ensure they take appropriate action when complaints or allegations arise.

The following chapters illustrate another significant year for both the Standards and the Scheme. In 2024–25 the Commission:

- received a record 2,232 notifications of reportable allegations under the Scheme, which is an 18 per cent increase on the number of notifications received in 2023–24

- continued our focus on overseeing organisations to improve their systems for identifying and investigating sexual offence and sexual misconduct allegations
- referred 484 people found to have committed substantiated reportable conduct for reassessment of their Working with Children Check in relation to 1,690 substantiated allegations of reportable conduct
- implemented further changes to reduce oversight of individual cases under the Scheme as a result of workload pressures arising from the increasing volume of notifications with no additional allocation of funding to address this increase
- initiated compliance action in relation to 140 organisations for potential non-compliance with the Standards and concluded compliance activity with 233³⁹ organisations
- used compliance and enforcement powers to conduct 29⁴⁰ assessments of compliance with the Standards to drive improvements in child safety in respect of 26 organisations.⁴¹ This involved the Commission conducting two onsite inspections, issuing eight notices to produce documents or information and eight notices to comply with the Standards. Four official warnings were issued by the Commission for non-compliance with a Commission issued notice
- continued to develop and refine child safety resources and guidance to organisations and the community, and amplify our messages on keeping children safe through our channels.

³⁹ This includes the conclusion of compliance cases commenced in prior years.
⁴⁰ This figure relates to completed assessments only where the assessment outcome has been determined. Assessments that were still to be completed as at 30 June 2025 have not been included in this figure.
⁴¹ Some organisations were assessed for a Standard on more than one occasion. In addition, this figure represents assessments commenced.

Supporting compliance

An important part of the Commission's role is to help organisations and sectors to understand and meet the requirements of the Standards and the Scheme, and to keep children safe. We take a holistic approach, focusing attention on the culture and systems of organisations through the Standards, as well as providing oversight to ensure individual allegations of inappropriate or abusive conduct towards children are properly reported and investigated through the Scheme.

In most cases, we can bring about compliance through education and support. We do this by providing organisations with the resources and practical guidance they need to build their capacity to comply with the Standards and Scheme.

Over the past 12 months, we have continued to respond to the needs of our audiences by developing and refining the resources and tools available on our website, as well as strengthening the ways we communicate and engage with them.

Resources and guidance

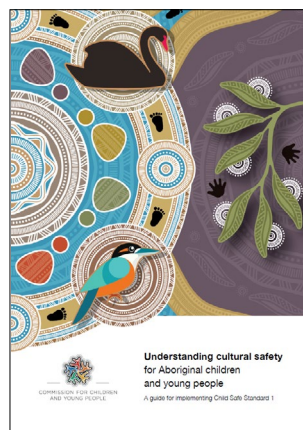
In 2024–25, digital engagement with our resources continued to grow. Our website received over 1.1 million page views which represents a six per cent increase on the prior year. People viewed our child safety on-demand videos 64,459 times, representing an eight per cent increase from 2023–24, and downloaded publications on the Standards and Scheme approximately 76,000 times.

Our most popular resources included the *Short Guide to the Child Safe Standards*, *Child Safe Standards Information Sheet*, and *A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation*.

In July 2024, we published new guidance materials to support organisations in implementing Child Safe Standard 1. The *Understanding cultural safety for Aboriginal children and young people: A guide for implementing Child Safe Standard 1* was downloaded

approximately 2,880 times, and the Understanding cultural safety for Aboriginal children and young people section of the website was viewed 26,000 times.

We also published eight new videos on both the Standards and the Scheme which were viewed approximately 2,800 times. Videos include a recorded webinar on important legislative changes to the Scheme and a series of videos of speakers at the Child Safe Standards Community of Practice on implementing Child Safe Standard 1.



The Commission's Guide for implementing Child Safe Standard 1

To support understanding of the Standards in a broad range of organisations and communities, we expanded our translated resources, adding the *Plain Language Guide to the Child Safe Standards* and the *Child Safe Standards Poster* in 20 community languages to our website.

Throughout the year, the Commission received over 3,800⁴² enquiries via email or phone relating to matters across all our functions, representing a 16 per cent increase from the previous year. We aim to resolve 80 per cent of enquiries about the Scheme or Standards within three business days. This year, we exceeded that target, resolving 92 per cent of enquiries within the time frame.

⁴² This figure includes 2,259 phone calls and 1,526 emails.

Communicating with our audiences

We use multiple channels, including social media, our website, and subscriber-based emails, to share resources and guidance materials with professionals working with children and the broader community, including children, young people, parents and carers.

The Commission Update is an e-newsletter for our 18,000 subscribers working in organisations subject to the Standards and Scheme. Over the past year, we released six editions. This content performed well above communication benchmarks, with a 47 per cent open rate and seven per cent click rate, indicating that guidance material is reaching the target audience.

Our social media presence continued to grow and played a critical role in our communications approach. LinkedIn followers increased by 27 per cent, with resources on the Standards remaining our top-performing content. Instagram remains our key platform for engaging with children and young people about their rights and safety. We have continued to collaborate closely with our Youth Council and youth project officers to ensure our content meets young people's needs.

Capacity-building engagements

In 2024–25, we delivered presentations at various external forums and meetings, often at the request of large organisations, including from the sporting, religious and volunteer sectors. These engagements reflect our growing reputation and an increase in awareness of our role and functions. Feedback consistently showed that attendees left with a stronger understanding of how to comply with the Standards and Scheme.

Complementing this work is our proactive sector-based approach to capacity building. We do this by partnering with key stakeholders with broad reach, such as peak bodies, and actively working together to build knowledge about the Standards and Scheme, and about their legislative obligations.

In May 2025, we hosted a Child Safe Standards Community of Practice forum, attended by 150 people from ten different sectors that work with children and

young people. The forum focused on Child Safe Standard 6, which requires organisations to ensure the suitability of employees and volunteers working with children and young people through screening processes.

The highlight of the forum was an insightful panel discussion led by our Youth Council on how to centre children and young people in organisations' screening and recruitment processes. We extend our appreciation to the Community of Practice Working Group, comprising sector representatives and Youth Council members, who provided invaluable guidance and input on the agenda.

Feedback from attendees demonstrated the forum's impact. Before the forum, 71 per cent rated their knowledge as 'good' or 'very good' compared to 89 per cent who rated their knowledge as 'very good' or 'excellent' after the forum.



Commission Youth Council members and Commissioner Meena Singh at the Child Safe Standard 6 Community of Practice in May.

Reportable Conduct Scheme

Overview⁴³

- In 2024–25, the Commission received 2,232 notifications⁴⁴ of reportable allegations, an 18 per cent increase on the number of notifications received in 2023–24 and a 178 per cent increase since the first year of the Reportable Conduct Scheme (the Scheme).⁴⁵ This was a record number of annual notifications and notifications are expected to further increase next year.
- These notifications relate to 4,534 allegations received in 2024–25, with a total of 26,588 allegations received since the start of the Scheme.
- There has also been a steady increase in the number of public notifications received each year since the start of the Scheme, with seven times the number received in 2024–25 than in 2017–18.
- In 2024–25, as in each of the eight years since the Scheme started, the highest number of allegations received (36 per cent) related to physical violence.
- Since the Scheme started, 72 per cent of all sexual misconduct allegations across all sectors subject to the Scheme were in the education sector.⁴⁶ Sexual misconduct is the most common allegation type for the whole education sector (36 per cent of allegations since the start of the Scheme).
- In 2024–25, nine per cent of unique alleged victims⁴⁷ were identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This is a significant over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, who only make up two per cent of the Victorian population under 18 years of age.⁴⁸
- In 2024–25, 36 per cent of reportable allegations were substantiated, this is the highest substantiation rate⁴⁹ since the start of the Scheme.
- The substantiation rate for sexual offence allegations has substantially increased, rising from 15 per cent in 2018–19 to 51 per cent in 2024–25.⁵⁰
- The substantiation rate for sexual misconduct allegations has also increased in each of the last six years, rising from 21 per cent in 2018–19 to 48 per cent in 2024–25.

⁴³ Data presented in this chapter was extracted on 1 July 2025 from a live database and is subject to change.

⁴⁴ Each mandatory notification can contain multiple reportable allegations and multiple alleged victims.

⁴⁵ The Scheme commenced on 1 July 2017.

⁴⁶ Includes primary and secondary school, excludes early childhood education.

⁴⁷ ‘Unique alleged victims’ refer to an individual child or young person who has been the victim of a reportable allegation at least once during the Scheme. Where the unique alleged victims are referred to in terms of the financial year, then this refers to the number of individuals who were the victim of a reportable allegation within that financial year. Where a child or young person has been the victim of multiple allegations over multiple years, they will be counted once for each financial year. As a result of this, financial year totals will not add up to the whole of Scheme totals as they are based on different counting methodologies.

⁴⁸ Data sourced from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011 to 2031), Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, ABS Website, accessed 7 July 2025.

⁴⁹ Substantiation rate is the percentage of all findings that were substantiated by the organisations conducting investigations.

⁵⁰ The substantiation rate is the percentage of allegations that were substantiated after investigation under the Reportable Conduct Scheme. This does not reflect the outcomes of criminal investigations and charges. The burden of proof under the Scheme for sexual offences is lower than in criminal investigations, and allegations can be substantiated on the balance of probabilities.

Notifications of reportable allegations

The Scheme requires the head of an organisation to notify the Commission of allegations of reportable conduct. Since the start of the Scheme on 1 July 2017, the Commission has received 10,353 mandatory notifications. For the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025, the Commission received 2,232 notifications of reportable allegations from heads of organisations. This was an 18 per cent increase on the number of notifications received in 2023–24, and a 178 per cent increase on the number received in 2017–18.

In 2024–25, 103 mandatory notifications were received about the new types of employees that started being covered by the Scheme since 1 July 2024 including labour hire workers, secondees, directors of companies and individual business owners.⁵¹

The *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (CWSA) also allows any person – for example, young people, parents or other members of the public – to disclose allegations to the Commission. Since the Scheme started eight years ago, the Commission has noted a steady increase in the number of public notifications received, with the amount in 2024–25 seven times greater than the number received in 2017–18.

The monthly average of notifications has substantially increased from 67 in the first year of the Scheme to 186 in 2024–25. Notifications are expected to increase again next year.

As reported in last year’s annual report, with no additional funding for the Scheme since it commenced in 2017, the Commission has continued to implement changes to manage the increasing workload associated with record numbers of notifications, which has necessitated further reducing our oversight of individual cases in 2024–25. With an 178 per cent increase in notifications since the start of Scheme, the majority of investigations in 2024–25 proceeded with minimal oversight by the Commission and without detailed consideration of findings once received. Changes being implemented mean we are unable to provide the same levels of guidance and capacity building to organisations, or support to parents and carers, as we have previously. We have focused our limited resources on the cases of most obvious and serious risk to children. The Commission’s resource limitations have impacted our ability to run the Scheme in a way that maximises child safety and as recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the Scheme continues to deliver vital safety outcomes to children and young people on a daily basis. As a direct result of our work this year, organisations have improved their internal reporting systems and skills in investigating child abuse, increased their understanding of child abuse and how to manage risks to children, included children and young people in investigations to ensure their evidence is given appropriate weight and the Commission has shared important information with Victoria Police and other regulators to assist them to take action to protect children.

⁵¹ The *Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition, Aboriginal Self-determination and Other Matters) Act 2023* expanded the definition of an employee for the Scheme.

Table 10. Reportable conduct matters received by notification type 2022–23 to 2024–25 and Scheme total⁵²

Type	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	Since the start of the Scheme ⁵³
Mandatory notification	1,457	1,892	2,232	10,353
Public notification ⁵⁴	376	523	535	2,210

Mandatory notifications

The following sections contain information about notifications of reportable allegations received by the Commission from heads of organisations or where the Commission is conducting an own motion investigation.⁵⁵ This data details allegations only – for some of these, findings have not yet been made about whether the alleged conduct occurred.

For the period of 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025, the Commission received 2,232 notifications of reportable allegations.

Notifications received

The monthly average of notifications has substantially increased from 67 in the first year of the Scheme to 186 in 2024–25. The Commission expects the number of notifications will continue to increase in future years as community understanding about child abuse and harm and the importance of taking action increases, and as organisations strengthen their processes to identify and ensure all reportable allegations are appropriately notified to the Commission. We also expect to see increasing numbers of notifications as awareness grows about changes that commenced from 1 July 2024⁵⁶ meaning labour hire workers and other types of employees were covered by the Scheme for the first time.

⁵² In some cases, data from previous financial years expressed in this report is different from that published in previous Commission annual reports. Variations are due to the fact that Scheme data is live and includes open matters, causing some movement of data over time. New information can come to light as a matter progresses that alters previous classifications or results in matters being excluded because they are subsequently determined to be out of the scope of the Scheme. In some cases, data is also consolidated where it is identified that multiple notifications have been made for the same matter and are reclassified accordingly.

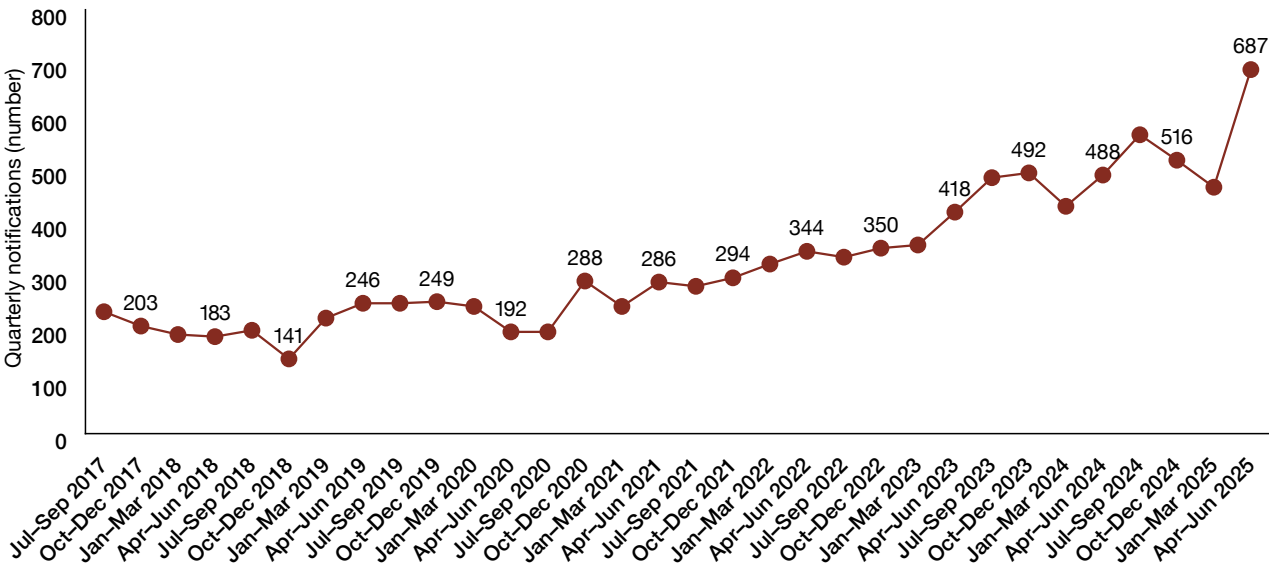
⁵³ This refers to the period 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2025.

⁵⁴ Public notifications will often result in the head of an organisation submitting a mandatory notification to the Commission. Others will be assessed as being outside the jurisdiction of the Scheme due to not meeting the relevant legislative requirements.

⁵⁵ In some matters the Commission may conduct an own motion investigation where no organisation has submitted a mandatory notification. If this is the case, the allegations from the Commission own motion investigation will be counted in data where analysis is based on allegations, but not included where analysis is based on mandatory notifications. Where allegations are attached both to a mandatory notification, and to a Commission own motion investigation, they will be counted only once.

⁵⁶ The *Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition, Aboriginal Self-determination and Other Matters) Act 2023* expanded the definition of an employee for the Scheme. New types of employees covered by the Scheme include labour hire workers, secondees, directors of companies and individual business owners.

Figure 5. Number of mandatory notifications received by the Commission 2017–18 to 2024–25



Mandatory notifications by sector

In 2024–25, the education, early childhood education and out-of-home care sectors contributed the highest proportion of notifications (43 per cent, 32 per cent and 17 per cent respectively). Compared to the previous year, there was a 25 per cent increase in notifications in the education sector and a 32 per cent increase in the early childhood education sector.

Table 11. Notifications of reportable allegations received by sector 2022–23 to 2024–25 and Scheme total ^{57 58}

Sector	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Percentage change 2023–24 to 2024–25	Since the start of the Scheme	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		No.	%
Education⁵⁹	436	30	762	40	949	43	25▲	3,364	32
Government school ⁶⁰	199		485		591		22▲	1,695	
Non-government school – Catholic ⁶¹	93		135		190		41▲	825	
Non-government school – Independent ⁶²	125		115		154		34▲	752	
Senior secondary course/ qualification ⁶³	15		26		12		-54▼	75	
International-student course	1		0		1		–	7	
Student exchange program	2		0		0		–	5	
Employee – other/admin	1		1		1		0	5	
Out-of-home care⁶⁴	409	28	394	21	377	17	-4▼	2,911	28
Kinship care	134		162		181		12▲	999	
Residential care	143		107		115		7▲	941	
Foster care	116		111		73		-34▼	871	
Employee – other/admin	9		12		7		-42▼	51	
Respite and contingency care	2		1		0		-100▼	24	
Lead tenant	3		1		1		0	20	
Permanent care	2		0		0		–	5	

⁵⁷ In some cases, data from previous financial years expressed in this report is different from that published in previous Commission annual reports. Variations are due to the fact that Scheme data is live and includes open matters, causing some movement of data over time. New information can come to light as a matter progresses that alters previous classifications or results in matters being excluded because they are subsequently determined to be out of the scope of the Scheme. In some cases, data is also consolidated where it is identified that multiple notifications have been made for the same matter and are reclassified accordingly.

⁵⁸ This table breaks up notifications received by the Commission by sector and service type. The Commission notes that different sectors and service types have different types of engagement with children and young people. The number of organisations in sectors and service types is also different. Some sectors including out-of-home care and education have been subject to the Scheme since its commencement on 1 July 2017, whereas other sectors have been subject to the Scheme for less time. Religious bodies and disability services have been covered since 1 January 2018 and early childhood education have been covered since 1 January 2019. The Commission is concerned there may be under-reporting of notifications in some sectors and service types.

⁵⁹ Summary statistics on Victorian schools published by the DE state that the number of students (FTE) attending Victorian schools in February 2025 was 1,049,889.6. Of this, 661,326.7 attended a government school, 216,039.3 attended a non-government school – Catholic and 172,523.6 attended a non-government school – independent. Information about the education sector can be found at: <https://www.vic.gov.au/statistics-victorian-schools-and-teaching>.

⁶⁰ Includes primary and secondary school.

⁶¹ Includes primary and secondary school.

⁶² Includes primary and secondary school.

⁶³ These are courses and qualifications that are not delivered by registered schools.

⁶⁴ Includes services provided by DFFH, community service organisations and other organisation types providing out-of-home care.

Table 11. Notifications of reportable allegations received by sector 2022–23 to 2024–25 and Scheme total (continued)

Sector	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Percentage change 2023–24 to 2024–25	Since the start of the Scheme	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		No.	%
Early childhood education	384	26	534	28	705	32	32▲	2,615	25
Long day care	286		437		567		30▲	2,043	
Preschool/kindergarten	56		40		71		78▲	290	
Outside-school-hours care	34		46		54		17▲	223	
Family day care	8		8		11		38▲	54	
Employee – other/admin	0		1		0		-100▼	1	
Other	0		2		2		0	4	
Religious body⁶⁵	68	5	57	3	52	2	-9▼	473	5
Disability⁶⁶	46	3	42	2	46	2	10▲	271	3
Youth justice⁶⁷	29	2	22	1	18	<1	-18▼	235	2
Child protection⁶⁸	5	<1	7	<1	12	<1	71▲	67	<1
Accommodation⁶⁹	22	2	14	<1	9	<1	-36▼	63	<1
Health⁷⁰	9	<1	2	<1	8	<1	300▲	58	<1
Victorian government departments⁷¹	6	<1	11	<1	5	<1	-55▼	50	<1
Other⁷²	43	3	47	2	51	2	9▲	246	2
Total	1,457	100	1,892	100	2,232	100	18▲	10,353	100

⁶⁵ Excludes notifications in relation to services provided by religious bodies in other sectors.

⁶⁶ This is a broad category that includes registered and non-registered disability service providers, residential services for children with a disability, DFFH disability support services as well as organisations that provide specific services to children with disabilities such as all abilities programs.

⁶⁷ Youth justice functions provided by DJCS including custodial and community-based.

⁶⁸ Includes child protection services provided by DFFH, child protection services provided by organisations pursuant to a DFFH contract and DFFH secure care

⁶⁹ Includes overnight camps, homelessness service providers with overnight beds and residential facilities for boarding schools.

⁷⁰ Includes hospitals (public and private), mental health services with inpatient beds and inpatient drug and alcohol services.

⁷¹ Excludes notifications in relation to state government workers or volunteers contained in other sectors.

⁷² In this category, some notifications are included from organisations subsequently deemed outside the scope of the Scheme and some relate to organisations not yet identified. Of those notifications within the scope of the Scheme, these relate to employees not otherwise captured in other sectors, including youth services, aquatic and leisure centre workers and council workers.

Reportable allegations by type of reportable conduct

Each mandatory notification can contain multiple reportable allegations and multiple alleged victims. The 10,353 notifications received since the Scheme started contained 26,588 allegations.⁷³

There are five types of 'reportable conduct'⁷⁴ listed in the CWSA:

- sexual offences (against, with or in the presence of a child)
- sexual misconduct (against, with or in the presence of a child)
- physical violence (against, with or in the presence of a child)⁷⁵
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm
- significant neglect of a child.

In 2024–25, like previous years, the highest number of allegations (36 per cent) related to physical violence.

Table 12. Category of reportable conduct allegations 2022–23 to 2024–25 and Scheme total⁷⁶

Category	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Since the start of the Scheme	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Physical violence ⁷⁷	1,416	31	1,610	32	1,610	36	9,463	36
Sexual misconduct ⁷⁸	967	21	1,008	20	933	21	5,439	20
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	1,098	24	1,015	20	689	15	5,255	20
Significant neglect of a child	900	20	1,069	22	1,007	22	4,746	18
Sexual offences ⁷⁹	201	4	269	5	295	7	1,685	6
Total	4,582	100	4,971	100	4,534	100	26,588	100

⁷³ Analysis of allegations in this annual report includes some allegations that are subject to an own motion investigation by the Commission where no mandatory notification was received.

⁷⁴ The Commission's website has information sheets that provide a detailed explanation about the different types of reportable conduct <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/resources/reportable-conduct-scheme/reportable-conduct-scheme-information-sheets/#TOC-2>.

⁷⁵ This covers a range of conduct including actual and threatened physical violence. Where physical contact is made with a child, it will be considered 'physical violence' if the contact was capable of causing injury or harm to the child. It is not, however, necessary for injury or harm to have occurred.

⁷⁶ In some cases, data from previous financial years expressed throughout this report is different from that published in previous Commission annual reports. Variations are due to the fact that Scheme data is live and includes open matters, causing some movement of data over time. New information can come to light as a matter progresses that alters previous classifications or results in matters being excluded because they are subsequently determined to be out of the scope of the Scheme.

⁷⁷ Includes physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child.

⁷⁸ Includes sexual misconduct against, with or in the presence of a child.

⁷⁹ Includes sexual offences against, with or in the presence of a child.

Reportable allegations by sector and type of reportable conduct

Different types of allegations appear more prevalent in some sectors. For example, there is a higher proportion of sexual offence allegations in religious bodies than any other sector and the most common allegation type in the out-of-home care and early childhood education sectors is physical violence.

Overall, and for the last five years, the highest number of allegations in the education sector relate to sexual misconduct.

Table 13. Reportable allegations by sector and conduct type 2022–23 to 2024–25 and Scheme total

Sector ⁸⁰ and conduct type ⁸¹	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Since the start of the Scheme	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Education	1,958	100	2,136	100	2,149	100	10,862	100
Sexual misconduct	717	37	702	33	704	33	3,895	36
Physical violence	456	23	530	25	559	26	2,752	25
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	479	24	490	23	360	17	2,393	22
Significant neglect of a child	220	11	272	13	360	17	1,136	10
Sexual offences	86	4	142	7	166	8	686	6
Out-of-home care	1,376	100	1,438	100	1,062	100	8,428	100
Physical violence	469	34	486	34	347	33	3,364	40
Significant neglect of a child	496	36	561	39	425	40	2,646	31
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	348	25	295	21	196	18	1,719	20
Sexual misconduct	49	4	65	5	46	4	429	5
Sexual offences	14	1	31	2	48	5	270	3
Early childhood education	664	100	896	100	967	100	4,123	100
Physical violence	364	55	507	57	627	65	2,516	61
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	122	18	131	15	83	9	595	14
Significant neglect of a child	94	14	126	14	152	16	544	13
Sexual misconduct	68	10	99	11	78	8	359	9
Sexual offences	16	2	33	4	27	3	109	3

⁸⁰ Some sectors including out-of-home care and education have been subject to the Scheme since its commencement on 1 July 2017, whereas other sectors have been subject to the Scheme for less time. Religious bodies and disability services have been covered since 1 January 2018 and early childhood education have been covered since 1 January 2019. Additionally, this analysis is of reportable allegations, not substantiated incidents of reportable conduct.

⁸¹ Reportable conduct types have been grouped in this table. Physical violence, sexual misconduct and sexual offences includes against, with, or in the presence of a child.

Table 13. Reportable allegations by sector and conduct type 2022–23 to 2024–25 and Scheme total (continued)

Sector ⁸⁰ and conduct type ⁸¹	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Since the start of the Scheme	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Religious body	253	100	150	100	89	100	1,331	100
Sexual offences	78	31	34	23	29	33	430	32
Sexual misconduct	53	21	43	29	29	33	339	25
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	83	33	41	27	12	13	280	21
Physical violence	35	14	15	10	17	19	219	16
Significant neglect of a child	4	2	17	11	2	2	63	5
Disability	78	100	87	100	84	100	457	100
Physical violence	31	40	22	25	21	25	194	42
Significant neglect of a child	22	28	20	23	21	25	84	18
Sexual misconduct	11	14	18	21	17	20	72	16
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	14	18	12	14	18	21	60	13
Sexual offences	0	–	15	17	7	8	47	10
Youth justice	66	100	43	100	25	100	390	100
Physical violence	28	42	24	56	7	28	225	58
Significant neglect of a child	21	32	16	37	8	32	79	20
Sexual misconduct	11	17	1	2	9	36	51	13
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	4	6	2	5	1	4	23	6
Sexual offences	2	3	0	–	0	–	12	3
Accommodation	64	100	68	100	21	100	184	100
Sexual misconduct	21	33	30	44	18	86	82	45
Significant neglect of a child	20	31	22	32	0	–	43	23
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	19	30	16	24	0	–	38	21
Sexual offences	4	6	0	–	1	5	11	6
Physical violence	0	–	0	–	2	10	10	5

Table 13. Reportable allegations by sector and conduct type 2022–23 to 2024–25 and Scheme total (continued)

Sector ⁸⁰ and conduct type ⁸¹	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Since the start of the Scheme	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Child protection	13	100	10	100	22	100	133	100
Physical violence	4	31	4	40	6	27	48	36
Significant neglect of a child	5	38	5	50	12	55	44	33
Sexual misconduct	1	8	0	–	2	9	17	13
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	2	15	1	10	1	5	15	11
Sexual offences	1	8	0	–	1	5	9	7
Victorian government departments	18	100	17	100	11	100	126	100
Sexual offences	0	–	3	18	2	18	40	32
Physical violence	11	61	4	24	6	55	36	29
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	6	33	5	29	0	–	26	21
Sexual misconduct	0	–	0	–	1	9	12	10
Significant neglect of a child	1	6	5	29	2	18	12	10
Health	14	100	3	100	11	100	114	100
Sexual offences	0	–	1	33	2	18	28	25
Significant neglect of a child	5	36	0	–	2	18	25	22
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	2	14	1	33	5	45	25	22
Physical violence	4	29	1	33	2	18	20	18
Sexual misconduct	3	21	0	–	0	–	16	14
Other	78	100	123	100	93	100	440	100
Sexual misconduct	33	42	50	41	29	31	167	38
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	19	24	21	17	13	14	81	18
Physical violence	14	18	17	14	16	17	79	18
Significant neglect of a child	12	15	25	20	23	25	70	16
Sexual offences	0	–	10	8	12	13	43	10
Total	4,582		4,971		4,534		26,588	

Sexual misconduct

The Commission's *Strategic Plan 2022–2025* includes a commitment to 'hold organisations to account for their obligation to rigorously investigate, and keep children and young people safe from, grooming and sexual misconduct'. Notification numbers and substantiation rates for sexual offence and sexual misconduct allegations have increased, and the Commission has noted improvements in some organisations' systems for identifying and investigating these conduct types. However, there continue to be concerning instances where organisations appear reluctant to substantiate allegations as 'sexual misconduct' under the Scheme where these findings are open on the evidence. The Commission also continues to see apparent reluctance to characterise behaviour as 'sexual misconduct', including where there is a proven pattern of overly personal and intimate conduct towards a child or conduct that seriously crosses professional boundaries.

The Commission will continue to support and guide organisations to conduct thorough investigations, give appropriate weight to the evidence of affected children, and make sound decisions about whether proven conduct amounts to sexual misconduct.

The education sector has contributed the majority of allegations of sexual misconduct since the Scheme began (72 per cent).

Table 14. Reportable allegations of sexual misconduct by sector 2022–23 to 2024–25 and Scheme total⁸²

Sector	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Since the start of the Scheme	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Education	717	74	702	70	704	75	3,895	72
Out-of-home care	49	5	65	6	46	5	429	8
Early childhood education	68	7	99	10	78	8	359	7
Religious body	53	5	43	4	29	3	339	6
Accommodation	21	2	30	3	18	2	82	2
Disability	11	1	18	2	17	2	72	1
Youth justice	11	1	1	<1	9	<1	51	<1
Child protection	1	<1	0	–	2	<1	17	<1
Health	3	<1	0	–	0	–	16	<1
Victorian government departments	0	–	0	–	1	<1	12	<1
Other	33	3	50	5	29	3	167	3
Total	967	100	1,008	100	933	100	5,439	100

⁸² In some cases, data from previous financial years expressed throughout this report is different from that published in previous Commission annual reports. Variations are due to the fact that Scheme data is live and includes open matters, causing some movement of data over time. New information can come to light as a matter progresses that alters previous classifications or results in matters being excluded because they are subsequently determined to be out of the scope of the Scheme.

Alleged victims

This analysis relates to notifications of reportable allegations, not substantiated incidents of reportable conduct. The term ‘alleged victim’⁸³ is used in this section to reflect this.

The term ‘unique alleged victim’⁸⁴ is used where an alleged victim is known.⁸⁵ Of the 11,134 unique victims of reportable allegations identified since the start of the Scheme, 54 per cent were male, 46 per cent female and less than one per cent did not identify as either male or female or their gender was unknown.⁸⁶

In 2024–25, there were 2,504 unique alleged victims identified relating to 1,961 notifications.⁸⁷ Fifty-three per cent of these unique alleged victims were male and 46 per cent were female. Less than one per cent of alleged victims did not identify as either male or female or their gender was unknown.

As in previous years, alleged victims of sexual misconduct were more likely to be female. This year, 63 per cent of sexual misconduct allegations related to girls up to the age of 18. Sexual misconduct accounted for 27 per cent of all

allegations involving a female alleged victim in 2024–25 and only 13 per cent of all allegations involving a male alleged victim.⁸⁸

Sixty-two per cent of allegations of physical violence involved a male alleged victim. This type of conduct accounted for almost half of all allegations involving a male alleged victim in 2024–25 (48 per cent), and almost a quarter of all allegations involving a female alleged victim (24 per cent).

⁸³ Alleged victims must be aged under 18 years at the time of the alleged conduct to be covered under the Scheme.

⁸⁴ ‘Unique alleged victims’ refer to an individual child or young person who has been the victim of a reportable allegation at least once during the Scheme. Where the unique alleged victims are referred to in terms of the financial year, then this refers to the number of individuals who were the victim of a reportable allegation within that financial year. Where a child or young person has been the victim of multiple allegations over multiple years, they will be counted once for each financial year. As a result of this, financial year totals will not add up to the whole of Scheme totals as they are based on different counting methodologies.

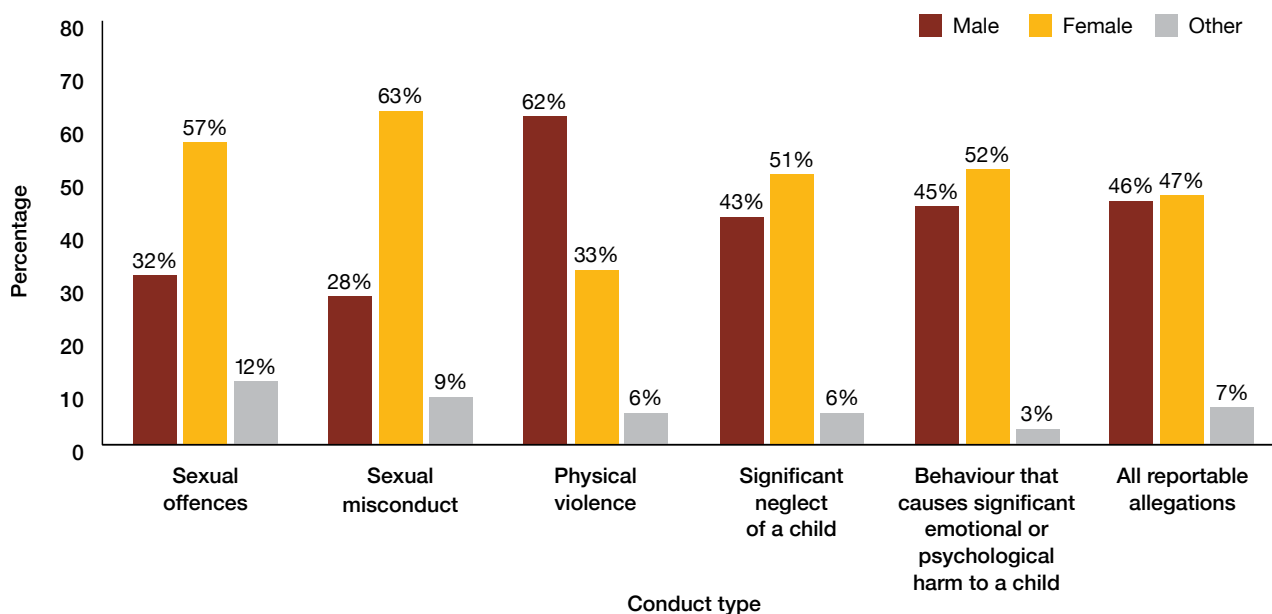
⁸⁵ In some notifications the identity of the alleged victim may be unknown.

⁸⁶ Alleged victims with a recorded gender of ‘other’ may identify as non-binary or gender diverse. There have been 46 unique alleged victims (less than one per cent) with a recorded gender of ‘other’ and a further five whose gender is not known.

⁸⁷ This also includes unique alleged victims where no mandatory notification was received, but the Commission is conducting an own motion investigation.

⁸⁸ This paragraph is based on an analysis of reportable allegations, not unique alleged victims.

Figure 6. Reportable allegations by type of reportable conduct and gender of alleged victims 2024–25⁸⁹



Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, cultural background and disability characteristics of alleged victims

In 2024–25, organisations subject to the Scheme identified:⁹⁰

- nine per cent of unique alleged victims as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander⁹¹ which is a substantial over-representation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young people, who only make up two per cent of the Victorian population under 18 years of age⁹²
- 14 per cent of unique alleged victims as being from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background⁹³
- 17 per cent of unique alleged victims as having a disability.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Alleged victims with a recorded gender of 'other' may identify as non-binary or gender diverse. 'Other' also includes alleged victims with an unknown gender. In 2024–25, there were 37 allegations where the alleged victim had an identified gender of 'other' that account for less than one per cent of alleged victims and 258 allegations had an alleged victim with an unknown gender. For most of these allegations, the alleged victim was unknown.

⁹⁰ The Commission was not provided with details of characteristics of the alleged victim in a high number of matters. In the next financial year, the Commission will continue to further increase efforts to require organisations to turn their minds to these characteristics.

⁹¹ This is consistent with the nine per cent of unique alleged victims who were identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander since the start of the Scheme

⁹² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011 to 2031), Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, ABS Website, accessed 7 July 2025.

⁹³ This is consistent with the 15 per cent of unique victims who were identified as being from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background since the start of the Scheme.

⁹⁴ This is slightly more than the 15 per cent of unique alleged victims who were identified as having a disability since the start of the Scheme.

Age of alleged victim and alleged reportable conduct type

Across almost all age groups, physical violence was consistently the most likely type of reportable conduct about which allegations were raised.⁹⁵

In 2024–25, physical violence accounted for 60 per cent of all allegations for children aged zero to four years, 46 per cent for children aged five to nine years, and 28 per cent for children aged 10 to 14 years.⁹⁶

In contrast, the largest category of conduct type for young people aged 15 to 17 years was sexual misconduct (37 per cent), consistent with previous years. Sexual misconduct made up eight per cent of allegations for children aged zero to four years, eight per cent for children aged five to nine years, and 23 per cent of allegations for children aged 10 to 14 years.⁹⁷

The average age of unique alleged victims at the time of the first reportable allegation in 2024–25 was nine years.

Consistent with previous years, the largest proportion of unique alleged victims in 2024–25 was aged 10 to 14 years (32 per cent), followed by those aged zero to four years (24 per cent).

Table 15. Age of unique alleged victim at date of first reportable allegation 2022–23 to 2024–25 and Scheme total

Age ⁹⁸	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Since the start of the Scheme	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0 to 4 years	401	22	529	24	609	24	2,594	23
5 to 9 years	334	18	436	20	549	22	2,170	19
10 to 14 years	628	35	658	30	795	32	3,370	30
15 to 17 years	361	20	408	19	446	18	2,158	19
18 years ⁹⁹	7	<1	0	–	0	–	15	<1
Not identified	80	4	152	7	105	4	827	7
Total	1,811	100	2,183	100	2,504	100	11,134	100

⁹⁵ This paragraph is based on an analysis of reportable allegations, not unique alleged victims.

⁹⁶ This paragraph is based on an analysis of reportable allegations, not unique alleged victims.

⁹⁷ This paragraph is based on an analysis of reportable allegations, not unique alleged victims.

⁹⁸ Where a child or young person has been the victim of multiple reportable allegations, age is calculated based on the earliest reportable allegation.

⁹⁹ These allegations were determined to be out of jurisdiction of the Scheme, or remain under review.

Subjects of allegations

A worker or volunteer who is alleged to have committed reportable conduct is known as the subject of allegation. A person can be the subject of allegation for more than one notification with multiple reportable allegations involving more than one alleged victim. The following analysis relates to the characteristics of the subjects of allegations, not substantiated incidents of reportable conduct.

In 2024–25, there were 2,075 unique individuals who were subjects of allegation¹⁰⁰ (a 20 per cent increase on 2023–24). Just over half of these individuals were subject to one allegation (54 per cent) and a small proportion (eight per cent) were the subject of five or more allegations.

Since the start of the Scheme, 8,750 unique individuals have been the subject of allegations. Ninety per cent of these individuals were involved in one notification to the Commission since the start of the Scheme, eight per cent were involved in two notifications, two per cent were involved in three or four notifications and less than one per cent had between 5 and 11 notifications.

Gender and reportable conduct type

Of the 2,075 individuals who were the subject of the 4,534 reportable allegations made in 2024–25, over half were female (57 per cent) and 42 per cent were male. The remaining individuals did not identify as either male or female (less than one per cent).

Physical violence was the largest category of reportable allegations for women (46 per cent) and sexual misconduct was the largest category for men (33 per cent) in 2024–25.¹⁰¹

For men, the combined categories of sexual misconduct and sexual offences accounted for 46 per cent of all

reportable allegations this year. In 2024–25, 88 per cent of all sexual offence and 76 per cent of all sexual misconduct reportable allegations were made against men.¹⁰²

Women were more likely to be the subject of a reportable allegation of physical violence (67 per cent) or significant neglect of a child (65 per cent) compared to men (32 per cent and 34 per cent respectively).

¹⁰⁰ ‘Unique subjects of allegation’ refer to an individual who has been the subject of a reportable allegation at least once during the Scheme. Where the unique subjects of allegations are referred to in terms of the financial year, then this refers to the number of individuals who were the subject of a reportable allegation within that financial year. Where an individual has been the subject of multiple allegations over multiple years, they will be counted once for each financial year. As a result of this, financial year totals will not add up to the whole of Scheme totals as they are based on different counting methodologies.

¹⁰¹ This paragraph is based on an analysis of reportable allegations and not unique subjects of allegation.

¹⁰² This paragraph is based on an analysis of reportable allegations and not unique subjects of allegation.

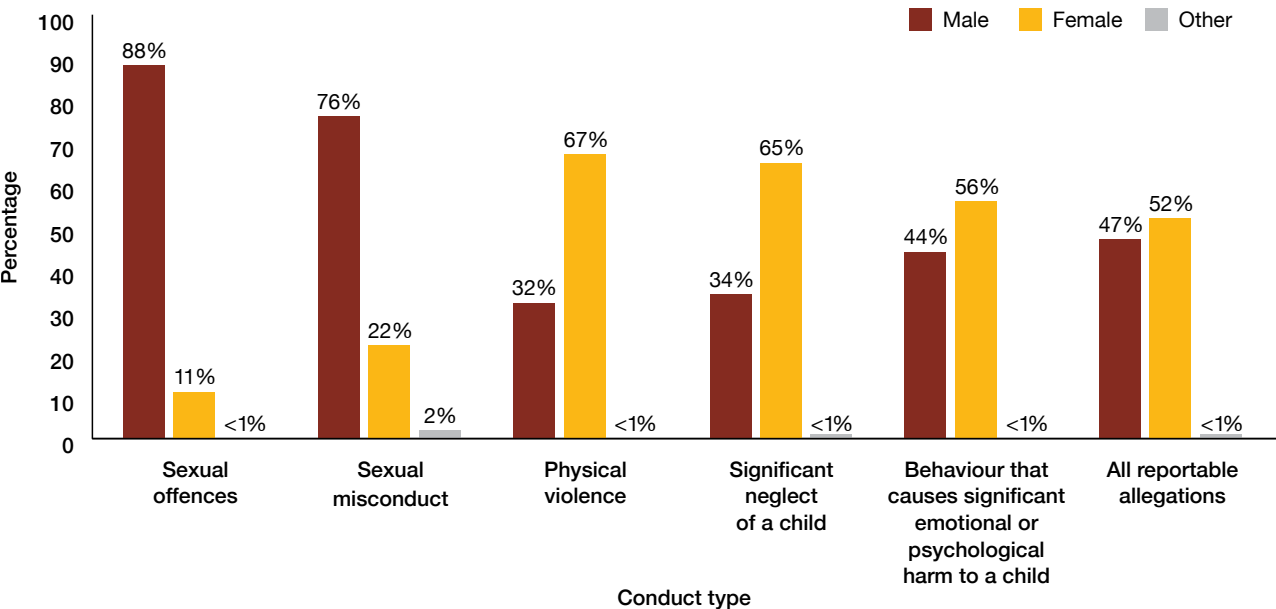
Table 16. Reportable allegations by gender of subject of allegation and conduct type 2022–23 to 2024–25 and Scheme total

Gender of subject of allegation ¹⁰³ and conduct type	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Since the start of the Scheme	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female	2,358	100	2,441	100	2,366	100	12,934	100
Physical violence	827	35	1,013	41	1,086	46	5,744	44
Significant neglect of a child	662	28	717	29	656	28	3,278	25
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	616	26	495	20	386	16	2,713	21
Sexual misconduct	220	9	184	8	206	9	986	8
Sexual offences	33	1	32	1	32	1	213	2
Male	2,218	100	2,514	100	2,136	100	13,574	100
Sexual misconduct	745	34	819	33	712	33	4,430	33
Physical violence	588	27	591	24	517	24	3,704	27
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	481	22	517	21	302	14	2,530	19
Significant neglect of a child	237	11	350	14	344	16	1,441	11
Sexual offences	167	8	237	9	261	12	1,469	11
Other¹⁰⁴	6	100	16	100	32	100	80	100
Significant neglect of a child	1	17	2	13	7	22	27	34
Sexual misconduct	2	33	5	31	15	47	23	29
Physical violence	1	17	6	38	7	22	15	19
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	1	17	3	19	1	3	12	15
Sexual offences	1	17	0	–	2	6	3	4
Total	4,582		4,971		4,534		26,588	

¹⁰³ This table is based on an analysis of reportable allegations and not unique subjects of allegation.

¹⁰⁴ Subjects of allegation with a recorded gender of 'other' may identify as non-binary or gender diverse.

Figure 7. Reportable allegations by type of conduct and gender of subject of allegation 2024–25¹⁰⁵



Employment status of subject of allegation

The Commission records the employment status of subjects of allegation. The categories are based on the individual's relationship to the organisation that has submitted the mandatory notification. In 2024–25, 80 per cent of subjects of allegation were identified as employees of an organisation and 11 per cent were identified as foster or kinship carers.

The *Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition, Aboriginal Self-determination and Other Matters) Act 2023* expanded the definition of an employee for the Scheme. Since 1 July 2024, new types of employees have been covered by the Scheme including labour hire workers, secondees, directors of companies and individual business owners.

In 2024–25, notifications were received by the Commission about 78 labour hire or agency workers, 16 individuals employed under contracts and 11 individuals hired under student placements.

¹⁰⁵ Subjects of allegation with a recorded gender of 'other' may identify as non-binary or gender diverse.

Table 17. Unique subjects of allegation by employment type 2022–23 to 2024–25 and Scheme total¹⁰⁶

Employment type ¹⁰⁷	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Since the start of the Scheme ¹⁰⁸	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Employee	1,057	78	1,452	84	1,664	80	6,811	78
Foster or kinship carer	230	17	236	14	234	11	1,457	17
Volunteer	35	3	32	2	45	2	215	2
Minister of religion or religious leader	27	2	14	<1	23	1	155	2
Labour hire or agency worker	n/a	–	n/a	–	78	4	74 ¹⁰⁹	<1
Other ¹¹⁰	≤3	<1	0	–	31	1	38	<1
Total	1,351	100	1,734	100	2,075	100	8,750	100

¹⁰⁶ In order to maintain confidentiality, person-based counts with a value of 1 to 3 are given a value of 2 to calculate totals and are denoted by '≤3'.

¹⁰⁷ An individual can be the subject of allegation in more than one notification and may have different roles in different organisations. Where this has occurred, the employment type referenced in the individual's earliest reportable conduct has been taken.

¹⁰⁸ 'Unique subjects of allegation' refer to an individual who has been the subject of a reportable allegation at least once during the Scheme. Where the unique subjects of allegations are referred to in terms of the financial year, then this refers to the number of individuals who were the subject of a reportable allegation within that financial year. Where an individual has been the subject of multiple allegations over multiple years, they will be counted once for each financial year. As a result of this, financial year totals will not add up to the whole of Scheme totals as they are based on different counting methodologies.

¹⁰⁹ Financial year totals will not add up to the whole of Scheme totals as they are based on different counting methodologies. Four individuals had a different employment type in matters received prior to the 2024–25 financial year, as such they are counted against the employment category for their prior matters.

¹¹⁰ 'Other' includes contractors, director or office holders, student placements and other employment types.

Findings from investigations into reportable allegations

The head of an organisation must investigate a reportable allegation and provide findings to the Commission.

Finalised mandatory notifications

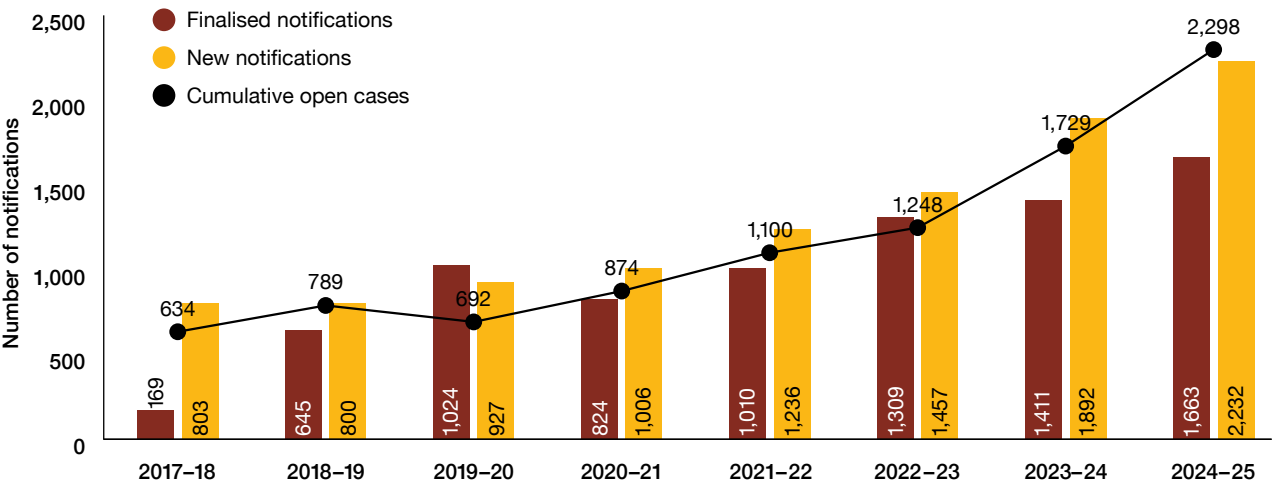
Out of the 10,353 mandatory notifications¹¹¹ received by the Commission since the start of the Scheme, 8,055 (78 per cent) were finalised and of these, 520 (six per cent) were assessed as being outside the scope of the Scheme as at 30 June 2025.

There were 2,298 open mandatory notifications as at 30 June 2025, a 33 per cent increase on the same time last year.

A total of 1,663 notifications of reportable allegations were finalised by the Commission in 2024–25.¹¹² The finalisation rate¹¹³ for 2024–25 was 75 per cent.

Of the 26,589 reportable allegations¹¹⁴ received by the Commission since the start of the Scheme, 21,631 (81 per cent) had been finalised by the Commission as at 30 June 2025. A total of 5,097 reportable allegations were finalised by the Commission in 2024–25.¹¹⁵

Figure 8. New notifications each year, matters open and finalised at the end of each financial year 2017–18 to 2024–25



¹¹¹ Each mandatory notification can contain multiple reportable allegations and multiple alleged victims.

¹¹² Of these, 106 notifications (six per cent) were assessed by the Commission as being outside the jurisdiction of the Scheme, and seven were closed as the subject of allegation was deceased.

¹¹³ This is the rate of finalisation of notifications compared with new notifications being received.

¹¹⁴ Includes reportable allegations finalised through own motion investigations conducted by the Commission under section 160 of the CWSA.

¹¹⁵ Includes reportable allegations finalised through own motion investigations conducted by the Commission under section 160 of the CWSA.

Reportable conduct findings

There have been 7,477 notifications^{116 117} and 21,462 reportable allegations finalised following an investigation since the Scheme started.¹¹⁸

Thirty-six per cent of reportable allegations were substantiated in 2024–25 which is higher than in previous years noting the average since the start of the Scheme remains steady at 30 percent.

Table 18. Findings per allegation 2022–23 to 2024–25 and Scheme total ¹¹⁹

Finding type	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Since the start of the Scheme	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Substantiated	1,185	28	1,190	30	1,794	36	6,515	30
Unsubstantiated – insufficient evidence	1,262	30	1,207	30	1,726	34	6,549	31
Unsubstantiated – lack of evidence of weight	1,068	25	774	19	643	13	4,308	20
Unfounded	401	9	383	10	390	8	1,896	9
Conduct outside Scheme	346	8	441	11	494	10	2,194	10
Total	4,262	100	3,995	100	5,047	100	21,462	100

In 2024–25, just over half of sexual offences allegations and almost half of sexual misconduct allegations were substantiated (51 per cent and 48 per cent respectively).

The substantiation rate for sexual misconduct allegations has continued to increase steadily since 2018–19, rising from 21 per cent to 48 per cent in 2024–25.

The substantiation rate for sexual offence allegations has substantially increased over the life of the Scheme, rising from 15 per cent in 2018–19 to 51 per cent in 2024–25.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Excludes mandatory notifications determined to be outside the scope of the Scheme, where the entity has ceased its operations, and where an investigation was not completed due to issues including safety concerns for alleged victims.

¹¹⁷ Includes matters finalised through own motion investigations conducted by the Commission under section 160 of the CWSA.

¹¹⁸ Includes allegations where the Commission was notified that a subject of allegation was deceased following the completion of the investigation and allegations investigated or identified through Commission own motion investigations.

¹¹⁹ By year of finalisation by the Commission.

¹²⁰ This does not reflect the outcomes of criminal investigations and charges.

Table 19. Findings per reportable conduct category 2022–23 to 2024–25 and Scheme total¹²¹

Conduct type and finding	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Since the start of the Scheme	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Physical violence	1,351	100	1,246	100	1,610	100	7,793	100
Substantiated	367	27	378	30	489	30	2,291	29
Unsubstantiated – insufficient evidence	423	31	345	28	585	36	2,330	30
Unsubstantiated – lack of evidence of weight	376	28	305	24	258	16	1,831	23
Unfounded	92	7	108	9	116	7	596	8
Conduct outside Scheme	93	7	110	9	162	10	745	10
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	1,020	100	920	100	981	100	4,415	100
Substantiated	194	19	160	17	237	24	887	20
Unsubstantiated – insufficient evidence	351	34	350	38	452	46	1,662	38
Unsubstantiated – lack of evidence of weight	272	27	198	22	110	11	957	22
Unfounded	136	13	74	8	69	7	425	10
Conduct outside Scheme	67	7	138	15	113	12	484	11
Sexual misconduct	872	100	885	100	1,010	100	4,395	100
Substantiated	304	35	336	38	481	48	1,590	36
Unsubstantiated – insufficient evidence	194	22	240	27	255	25	1,168	27
Unsubstantiated – lack of evidence of weight	200	23	108	12	108	11	698	16
Unfounded	69	8	82	9	57	6	359	8
Conduct outside Scheme	105	12	119	13	109	11	580	13
Significant neglect of a child	840	100	705	100	1,137	100	3,660	100
Substantiated	246	29	225	32	430	38	1,288	35
Unsubstantiated – insufficient evidence	240	29	197	28	370	33	1,077	29
Unsubstantiated – lack of evidence of weight	195	23	124	18	107	9	559	15
Unfounded	82	10	97	14	130	11	394	11
Conduct outside Scheme	77	9	62	9	100	9	342	9

¹²¹ By year of finalisation by the Commission.

Table 19. Findings per reportable conduct category 2022–23 to 2024–25 and Scheme total (continued)

Conduct type and finding	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Since the start of the Scheme	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sexual offences	179	100	239	100	309	100	1,199	100
Substantiated	74	41	91	38	157	51	459	38
Unsubstantiated – insufficient evidence	54	30	75	31	64	21	312	26
Unsubstantiated – lack of evidence of weight	25	14	39	16	60	19	263	22
Unfounded	22	12	22	9	18	6	122	10
Conduct outside Scheme	4	2	12	5	10	3	43	4
Total	4,262		3,995		5,047		21,462	

Substantiated reportable conduct

Substantiation rates in different sectors vary. Among the three sectors contributing the highest number of notifications, in 2024–25 education had a substantially higher substantiated rate of 43 per cent compared with the substantiation rate of all sectors since the start of the Scheme (30 per cent), early childhood education and out-of-home care both had a slightly lower substantiation rate of 28 per cent. There has been an increase in the substantiation rate for allegations in the disability sector rising from 15 per cent in 2023–24 to 44 percent this year.

Table 20. Substantiation rate of reportable conduct incidents by sector 2022–23 to 2024–25 and Scheme total^{122 123}

Sector	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Since the start of the Scheme	
	No.	Sub. Rate %	No.	Sub. Rate %	No.	Sub. Rate %	No.	Sub. Rate %
Education	542	35	535	36	950	43	2,917	36
Out-of-home care	335	21	333	29	446	28	2,007	28
Early childhood education	189	28	190	27	226	28	887	25
Religious body	63	27	53	19	67	33	304	28
Disability	11	26	8	15	43	44	98	26
Youth justice	13	42	8	16	8	40	78	29
Child protection	0	–	2	11	5	50	31	27
Victorian government departments	2	10	17	49	2	15	31	34
Accommodation	7	29	2	2	8	32	21	12
Health	6	75	1	8	0	–	21	20
Other	17	29	41	32	39	43	120	33
Total	1,185	28	1,190	30	1,794	36	6,515	30

Victims of substantiated findings

During the Scheme's eight years of operation, a total of 6,020¹²⁴ allegations have been substantiated, involving 3,452 individual unique victims.¹²⁵ A small number (eight per cent) of substantiated incidents involved unknown victims.

Of the 3,452 unique victims, over half (52 per cent) were male and 47 per cent were female.¹²⁶

The majority of these 3,452 victims had one substantiated reportable conduct incident (67 per cent) since the start of the Scheme. Just under one-fifth (18 per cent) had two substantiated incidents and nine per cent had between three and four substantiated incidents. The remaining five per cent had five or more substantiated incidents.

¹²² No. refers to total number of substantiated reportable conduct incidents. Substantiation rate is the percentage of all findings in the sector that were substantiated by the organisations conducting investigations.

¹²³ By year of finalisation by the Commission.

¹²⁴ This includes only allegations where there is a known victim.

¹²⁵ 'Unique victim' refers to an individual child or young person who has been the victim of a substantiated allegation of reportable conduct at least once during the Scheme. Where a child or young person has been the victim of multiple incidents of reportable conduct over multiple years, they are counted once.

¹²⁶ A small proportion (less than one per cent) of victims had a recorded gender of 'other' and may identify as non-binary or gender diverse.

Of the substantiated incidents where the victim was known, the largest proportion of victims were aged between 10 and 14 years at the time of the reportable conduct (31 per cent), followed by those aged 15 to 17 years (25 per cent).¹²⁷

Almost half (45 per cent) of those found to have engaged in reportable conduct since the start of the Scheme were aged between 40 and 59 years at the time of the reportable conduct and over one-third (40 per cent) were aged between 20 and 39 years.¹³⁰

Persons found to have engaged in substantiated reportable conduct

Since the commencement of the Scheme, there have been 2,379 individuals found to have engaged in reportable conduct.¹²⁸

Of the 2,379 persons found to have engaged in substantiated reportable conduct, over half (54 per cent) were women and 46 per cent were men.¹²⁹

Three quarters of all individuals who engaged in substantiated reportable conduct since the Scheme started were classified as employees of an organisation (75 per cent). A further 20 per cent were foster or kinship carers and the remaining five per cent were spread across ministers of religion or religious leaders, contractors, volunteers and other types of involvement.

Just under half of people found to have engaged in substantiated reportable conduct since the Scheme started had one substantiated allegation (47 per cent). Twenty-four per cent had two substantiated allegations, 25 per cent had between three and nine substantiated allegations and the remaining four per cent had ten or more substantiated allegations.

Ninety-six per cent of individuals found to have engaged in substantiated reportable conduct since the Scheme started were the subject of one notification, four per cent were the subject of two notifications and the remaining (less than one per cent) were the subject of three to six notifications.

¹²⁷ Where a child or young person has been the victim of multiple substantiated reportable allegations, their reported age is based on the earliest substantiated allegation.

¹²⁸ ‘Person found to have engaged in substantiated reportable conduct’ refers to an individual who has been the subject of at least one substantiated reportable allegation during the Scheme. Where an individual has been found to have multiple substantiated allegations over multiple years, they are counted once.

¹²⁹ A small proportion (less than one per cent) of persons found to have engaged in substantiated reportable conduct had a recorded gender of ‘other’ and may identify as non-binary or gender diverse.

¹³⁰ Where an individual has been found to have multiple substantiated allegations, age is calculated based on the earliest substantiated allegation.

Spotlight on early childhood education

Notifications in the early childhood education sector have been steadily increasing since the sector came within scope of the Scheme¹³¹ – rising from 265 in 2019–20 to 705 in 2024–25. The early childhood education sector contributed the second highest number of notifications in 2024–25 behind the education sector.

In 2024–25, there was a 32 per cent increase in mandatory notifications received from the early childhood education sector compared with 2023–24. This was contributed to by a 78 per cent increase in notifications from preschool/kindergartens and a 30 per cent increase in notifications from long day care.

The majority of notifications in the early childhood education sector did not involve subjects of allegation who held a registration to teach with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT).

Table 21. Mandatory notifications in the early childhood education sector by subject of allegation VIT registration¹³² 2022–23 to 2024–24 and Scheme total

Sector	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Since the start of the Scheme	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Registered	64	17	79	15	143	20	436	17
Not registered	320	83	455	85	562	80	2,179	83
Total	384	100	534	100	705	100	2,615	100

Physical violence is the most common allegation type for the whole early childhood education sector since the start of the Scheme (61 per cent). In 2024–25, physical violence was the most common allegation type in all service types in the early childhood sector. This is in line with the previous years, where the majority of allegations related to physical violence.

A small proportion of allegations in the early childhood sector relate to sexual misconduct and sexual offences in 2024–25 (eight per cent and three per cent respectively). This has remained consistent since the start of the Scheme.

In 2024–25, 28 per cent of reportable allegations in the early childhood education sector were substantiated. This was slightly higher than the substantiation rate for the sector since the commencement of the Scheme (25 per cent). This is lower than the overall substantiation rate for all sectors since the start of Scheme which is 30 per cent.

Almost two thirds of substantiated findings in the early childhood education sector since the start of the Scheme have been for physical violence (64 per cent). Sexual misconduct and sexual offences made up a small proportion with six per cent of substantiated findings.

¹³¹ The early childhood education sector came within scope of the Scheme on 1 January 2019.
¹³² Some workers in early childhood education must be registered with VIT: <https://www.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-teacher-requirements>.

Table 22. Category of reportable conduct for substantiated allegations and substantiation rates in the early childhood education sector 2022–23 to 2024–25¹³³ and Scheme total¹³⁴

Category	2022–23			2023–24			2024–25			Since the start of the Scheme		
	No.	Prop. (%)	Sub. Rate	No.	Prop. (%)	Sub. Rate	No.	Prop. (%)	Sub. Rate	No.	Prop. (%)	Sub. Rate
Physical violence	106	56	30%	128	67	29%	134	59	27%	567	64	26%
Significant neglect of a child	45	24	42%	27	14	36%	69	31	50%	187	21	41%
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	23	12	17%	21	11	21%	15	7	16%	78	9	15%
Sexual misconduct	8	4	13%	12	6	15%	6	3	10%	44	5	15%
Sexual offences	7	4	41%	2	1	10%	2	<1	10%	11	1	14%
Total	189	100	28%	190	100	27%	226	100	28%	887	100	25%

Significant neglect of a child had the highest substantiation rate of all conduct types in early childhood education in 2024–25 with half of all allegations found to be substantiated.

Since the start of the Scheme, sexual misconduct and sexual offence allegations in early childhood education have both had far lower substantiation rates (15 per cent and 14 per cent respectively) than all other sectors combined (36 per cent and 38 per cent).

¹³³ By year of finalisation by the Commission.

¹³⁴ No. refers to total number of substantiated reportable conduct incidents. Prop. (%) refers to the proportion of substantiated allegations by conduct type within the year. Substantiation rate is the percentage of all findings in the conduct type for the early childhood education sector that were substantiated by the organisations conducting investigations.

Case study:

Working together to keep children safe.*

A four-year-old child attending an early childhood service made a series of disclosures to their parent that their teacher touches them inappropriately during toileting. The parent immediately reported the concern to the early childhood service.

The teacher had left the early childhood service when the allegations were raised, and it was identified that there were similar concerns about the teacher's conduct in previous positions in other services. The Commission was then advised that the teacher had commenced a new role in a different early childhood service. The Commission shared information about the alleged conduct with the new employer, which led to the suspension of the teacher.

The alleged victim was unable to make any disclosures to police, and while police attempted to investigate the allegation, there was insufficient evidence to pursue criminal charges.

With limited detail available and the alleged victim being very young, the early childhood service faced challenges in progressing the reportable conduct investigation. With support and guidance from the Commission, the early childhood service conducted a sensitive and robust investigation, drawing on available records, staff interviews, and observations. The parents of the child were also spoken to. The investigator did not attempt to interview the alleged victim given their young age and noting it may cause further trauma to the child.

The investigation identified concerning patterns of behaviour by the teacher, including multiple instances of inappropriate physical contact during toileting, and while the conduct did not meet the criminal threshold, it was substantiated as sexual offences, sexual misconduct and behaviour that caused significant and psychological and emotional harm under the Scheme.

The substantiated findings were referred to Working with Children Check Victoria, the Department of Education (Quality and Regulation Division), and the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT). The teacher's registration was subsequently cancelled by VIT and their Working with Children Check was revoked.

This case demonstrates the importance of the Scheme in supporting organisations to ensure inappropriate behaviour that may not result in criminal charges but still poses serious risks to children is investigated with appropriate action taken. It also demonstrates the importance of sharing information, under the Scheme, with the Worker Screening Unit, regulators, and employers to keep children safe from harm.

** This case study is fictitious and based on themes from multiple cases under the Reportable Conduct Scheme. It does not represent any actual case handled by the Commission.*

Spotlight on education

In 2024–25, there was a 25 per cent increase in mandatory notifications received from the education sector¹³⁵ compared with 2023–24. This was contributed to by a 41 per cent increase in notifications from non-government Catholic schools and a 34 per cent increase in notifications from non-government Independent schools. Government schools also showed a 22 per cent increase in notifications from the previous financial year.

The majority of notifications in the education sector were made about registered teachers. However, over a quarter of education-related notifications in 2024–25 were made about subjects of allegation who are not registered teachers.¹³⁶

Table 23. Mandatory notifications in the education sector by subject of allegation VIT registration 2022–23 to 2024–24 and Scheme total

Sector	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Since the start of the Scheme	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Registered ¹³⁷	334	77	589	77	689	73	2,486	74
Not registered	102	23	173	23	260	27	878	26
Total	436	100	762	100	949	100	3,364	100

Sexual misconduct is the most common allegation type for the whole education sector since the start of the Scheme (36 per cent). The education sector accounts for 72 per cent of all sexual misconduct allegations across all sectors subject to the Scheme.

Sexual misconduct has been the most common conduct type in non-government Catholic and non-government independent schools since the start of the Scheme (31 per cent and 45 per cent respectively).

In 2024–25, sexual misconduct was the most common allegation type in government schools (36 per cent). This is in line with the previous two years, where the majority of allegations in government schools related to sexual misconduct.

¹³⁵ Some information about the education sector can be found at: <https://www.vic.gov.au/statistics-victorian-schools-and-teaching>.
¹³⁶ Many roles in schools do not require a person to be a registered teacher, including for example support staff and learning support officers.
¹³⁷ Includes a small number of notifications for the period 2017–25 where subjects of allegation ceased to be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching after the notification was submitted.

Table 24. Reportable allegations by education service type and conduct type¹³⁸ 2022–23 to 2024–25 and Scheme total

Service type	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Since the start of the Scheme	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Government school	672	100	974	100	1,041	100	4,349	100
Sexual misconduct	266	40	314	32	371	36	1,488	34
Physical violence	195	29	296	30	340	33	1,373	32
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	118	18	148	15	110	11	751	17
Sexual offences	55	8	100	10	75	7	376	9
Significant neglect of a child	38	6	116	12	145	14	361	8
Non-government school – Catholic	685	100	677	100	743	100	3,948	100
Sexual misconduct	172	25	170	25	175	24	1,230	31
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	206	30	201	30	177	24	1,036	26
Physical violence	148	22	154	23	137	18	872	22
Significant neglect of a child	137	20	114	17	176	24	597	15
Sexual offences	22	3	38	6	78	10	213	5
Non-government school – Independent	574	100	373	100	340	100	2,306	100
Sexual misconduct	263	46	153	41	146	43	1,046	45
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	152	26	109	29	65	19	544	24
Physical violence	110	19	73	20	78	23	472	20
Significant neglect of a child	43	7	34	9	38	11	156	7
Sexual offences	6	1	4	1	13	4	88	4
Senior secondary course/qualification	20	100	108	100	23	100	227	100
Sexual misconduct	12	60	65	60	12	52	116	51
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	1	5	29	27	8	35	55	24
Physical violence	3	15	6	6	2	9	31	14
Significant neglect of a child	2	10	8	7	1	4	21	9
Sexual offences	2	10	0	–	0	–	4	2

¹³⁸ Where conduct types are absent from this table, this is because the Commission has not been notified of reportable allegations for that conduct type.

Table 24. Reportable allegations by education service type and conduct type 2022–23 to 2024–25 and Scheme total (continued)

Service type	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Since the start of the Scheme	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
International student course	2	100	0	–	0	–	13	100
Sexual misconduct	1	50	0	–	0	–	11	85
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	1	50	0	–	0	–	1	8
Sexual offences	0	–	0	–	0	–	1	8
Student exchange program	4	100	0	–	0	–	10	100
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	1	25	0	–	0	–	3	30
Sexual misconduct	3	75	0	–	0	–	3	30
Sexual offences	0	–	0	–	0	–	2	20
Significant neglect of a child	0	–	0	–	0	–	1	10
Physical violence	0	–	0	–	0	–	1	10
Employee – other/admin	1	100	4	100	2	100	9	100
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	0	–	3	75	0	–	3	33
Physical violence	0	–	1	25	2	100	3	33
Sexual offences	1	100	0	–	0	–	2	22
Sexual misconduct	0	–	0	–	0	–	1	11
Total	1,958		2,136		2,149		10,862	

In 2024–25, the substantiation rate for the education sector was 43 per cent with 950 reportable allegations found to be substantiated. This was higher than the substantiation rate for the education sector since the start of the Scheme (36 per cent) and higher than the overall substantiation rate for all sectors since the start of Scheme which is 30 per cent.

Sexual misconduct and sexual offences made up just over half of all substantiated findings (52 per cent) in the education sector in 2024–25. Almost a half of substantiated findings in the education sector since the start of the Scheme have been for sexual misconduct (43 per cent).

Table 25. Category of reportable conduct for substantiated allegations and substantiation rates in the education sector 2022–23 to 2024–25¹³⁹ and Scheme total^{140 141}

Category	2022–23			2023–24			2024–25			Since the start of the Scheme		
	No.	Prop. (%)	Sub. Rate	No.	Prop. (%)	Sub. Rate	No.	Prop. (%)	Sub. Rate	No.	Prop. (%)	Sub. Rate
Sexual misconduct	253	47	39%	271	51	47%	391	41	53%	1,256	43	41%
Physical violence	131	24	44%	131	24	44%	188	20	36%	812	28	41%
Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child	79	15	19%	54	10	14%	125	13	27%	373	13	20%
Significant neglect of a child	47	9	39%	37	7	31%	137	14	44%	254	9	38%
Sexual offences	32	6	42%	42	8	46%	109	11	62%	222	8	48%
Total	542	100	35%	535	100	36%	950	100	43%	2,917	100	36%

Sexual offences had the highest substantiation rate of all conduct types in the education sector in 2024–25 with almost two thirds of all allegations found to be substantiated (62 per cent). This was higher than the substantiation rate for this conduct type in the education sector since the Scheme began (48 per cent) and higher than the overall substantiation rate for all conduct types in the education sector (36 per cent).

Over half of sexual misconduct allegations in the education sector were found to be substantiated in 2024–25 (53 per cent).

¹³⁹ By year of finalisation by the Commission.

¹⁴⁰ In some cases, data from previous financial years expressed throughout this report is different from that published in previous Commission annual reports. Variations are due to the fact that Scheme data is live and includes open matters, causing some movement of data over time. New information can come to light as a matter progresses that alters previous classifications or results in matters being excluded because they are subsequently determined to be out of the scope of the Scheme.

¹⁴¹ No. refers to total number of substantiated reportable conduct incidents. Prop. (%) refers to the proportion of substantiated allegations by conduct type within the year. Substantiation rate is the percentage of all findings in the conduct type for the education sector that were substantiated by the organisations conducting investigations.

Historical allegations

An historical allegation is defined as an allegation of reportable conduct where the conduct occurred prior to the start of the Scheme on 1 July 2017.¹⁴²

The Scheme requires certain allegations of past or historical reportable conduct to be reported to the Commission and investigated by organisations. Some historical matters can proceed through an investigation without undue challenge, while others can be significantly impacted by the passage of time.

Since the commencement of the Scheme, 808 (eight per cent) of all mandatory notifications involved alleged conduct which is historical. These notifications involved 2,575 allegations. Just under a quarter of these historical allegations relate to alleged conduct that occurred in the three years prior to the start of the Scheme (23 per cent). However, 19 per cent of these historical allegations refer to alleged conduct that occurred prior to 1980.

Allegations associated with subjects of allegation engaged in the education sector make up 46 per cent of all historical notifications and 45 per cent of historical reportable allegations. This is slightly higher than the overall proportion of reportable allegations, where those in the education sector make up 41 per cent.

Allegations associated with subjects of allegation engaged by religious bodies make up 33 per cent of all historical notifications and 37 per cent of historical reportable allegations. Since the commencement of the Scheme, 72 per cent of allegations in relation to religious organisations were historical.

Over a third (35 per cent) of reportable allegations involving conduct before 1980 involved sexual offences. For the period 1980 to 2014,¹⁴³ almost a third (32 per cent) of the allegations were for sexual offences and almost a third (31 per cent) were for sexual misconduct.

However, in the three years prior to the Scheme commencing, over one-third (38 per cent) of all allegations related to sexual misconduct, while sexual offences accounted for 14 per cent.

Historical substantiated reportable conduct

To date, 566 allegations of historical reportable conduct relating to 164 notifications have been found to be substantiated. This is a substantiation rate of 29 per cent,¹⁴⁴ which is consistent with the overall substantiation rate.

Almost half (46 per cent) of substantiated historical allegations were in the education sector and a further 33 per cent were in religious bodies. Within the education sector, 69 per cent of substantiated historical allegations related to sexual misconduct and sexual offences (57 per cent and 12 per cent respectively). Within religious bodies, 65 per cent of substantiated historical allegations related to sexual misconduct and sexual offences (21 per cent and 44 per cent respectively).

¹⁴² For example, religious bodies came within scope of the Scheme on 1 January 2018. A historical allegation in relation to a religious body concerns conduct alleged to have occurred before 1 January 2018. Determining whether a historical allegation is covered by the Scheme requires examination of when the allegation was made, the employment or engagement of the worker or volunteer and when the alleged conduct is alleged to have occurred. For the purposes of this analysis, allegations have been classified as historical if they relate to conduct prior to the start of the Scheme (1 July 2017). This means there may be an underestimation of historical allegations.

¹⁴³ This period refers to January 1980 to June 2014.

¹⁴⁴ Includes four allegations where the Commission was notified that a Subject of Allegation (SOA) was deceased following the completion of the investigation.

Sharing information

The Scheme enables and encourages the sharing of information about allegations, findings and other information to assist organisations to take action to support children’s safety. The information sharing provisions in the CWSA are supplemented by the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme and the Child Information Sharing Scheme in Victoria.

Notifications to Victoria Police

Organisations and the Commission are required to notify Victoria Police of reportable allegations that may involve conduct that is criminal in nature.

Of the 2,232 notifications of reportable allegations made to the Commission in 2024–25, 43 per cent (968) were reported to Victoria Police by either the organisation or the Commission as they involved possible criminal conduct.¹⁴⁵

During this period, the Commission referred 428 notifications that had not previously been reported to police.

For the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025, the Commission referred 59¹⁴⁶ matters that involved conduct that may be criminal in nature that were not within the jurisdiction of the Scheme.

Where a notification has been investigated by police and charges laid, outcomes since the start of the Scheme have included:

- terms of imprisonment, including suspended sentences
- good behaviour bonds
- intervention orders, including family violence intervention orders granted
- community correction orders
- diversion
- adjournment without conviction.

¹⁴⁵ The Commission referred an additional two notifications that were received in the previous financial year.

¹⁴⁶ There were an additional 16 notifications that were referred to Victoria Police as the conduct may be criminal in nature. At the end of the financial year, these 16 notifications were under review by the Commission to determine whether they are within the scope of the Scheme, and, if so, whether a mandatory notification is required to be submitted by an organisation.

¹⁴⁷ In some cases, data from previous financial years expressed throughout this report is different from that published in previous Commission annual reports. Variations are due to the fact that Scheme data is live and includes open matters, causing some movement of data over time.

Referrals to Working with Children Check Victoria

One of the important ways the Commission contributes to children’s safety is by referring substantiated allegations of reportable conduct to the Secretary of the Department of Government Services (DGS). This enables DGS to assess whether the person should retain a Working with Children Check under the *Worker Screening Act 2020*.

In 2024–25, 484 unique individuals found to have committed substantiated reportable conduct were referred to DGS in relation to 1,690 substantiated allegations of reportable conduct.

Since the start of the Scheme, a total of 2,081 unique individuals found to have committed reportable conduct have been referred to DGS in relation to 6,032¹⁴⁷ substantiated allegations of reportable conduct.

In 2024–25, the Commission and DGS have worked to progress changes to support greater sharing of information about outcomes of assessments. The Commission’s 2019 and 2023 reviews of the administration of the *Working with Children Act 2005* and the *Worker Screening Act 2020*, recommended the Victorian Government amend laws to enable DGS to share information with the Commission on the outcomes of all assessments. DGS has implemented a process to enable this information to be shared with the Commission, and we hope to have this commence next year.

Referrals to Victorian Institute of Teaching

On becoming aware that a registered teacher is the subject of a reportable allegation, the Commission must notify VIT pursuant to the *Education Training and Reform Act 2006*. The Commission must also refer any findings of substantiated reportable conduct to VIT at the completion of an investigation. In practice, the Commission referred all findings from completed reportable conduct investigations to VIT in 2024–25.

In 2024–25, the Commission advised VIT of 807¹⁴⁸ notifications of reportable allegations in relation to 789 unique registered teachers and shared information with VIT about the findings in 507 finalised notifications in relation to 494 unique registered teachers.

Since the start of the Scheme, the Commission has advised VIT of 2,869¹⁴⁹ notifications relating to 2,677 unique registered teachers and has shared information about 1,819¹⁵⁰ finalised notifications.

Public notifications

The Commission can be notified of allegations by any person and that person can choose to remain anonymous and have protection under the CWSA if disclosures are made in good faith.

In 2024–25, public notifications came from a range of sources including workers in organisations subject to the Scheme about the conduct of workers inside their organisation and other organisations, parents or carers, Victoria Police, other regulators and members of the general public.

In 2024–25, the Commission received 535 disclosures of potential reportable allegations from persons other than the head of an organisation. These related to 368 unique organisations.¹⁵¹ The Commission discloses allegations received from public notifications to the employer of the subject of allegation, ensuring any requests by public notifiers for anonymity are maintained. Mandatory notifications were subsequently submitted by organisations in relation to 44 per cent of public notifications and an investigation subsequently undertaken. In some cases, multiple public notifications may be made about the same conduct and will result in only one mandatory notification being made.

Some public notifications involve allegations that are not within the scope of the Scheme. The Commission assessed 16 per cent as being outside jurisdiction of the Scheme. A further 13 per cent of public notifications were under consideration as at 30 June 2025.

The number of public notifications received by the Commission has risen significantly over the life of the Scheme. In 2024–25, the Commission received an average of 134 public notifications per quarter.

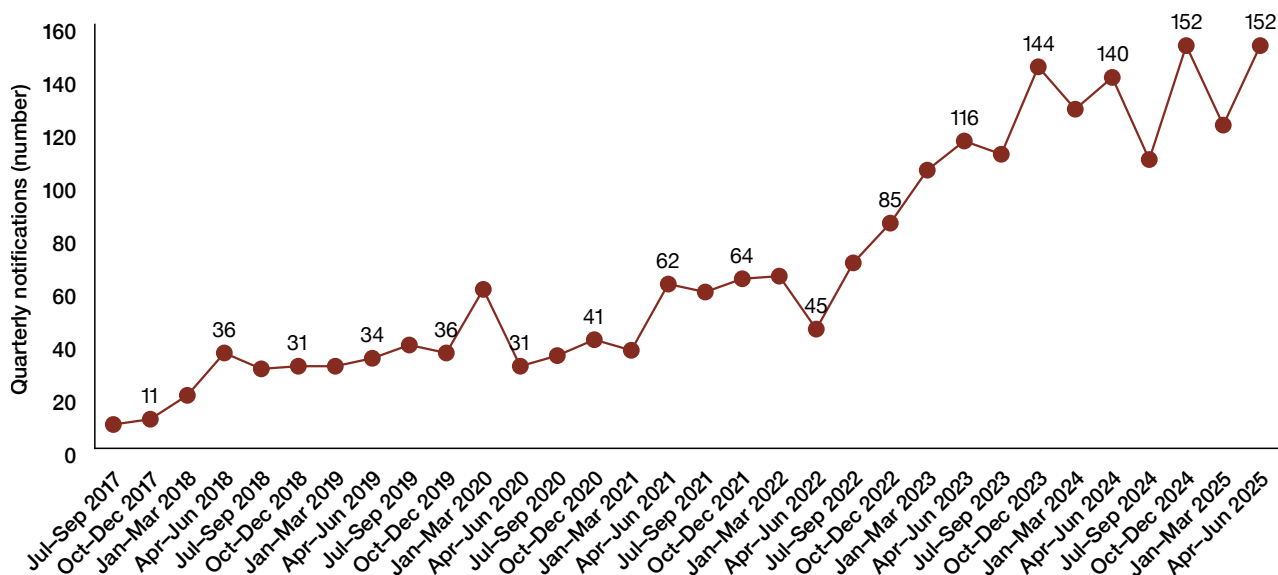
¹⁴⁸ This refers to notifications of reportable allegations, not individual teachers. Individual teachers could have more than one notification of reportable allegations made against them. Registered teachers do not work solely in schools and may work in sectors including early childhood education and out-of-home care.

¹⁴⁹ Data was extracted on 1 July 2025 from a live database and is subject to change.

¹⁵⁰ Data was extracted on 1 July 2025 from a live database and is subject to change.

¹⁵¹ Public notifications are recorded based on the subject of allegation and the organisation they are employed or engaged by.

Figure 9. Public notifications by quarter received 2017–18 to 2024–25



The majority of public notifications in 2024–25 related to the education sector (33 per cent) and out-of-home care (16 per cent) which is consistent with the Scheme to date, 39 per cent and 16 per cent respectively.

Table 26. Public notifications received by sector 2021–22 to 2023–24 and Scheme total ¹⁵²

Sector	2022–23		2023–24		2024–25		Since the start of the Scheme	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Education	165	44	194	37	178	33	869	39
Out-of-home care	52	14	87	17	84	16	364	16
Early childhood education	56	15	91	17	108	20	321	15
Disability	21	6	46	9	47	9	165	7
Religious body	14	4	19	4	26	5	111	5
Child protection	5	1	19	4	4	<1	59	3
Accommodation	12	3	6	1	8	1	40	2
Health	8	2	6	1	6	1	31	1
Victorian government departments	2	<1	2	<1	3	<1	11	<1
Youth justice	1	<1	2	<1	2	<1	6	<1
Other	40	11	51	10	69	13	233	11
Total	376	100	523	100	535	100	2,210	100

¹⁵² In some cases, data from previous financial years expressed in this report is different from that published in previous Commission annual reports. Variations are due to the fact that Scheme data is live and includes open matters, causing some movement of data over time. New information can come to light as a matter progresses that alters previous classifications.

Own motion investigations and other compliance actions

In limited circumstances, the Commission may, on its own motion, investigate an allegation of reportable conduct by a worker or volunteer who is or was engaged by an organisation subject to the Scheme (sections 16O(1) and 16O(2) of the CWSA). The Commission may also conduct an investigation concerning any inappropriate handling of, or response to, a reportable allegation (section 16O(3) of the CWSA).

In 2024–25, the Commission completed¹⁵³ nine own motion investigations¹⁵⁴ under section 16O(1) and 16O(2) of the CWSA and has completed 18 own motion investigations since the start of the Scheme.

The Commission has completed one own motion investigation into the inappropriate handling of, or response to, an investigation into a reportable allegation by an organisation under section 16O(3). This was concluded in 2022–23 and no new investigations of this type were commenced in 2024–25.

In 2024–25, 21 own motion investigations were active with the Commission commencing two new investigations and progressing 19 existing investigations commenced in previous years. Sectors involved in these own motion investigations include disability, early childhood education, education, out-of-home care and religious bodies.

In 2024–25, the Commission received and determined one application for internal review of the Commission’s findings made in an own motion investigation.

Table 27. Reportable Conduct Scheme compliance actions 2024–25

Action type	No.
Section 16K – recommendation for action regarding reportable conduct systems	nil
Section 16O – own motion investigation concerning a reportable allegation	21 ¹⁵⁵
Section 16ZG – notice to produce	nil

Table 28. Reportable Conduct Scheme enforcement action 2024–25

Action type	No.
Section 16ZF – prosecution for providing false or misleading information	nil
Section 16ZH – application for civil penalty – failure to comply with a notice to produce	nil

Table 29. Reportable Conduct Scheme decisions reviewed 2024–25

Action type	No.
Section 16ZI – internal review	1
Section 16ZJ – review by VCAT	nil

¹⁵³ Completed means findings made about whether or not reportable conduct occurred.

¹⁵⁴ In addition, the Commission discontinued two own motion investigations under 16O(1) in 2024–25.

¹⁵⁵ This captures own motion investigations that were active during 2024–25.

Child Safe Standards

Overview

- In 2024–25 the Commission initiated compliance action in relation to 140 organisations for potential non-compliance with the Child Safe Standards (the Standards). In the same period, we also concluded compliance activity with 233¹⁵⁶ organisations. This was an increase on the previous years’ activity.
- The Commission used its compliance and enforcement powers to conduct 29¹⁵⁷ assessments of compliance with the Standards to drive improvements in child safety within 26 organisations in 2024–25.¹⁵⁸ This involved the Commission conducting two onsite inspections, issuing eight notices to produce documents or information and eight notices to comply with the Standards. The Commission issued four official warnings for non-compliance with notices issued by the Commission.
- The Commission continues to see some organisations failing to take adequate steps to reduce the risk of abuse to children posed by people who are under investigation for allegations of inappropriate behaviour with children or failing to take adequate steps to adequately screen leaders and volunteers working with children.
- The Commission has noted an increased effort by some organisations to share information with the community about their child safety systems.

Action by the Commission about non-compliance

The Standards are mandatory requirements that must be implemented by certain organisations that provide services or facilities for children, or that engage with children. They promote children’s safety by requiring organisations to take steps to prevent, respond to and report allegations of child abuse, and to maintain a culture and environment that supports children’s safety and wellbeing.

Our approach to regulation is to assist organisations through education and capacity building to develop an understanding of compliance requirements and ways to keep children safe to generate a robust culture of child safety.

The Commission is made aware of potential non-compliance with the Standards in a range of ways, including by members of the public contacting the Commission, through information gathered under the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Scheme) and concerns raised in public forums such as media reports.

We assess concerns about non-compliance, considering the seriousness of the concern, the risk profile of the organisation and whether we can achieve broader gains for children’s safety beyond a single organisation by engaging in compliance action.

Throughout 2024–25, the Commission continued with a graduated approach to achieving compliance by the organisations we regulate. In many instances, we can bring about improvements to children’s safety through education and support, with more significant powers being used for organisations that are uncooperative or that have repeated or serious failings in compliance, or where greater harm or significant risk of harm to children has

¹⁵⁶ This includes the conclusion of compliance cases commenced in prior years.
¹⁵⁷ This figure relates to completed assessments only where the assessment outcome has been determined. Assessments that were still to be completed as at 30 June 2025 are not included in this figure.
¹⁵⁸ Some organisations were assessed for a Standard on more than one occasion. In addition, this figure represents assessments commenced.

been identified.¹⁵⁹ Organisations are at different stages in their understanding of how to ensure children's safety, so the actions the Commission must take to support this will necessarily vary.

The Commission is one of six Standards co-regulators together with the Department of Health (DH), Wage Inspectorate Victoria (WIV), the Department of Education's Quality Assessment and Regulation Division (QARD), the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) and the Social Services Regulator (SSR).

Information and data presented in this section illustrates the Commission's activities and insights gathered as a result of those activities, and should not be used to compare compliance levels between sectors.

Since the Commission started administering the Standards on 1 January 2017, it has commenced action with 487 organisations following concerns of non-compliance with the Standards.

This year the Commission has seen increasing numbers of concerns raised about child safety in organisations. Compliance action was commenced by the Commission with 140 organisations in 2024–25 which is an increase on the previous year.

Table 30. Organisations by sector where the Commission started action about potential non-compliance with the Standards in 2024–25

Sector ¹⁶⁰	No.	%
Cultural, sporting or recreational services¹⁶¹	100	71
Community sporting clubs	49	
Other sporting organisations ¹⁶²	29	
Dance, acting, fine arts, music and theatre	17	
Other cultural and recreational services ¹⁶³	5	
Religious bodies¹⁶⁴	8	6
Transport services¹⁶⁵	6	4
Gym and play facilities¹⁶⁶	6	4
Coaching and tuition services¹⁶⁷	5	4
Entertainment and party services¹⁶⁸	4	3
Overnight camps¹⁶⁹	3	2
Other¹⁷⁰	8	6
Total	140	100

¹⁵⁹ This graduated approach to regulation is set out in more detail in the Commission's Regulatory Approach available on the Commission's website: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/about-us/our-regulatory-approach/>.

¹⁶⁰ Sector categories are based on the classifications listed in Schedule 1 of the CWSA. Some organisations may be categorised in multiple sectors due to the different types of services and facilities they provide. Organisations have been allocated to only one sector in this report with the sector chosen that is most representative of the services and facilities they provide to children and young people. Some sectors have been grouped together to aid in de-identifying the data.

¹⁶¹ Includes applicable entities that provide cultural, sporting or recreational services specifically for children.

¹⁶² Includes sporting peak bodies and associations and for-profit sports businesses.

¹⁶³ Includes special interest clubs and community clubs dedicated to cultural events.

¹⁶⁴ Includes religious bodies within the meaning of section 81 of the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*.

¹⁶⁵ Includes school bus services, and specialist school bus services.

¹⁶⁶ Includes indoor and outdoor recreational facilities specifically for children.

¹⁶⁷ Includes coaching and tutoring including language schools specifically for children.

¹⁶⁸ Includes youth event businesses, entertainment and children's party services.

¹⁶⁹ Includes businesses operating overnight camping facilities and programs specifically for children.

¹⁷⁰ Includes youth organisations, charities and not-for-profits, councils and counselling services.

We concluded compliance action with 233 organisations in 2024–25. As of 30 June 2025, there were 44¹⁷¹ open matters where the Commission had commenced but not yet concluded compliance action.

Table 31. Organisations by sector where the Commission has open action as at 30 June 2025 regarding concerns of non-compliance with the Standards

Sector ¹⁷²	No.	%
Cultural, sporting or recreational services ¹⁷³	26	59
Community sporting clubs	7	
Other sporting organisations ¹⁷⁴	14	
Cultural and recreational services ¹⁷⁵	5	
Religious bodies ¹⁷⁶	7	16
Victorian government departments and entities ¹⁷⁷	4	9
Other ¹⁷⁸	7	16
Total	44	100

Themes in non-compliance with the Standards

In 2024–25 the Commission was made aware of a number of matters relating to potential non-compliance with the Standards involving organisations:

- not taking action to properly manage risks to children where serious allegations of child abuse have been raised about a worker, volunteer or leader in the organisation, including where charges had been laid against the individual
- organisations engaging individuals who could not obtain a Working with Children Check (WWCC), or individuals under investigation for serious allegations of child abuse, due to poor screening practices.

The following case study demonstrates how the Commission would typically approach these situations focusing on immediate management of risks to children:

¹⁷¹ Cases are counted where action to address concerns about potential non-compliance with the Standards has commenced.

¹⁷² Sector categories are based on the classifications listed in Schedule 1 of the CWSA. Some organisations may come within multiple sectors due to the different types of services and facilities they provide. Organisations have been allocated to only one sector in this report with the sector chosen that is most representative of the services and facilities they provide to children and young people. Some sectors have been grouped together to aid in de-identifying the data.

¹⁷³ Includes applicable entities that provide cultural, sporting or recreational services specifically for children.

¹⁷⁴ Includes sporting peak bodies and associations and for-profit sports businesses.

¹⁷⁵ Includes dance schools, culture and language schools, theatre and acting organisations.

¹⁷⁶ Includes religious bodies within the meaning of section 81 of the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*.

¹⁷⁷ Includes departments within the meaning of the *Public Administration Act 2004* and applicable entities that are constituted by or under any Act and that has functions of a public nature.

¹⁷⁸ Includes not-for-profit organisations (not otherwise captured under other sectors in this table), counselling and other support services for children, entertainment and party services, gym and play facilities specifically for children.

Case study:

Managing a person of concern*

A community run youth service[†], Community 4 Youth, is informed by Victoria Police that allegations of serious sexual offences against children have been raised about a founding member and chairperson of their Board. Victoria Police have laid some charges, but none of the identified victims are clients of the youth service. They tell Community 4 Youth that the chairperson's Working with Children Card (WWCC) has been suspended. A small article appears in the newspaper about the charges.

Community 4 Youth have never faced a situation like this before, and their CEO contacts the Commission to discuss what they should do. The CEO states they decided years ago that board members didn't need a WWCC as they don't deliver any services themselves and only meet with children together with their parents as part of deciding whether the organisation should provide the children with support services. The CEO advises that the board met last night and decided there is no reason why the chairperson can't continue in his role as he is entitled to the presumption of innocence. The CEO says it would not be 'fair' to treat the chairperson as if he is guilty, stating 'he does so much for the organisation and that she and the other board members will just 'keep a closer eye on him' when he has anything to do with children.

From Community 4 Youth's website, the Commission identifies that the chairperson often attends the organisation's premises to support the 20 plus volunteers and staff while they are providing services to young people.

It is clear to the Commission that Community 4 Youth have not taken sufficient action to appropriately manage risks to children. There are also broader concerns with the organisation's compliance with the Standards and potential compliance with the *Worker Screening Act 2020*. The Commission meets urgently with the CEO and board secretary to discuss risk management, sharing information about screening practices under Standard 6, the requirements of the

Worker Screening Act and how this helps the organisation protect children. The Commission talks about the roles the chairperson has with the organisation and why there might be risks to children with their current approach of 'keeping a closer eye' on the chairperson. The Commission provides copies of the Commission's published guidance on managing risks to children and risk management templates.

The CEO ends the meeting stating she can't believe that the allegations would be true and appears reluctant to make any changes to the chairperson's involvement in the organisation. She states she will discuss this with the board when they meet again in a month.

The Commission issues Community 4 Youth with a Notice to Comply requiring the organisation to conduct a risk assessment and implement measures to reduce potential risks to children posed by the chairperson's involvement with the organisation. The Commission shares information about a potential breach of the *Worker Screening Act* with Working with Children Check Victoria.

The CEO and secretary ask to meet again urgently with the Commission. They advise they have now considered the situation and the Commission's advice. They are proposing to ask the chairperson to stand down while the court proceedings are underway and want to discuss what sort of involvement he could have in the organisation in the meantime as they feel strongly about his right to a presumption of innocence. With advice from the Commission, the CEO and secretary develop a risk management plan that sets out restrictions on the chairperson's ability to have any contact with children and young people in connection with Community 4 Youth. The chairperson will only be permitted to undertake duties that do not involve any form of contact with children or access to information about children. Given the long history the chairperson has with the organisation, the only way the risk management plan will work is if the organisation is told

of these restrictions. Otherwise, young people, staff and volunteers would think nothing of seeing the chairperson attending the premises and engaging with young people. The CEO and secretary prepare a communication to the organisation about the charges reported in the media and the steps they are taking to limit the chairperson's interactions with children. The communication also shares information about the organisation's reporting processes for raising child safety concerns.

The CEO and secretary contact the Commission again to advise that the chairperson has agreed to stand down from his role and to abide by the risk management plan. They have circulated the communication about this to the organisation. They said they were receiving lots of questions from parents and volunteers, but felt they were generally appreciative of the organisation's openness and transparency about the situation and the action they were taking to protect children.

The Commission advised Community 4 Youth that the Notice to Comply has been complied with and set up a time to meet with the CEO to discuss how the organisation was complying with the rest of the Standards.

** This case study is fictitious and based on themes from multiple cases where the Commission has taken action about concerns of non-compliance with the Standards. It does not represent any actual case handled by the Commission.*

† The fictitious organisation in this case study is a type of organisation that is not in scope for the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

The following are other common themes of non-compliance identified by the Commission in 2024–25:

- poor responses by organisations when child safety concerns or allegations of child abuse have been raised. This has included organisations not providing appropriate support to children after a concern has been raised, not appropriately managing risks to children or supporting alleged victims while an investigation is underway and minimising concerns that have been raised resulting in no action being taken
- organisations failing to provide children and young people with age-appropriate information to help them to understand how to raise a child safety concern, and organisations without any complaints handling processes
- organisations failing to take any action to identify and manage risks of child abuse at the organisation
- codes of conduct in organisations that do not set clear boundaries about appropriate and inappropriate conduct with children, that are not tailored to reflect the specific activities that the organisation undertakes with children or that have gaps that could expose to children to harm
- organisations that do not have any child safety policies and procedures
- staff who have not received any training or guidance from their organisation about child safety policies and practices
- organisations who are not sure if they need to take action, or what action to take, to manage risks to the children in their organisation when they are alerted to an adult in the organisation's community that is alleged to have perpetrated family violence.

When the Commission is alerted to concerns about child safety or non-compliance with the Standards, we take a range of actions depending on the circumstances of the organisation, the nature of the compliance issue and risks to children, any actions other regulators might be taking and the strategic impact that our actions may have. When taking compliance action, the Commission's aim is to change practices and behaviours in organisations to minimise the risk of harm to children and young people.

The following are some of the actions the Commission has taken in 2024–25 in response to potential non-compliance with the Standards:

- provided education and advice to organisations to support them to improve their compliance including by sending reminders to comply, meeting with organisations and sharing resources and templates to help them address gaps in their compliance to improve safety for children
- engaged with peak bodies, associations and other lead organisations, as well as delivered presentations at sector events, to support sector wide improvements in compliance and child safety
- gathered information and documents from organisations about their child safety policies and practices through requests for information, notices to produce, discussions with staff and volunteers, and inspections, and used this to assess compliance with the Standards and understand any potential child safety issues
- provided feedback and recommendations to organisations to help them address areas of non-compliance and risks to children
- issued notices to comply requiring organisations to address gaps in compliance with the Standards within a set timeframe for reasons including, the organisation not taking action in response to previously issued Commission feedback, or due to concerns about risks to children
- monitoring if action is taken by organisations to improve implementation of the Standards
- addressing failures to comply with Commission issued notices including through issuing official warnings.

The Commission's actions resulted in organisations taking action in 2024–25 and achieving outcomes that include:

- the development and implementation of a full child safety framework in the organisation including Codes of Conduct and a Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- organisations taking action to remove a person of concern from the organisation or restricting their access to children
- improved screening procedures for volunteers, employees and leaders at organisations
- organisations developing resources for children and young people with age-appropriate language about how to raise complaints and child safety concerns
- the development and implementation of complaints policies and processes to support child safety concerns to be raised and responded to
- organisations receiving increased interest and engagement from their community and families because they have demonstrated their prioritisation of children's safety through improving their child safety framework.

The following is a case study that illustrates some of the positive outcomes organisations have reported to the Commission after taking action to improve their compliance with the Standards:

Case study:

Becoming an organisation of choice by implementing the Standards*

The Commission received information from Victoria Police that a person of concern, who was under investigation for a criminal offence, was actively involved as a volunteer coaching assistant in a community sports club, Jumping Jacks Football Club.†

The Commission was told by Victoria Police it could not disclose information to the club given the sensitive stage in the investigation. As the matters being investigated had no connection to the club, permission was provided for the Commission to contact the club to discuss their implementation of the Standards.

A meeting was set up by the Commission with the club president and secretary to discuss the Standards. The club shared that it had junior and adult teams. They said they were aware of their obligations to implement the Standards but had not taken any specific action within their club saying they thought their association 'took care of all that'. They provided the Commission with a copy of their association's child safety and wellbeing policy, but said in preparation for their meeting with the Commission, they realised they had made a mistake. They shared that they incorrectly thought the association's policy covered them, when the association shared it with them to use as a template to help prepare their own policies. They said they were keen to do what was needed to fix the situation.

During the meeting with the club, the Commission identified some further gaps including:

- a lack of screening processes for staff and volunteers
- no code of conduct
- no documented child safety policies and procedures and no information made available for families and communities about child safety at the club
- no information for children and young people about their rights, how adults should and should not behave with children, or how to raise a complaint or child safety concern.

The Commission provided feedback to the club and requested they address these gaps.

The president contacted the Commission to advise they had addressed the Commission's feedback, had rolled out a full suite of policies and published information on their website for children and young people and families about their approach to child safety. The president shared he had been surprised to see an increase in sign-ups since rolling out their new approach to child safety and that a number of families told him they selected the club because it had child safety policies on their website, unlike some of the other local clubs. The president shared that, while some volunteers had been unhappy about the club asking them to go through a screening process, their association was being very supportive by reinforcing with volunteers that they had to do it. The Commission later identified in the club newsletter that the volunteer coaching assistant under investigation by Victoria Police had left the club following the implementation of the new child safety policies.

** This case study is fictitious and based on themes from multiple cases where the Commission has taken action about concerns of non-compliance with the Standards. It does not represent any actual case handled by the Commission.*

† The fictitious organisation in this case study is a type of organisation that is not in scope for the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Assessments of compliance with the Standards

The Commission assesses compliance with the Standards and provides guidance on addressing gaps in a variety of ways. In each case, the Commission will consider what approach is appropriate and take a balanced and proportionate approach.

For organisations who appear willing and have capacity to achieve compliance, assessments can involve a combination of discussions with the organisation, provision of advice and guidance, and assessments of child safe systems followed by recommendations from the Commission to address gaps in compliance.

Where risks to children are higher, the Commission may use a combination of more significant powers to assess compliance and generate improvements to children's safety including statutory requests for information or notices to produce, inspections and notices to comply that compel action by organisations to improve compliance within a set timeframe. The Commission conducted 29 assessments of compliance with the Standards using statutory tools with 26 organisations in 2024–25.¹⁷⁹

In 2024–25, the Commission conducted two onsite inspections, issued eight notices to produce documents or information and eight notices to comply with the Standards. Additionally, we issued four official warnings for non-compliance with a Commission issued notice.

Table 32. Statutory compliance and enforcement actions under the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*

Actions	No.
Request for information ¹⁸⁰	16
Notice to produce	8
Notice to comply	8
Official warning ¹⁸¹	4
Total	36

Table 33. Standards assessed by the Commission and outcomes 2024–25¹⁸²

Standard	Number of times Standard assessed	Non-compliance identified	No non-compliance identified
1	1	1	0
2	17	15	2
3	8	8	0
4	4	4	0
5	2	2	0
6	8	8	0
7	21	20	1
8	1	1	0
9	11	9	2
10	0	0	0
11	13	12	1

¹⁷⁹ Some organisations were assessed for a Standard on more than one occasion. Twenty-nine assessments were concluded in this period. Twenty-six organisations had an assessment commence.

¹⁸⁰ This captures where the Commission has issued a written request for information under section 40A of the CWSA as part of an assessment of compliance (listed in Table 33). Requests for information may also be issued in other kinds of compliance action which are not captured in this table.

¹⁸¹ Issued under section 36A of the CWSA.

¹⁸² Each Standard has more than one minimum requirement. Reference to a Standard in this table relates to where at least one minimum requirement for that Standard was assessed, noting not all minimum requirements for that Standard may have been assessed. In addition, the figures in this table relate to completed assessments only (where the outcome of the assessment has been finalised).

Child Safe Standards co-regulation

From January 2023 the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (CWSA) established six co-regulators as either sector regulators or integrated sector regulators. This group of six co-regulators includes the Commission, the Department of Health (DH), Wage Inspectorate Victoria (WIV), the Department of Education’s Quality Assessment and Regulation Division (QARD), the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) and from July 2024, the Social Services Regulator (SSR).

On 19 February 2019, the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*. Consistent with this agreement, several other states and territories in Australia also have a version of the Standards. In situations where organisations operate in multiple jurisdictions, Standards regulators may need to collaborate with an interstate regulator to take action on concerns about non-compliance with the Standards.

The Commission collaborates with the other five Victorian Standards regulators hosting a Standards Regulator Senior Executive Group and Steering Group to support the regulators to discuss issues of mutual importance to regulating the Standards. These forums are convened to build the co-regulatory approach between Standards regulators to further the safety of children and young people, reduce the regulatory burden for organisations and make best use of limited resources.

This year, the Commission chaired two Senior Executive Group meetings and seven Steering Group meetings. Together, the Standards regulators continued to progress a shared workplan to address three priority co-regulatory issues:

- working together to support organisations with more than one Standards regulator
- adopting a collaborative approach to safeguarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young

people and working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations

- sharing information effectively to promote child safety.

The Senior Executive Group developed a joint statement sharing our commitment to regulating Standard 1 in a way that best serves and prioritises the experiences of Aboriginal children and young people.

The Standards regulators have promoted consistency of child safety outcomes and continued to build capability through delivery of Community of Practice sessions, with officers meeting to share practice on topics such as assessment tools and methods and the Scheme.

The Commission worked with Standards regulators on several matters where an organisation is regulated by more than one regulator. In some matters, an agreed lead regulator engages with the organisation on concerns about non-compliance, sharing information with the other regulator(s) as appropriate. In other cases, both regulators may take action with appropriate coordination and information sharing occurring throughout to support each regulator to undertake their role, reduce regulatory burden and ensure a focus on child safety.

Action by sector regulators and integrated sector regulators

This section describes the activities engaged in by sector regulators (other than the Commission) and integrated sector regulators¹⁸³ to provide education, information and advice on the Standards and to monitor and enforce compliance in 2024–25. Each co-regulator takes a different approach to their role as a regulator consistent with the model established under the CWSA. Information and data presented in this section illustrates activities engaged in by sector regulators and integrated sector regulators and insights from those activities, and should not be used to compare compliance levels between sectors.

Department of Education

Quality Assessment and Regulation Division

The Department of Education's Quality Assessment and Regulation Division (QARD) is the integrated sector regulator for the Standards in the early childhood education sector.

Activities undertaken by QARD to support compliance with the Standards by organisations included:

- publishing articles about the Standards in its newsletters
- making material regarding the Standards available online¹⁸⁴
- raising the Standards as part of regular meetings with sector representatives, including the Early Childhood Education and Care Regulatory Reference Group
- conducting regional educative sessions and meetings with early childhood education and care approved providers and services that included information and discussions on the Standards.

All early childhood education services must comply with the Standards, and reflect the Standards within the service's policies, procedures and practices. QARD assesses compliance with the Standards as part of its broader regulatory visits to services, as well as through its investigations and assessments. These visits include discussions about the Standards but do not necessarily involve assessing compliance with all Standards.

In 2024–25, QARD considered the Standards as part of 4,210 broader regulatory visits to early childhood education services in Victoria. QARD identified non-compliance with the Standards in 97 regulatory visits. Non-compliances identified via QARD's broader regulatory approach were predominately against Standard 2 (84 non-compliances), Standard 8 (13 non-compliances), Standard 6 (12 non-compliances) and Standard 1 (11 non-compliances).

QARD continued a program of specific visits around the Standards throughout 2024–25. The Focused/Themed Child Safe Standards Visits Program saw QARD Authorised Officers (AO) undertake compliance visits focusing on all 11 Standards at 80 early childhood education services with a further two themed Standards visits (incorporating Standards 1, 6, 7, 8 and 9) at early childhood education services.

¹⁸³ Sector regulators are Department of Health and Wage Inspectorate Victoria and integrated sector regulators are the Department of Education (Quality Assessment and Regulation Division), Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority and the Social Services Regulator.

¹⁸⁴ This is available at <https://www.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services-child-safe-standards>.

Table 34. Standards assessed by QARD and outcomes 2024–25¹⁸⁵

Standard	Number of times Standard assessed	Non-compliance identified	No non-compliance identified
1	82	69	13
2	80	67	13
3	80	43	37
4	80	17	63
5	80	55	25
6	82	30	52
7	82	64	18
8	82	40	42
9	82	72	10
10	80	24	56
11	80	67	13

The highest level of non-compliance was identified in relation to Standard 9, in particular minimum requirement 9.1 which mandates that staff and volunteers are required to identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities. A common theme was the need for risk assessments for online environments. Visited services also showed higher non-compliance for minimum requirement 9.3 relating to risk management plans, considering risks posed by organisational settings, activities and the physical environment. Observations found that risk management plans were either not complete or lacked the detail required to be found compliant.

Services visited showed a degree of non-compliance with minimum requirements 7.1 and 7.4 regarding complaints handling processes. Observations made by AOs included that a number of complaints policies did not have a child

focus while others did not include information about reporting to authorities.

All early childhood education services with identified non-compliance with the Standards, either through QARD's broader regulatory visits or the Focused/Themed Child Safe Standards Visit Program, receive letters specifying the non-compliance. Services are required to address identified non-compliance within a specified timeframe and demonstrate to QARD that required action to meet compliance has occurred. QARD also meets with these services as required to provide advice.

QARD have continued to build the capability of its workforce in regulating the Standards and the role of QARD as an integrated sector regulator. In 2024–25 this included:

- four training modules delivered to 23 new QARD staff
- discussions about the Standards at its August 2024 Authorised Officer Forum, including a presentation by Victoria's Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People and sharing of new resources developed by the Commission for Children and Young People relating to Standard 1
- developing a new Standards Focused/Themed Visit training module in March 2025, with QARD AOs involved in the Focused/Themed CSS Visits Program supported via this training
- updated QARD-specific tools and templates designed to capture compliance evidence across all Standards as well as identified themes.

¹⁸⁵ These assessments were from the Focused Child Safe Standards Visits Program. Each Standard has more than one minimum requirement. Reference to a Standard in this table relates to where at least one minimum requirement for that Standard was assessed, noting not all minimum requirements for that Standard may have been assessed.

Department of Health

The Health Regulator¹⁸⁶ was formally established in February 2024 as the main regulatory oversight branch of the Department of Health following an announcement from the Minister of Health regarding improvements to regulation across the health system.

The Health Regulator undertook a range of education and capacity building activities, including the delivery of two Community of Practice sessions for health organisations. One session in October 2024 focused on Standard 6 with 37 participants across 27 organisations. In April 2025, a session with 52 participants across 26 organisations focused on Standard 1 and featured a presentation from the Department of Health's Deputy Chief Aboriginal Health Advisor.

The Health Regulator's range of child safety videos available on its website recorded over 1,900 views and publications on the Standards and the Scheme were downloaded more than 1,300 times.

In 2024–25 the Health Regulator continued the development and distribution of a series of targeted news bulletins to the health sector, each focused on a specific Standard alongside key topics relevant to health organisations. Content was informed by trends identified through general enquiries to the Health Regulator and ongoing monitoring of relevant news and sector developments. These bulletins, designed to support continuous awareness, engagement and compliance with the Standards, were distributed five times, to more than 1,000 recipients on each occasion.

The Health Regulator called for 'Champions in Child Safety' case studies from the health sector to showcase practical approaches in implementing the Standards. Selected submissions will be highlighted by the Health Regulator across the sector to champion child safety, promote compliance, and motivate and inspire others by sharing key insights, challenges and sector-led contributions. The initiative was developed in response to feedback from the April 2025 Community of Practice

meeting, reflecting the sector's commitment to continuous improvement and peer learning.

The Health Regulator developed and distributed a pilot survey to selected health organisations to gather information on their operations and engagement with children and young people. The data collected will support the Health Regulator to maintain an accurate and current sector profile and strengthen our education, communication, and information-sharing activities. Importantly, the findings will further inform risk profiling and evidence-based regulatory decisions, helping to identify higher-risk organisations and guide the targeted use of resources where regulatory action can most effectively reduce harm.

The Health Regulator is redeveloping an online self-assessment tool and supporting guidance material to strengthen sector compliance with the Standards and improve usability. The updates will embed sector-specific information, supporting health organisations to meet their obligations and uphold child safety. These tools are scheduled for publishing in 2025–26. The Health Regulator also manages a dedicated email inbox to provide organisations with information and advice about the Standards and distribute relevant materials to organisations.

In 2024–25 the Health Regulator undertook 11 assessments to assess potential non-compliance with the Standards and 21 cases were commenced relating to organisational scope and risk identification.

¹⁸⁶ Information available at <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/health-regulator>.

Table 35. Organisations where DH started action about potential non-compliance with the Standards by sector 2024–25 and cases open at 30 June 2025¹⁸⁷

Sector	Number of cases started in 2024–25	Number of cases open at 30 June 2025
Maternal and child health centres ¹⁸⁸	2	2
Public hospitals ¹⁸⁹	3	3
Public health services ¹⁹⁰	2	2
Denominational hospitals ¹⁹¹	2	2
Private hospitals ¹⁹²	2	2
Day procedure centres ¹⁹³	2	2
Multipurpose services ¹⁹⁴	2	2
Community health centres ¹⁹⁵	2	2
Mental health and wellbeing service providers ¹⁹⁶	6	6
State-funded drug or alcohol treatment services ¹⁹⁷	7	7

During the reporting period, enquiries and feedback to the Health Regulator regarding Standard 6 revealed uncertainty amongst the sector about screening practices, particularly around the use and applicability of Working with Children Checks (WWCC). Questions commonly focused on whether contractors in health settings required a WWCC, if volunteers under the age of 18 were subject to WWCC requirements, and what screening measures applied to students undertaking placements (in a health setting). In response, the Health Regulator held a dedicated Community of Practice session focused on Standard 6 to address these uncertainties and enhance understanding in the sector.

Enquiries and feedback received by the Health Regulator during the reporting period demonstrated a proactive commitment by health organisations to creating safer environments for children and young people.

¹⁸⁷ Cases 'commenced' and 'in progress' relate to 21 organisations. Cases 'closed' relates to 11 organisations. Ten of these cases commenced in 2024 with assessment undertaken and completed in 2024–25. Some organisations provide multiple services and therefore are counted under more than one sector/subsector type.

¹⁸⁸ Includes applicable entities that operate a maternal and child health centre.

¹⁸⁹ Includes hospitals listed in Schedule 1 of the *Health Services Act 1988* as a public hospital.

¹⁹⁰ Includes public health services within the meaning of the *Health Services Act 1988*.

¹⁹¹ Includes hospitals listed in Schedule 2 of the *Health Services Act 1988* as a denominational hospital.

¹⁹² Includes applicable entities that operate a private hospital within the meaning of the *Health Services Act 1988*.

¹⁹³ Includes applicable entities that operate a day procedure centre within the meaning of the *Health Services Act 1988*.

¹⁹⁴ Includes applicable entities that operate multipurpose services within the meaning of the *Health Services Act 1988*.

¹⁹⁵ Includes registered community health centres within the meaning of the *Health Services Act 1988*.

¹⁹⁶ Includes mental health and wellbeing service providers within the meaning of the *Mental Health Act 2022*.

¹⁹⁷ Includes applicable entities that receives funding under a State contract to provide drug or alcohol treatment services.

Table 36. Standards assessed by DH and outcomes
2024–25¹⁹⁸

Standard	Number of times Standard assessed	Non-compliance identified	No non-compliance identified
1	11	0	11
2	11	0	11
3	11	0	11
4	11	0	11
5	11	0	11
6	11	0	11
7	11	0	11
8	11	0	11
9	11	0	11
10	11	0	11
11	11	0	11

While no instances of non-compliance were identified during the reporting period, several opportunities for improvement were noted during the assessments.

No formal compliance or enforcement actions were required during the reporting period. All necessary outcomes were achieved through voluntary and assisted actions including general and targeted guidance and education, consistent with the Health Regulator's compliance and enforcement policy.¹⁹⁹

The Health Regulator conducted a program of targeted upskilling and capacity building in 2024–25 to support AOs to deepen their understanding and appropriate use of regulatory powers, strengthen their ability to promote compliance with relevant standards and foster a consistent and professional approach to regulatory practice. A program of reform work was continued to ensure the Health Regulator's tools and resources are fit for purpose.

¹⁹⁸ Each Standard has more than one minimum requirement. Reference to a Standard in this table relates to where at least one minimum requirement for that Standard was assessed, noting not all minimum requirements for that Standard may have been assessed.

¹⁹⁹ Available at <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/publications/health-regulator-compliance-enforcement-policy>.

²⁰⁰ Services in scope and requiring registration can be found at: <https://www.vic.gov.au/services-scope-new-scheme>.

²⁰¹ Applicable entities, other than a disability service provider within the meaning of the Disability Act, that provides disability services.

Social Services Regulator

The Social Services Regulator (SSR) commenced operation as an integrated sector regulator for the Standards on 1 July 2024, assuming responsibility for regulating organisations that had previously been regulated by DFFH. The SSR also assumed responsibility for regulating DFFH for the Standards, previously regulated by the Commission.

Social service providers in Victoria must register²⁰⁰ with the SSR. Many of these providers also have to meet the Standards. The SSR also regulates some sectors for the Standards that are not required to be registered including disability service providers.²⁰¹

At the time of registration, all new social service providers are requested to notify the SSR if they are required to comply with the Standards. Newly registered service providers receive a written reminder of their obligations to comply with the Standards together with links to resources available on the SSR website to support compliance.

Social service providers must report serious incidents during the delivery of a registered social service. Monitoring notifiable incidents helps the SSR to identify potential non-compliance with the Standards and supports the delivery of safe and effective services to children.

In 2024–25, the SSR maintained a strong focus on raising awareness of the Standards as a new integrated sector regulator. This involved providing information and supporting organisations to build their capacity to implement the Standards including:

- publishing the Standards bulletin focused on specific Standards and resources that organisations can use to implement the Standards

- preparing and publishing Standards resources including a fact sheet, all-in-one self-assessment tool, easy read documents and translated resources
- establishing and hosting three Consultative Committee meetings with representatives from peak bodies in the social service sector, establishing and co-chairing two Service Provider Reference Group meetings with service provider representatives from the social services sectors in scope of the SSR and establishing and facilitating two First Nations Reference Group meetings with representatives from the Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- hosting a series of webinars targeted at social service providers and organisations in scope of the Standards.

In 2024–25, the SSR initiated contact with 29 newly registered social service providers to remind them of their compliance obligations under the Standards. The SSR provided advice and guidance to 132 organisations through its help desk.

The SSR commenced 173 compliance activities in the last year, with nine remaining open at 30 June 2025.²⁰² In the 2024–25, 158 compliance activities were closed.²⁰³

Table 37. Organisations where SSR started action about potential non-compliance with the Standards by sector 2024–25 and cases open at 30 June 2025²⁰⁴

Sector	Number of cases started in 2024–25 ²⁰⁵	Number of cases open at 30 June 2025 ²⁰⁶
Disability services ²⁰⁷	6	1
Out-of-home care services ²⁰⁸	141	8 ²⁰⁹
State-funded support services for parents and families ²¹⁰	10	0
State-funded services in relation to family violence or sexual assault ²¹¹	2	0
State-funded child protection services ²¹²	14	0
Total	173	9

²⁰² Includes some compliance activity commenced in 2023–24 by DFFH that were transferred to the SSR.

²⁰³ Includes some compliance activity commenced in 2023–24 by DFFH that were transferred to the SSR.

²⁰⁴ The compliance activity data detailed in Table 37 does not indicate the total number of compliance activities undertaken by the SSR over the 2024–25 period. Table 37 provides data relating to compliance activity in relation to the Standards in response to a notifiable critical incident or other intelligence obtained by the SSR.

²⁰⁵ Each case in this column is a separate organisation. Where organisations provide multiple service types, the sector has been recorded where SSR became aware of concerns about potential non-compliance with the Standards.

²⁰⁶ Each case in this column is a separate organisation. Where organisations provide multiple service types, the sector has been recorded where SSR became aware of concerns about potential non-compliance with the Standards.

²⁰⁷ Includes applicable entities, other than a disability service provider within the meaning of the *Disability Act 2006*, that provides disability services.

²⁰⁸ Includes out-of-home care services within the meaning of the CWSA

²⁰⁹ Includes six cases commenced by the SSR and two cases commenced by DFFH.

²¹⁰ Includes applicable entities that receive funding under a State contract to provide support services for parents and families.

²¹¹ Includes applicable entities that receive funding under a State contract to provide services in relation to family violence or sexual assault.

²¹² Includes applicable entities that receive funding under a State contract to provide child protection services.

While all service providers the SSR engaged with indicated commitment to child safety, some common themes or issues found to contribute to non-compliance with the Standards included the following:

- risk management frameworks at an organisational level and risk assessments at service area level were lacking
- complaint processes were not clearly communicated and understood by children, young people, and families
- records of staff training were not kept and/or communicated
- staff training programs did not adequately demonstrate cultural safety and child safety training.

Table 38. Standards assessed by SSR and outcomes 2024–25²¹³

Standard ²¹⁴	Number of times Standard assessed	Non-compliance identified	No non-compliance identified
2	4	3	1
7	1	1	0
8	2	2	0
9	2	2	0

In 2024–25, the SSR issued four requests for information or documents²¹⁵, five reminders of obligations to comply with the Standards, two improvement notices²¹⁶ and five requests for information to relevant agencies and the Commonwealth.²¹⁷

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority

The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) is the Standards regulator for registered schools, school boarding premises, school-sector providers of courses to overseas students (that is, providers on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS)), non-school senior secondary and foundation secondary providers (NSSFSP), student exchange organisations (SEOs) and VRQA-regulated Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) that deliver training to children under 18 years of age.

Registered schools, school boarding premises, and schools registered as CRICOS providers, SEOs and RTOs are required to comply with Ministerial Order No.1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools and school boarding premises (Ministerial Order 1359).²¹⁸ Non-school CRICOS providers, SEOs, RTOs and NSSFSPs are required to comply with the Standards.

The VRQA has appointed two review bodies with responsibility for reviewing registered schools' compliance with the Standards.²¹⁹ These are the Department of Education (DE) for government schools and the Victorian Catholic Education Authority (VCEA) for non-government Catholic schools.²²⁰

During 2024–25, the VRQA continued to provide guidance and stakeholder engagement focused on assisting providers to comply with the Standards.

²¹³ Data included in this table only relates to detailed assessments of the Standards.

²¹⁴ Each Standard has more than one minimum requirement. Reference to a Standard in this table relates to where at least one minimum requirement for that Standard was assessed, noting not all minimum requirements for that Standard may have been assessed. Where a Standard is not listed in the table, this means no assessments of this Standard were conducted.

²¹⁵ Section 108 of the *Social Services Regulation Act 2021*.

²¹⁶ Section 138 of the *Social Services Regulation Act 2021*.

²¹⁷ Section 193 of the *Social Services Regulation Act 2021*.

²¹⁸ This is in addition to being required to comply with the gazetted Standards as per section 19 of the CWSA.

²¹⁹ Appointed under section 4.3.2 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*. See VRQA, 'School regulation', <https://www2.vrqa.vic.gov.au/independent-schools>.

²²⁰ The VRQA undertakes assessments of the Standards when it registers government, Catholic and independent schools, school boarding premises, SEOs, CRICOS providers and RTOs. The VRQA also directly reviews independent schools. Under the review body arrangements, VCEA and DE undertake cyclical reviews of Catholic and government schools and must report to the VRQA on the compliance of their schools.

The Standards for education providers website, a shared DE and VRQA resource hosted on the vic.gov.au platform, continues to promote the implementation of the Standards by providing guidance for education providers about how to comply. The website maintained high user satisfaction and remains a key resource, with 147,651 session views by 110,246 users in 2024–25, representing a significant increase from the previous reporting period.

The VRQA conducts annual client and stakeholder research, including to ensure education providers are satisfied with the level of guidance provided on the Standards. Ninety-one per cent of independent schools, 93 per cent of government schools and 96 per cent of Catholic schools agreed the website is helpful in implementing the Standards. Eighty-five per cent of RTOs agreed. The research will assist in the development of further enhancements to the VRQA's website and guidance for education providers.

In 2024–25 the VRQA held information sessions for schools, school boarding premises and CRICOS providers that included guidance about how to comply with the Standards. In addition, the VRQA hosted briefings for school reviewers, prospective schools and school boarding premises, existing schools and other education and training providers. The VRQA also presented at forums for review bodies, system owners, and peak bodies including Independent Schools Victoria.

Both DE and VCEA continue to support their registered schools to comply with the Standards including providing resources and guidance, regular communications to schools and school boarding premises, and providing training to their reviewers. DE also provided training and

briefings to school leaders and provided direct support to government schools to comply during the review process.

VRQA has a Review Body Community of Practice together with its appointed review bodies (VCEA and DE) for registered schools. Discussion of Ministerial Order 1359 and assuring consistent approaches to compliance and assessment continued to be a topic at the Review Body Community of Practice.

The VRQA, DE and VCEA conduct cyclical and out-of-cycle reviews of registered schools and school boarding premises against the minimum standards for registration including Ministerial Order 1359.²²¹

Across all types of registered schools, when initially assessed Standard 11 (76 per cent),²²² Standard 6 (62 per cent) and Standard 2 (48 per cent) had higher levels of non-compliance. All registered schools reviewed were fully compliant with Ministerial Order 1359 at the end of the review process.

In independent registered schools assessed by the VRQA, Standard 7, Standard 11, Standard 8 and Standard 2 had higher levels of non-compliance when initially assessed.

DE reported that the highest level of non-compliance for government registered schools when initially assessed was against Standard 11 and Standards 6, 2 and 8 also had higher levels of non-compliance.

In relation to Catholic registered schools, VCEA reported higher levels of non-compliance against Standard 11, Standard 9, Standard 6 and Standard 7 when initially assessed.²²³

²²¹ Ministerial Order 1359 was in effect for the full reporting period following its implementation on 1 July 2022. The 2024–25 reporting period represents the second full 12-month cycle the VRQA is reporting on compliance monitoring activities against Ministerial Order 1359. For this reason, comparison with data prior to the 2023–24 reporting cycle is not comparable as it relates to assessments against the previous Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 870.

²²² The reason for high rates of non-compliance with Child Safe Standard 11 is that clause 15 of Ministerial Order 1359, which sets out the actions schools must take to comply with this standard, is highly detailed and duplicates several other clauses of Ministerial Order 1359 that require schools to implement actions and develop policies, procedures and other documents that include required information and are informed by consultation with the school community. As a result, any single non-compliance with one of those other clauses is also recorded as a non-compliance with Child Safe Standard 11.

²²³ As for 2023–24, the level of non-compliance reported overall by Catholic schools is significantly lower than government and independent schools. Until 2025, reviews of Catholic schools were undertaken by the diocesan school proprietors on behalf of the VCEA. In 2025, the VCEA has commenced directly reviewing Catholic schools. However, as noted above, the data is for completed school reviews, and the 2024–25 data largely relates to reviews conducted under the previous model.

VRQA and its review bodies apply different review models and assessment methodologies which may produce disparity in data across sectors. The VRQA continues to seek to drive consistency and quality across the sector through its Review Body Assurance Program and its Review Body Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This includes a new MoU that will require uplift of the VCEA's review and assurance of Catholic schools, driving quality and consistency through the Review Body Assurance Program, and requiring the VCEA to monitor and quality assure its reviews of schools and school boarding premises in 2025.

Table 39. Standards assessed for registered schools, school boarding premises and CRICOS providers and outcomes 2024–25²²⁴

Standard	Number of assessments ²²⁵				Non-compliance identified			Number assessed as not compliant following rectification		
	All schools ²²⁶	Government	Catholic	Independent	Government	Catholic	Independent	Government	Catholic	Independent
1	601	459	97	45	61	3	19	0	0	0
2	601	459	97	45	254	7	30	0	0	0
3	601	459	97	45	188	2	24	0	0	0
4	601	459	97	45	147	3	15	0	0	0
5	601	459	97	45	144	2	19	0	0	0
6	601	459	97	45 ²²⁷	342	7	25	0	0	0
7	601	459	97	45	112	7	32	0	0	0
8	601	459	97	45	198	4	30	0	0	0
9	601	459	97	45	118	8	24	0	0	0
10	601	459	97	45	133	6	22	0	0	0
11	601	459	97	45	409	19	30	0	0	0

²²⁴ Assessments in this table under Ministerial Order 1359 were conducted by the VRQA, the DE and the VCEA. This table consolidates the data for registration activity for schools and school boarding premises, including re-approval of CRICOS providers, school and school boarding premises reviews, school and school boarding premises investigations and assessments following a complaint made to VRQA. The investigations identified here are completed. This data does not include ongoing Standards investigations/enquiries.

²²⁵ There were 18 CRICOS re-registrations that that did not require assessment against Ministerial Order 1359 because they had been assessed within the previous 12 months through other regulatory activity, or were a government or Catholic school and assessed by review bodies within the last 12 months. A further three CRICOS re-registrations did not include an assessment because an assessment was undertaken as part of the school's cyclical review.

²²⁶ More than one assessment may have been conducted with a school or school boarding premises.

²²⁷ There was an additional assessment completed in an independent school as a result of a complaint made to VRQA. This data is not presented in the table as it was not a full assessment of Standard 6. The assessment did not find any non-compliances with the Standard.

Table 40. Standards assessed for non-school senior secondary and foundation secondary providers (NSSFSP), student exchange organisations (SEO) and registered training organisations (RTO) and outcomes 2024–25

Standard	Number of assessments			Non-compliance identified			Number assessed as not compliant following rectification		
	NSSFSP	SEO	RTO ²²⁸	NSSFSP	SEO	RTO	NSSFSP	SEO	RTO
1	2	11	6	1	9	3	0	0	0
2	2	11	6	2	9	3	0	0	0
3	2	11	6	2	9	4	0	0	0
4	2	11	6	2	10	3	0	0	0
5	2	11	6	1	10	5	0	0	0
6	2	11	6	2	10	4	0	0	0
7	2	11	6	1	10	4	0	0	0
8	2	11	6	2	10	5	0	0	0
9	2	11	6	2	10	4	0	0	0
10	2	11	6	2	10	5	0	0	0
11	2	11	5	2	11	4	0	0	0

During the period, the VRQA did not exercise any of the powers contained in section 41K(3) of the CWSA. The VRQA used its other powers under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* to ensure compliance with the Standards by imposing conditions on five SEOs. It was otherwise not required to use regulatory powers to ensure compliance of schools and other providers during the reporting period, instead taking an educative approach, which used guidance and support to achieve compliance.

Wage Inspectorate Victoria

Businesses that employ children under 15 years of age need a Child Employment Licence from the Wage Inspectorate Victoria and are required to abide by child employment laws, which include the Standards and the *Child Employment Act 2003* (CE Act).

To support and promote compliance with the Standards and child employment laws, the Wage Inspectorate undertook a range of educational and engagement activities, including:

- delivering targeted presentations and webinars to key stakeholders such as the Child Employment Entertainment Working Group, ABC, casting agents, universities and McDonald's
- publishing updated guidance and resources on the Standards via the Wage Inspectorate's website
- developing and delivering an E-Learning module focused on employer obligations.

²²⁸ Twenty-four RTOs were approved or reapproved in the period. The 18 RTOs not assessed are registered schools that would be assessed by the VRQA or review bodies as part of a school review or do not deliver to students under 18.

A total of 645 employers were issued a child employment licence, during which they received information outlining their obligations under the Standards.

AOs conducted field visits and audits across Bendigo, Ballarat and Shepparton, inspecting over 100 employers.

In 2024–25, the Wage Inspectorate commenced 122 checks into potential non-compliance with child employment laws including assessing for compliance with Standards 6 and 7 and completed 160 checks. No cases remained open at year-end. Standard 6 was assessed in 160 instances, with 22 assessments identifying a breach. Standard 7 was assessed in 142 instances, with non-compliance identified on 12 occasions.

The Wage Inspectorate also assessed a larger employer within the entertainment industry against all Standards. The employer was found to be non-compliant and was educated on their requirements and notified that future compliance checks would occur.

Some employers provided feedback outlining the challenge in meeting the 50 minimum requirements and evaluating the impact of such on their business operations, as well as the value of educative tools and resources.

Table 41. Standards assessed by Wage Inspectorate and outcomes 2024–25²²⁹

Standard	Number of times Standard assessed	Non-compliance identified	No non-compliance identified
1	1	1	0
2	1	1	0
3	1	1	0
4	1	1	0
5	1	1	0
6	160	22	138
7	142	12	130
8	1	1	0
9	1	1	0
10	1	1	0
11	1	1	0

During 2024–25, Wage Inspectorate issued five notices to produce information or documents relating to compliance with the Standards.

²²⁹ Each Standard has more than one minimum requirement. Reference to a Standard in this table relates to where at least one minimum requirement for that Standard was assessed, noting not all minimum requirements for that Standard may have been assessed.

Enforcement action by all Standards regulators

The Commission is required to report on enforcement action taken by all Standards regulators.

Table 42. Enforcement action taken by Standards regulators in 2024-25²³⁰

Enforcement action ²³¹	Number issued by the Commission	Number issued by SSR	Number issued by Wage Inspectorate
Notice to produce	8	–	5
Notice to comply	8	2 ²³²	–
Official warning ²³³	4	–	–

All Standards co-regulators continued to take an educative approach in 2024–25 to support organisations in complying with the Standards or used enforcement tools available under other Acts they administer.

²³⁰ Section 41K(3), CWSA.

²³¹ No regulators took enforcement action using enforceable undertakings, infringements, official warnings (under the *Infringements Act 2006*) or any court proceedings.

²³² SSR have the power to issue an improvement notice under section 138 of the *Social Services Regulation Act 2021* which is broadly equivalent to the power to issue a notice to comply under section 31 of the CWSA.

²³³ Issued under section 36A of the CWSA.

Corporate services and financial summary

On 20 July 2016, under section 53 of the *Financial Management Act 1994*, the Minister for Finance approved Commission financial statements to be included in the accounts of the former Department of Health and Human Services (now the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, DFFH) in its annual report.

Table 43 provides a summary of the Commission's expenditure for 2024–25.

Table 43. Commission expenditure 2022–23 to 2024–25

Expenditure	2024–25 (\$)	2023–24 (\$)	2022–23 (\$)
Salaries and on costs	14,422,233	13,076,179	11,999,315
Grants and other transfers	–	–	–
Operating expenses	2,031,903	1,973,573	2,952,272
Depreciation	–	–	–
Total expenditure	16,454,136	15,049,752	14,951,587

Asset Management Accountability Framework (AMAF) maturity assessment

The Commission does not have any assets for the purposes of the AMAF.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Disclosure index

Commission for Children and Young People financial statements are now included in the accounts of DFFH and, therefore, disclosures under 'Financial statements required under Part 7 of the *Financial Management Act 1994*', 'Other requirements under Standing Direction 5.2' and 'Other disclosures required by Financial Reporting Directions (FRD) in notes to the financial statements' are referenced in DFFH's report of operations and disclosure index.

Table 44. Commission disclosures

Legislation	Requirement	Page
<i>Standing Directions and Financial Reporting Directions</i>		
<i>Report of operations</i>		
Charter and purpose		
FRD 22	Manner of establishment and the relevant ministers	10, 16
FRD 22	Purpose, functions, powers and duties	16–17
FRD 22	Key initiatives and projects	18–22
FRD 22	Nature and range of services provided	16
Management and structure		
FRD 22	Organisational structure	146
Financial and other information		
FRD 10	Disclosure index	143
FRD 12	Disclosure of major contracts	155
FRD 15	Executive disclosures	146, 152
FRD 22	Employment and conduct principles	148
FRD 22	Occupational health and safety policy	147
FRD 22	Summary of the financial results for the year	141
FRD 22	Significant changes in financial position during the year	N/A
FRD 22	Major changes or factors affecting performance	N/A
FRD 22	Subsequent events	N/A
FRD 22	Application and operation of the <i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>	155
FRD 22	Compliance with building and maintenance provisions of the <i>Building Act 1993</i>	156
FRD 22	Statement on National Competition Policy	N/A
FRD 22	Application and operation of the <i>Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012</i>	156
FRD 22	Application and operation of the <i>Carers Recognition Act 2012</i>	156
FRD 22	Details of consultancies over \$10,000	153
FRD 22	Details of consultancies under \$10,000	154
FRD 22	Disclosure of government advertising expenditure	153
FRD 22	Disclosure of information and communication technology expenditure	154
FRD 22	Reviews and studies expenditure	N/A
FRD 22	Statement of availability of other information	157

Table 44. Commission disclosures (continued)

Legislation	Requirement	Page
<i>Standing Directions and Financial Reporting Directions</i>		
FRD 22	Asset Management Accountability Framework maturity assessment	141
FRD 22	Disclosure of emergency procurement	157
FRD 22	Disclosure of social procurement activities under the Social Procurement Framework	158
FRD 22	Disclosure of procurement complaints	158
FRD 24	Reporting of environmental data	158
FRD 25	Local Jobs First	153
FRD 29	Workforce data disclosures	149–151
SD 5.2	Specific requirements under Standing Direction 5.2	1–159
Compliance attestation and declaration		
SD 5.4.1	Attestation for compliance with Ministerial Standing Direction	159
SD 5.2.3	Declaration in report of operations	1
Legislation		
<i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>		155
<i>Building Act 1993</i>		156
<i>Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012</i>		156
<i>Carers Recognition Act 2012</i>		156
<i>Disability Act 2006</i>		157
<i>Local Jobs First Act 2003</i>		153
<i>Financial Management Act 1994</i>		159

Appendix 2. Governance and organisational structure

Commissioners

Principal Commissioner

The Principal Commissioner has all the functions and powers of the Commission, and any other powers or functions conferred on her by the CCYP Act or any other Act. In March 2025, the Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People, Liana Buchanan, left the Commission after nine years in the role. Meena Singh is currently Acting Principal Commissioner.

Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People

In April 2022, Meena Singh was appointed to the role of Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People for a five-year term. The Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People is responsible for leading the functions of the Commission relating to Aboriginal children and young people.

Executive officers

Leanne Barnes

In February 2022, Leanne Barnes commenced as the Chief Executive Officer of the Commission for a five-year term. Ms Barnes provides operational leadership to the Commission and ensures its effective and efficient management.

Emily Sanders

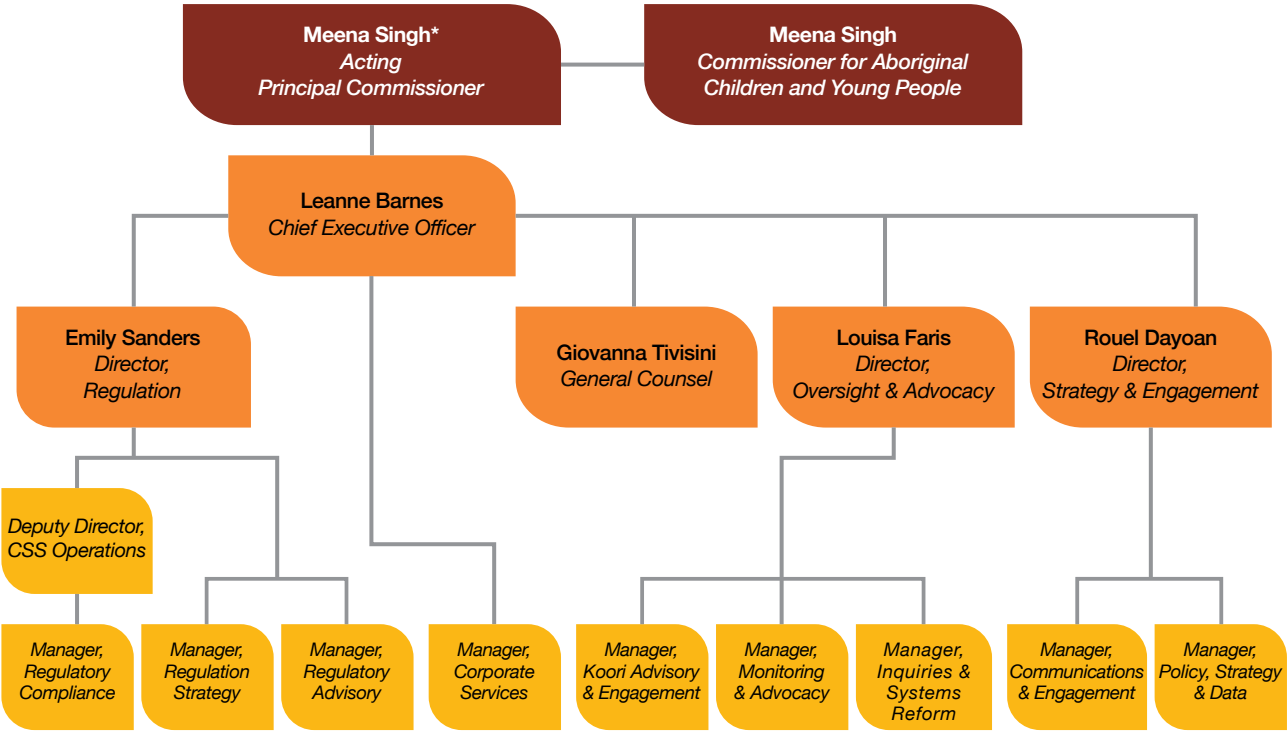
Emily Sanders was appointed Director, Regulation in February 2018 and has been reappointed to the role until February 2026. Ms Sanders is responsible for managing the operational components and regulatory functions of the Reportable Conduct Scheme and Child Safe Standards.

Giovanna Tivisini

Giovanna Tivisini was appointed to the executive role of General Counsel in 2019 and is responsible for the delivery of legal and investigation services across the Commission's portfolios.

Organisational structure as at 30 June 2025

Figure 10. Organisational chart



*Pending recruitment of a Principal Commissioner, Meena Singh will act in the role and continue in her role as the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People

Audit and Risk Committee membership and roles

The Audit and Risk Committee consists of the following members:

- Fiona Green, Chairperson
- Mary Polis, Independent Member
- Michael Shatter, Independent Member.

The primary role of the Audit and Risk Committee is to review and advise the executive of the Commission on matters of financial accountability, internal financial and non-financial controls, and risk management.

The Audit and Risk Committee provides oversight and advice to the executive of the Commission in relation to:

- the Commission’s financial performance
- the Commission’s financial reporting processes
- the effective operation of the Commission’s risk management framework
- the charter, scope of work, performance and independence of the Commission’s internal audit function
- recommendations made by the internal auditor and the implementation of actions to resolve issues raised
- matters of accountability and internal control affecting the financial operations of the Commission
- the effectiveness of management information systems and other systems of internal financial and non-financial controls
- the acceptability, disclosure of, and correct accounting treatment for significant transactions that are not part of the Commission’s normal course of business.

Occupational health and safety

The Commission is committed to ensuring all staff remain safe and healthy at work in accordance with its obligations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007.

In 2024–25, the Commission continued its ongoing internal safety reporting process, ergonomic assessments for staff, a tailored employee wellbeing program and dedicated vicarious trauma sessions for particular staff and teams. Many of these processes and programs were tailored to support staff working both in the office and at home (hybrid working).

The Commission continued its engagement with Medibank Health Solutions to deliver expert wellbeing support to all staff at the Commission. The employee wellbeing program consists of bi-monthly telephone-based counselling for staff to discuss any issues they may be experiencing, either as a result of the subject matter they deal with at work, other work-related issues or any personal concerns. The frequency of counselling sessions can be increased if required.

Uptake of the employee wellbeing program continued to increase from previous years with over 70 per cent of staff participating in the program in 2024–25.

As mentioned above, in 2024–25, the Commission also arranged for the delivery of bespoke vicarious trauma group training sessions to teams at high-risk of exposure to vicarious trauma. In 2024–25, the Commission also piloted a group trauma-informed supervision program for staff.

New starters at the Commission receive an occupational health and safety induction program that includes a health and safety related tour of the Commission’s office and demonstration of the evacuation process.

New staff are also required to complete a dedicated workplace health and safety e-learning module.

Occupational Health and Safety Committee meetings

The Commission has an Occupational Health and Safety Committee. The committee consists of elected management and staff representatives, the Commission’s health and safety representatives and secretariat. The committee is chaired by the Commission’s Manager, Corporate Services.

Four occupational health and safety committee meetings were held in 2024–25.

Injuries and incident management

There were no reported injuries in 2024–25. In 2023–24, there were three reported injuries.

The low number of reported injuries over the past two years can largely be attributed to the fact that staff continue to work both in the office and at home rather than just in an office-based environment. However, staff have been reminded regularly that any injuries incurred at home while working for the Commission are reportable injuries. In addition, staff have been regularly reminded to take care when cleaning their workstations and surrounding areas in anticipation of a move to a new office location in 2025.

In 2024–25, there were no WorkCover claims.

Employment and conduct principles

The Commission is committed to applying merit and equity principles when appointing staff. The Commission’s selection processes ensure that applicants are assessed and evaluated fairly and equitably based on the key selection criteria and other accountabilities without discrimination.

Employees have been correctly classified in workforce data collections.

Our commitment to child safety

The Commission is committed to providing a child-safe and child-friendly environment, where children and young people with whom the Commission has contact with are safe, feel safe and are able to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

The Commission’s *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* and *Child Safe Code of Conduct* apply to the commissioners, staff, contractors, volunteers and authorised persons engaged by the Commission.

Appendix 3. Workforce data

Public sector values and employment principles

The *Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees of Special Bodies* applies within the Commission.

Comparative workforce data

The Commission employed 87 people as at 30 June 2025, which is an increase of seven employees from the same time last year (Tables 45a and 45b). The data is consistent with 30 June 2024 across most indicators. There has been a slight increase to the number of employees aged 15–24 due to the employment of additional project support officers to assist the Commission with youth engagement. The Commission has also employed ongoing STS officers (three) for the first time during 2024–25 as part of the implementation of a new organisational structure that commenced on 1 July 2024.

Appendix 3. Workforce data
continued

Table 45a. Workforce data as at 30 June 2025

30 June 2025		All employees		Ongoing			Fixed-term and casual	
		Number (headcount)	FTE	Full-time (headcount)	Part-time (headcount)	FTE	Number (headcount)	FTE
Demographic data	Gender							
	Men	18	17.1	14	0	14	4	3.1
	Women	69	63.2	37	20	52.8	12	10.4
	Self-described	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
	Age							
	15–24	7	4.5	1	0	1	6	3.5
	25–34	16	15.6	10	2	11.6	4	4
	35–44	24	22	15	9	22	0	0
	45–54	23	22.2	14	4	17.2	5	5
	55–64	12	11	6	5	10	1	1
	65+	5	5	5	0	5	0	0
Classification data	Victorian Public Service 1–6 grades	81	74.5	49	19	64	13	10.5
	VPS 2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	VPS 3	4	2.3	0	0	0	4	2.3
	VPS 4	19	17.1	12	3	13.9	4	3.2
	VPS 5	35	33.1	20	11	29.1	4	4
	VPS 6	23	22	17	5	21	1	1
	Senior employees	6	5.8	2	1	2.8	3	3
	Executives	3	3	0	0	0	3	3
	STS	3	2.8	2	1	2.8	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total employees		87	80.3	51	20	66.8	16	13.5

Table 45b. Workforce data as at 30 June 2024

30 June 2024		All employees		Ongoing			Fixed-term and casual	
		Number (headcount)	FTE	Full-time (headcount)	Part-time (headcount)	FTE	Number (headcount)	FTE
Demographic data	Gender							
	Men	14	12.9	10	0	10	4	2.9
	Women	67	61.8	37	15	48.6	15	13.2
	Self-described	Nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
	Age							
	15–24	3	1.9	0	0	0	3	1.9
	25–34	21	19.7	13	1	13.8	7	5.9
	35–44	20	17.7	10	6	14.4	4	3.3
	45–54	20	19.4	14	3	16.4	3	3
	55–64	12	11.1	6	4	9.1	2	2
	65+	5	4.9	4	1	4.9	0	0
Classification data	Victorian Public Service 1–6 grades	78	71.7	47	15	58.6	16	13.1
	VPS 2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	VPS 3	3	1.9	0	0	0	3	1.9
	VPS 4	19	17.8	14	2	15.2	3	2.6
	VPS 5	33	30.4	19	7	24.6	7	5.8
	VPS 6	23	21.6	14	6	18.8	3	2.8
	Senior employees	3	3	0	0	0	3	3
	Executives	3	3	0	0	0	3	3
	STS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total employees		81	74.7	47	15	58.6	19	16.1

The figures in Tables 45a and 45b exclude those on leave without pay or absent on secondment, external contractors/consultants, temporary staff employed by employment agencies, and a small number of people who are not employees but are appointees to a statutory office, as defined in the *Public Administration Act 2004*.

All figures reflect employment levels during the last full pay period of each year.

‘Ongoing’ employees means people engaged on an open-ended contract of employment and executives engaged on a standard executive contract who are active in the last full pay period of June.

The following table discloses the annualised total salary for senior employees of the Commission, categorised by classification. The salary amount is reported as the full-time annualised salary.

Table 46. Annualised total salary by \$40,000 bands for executives and other senior non-executive staff as at 30 June 2025

Income band (salary)	Executives	STS	Other
\$160,000 – \$199,999	0	1	0
\$200,000 – \$239,999	1	2	0
\$240,000 – \$279,999	1	0	0
\$280,000 – \$319,999	1	0	1
Total	3	3	1

Workforce inclusion

Equal opportunity and workforce diversity and inclusion are highly valued at the Commission.

In 2021–22, the Commission undertook a workplace review under the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, and in 2022, the Commission developed and submitted its first *Gender Equality Action Plan 2022–2025*.

The Commission’s four-year *Gender Equality Action Plan* included an analysis of available workforce data to identify and address any inequities evident from the data. A number of strategies and actions were then developed to assist and further strengthen the Commission as a workplace that celebrates and promotes employee diversity and inclusion.

During 2024–25, the Commission continued to work on the strategies outlined in its *Gender Equality Action Plan* and in late 2025, will report final outcomes to the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector. A new Gender Equality Action Plan will then be developed in early 2026.

In 2024–25 the Commission continued to finalise a draft of its *Reconciliation Action Plan* and had consulted, and incorporated feedback from Reconciliation Australia. It is anticipated that the Commission will release its first Reconciliation Action Plan in 2025–26.

Executive data

For the Commission, a member of the Senior Executive Service (SES) is defined as a person employed as an executive under Part 3 of the *Public Administration Act 2004*. All figures reflect employment levels at the last full pay period in June of the current and corresponding previous reporting year.

Table 47 discloses the total number of SES for the Commission, broken down by gender.

Table 47. Total number of SES for the Commission, broken down into gender

Class	Total		Men		Women		Self-described	
	No.	Var.	No.	Var.	No.	Var.	No.	Var.
SES-1	2	0	0	0	2	0	nil	nil
SES-2	1	0	0	0	1	0	nil	nil
Total	3	0	0	0	3	0	nil	nil

Table 48 below lists the number of executive positions that are occupied at the end of the financial year compared to the previous year. The table lists the actual number of executives, non-executive senior staff (Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People) and accountable officers (Principal Commissioner) over the reporting period. Separations are those that have left the Commission during the reporting period.

Table 48. Reconciliation of executive numbers

	2024–25	2023–24
Executives	3	3
Non-executive senior staff	1	1
Accountable officer	1	1
Separations	1	0
Total numbers at 30 June 2025	4	5

Appendix 4. Other disclosures

Local jobs first

The *Local Jobs First Act 2003* introduced in August 2018 brings together the *Victorian Industry Participation Policy* and *Major Project Skills Guarantee* policy, which were previously administered separately.

Departments and public sector bodies (which includes special bodies such as the Commission) are required to apply the Local Jobs First policy in all projects valued at \$3 million or more in metropolitan Melbourne or, for statewide projects, \$1 million or more for projects in regional Victoria.

The *Major Project Skills Guarantee* applies to all construction projects valued at \$20 million or more.

The Commission did not engage in any applicable tenders or projects during the reporting period.

Advertising expenditure

In 2024–25 the Commission did not commission any advertising campaigns with a total media spend of \$100,000 or greater (exclusive of GST).

Consultancy expenditure

Consultancies \$10,000 or greater

In 2024–25 the Commission engaged 15 consultancies with individual costs greater than \$10,000. The total value of those consultancies was \$498,461 (Table 49).

Investigations in the below table refer to own motion investigations concerning reportable allegations conducted under section s16O of the CWSA.

Appendix 4. Other disclosures

continued

Table 49. Consultancies valued at \$10,000 or greater

Consultant	Purpose of consultancy	Total approved project fee (excl. GST)	Expenditure 2024–25 (excl. GST)	Future expenditure (excl. GST)
Allens Linklaters	Investigation	40,000	40,000	–
FOI Solutions	Advice	13,230	11,340	–
FOI Solutions	Advice	59,727	39,528	–
FOI Solutions	Advice	140,637	100,537	–
Foleys List Pty Ltd	Advice	26,600	26,600	–
Grange Advisory	Advice	61,200	16,920	44,280
Justitia Lawyers	Investigation	49,773	48,306	–
List A Barristers	Advice	16,402	16,402	–
Maddocks	Investigation	42,710	41,107	–
Maddocks	Investigation	18,740	18,740	–
Minter Ellison	Advice	25,818	20,740	–
Rapid Impact	CCYP Strategy Development	21,600	21,600	–
Socialens Consulting	South Sudanese Australian expert working group report	10,500	10,500	–
Victorian Government Solicitors Office	Advice	32,500	14,591	17,909
Viaggio Mather Consulting	Investigation process model and compliance function management	71,550	71,550	–
Total		630,987	498,461	62,189

Consultancies less than \$10,000

In 2024–25, the Commission engaged 23 consultancies with individual costs less than \$10,000. The total value of those consultancies was \$101,122.

Information and communication technology expenditure

For the 2024–25 reporting period, the Commission had a total information and communication technology expenditure of \$301,694 (Table 50).

Non-business-as-usual information and communication technology expenditure was \$71,947. This related to case management system enhancements, website functionality improvements and IT commissioning of new premises. Business-as-usual expenditure predominantly related to system licences and hosting fees.

Table 50. Commission ICT expenditure

Business-as-usual	Non-business as usual	Operational expenditure	Capital expenditure
(Total)	(Total = Operational expenditure and capital expenditure)		
\$229,747	\$71,947	\$71,947	\$0

Disclosure of major contracts

The Commission did not enter into any contracts greater than \$10 million in value.

Freedom of information

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act) allows the public a right of access to documents held by the Commission. The purpose of the FOI Act is to extend as far as possible the right of the community to access information held by government departments, local councils, ministers and other bodies subject to the FOI Act.

An applicant has a right to apply for access to documents held by the Commission. This comprises documents both created by the Commission or supplied to the Commission by an external organisation or individual, and may also include maps, films, microfiche, photographs, computer printouts, computer discs, tape recordings and videotapes. Information about the type of material produced by the Commission is available on the Commission’s website under its Part II Information Statement.

The FOI Act allows the Commission to refuse access, either fully or partially, to certain documents or information. Examples of documents that may not be accessed include cabinet documents; some internal working documents; law enforcement documents; documents covered by legal professional privilege, such as legal advice; personal information about other people; and information provided to the Commission in confidence and information that is confidential under another Act.

Under the FOI Act, the FOI processing time for requests received is 30 days. However, when external consultation is required under sections 29, 29A, 31, 31A, 33, 34 or 35 of the FOI Act, the processing time is 45 days. Processing

time may also be extended by periods of 30 days, in consultation with the applicant. With the applicant’s agreement this may occur any number of times. However, obtaining an applicant’s agreement for an extension cannot occur after the expiry of the timeframe for deciding a request.

If an applicant is not satisfied by a decision made by the Commission, under section 49A of the FOI Act, they have the right to seek a review by the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner within 28 days of receiving a decision letter.

Making a freedom of information request

Freedom of information requests can be made using the options available on the Commission’s website. An application fee of \$32.70 applied in 2024–25. Access charges may also be payable if the document pool is large, and the search for material is time consuming.

Access to documents can also be obtained through a written request to the Commission, as detailed in section 17 of the FOI Act.

When making a freedom of information request, applicants should ensure requests are in writing, and clearly identify the documents sought.

Requests for documents in the possession of the Commission should be addressed to:

Chief Executive Officer
Commission for Children and Young People
Level 16, 150 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000.

Alternatively, email contact@ccyp.vic.gov.au and attention it to the Commission’s Chief Executive Officer.

Freedom of information statistics

During 2024–25, the Commission received 11 applications from members of the public. This is a slight decrease in applications received compared to 2023–24 (16 received).

Of the 11 applications received, all decisions were made within the statutory 30-day period. For all applications that progressed, access to documents were denied in full.

One decision made by the Commission during 2024–25 was reviewed by the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner. No decisions made during 2024–25 were referred to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Further information

Further information regarding the operation and scope of freedom of information can be obtained from the FOI Act, regulations made under the Act and the [Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner’s website](#).

Compliance with the *Building Act 1993*

The Commission does not own or control any government buildings and is exempt from notifying its compliance with the building and maintenance provisions of the *Building Act 1993*.

Compliance with the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012*

The *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012* encourages and assists people in making disclosures of improper conduct by public officers and public bodies. The Public Interest Disclosures Act provides protection to people who make disclosures in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosures Act and establishes a system for the matters disclosed to be investigated and rectifying action to be taken.

The Commission does not tolerate improper conduct by employees, nor the taking of reprisal action against those who come forward to disclose such conduct. It is committed to ensuring transparency and accountability in

its administrative and management practices and supports the making of disclosures that reveal corrupt conduct, conduct involving a substantial mismanagement of public resources, or conduct involving a substantial risk to public health and safety or the environment.

The Commission will take all reasonable steps to protect people who make such disclosures from any detrimental action in reprisal for making the disclosure. It will also afford natural justice to the person who is the subject of the disclosure to the extent it is legally possible.

Reporting procedures

Disclosures of improper conduct or detrimental action by the Commission or any of its employees may be made to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission:

Level 1, North Tower
459 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
Phone: 1300 735 135
Website: www.ibac.vic.gov.au.

Public interest disclosures statistics

During 2024–25, no disclosures were made to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission by individuals regarding the Commission and/or its staff that the Commission is aware of.

Compliance with the *Carers Recognition Act 2012*

The Commission supports the principles of the *Carers Recognition Act 2012* and demonstrate this through a commitment of providing flexible working arrangements for staff to support their roles as carers.

Continued flexibility was awarded to staff during 2024–25 and Commission staff were supported to adopt hybrid working arrangement to work both at home and the office to support work-life balance.

Additional Commission information available on request

In compliance with the requirements of the Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance, details in respect of the items listed below have been retained by the Commission and are available on request, subject to the provisions of the FOI Act and any other relevant laws and Commission policies.

- a) a statement that declarations of pecuniary interests have been duly completed by all relevant officers
- b) details of shares held by a senior officer as nominee or held beneficially in a statutory authority or subsidiary
- c) details of publications produced by the entity about itself, and how these can be obtained
- d) details of changes in prices, fees, charges, rates and levies charged by the entity
- e) details of any major external reviews carried out on the entity
- f) details of major research and development activities undertaken by the entity
- g) details of overseas visits undertaken including a summary of the objectives and outcomes of each visit
- h) details of major promotional, public relations and marketing activities undertaken by the entity to develop community awareness of the entity and its services
- i) details of assessments and measures undertaken to improve the occupational health and safety of employees
- j) a general statement on industrial relations within the entity and details of time lost through industrial accidents and disputes
- k) a list of major committees sponsored by the entity, the purposes of each committee and the extent to which the purposes have been achieved
- l) details of all consultancies and contractors including:
 - consultants/contractors engaged
 - services provided
 - expenditure committed to for each engagement.

The information is available on request from:

Chief Executive Officer
Commission for Children and Young People
Level 16, 150 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Compliance with the Disability Act

The Commission acknowledges the importance of strengthening the rights of people with a disability and is committed to creating and maintaining an accessible and inclusive environment for all people with a disability. This includes Commission employees, stakeholders or members of the public.

The Commission supports the whole-of-government *Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan 2022–2026*, a four-year plan that outlines the actions the Victorian Government will take to ensure the Victorian community is inclusive and accessible.

In 2022, the Commission also released its first *Gender Equality Action Plan 2022–2025*, which has a focus on intersectionality, including disability. A number of actions have been developed in this four-year plan to address potential gaps, pending the collection of improved data on experience of disability.

In 2025, the Commission moved to a new office location and lessons learnt from a disability audit of the Commission’s previous office will be considered in the new premises.

Disclosure of emergency procurement

The Commission did not activate any emergency procurement activities in 2024–25.

Disclosure of social procurement activities under the Social Procurement Framework

The Social Procurement Framework governs how the Victorian Government undertakes social procurement.

In 2019, the Commission sought and received an exemption from developing its own social procurement strategy due to the Memorandum of Understanding and procurement related support provided by DFFH.

The department's current *Social Procurement Strategy 2023–25* applies to all procurement activities of both the department and the Commission. As such, the overall administration, monitoring and reporting of all social procurement activities for the Commission is managed by DFFH.

The Commission acknowledges the importance of DFFH's *Social Procurement Strategy 2023–25* and works closely with the department to ensure procurement activities align with the Victorian Governments' *Social Enterprise Strategy 2021–2025*.

Disclosure of procurement complaints

The Commission did not receive any formal procurement complaints in 2024–25.

Reporting of environmental data

The Commission is committed to environmental sustainability in its operations. Through the Memorandum of Understanding with DFFH, the department is responsible for the overall management of the Commission's office lease and subsequent utilities.

The Commission notes that DFFH's *Health and Human Services Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan 2022–26* is progressing, and the reporting of all environmental data by DFFH includes the Commission.

The Commission itself minimises the use of electricity and water by using efficient appliances and office equipment, including energy-efficient lighting. The Commission creates and stores records electronically and printing is generally discouraged. The Commission has also decreased its number of printers in 2024–25 from three to two printers and will further decrease this to one printer later in 2025. When printing documents, the Commission also uses 100 per cent recycled paper and encourages double-sided printing.

The Commission separates waste systems into recycled, landfill and compost, and bins are cleared daily. Takeaway coffee cups are also separated and recycled through a dedicated coffee cup recycling system. A specific aluminium can recycling scheme also exists.

In 2024–25, Commission staff continue to adopt hybrid working arrangements and work both at home and the office. Office ceiling lights are also set on timers to automatically turn off outside regular business hours.

As a benefit of staff working from home in some capacity during 2024–25, the Commission has also minimised water usage in the office and has significantly reduced the creation of waste. Building waste statistics are also regularly provided to the Commission by building management at 570 Bourke Street.

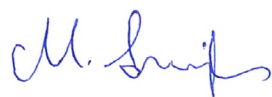
As per the Commission's *Domestic Travel and Expenses Policy*, staff are encouraged to use public transport where possible when undertaking business activities, and the Commission does not have its own government fleet vehicles assigned to it.

The Commission relocated to a new office premise in 2025 and has continued similar initiatives and processes at its new office location.

Attestation for financial management compliance with Standing Direction 5.1.4

Commission for Children and Young People Financial Management Compliance Attestation Statement

I, Meena Singh, certify that the Commission for Children and Young People has no Material Compliance Deficiency with respect to the applicable Standing Directions under the *Financial Management Act 1994* and Instructions.



Meena Singh
Acting Principal Commissioner
Commission for Children and Young People

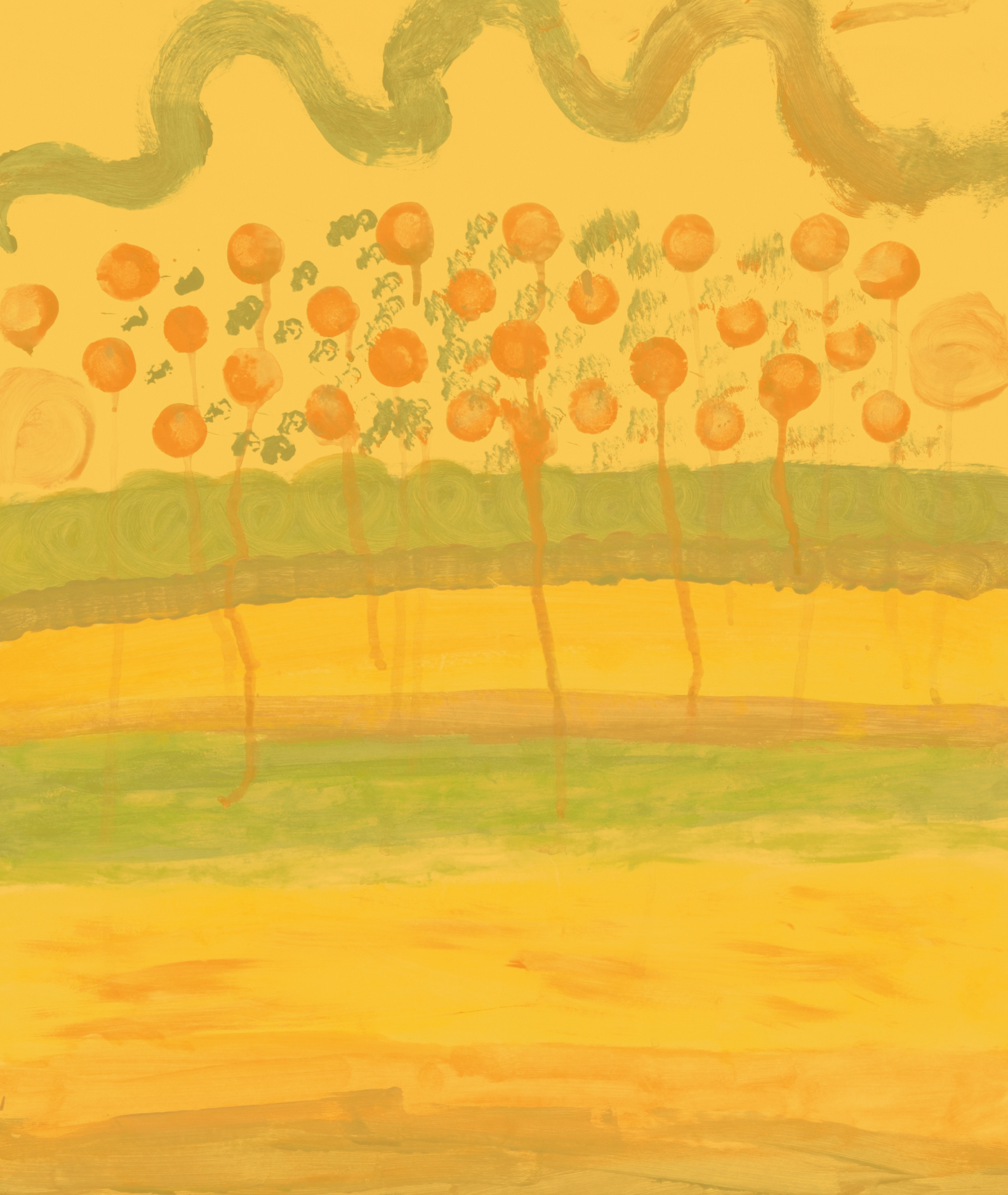
Commission for Children and Young People

Level 16, 150 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne, Victoria, 3000

Phone: 1300 78 29 78

Email: contact@ccyp.vic.gov.au

Web: ccyp.vic.gov.au



COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE