



COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Strategic Plan

2019–2022



**We put the rights
of children and
young people at
the centre of all
that we do.**



Message from the Commissioners

The Commission for Children and Young People was established to promote the rights, wellbeing and safety of young people in Victoria through education, advocacy, monitoring and regulatory oversight.

Our mandate reflects the reality that children and young people's unique needs and experiences are often overlooked in the laws, policies and practices that affect them.

Noting our broad remit, our Strategic Plan supports us to remain disciplined and focused on the activities that have the greatest benefit and impact for the children and young people we serve and ensures our efforts and resources are aligned accordingly.

The last few years have laid an unprecedented foundation for the advancement of children's rights and safety. Victoria's Royal Commission into Family Violence and the national Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse have defined best practice approaches to protecting children, both in the home and outside it. Our challenge is ensuring this recent momentum translates into tangible policies and practices and much-needed investment in services for children and young people.



It was kind of a relief for me when I found out about [the Commission], even if they don't do stuff for specific young people, I think knowing it is there is so much better than doing nothing... There needs to be more opportunities for young people to speak up for themselves.

ALICIA, 17



No one has told me [my rights], I have just experienced things and learned. It just can't be one person showing the kid their rights, it needs to be bigger than that.

BRANDON, YJ

Over the next three years, we will maintain our close oversight over the child protection, out-of-home care and youth justice systems to ensure the rights, safety and dignity of these children are upheld. We plan to focus particularly on reducing the unacceptable overrepresentation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in both systems and will advocate for practices that promote self-determination and cultural connection.

We will further consolidate and embed our newer regulatory functions, which are designed to prevent abuse and harm in organisational settings.

Across all our work, we will include the views and perspectives of children and young people themselves, recognising their insight and expertise. We are grateful to the many young people who guided us in the development of this Strategic Plan, helping us to understand what was important to them and why.

Of course, our ambitions cannot be achieved without a well-supported workforce, which is why our Strategic Plan highlights the importance of ensuring our team is healthy and united.

Our skilled and dynamic staff are deeply devoted to promoting the rights of children and young people and are committed to achieving improved outcomes for them.

Our Strategic Plan supports our commitment to be transparent and accountable. In implementing it, we will live our values—as fearless and determined advocates who put the rights of children and young people at the centre of all that we do.



I knew I had rights, but never knew it was like law and people had to follow it, thought people just said it.

YOUNG PERSON,
THE HUDDLE

Commission legislation

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

Other legislation and international conventions

Other Victorian and international laws and conventions guide our day-to-day work. These include the following:

- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- *Health Records Act 2001*
- *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*
- *Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture*
- *Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees of Special Bodies.*

Our vision

That the rights
of all children
and young
people in
Victoria are
recognised,
respected
and defended.



Our values

In addition to operating in accordance with the Victorian Public Sector values, the Commission applies the following values in our day-to-day work:

- 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.



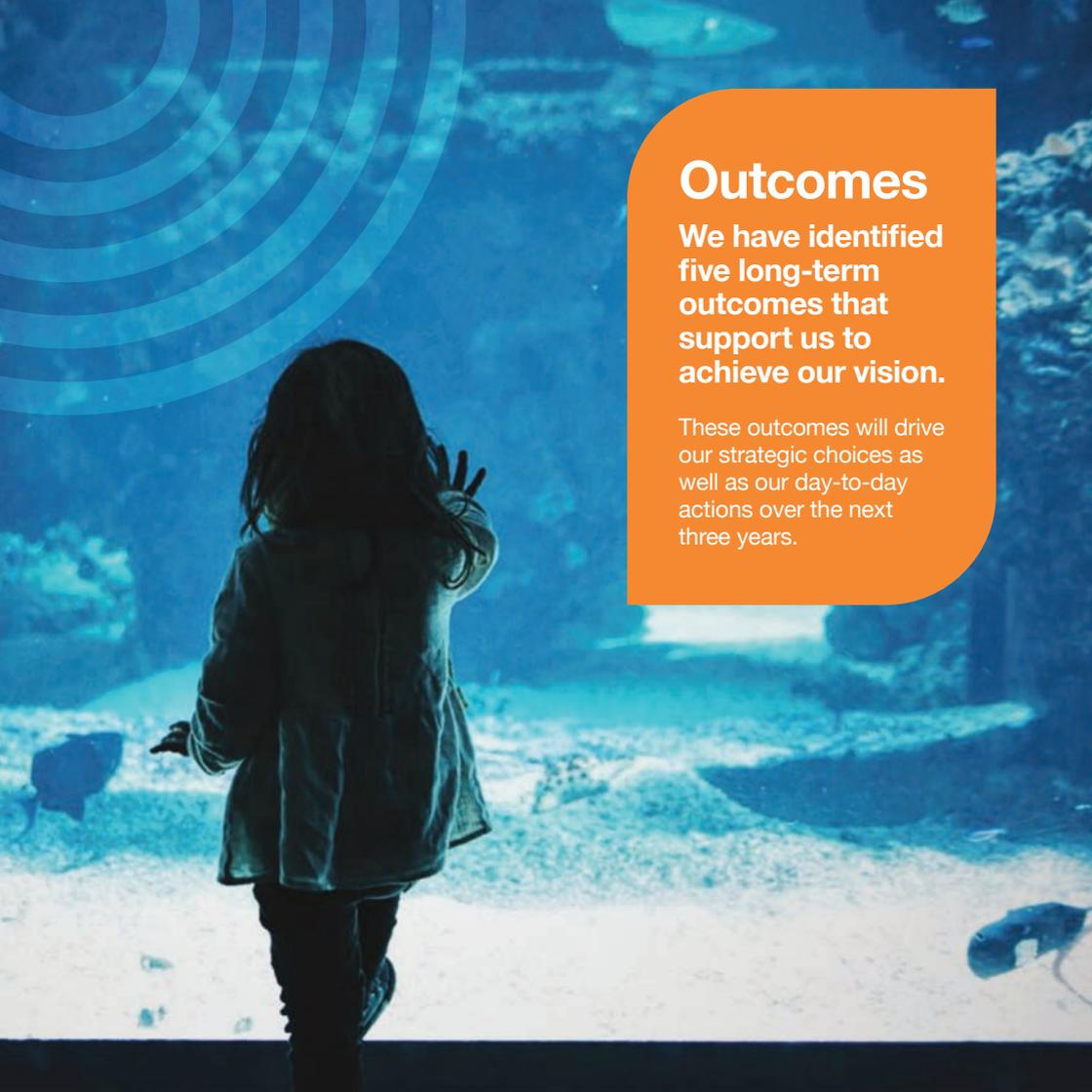
About us

Who we are

The Commission for Children and Young People is an independent statutory body that promotes improvement 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

- We promote the rights, safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
- We 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.
- We advocate for best-practice policy, program and service responses to meet the needs of children and young people.
- We promote the views and experiences of children and young people to increase the awareness of government and the community.
- We 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.



Outcomes

We have identified five long-term outcomes that support us to achieve our vision.

These outcomes will drive our strategic choices as well as our day-to-day actions over the next three years.

Outcome 1

Children and young peoples' voices are sought, heard and acted upon

How we will know if we are achieving this?

- Commission activities are informed and influenced by the voices of children and young people.
- The Commission has increased structures and processes that provide children and young people with meaningful ways to influence the work of the Commission.
- The Commission is regarded as a leader for children and young people's engagement, participation and empowerment.
- Government agencies and the private and community sectors develop effective methods for seeking out, listening to and acting on the views of the children and young people they work with.



There should be more teaching people in the community as well as young people, because we are the ones who get treated differently. Like it's more basic human rights, we are all people and all have rights.

YOUNG PERSON,
THE HUDDLE

Outcome 2

Organisations are child safe

How we will know if we are achieving this?

- Organisations understand their responsibilities and obligations to prevent and respond to child abuse and are held accountable by parents, carers and the broader community.
- Children and young people understand their right to be safe.
- Organisations act to prevent and respond to child abuse and ensure approaches are continuously refined and improved, based on best practice.
- The Commission drives systemic change as a trusted and known regulator.
- Organisations act to address racism, discrimination and intolerance (including on the basis of cultural background, gender identity, sexuality, or disability) ensuring a child's identity or personal circumstances do not act as barriers to inclusion and support.

Outcome 3

Children in out-of-home care and youth justice feel safe and have their rights respected and needs met

How we will know if we are achieving this?

- All children and young people in out-of-home care and youth justice are informed about their rights.
 - Agencies involved with children in youth justice and out-of-home care act in accordance with policy and legislation, and increasingly respect the rights and meet the needs of children and young people in these settings.
 - Children and young people's views, including their complaints and concerns, are heard and acted on.
 - There are fewer serious incidents that impact children, young people and staff in youth justice and out-of-home care.
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Outcome 4

Service systems keep children safe and well

How we will know if we are achieving this?

- Our inquiries and reviews show greater coordination and collaboration between the services required to support vulnerable children and their families, whether these be schools, mental health services, disability service providers or Child Protection, and a reduction over time of systemic concerns.
- More reports to Child Protection result in effective intervention including intensive family support.
- Data shows a greater proportion of children experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability stay in school, including children with disabilities, Aboriginal children and children with Child Protection contact.

Outcome 5

The experience of Aboriginal children and young people is free of systemic and institutional racism

How we will know if we are achieving this?

- The number, rate and proportion of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care are reduced.
- The number, rate and proportion of Aboriginal children and young people in the youth justice system, and particularly in youth justice custody are reduced.
- There is improved compliance with legislated principles relating to Aboriginal children including the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle and the requirements for cultural support plans.
- Organisations in and outside government act to address systemic and institutional racism.
- Self-determination is a driving consideration in child protection policies and practices with regard to Aboriginal children.



For you guys to acknowledge that the system racism is there and is current is a great start.

KEYARA, 19

A woman with dark hair, wearing a black uniform and a headset, is shown in profile, smiling and looking towards a young child. The child is wearing a white tank top and looking directly at the camera. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting. The image is overlaid with a decorative graphic of concentric, semi-transparent circles in shades of orange and brown, centered over the woman and child.

Strategic priorities

We have identified six strategic priorities that will contribute, to different degrees, to the achievement of each outcome over the next three years.

These strategic priorities will be implemented through our annual corporate plans and will be actively monitored by the Commission's leadership.

Strategy 1

Advocate to improve the experience of vulnerable children and young people in Victoria

Over the three-year period 2019–22 we will take the following actions to support this strategy:

- raise awareness of issues impacting on vulnerable children and young people in Victoria to improve services, policy and the law
- identify and use advocacy methods which have the greatest impact, including advice to government, formal submissions, own-motion inquiries as well as media and stakeholder engagement
- draw upon and use the information, data and expertise available to the Commission through the exercise of all of its functions
- undertake rights-based inquiries into the experience of groups of children facing particular discrimination or disadvantage, such as children with disability or mental health concerns, or children at risk of suicide, to drive reform for those groups.

This strategy will make a strong contribution to the achievement of the following outcomes:

- Children and young peoples' voices are sought, heard and acted upon.
- Children in out-of-home care and youth justice feel safe and have their rights respected and needs met.
- Service systems keep children safe and well.
- The experience of Aboriginal children and young people is free of systemic and institutional racism.

Strategy 2

Strengthen the capability of the Commission and other organisations to act on the voice of children and young people

Over the three-year period 2019–22 we will take the following actions to support this strategy:

- develop, test and use a framework for engaging with children and young people across all the Commission's areas of work
- provide creative opportunities for children and young people to directly inform and influence the work of the Commission, particularly those who are not typically heard through other avenues
- influence organisations to seek and act on children and young people's voices in their core activities, and in particular in matters directly relating to children
- develop more accessible and visible information channels for children and young people about the Commission's work.

This strategy will make a strong contribution to the achievement of the following outcomes:

- Children and young peoples' voices are sought, heard and acted upon.
- Organisations are child safe.
- Children in out-of-home care and youth justice feel safe and have their rights respected and needs met.

Strategy 3

Drive safe, rights-based and child-centred out-of-home care, child protection and youth justice systems

Over the three-year period 2019–22 we will take the following actions to support this strategy:

- monitor the extent to which children and young people's rights are protected and upheld in the out-of-home care, child protection and youth justice systems through incident monitoring, audits, inspections, child death and other individual inquiries, the Reportable Conduct Scheme and Child Safe Standards compliance activity

- complete and table systemic inquiries highlighting the experiences of, and issues affecting, children and young people involved with the child protection, out-of-home care and youth justice systems
- monitor government action on the Commission's recommendations and publish regular updates.

This strategy will make a strong contribution to the achievement of the following outcomes:

- Children and young peoples' voices are sought, heard and acted upon.
- Children in out-of-home care and youth justice feel safe and have their rights respected and needs met.
- The experience of Aboriginal children and young people is free of systemic and institutional racism.

Strategy 4

Mature the Commission's regulatory models

Over the three-year period 2019–22 we will take the following actions to support this strategy:

- implement and refine our data-informed, risk-based framework to guide decisions about where to most effectively allocate Commission resources and target our education, compliance and enforcement efforts
- develop our co-regulatory relationships to support effective, collaborative and streamlined regulation that prioritises child safety
- expand the Commission's guidance material and resources to support organisations to embed effective and consistent child safe practices
- continue to improve internal policies and procedures to support effective, consistent and transparent regulatory practice
- oversee reportable conduct investigations, and support organisations to appropriately investigate inappropriate behaviour towards, and abuse of, children
- support organisations and enforce compliance with the Child Safe Standards, including through onsite inspections.

This strategy will make a strong contribution to the achievement of the following outcomes:

- Organisations are child safe.

Strategy 5

Mobilise organisations and the community to improve child safety

Over the three-year period 2019–22 we will take the following actions to support this strategy:

- increase the use of risk-based education and compliance campaigns to address areas of high risk or to maximise impact
- increase information for children, parents and carers about children's rights to be safe and how to support child safety
- work with diverse sectors to support leadership in child safety
- model what it means to be a child-safe organisation.

This strategy will make a strong contribution to the achievement of the following outcomes:

- Children and young peoples' voices are sought, heard and acted upon.
- Organisations are child safe.



Strategy 6

Continue to build an efficient, healthy, high-impact Commission

Over the three-year period 2019–22 we will take the following actions to support this strategy:

- develop and implement a Reconciliation Action Plan, which embeds Aboriginal cultural safety across all areas of the Commission's work
- continue to explore and refine effective internal and external wellbeing supports which address the particular risks of vicarious trauma and support a healthy work/life balance
- formalise and expand core and targeted induction, training and learning and development for all staff
- develop systems and processes to maximise collaboration and information-sharing across the Commission
- embed performance reporting across all areas of the Commission
- focus on workload management to support reasonable workloads through effective planning.

This strategy will make a strong contribution to the achievement of the following outcomes:

- Children and young peoples' voices are sought, heard and acted upon.
- Organisations are child safe.
- Children in out-of-home care and youth justice feel safe and have their rights respected and needs met.
- Service systems keep children safe and well.
- The experience of Aboriginal children and young people is free of systemic and institutional racism.



COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Commission for Children and Young People logo

The logo represents our vision for all children to be strong in health, education, culture and identity, and face the world with confidence. The people are connected, equal in size and importance, and there is a fluidity that binds them together. The mission of the Commission is for all young Victorians to achieve these goals.

The symbol is a Koorie design created by Marcus Lee for the Commission.

The Commission respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the country throughout Victoria and pays respect to the ongoing living cultures of First Peoples.



**Commission for Children
and Young People**

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