

Creating our Strategic Plan 2026–29

A strategic plan is a roadmap that shows an organisation’s direction and priorities.

The Commission for Children and Young People’s Strategic Plan guides our work for the next three years. Read our [Strategic Plan 2026-29](#).

How we got here

We heard from our staff, stakeholders and children and young people who are at the centre of what we do.

We gathered the perspectives of children and young people through:

- Youth Council workshops
- an online survey for children and young people
- small group consultations with young people
- an online youth forum.

Our Youth Council guided and facilitated our engagement with children and young people.

Who we heard from

We heard from **450+** Victorian children and young people.

This included responses from **403** children and young people to our survey. Of these:

60%

were aged 14 to 17 years

40%

were aged 18 to 24 years

28%

were from regional or
rural Victoria

19%

were Aboriginal,
Torres Strait
Islander or both

5%

identified as
neurodivergent

24%

spoke a language
other than English
at home

15%

identified as
LGBTQIA+

What we heard

Children and young people told us about a wide range of issues they were concerned about. The most common issues raised included **access to services**, **education**, **mental health** and **having a voice and being listened to**.

Access to services

We heard the need for better and earlier access to services, particularly mental health support for young people including in regional areas and in schools.

'Act earlier, not later. Many crises like homelessness, mental health emergencies, youth offending are preventable with early, coordinated intervention.'

'Children and young people in Victoria would benefit from earlier access to mental health support, more wellbeing services in schools, and a more connected system that is easier to navigate. Community and peer support programs can reduce stigma, while safe homes and stable living conditions are essential for wellbeing.'

'They miss school, have no social life, and get no government support until crisis hits. Give them respite care, homework help, and a dedicated worker. Recognise them in every policy. We can't thrive while carrying adult burdens alone.'

'Access to affordable, timely healthcare: especially dental, mental health, and specialist appointments [in] a crisis. Many young people wait months or give up entirely.'

Education

We heard about the need for more supports for students experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability to remain engaged in education and the importance of supporting wellbeing at school and learning real life skills.

'I forced myself going back to school. Because of the justice system, because I got arrested for something that I didn't do, school said, no, he's back in custody. He can't come back anymore.'

'I think schools should offer better care for students, both in terms of mental health and in education support. Many students fall through the cracks of a system that is currently designed to teach a class, not an individual.'

'Adjust the learning to suit us, not the other way around, and help us learn how to live in the evolving world, stop sheltering us so much... It's hard to live in this world, help us navigate it.'



Mental health

We heard about experiences of poor mental health and concerns about issues impacting children and young people's mental health.

'I have problems with my mental health, education, and just trying to find a job because since I got put in the justice system, finding a job, going back to the mainstream school's been hard for me.'

'Many young people in Victoria are struggling with mental health, especially anxiety, stress and feeling overwhelmed by school and social pressures. Social media can make this worse by creating unrealistic expectations and increasing bullying. Another big issue is the cost of living, which affect families and can make young people worry about money, housing and their future.'

'Mental health is such a big thing, but I think people don't really talk about it.'

Having a voice and being listened to

We heard about the importance of listening deeply and involving young people in decisions about their lives.

'I'd tell decision-makers that if you want better outcomes for children and young people, you need to genuinely listen to them not just consult them once, but involve them in ongoing, meaningful ways when shaping policies and programs'

'Young people need to be genuinely listened to, not just represented through data or assumptions. Many young people are navigating complex challenges, and support systems don't always meet them where they are.'

'Genuinely listen to children, treat their perspectives as equal and valued rather than tokenistic, and prioritise their safety and wellbeing above all else.'

Other themes

We also heard concerns about:

The cost of living

'Cost of living pressures are also affecting young people more than ever. Families under financial stress can struggle to provide stable housing, healthy food, and access to extracurricular opportunities, which can flow on to children's wellbeing and development.'

Social media and online safety

'.... AI and deepfake bullying are emerging threats teachers aren't trained to handle. Without digital literacy and access, young people fall behind before they even start.'

Experiences of safety and harm

'Family violence is a major issue for young people in Victoria as it affects their safety, mental health and development. Living in violent environments can cause trauma, anxiety, and impact their ability to learn and build healthy relationships. Many cases go unnoticed meaning young people don't always get the support they need.'



Loneliness and connection to community.

'We also need a community to go to. Like, of older people we can trust, you know, that's not out to get us, not out to feed us such bad things, you know.'

'Racism and cultural exclusion remain daily realities for many First Nations and migrant young people.'

'Fund youth social groups, hobby clubs, and community events to reduce loneliness and build connection.'

What we should focus on

In addition to these important issues, children and young people told us our focus over the next three years should include:

- increasing engagement with children and young people and amplifying their experiences and voices
- strengthening collaboration between government departments, systems, and organisations, and their accountability
- focusing on early intervention, belonging and connection to community, and long-term stability for children and young people
- challenging harmful narratives, stigmas and narrow ideas of success.

What's next

We drew from these perspectives to help shape our focus for the next three years. Our work will focus on five priorities:

- amplifying the voices and experiences of children and young people
- shaping systems and driving better decisions
- promoting earlier support
- collaborating for impact
- robust monitoring of service systems.

You can read more about our priorities in our [Strategic Plan 2026–29](#).

We will also use what we heard to inform our ongoing work to promote improvements to policies and services for children and young people.

More information

To keep up to date with our work, you can follow us on social media or [sign-up for Commission updates](#).

Find out more about the Commission's work at ccyp.vic.gov.au

