

Fact sheet

The Commission for Children and Young People

About us

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 vulnerable children and young people.

The Commission is led by the Principal Commissioner, Liana Buchanan, and the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Meena Singh.

What we do

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 and drive safe, rights based and child centred services
- 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 to have child safe practices.

Our approach

In delivering these functions, we aim to:

- provide advice and advocacy, strongly grounded in evidence, on behalf of children and young people
- hear and highlight the views and experiences of children and young people to ensure these are central to planning and decision making

- apply a rights-based approach to our work drawing on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Victoria's Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities
- work with government, the community and non-government agencies to identify and implement reforms that benefit children and young people
- focus on the rights, safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people, and Aboriginal children and young people
- work in a way that is inclusive, culturally sensitive and respectful of the diversity of children and young people.

How we perform our functions

Independent oversight and scrutiny

We provide independent scrutiny and oversight of services for children and young people in many ways, including:

Inquiries

- Systemic inquiries – we conduct systemic inquiries into services provided to a child or group of children and young people, such as child protection, out-of-home care, youth justice, health, human and community services and education.
- Individual inquiries – we conduct inquiries about the services provided to an individual child or a group of vulnerable children or young people.
- Child death inquiries – we must conduct an inquiry into services provided to any child who has died and who was involved with child protection in the 12 months before their death.

We provide our reports to the Minister for Children, and the Secretary of the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, the Minister for Youth Justice, where appropriate and any other minister if the report considers the matter that is the responsibility of that minister. Some of our systemic reports are also tabled in the Victorian Parliament.



Monitoring and visits

- Monitoring – we monitor reports of serious incidents that involve or impact on children and young people in child protection, out-of-home care or youth justice.
- Visits – we manage the Independent Visitor Program, which involves monthly visits by volunteers to Victoria's youth justice centres. Our staff also regularly visit Victoria's youth justice, secure welfare and residential care facilities.

Advocacy and promoting children's rights

We promote the rights, safety and wellbeing of children by:

- increasing public awareness about the views, experiences and rights of children and young people in Victoria
- collaborating with and advising government and the community to ensure programs and services meet the needs of children and young people
- preparing submissions and providing input when laws and policies that impact on children and young people are being developed and implemented
- making recommendations to government on improvements that should be made to laws, policies, programs and services affecting children and young people.

Supporting and regulating organisations

We support and regulate organisations that provide services or facilities to children and young people through the Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Child Safe Standards

We oversee and enforce organisations' compliance with the Child Safe Standards. These eleven, gazetted standards require organisations that work with children to have the right systems, processes and culture to prevent abuse and respond properly to allegations of abuse within the organisation.

Our role includes:

- working with organisations to build their capacity to be child safe
- liaising with entities and regulators to provide specific education and advice to support entities in their compliance with the standards

- making inquiries with the organisation if we have concerns about whether they are child safe and, if needed, taking compliance action

Reportable Conduct Scheme

We administer Victoria's new Reportable Conduct Scheme, which applies to some organisations that work with children. The scheme requires these organisations to report, investigate and respond to allegations of child abuse made against their workers or volunteers.

Our role includes:

- receiving notifications of allegations made against workers and volunteers
- supporting and guiding organisations to investigate and respond to allegations
- checking that organisations are investigating and responding to allegations in a timely and appropriate way
- sharing information when needed with Victoria Police, Working with Children Check, regulators and professional accreditation bodies.

The views and experiences of children and young people

We bring the views and experiences of children and young to the attention of government and the community by:

- consulting and engaging with children and young people as part of our inquiries and other activities
- speaking with children and young people in youth justice centres
- adopting a child-centred approach in everything we do.

Contact us

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If you need an interpreter, please call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 13 14 50 and ask them to contact the Commission for Children and Young People on (03) 8601 5281.

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