

# Children, Young People and Family Services Providers Newsletter

## March 2018

Department of Health and Human Services

### **To: Children, Young People and Family Services Providers**

- Child FIRST and Family Services
- Early Childhood Development Coordinators
- Cradle to Kinder and Aboriginal Cradle to Kinder
- Early Parenting Centres
- Parenting Assessment and Skill Development Services (PASDS)

### **Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare**

#### **Children's Resource Program**

#### **Youth Support:**

- Leaving Care and Springboard
- Finding Solutions
- Adolescent Support Program

#### **DHHS, DET, FSV:**

- Local Connections Teams
- Child Protection
- Children and Families Policy Branch
- Children and Youth Area Partnership
- Family Safety Victoria

## **Introduction**

Welcome to our Children, Young People and Family Services Providers Newsletter.

This newsletter has been prepared by the Early Pathways Unit of the Department of Health and Human Services to provide updates in statewide policy and service development to our funded organisations and department programs that deliver services to vulnerable children, young people and families. We hope that you find this informative and useful to the valuable work in your organisations.

We encourage you to please distribute this to staff and managers across your services.

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## Better information sharing to keep women and children safe

New laws introduced to keep women and children safe and perpetrators accountable are now operating in Victoria. The new *Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme* also enables other major reforms like the Support and Safety Hubs and Central Information Point to operate.

The *Family Violence Protection Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2017* was introduced in March last year. The Act allows an authorised group of trusted government agencies and community service organisations to share information with each other for family violence risk assessment and risk management purposes. The Act removes the requirement in existing Victorian privacy legislation that a serious threat to an individual must be imminent before information can be lawfully shared.

Training will be available in the coming months to ensure the new laws are implemented effectively. Ministerial Guidelines, fact sheets and other tools relating to the new family violence legislation are available at [vic.gov.au/familyviolence](http://vic.gov.au/familyviolence).

## Making things fairer for young people leaving care

The COMPASS Social Impact Bond will now call for investors to fund a program helping young people transition from care to independent living. The COMPASS program will give care leavers two years access to housing and provide them with a worker to navigate the system, an education specialist, and other support services based on the level of their assessed need.

It targets a positive and effective transition from out-of-home care, leading to improved health and justice outcomes. It will support more than 200 care leavers aged between 16-18 over the next five years, from across foster, kinship and residential care. The new model of support will run in Melbourne's west, inner north and Bendigo.

For more information on Victorian Social Impact Bonds, visit <https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/funds-programs-and-policies/social-impact-bonds-victoria>

## Funding boost to help support our most vulnerable children

Funding of \$1.8 million to ensure all of Victoria's 2,100-strong residential care workforce are able to meet mandatory minimum qualifications requirements, came into effect at the beginning of this year.

The funding builds on an \$8 million investment and will ensure all workers across the sector hold at least Certificate IV in Child, Youth & Family Intervention (residential and out of home care).

Developed in collaboration with the residential care sector, industry training providers and the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, the training will be delivered across Melbourne and regional Victoria by five TAFEs including Melbourne Polytechnic, SuniTAFE, Bendigo Kangan Institute, Federation Training and The Gordon.

## Making a complaint - for children and young people in out-of-home care

Children and young people in out-of-home care have the right to feel safe and secure and to tell someone how they feel, including if they are unhappy or have a concern about their care.

The department's complaints team is here to listen and help with concerns of children and young people in out-of-home care.

We have developed and launched a complaints awareness video for children in out-of-home care, 'It's OK to tell someone', shown at the CREATE Foundation Hour of Power.

The video was co-designed with children and young people identified through the CREATE Foundation, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, Victorian Ombudsman, and Commission for Children and Young People.

The video, along with child-friendly resources including a fact sheet and a simplified complaints form to support complaints awareness are available on this webpage <https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/making-complaint-children-and-young-people-out-home-care>

## Supporting new mums and dads right across Victoria

Funding of \$22.1 million has been announced to expand the Supported Playgroups program. The expansion means Supported Playgroups will soon be available across the entire state. A widening of the eligibility criteria will also result in more families being able to access the service, such as those experiencing family violence, social isolation, mental health issues or homelessness.

The program is about improving learning outcomes for families that need additional support, by fostering quality parent-child connections and making the most of the home learning environment.

Playgroups are convened by trained facilitators, who provide specialist training advice as well as referrals to additional services.

## Giving children with a disability a fairer go

\$9.7 million was announced on 27 March 2018 to fund an additional 741 Early Childhood Intervention Services places for Victorian kids, giving them support ahead of the full National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) rollout in 2019.

Early Childhood Intervention Services support families and children with special needs from birth to school entry, with services like speech and physical therapy, behaviour management, school transitioning or help with learning, sleep or feeding. These services build on those already available through Maternal and Child Health Centres, childcare and kindergarten.

For more information about the NDIS rollout in Victoria and the transition of services, visit [vic.gov.au/ndis](http://vic.gov.au/ndis)

## New legal resources for Aboriginal Victorians

Aboriginal Victorians will have better access to culturally appropriate legal information and resources, as part of a new initiative launched on 28 February 2018.

The resources aim to give Aboriginal Victorians more information about their right to choose who can make decisions on their behalf using Victorian powers of attorney laws.

The new resources include a brochure for community members about planning for the future and fact sheets about medical treatment decisions, guardianship, and powers of attorney.

The Office of the Public Advocate and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service developed the resources as part of the joint project *Your life, your choice*.

The resources are available online through the websites of Victoria Legal Aid

<http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/find-legal-answers/free-publications-and-resources/your-life-your-choice>

and the OPA [www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au](http://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au)

## Aboriginal organisations handed full control of assets

In a Victorian first, the property title held by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs over the Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative has been lifted and full control of the Cooperative's assets has been returned to the local Aboriginal community.

The removal of the first mortgage will give the Cooperative full control of its assets and to further develop the strong Aboriginal community in the Bendigo region.

In Victoria, there are 59 property titles owned by 30 Aboriginal organisations over which the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs holds a first mortgage.

The requirement for a first mortgage was a condition unique to Aboriginal organisations and left them with unnecessary red tape preventing them from delivering the best services.

## A place to remember the Stolen Generations

On the tenth anniversary of the National Apology, the Government and the Yarra City Council announced details of the Stolen Generations Marker in Fitzroy. The Marker will be a permanent public artwork designed by Aboriginal artist Reko Rennie.

The Marker will acknowledge the history of Atherton Gardens and Fitzroy as a place of significance for Aboriginal people where members of the Stolen Generations found family for the first time, and where community continues to gather and connect.

It will pay tribute to and honour the struggles of the Stolen Generations as well as acknowledge the resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities, clans and groups who seek to heal from the trauma of the past.

The Marker will be unveiled on 26 May 2018 in recognition of National Sorry Day and is a collaboration between Yarra City Council and a Steering Group comprising of representatives from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and local organisations.

## Education partnership to help Victorian families thrive

The *Our Place* initiative will help integrate early childhood, school and adult education services, giving families access to a range of education and support services at a single convenient location.

The initiative will expand to a further five schools following its success at Doveton College, where the creation of a single learning community in 2012 helped boost kinder participation, student outcomes and attendance, and improve local adult engagement in education.

The Colman Foundation will provide an average of \$300,000 per year per school site in staff and support over the next 10 years ensuring those schools involved have first-rate early childhood facilities.

The partnership will see dedicated engagement officers work with schools, the Department of Education and Training, local councils, and early childhood and adult education providers to help local families and children of all ages engage in education.

The five schools involved are:

- Morwell Central Primary School
- Seymour College
- Carlton Primary School
- Robinvale P-12
- Bridgewood Primary School.

## Encouraging more girls to take on the guiding adventure

On 16 March 2018, funding of \$1 million over four years was announced for Girl Guides Victoria to establish new groups with a focus on increasing diversity within their ranks.

The funding will establish eight new school-based programs for girls experiencing disadvantage, and eight new programs for girls from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Girl Guides Victoria will also provide targeted support and expert advice to 16 rural and regional guide groups, helping them recruit and support over 80 girls.

Up to 120 volunteers will get training, with funding to provide further assistance for those who want to become Guide leaders in the future.

Girl Guides Victoria supports women and girls to build their self-resilience and confidence, and to develop their leadership skills through outdoor and other activities.

## Victoria' first sexual and reproductive health helpline

The new helpline for Victorian women seeking timely and trusted information on sexual and reproductive health issues started taking callers from March 2018.

*1800 My Options* or 1800 696 784 provides Victorians with sexual and reproductive health information, and directs them to clinical services such as contraception, pharmacy services, counselling support, termination providers and a range of other services.

The phone line is free and confidential, with highly-trained, experienced and sensitive staff who have extensive knowledge in sexual and reproductive health issues.

For more information please visit <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/womens-sexual-reproductive-health-where-to-go>

## Levelling the playing field for women and girls

As part of International Women's Day a grant of \$670,000 for sporting organisations was announced on 8 March 2018.

In 2017 La Trobe University was funded to develop evidence-based guidelines for delivering gender equality and prevention of family violence projects within sports settings. The research identified the existing work in sporting clubs, and sought out what can be improved on a local level.

Sporting clubs across the state will now be able to apply for grants to fight sexism on and off the field.

Applications will open in April.

## This Girl Can gets Victorian women active

This Girl Can – campaign launched 26 March 2018, aims to empower women across the state to get active. The ad features everyday Victorian women overcoming their fears and giving it a go, no matter their skill

level, shape or size. The women, from right across the state, participate in a range of activities from boxing, cycling and roller-derby to netball and AFL.

The VicHealth initiative complements the *Change Our Game Scholarship Program*, providing a new pathway to senior roles for women in sport.

Women are encouraged to join the This Girl Can - Victoria movement by visiting <http://thisgirlcan.com.au>

## Building mateship with more men's sheds

Communities across Victoria are encouraged to apply for a grant to build more men's sheds and support the emotional and social health of men.

This year's Men's Shed Funding Program grant round – with \$885,000 up for grabs – has an emphasis on supporting Aboriginal men and those from regional areas.

Applications close on 8 June, 2018. For more information, visit [providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mens-shed-program](http://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mens-shed-program)

## More rapid housing for victims of family violence

On 11 March 2018 funding of \$4 million was announced for the *Rapid Housing Program*.

Under the program, homes are leased from private owners by community housing agencies, which sublet them to women and children at below market rent.

The program focuses on areas with high incidences of family violence and offers stable accommodation for up to 12 months.

## Calling all outstanding Aboriginal Victorians

Now in its eighth year, the Aboriginal Honour Roll recognises the achievements of Aboriginal Victorians who have made a profound contribution to their community and to Victoria.

The 2018 inductees will be added to the Honour Roll, which will travel as part of the roadshow and is on permanent display in the Victorian Parliament.

Nominations for the Honour Roll will be open until 7 July. For more information visit [dpc.vic.gov.au/vahr](http://dpc.vic.gov.au/vahr).

## Disability awards to recognise homegrown heroes

Nominations have opened for the eighth annual Victorian Disability Awards – recognising outstanding achievements of individuals and organisations to improve the lives of people with a disability.

The awards are a joint initiative between National Disability Services and the Department of Health and Human Services. Nominations are open until April 8 with awards to be presented in August. To nominate visit [dhhs.vic.gov.au/disabilityawards](http://dhhs.vic.gov.au/disabilityawards)

## Recognising Victoria's Early childhood heroes

The 2018 Victorian Early Years Awards are now open, and close 11 May 2018. Now in its 13th year, the awards recognise the best and brightest of those in the early childhood sector and acknowledge the crucial work they do to support our littlest Victorians.

For more details or to nominate for the 2018 Victorian Early Years Awards, visit [education.vic.gov.au/veya](http://education.vic.gov.au/veya).

## Tapping into child health tips and advice on your phone

The new free MCH App – developed by Maternal and Child Health Services – gives families access to comprehensive information matched to the age range of their child. The app provides reminders about upcoming MCH appointments, seasonal warnings, a list of useful contacts and an interactive Q&A function with links to trusted information online.

The new clinical supervision guidelines for the Enhanced MCH program, which will build the capacity of MCH nurses in caring for families with complex needs, was launched on 23 March 2018.

The app can be downloaded from the Apple Store and Google Play or at: [education.vic.gov.au/mchapp](http://education.vic.gov.au/mchapp).

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Please feel free to send this newsletter onto all staff within your organisation.

Regards

Early Pathways Team

Children Families Disability and Operations Division  
Department of Health and Human Services Victoria