

Progress against past inquiries

This document provides an update on the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing's responses to our recommendations from *Lost, not forgotten: Inquiry into children who died by suicide and were known to Child Protection* and the Commission's assessment of progress made in 2022-23.

The Commission will continue to annually assess and report on progress made against these recommendations.

Lost, not forgotten

Inquiry into children who died by suicide and were known to Child Protection

Progress against past inquiries: *Lost, not forgotten*
continued

Rec #	Action	Recommendation	Initial government response	Department status	Department update	Commission assessment	Commission comment
1		<p>That, in line with <i>Roadmap to Reform</i>, the Victorian Government develop, resource and implement an integrated and whole-of-system investment model and strategy for the child and family system, focussed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • earlier intervention and prevention services to reduce risks to children and build child and family wellbeing • reducing the rate of entry into care • meeting the distinct needs of children who need to live away from the family home. <p>The investment model should recognise the drivers of demand and the need for coordinated service responses. It should use client data, analytics and service evidence to identify the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resource levels needed to meet demand for safe, quality services for vulnerable children and their families • most efficient and effective investment options to achieve maximum impact. <p>The investment strategy should increase and improve safe, quality services in line with demand, by targeting early intervention and prevention, prioritising the most vulnerable cohorts, including families with chronic and complex issues and children exposed to cumulative harm.</p>	Accept in principle	In progress	<p>The Victorian Government provided funding for the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to further develop its capacity to respond to demand – this is intended to progress throughout 2023.</p> <p>This work will drive and inform the department’s investment strategy for Children and Families service system that will give clear advice to both government and external stakeholders about where investment in the children and families system should be focused to delivery established reform priorities, achieve best value for money, and support the best possible outcomes for the children and families experiencing vulnerability.</p>	Progress made	This recommendation requires a whole-of-system investment model and strategy for the child and family system. The Commission will keep this open until further progress has been made, noting the department advises that it is ‘currently developing a reform and investment strategy for consideration by government’.

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2		<p>That the Department of Health and Human Services develop, resource and implement a set of standard analytical data sets for Child FIRST/The Orange Door and IFS to monitor and report on the timeliness and effectiveness of their engagement with children and families, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time between initial assessment and commencement of case management • rates of unsuccessful engagement • referral outcomes • re-referrals • re-reports. 	Accept in principle	In progress	An operational report has been developed and released. Incorporation of data from The Orange Door is underway and a focus report for Operations Divisions on Child Protection, The Orange Door and Family Services is planned for late 2023.	Progress made	The Commission notes the work done to date, but remains concerned that the data collected does not yet enable the department, or government, to monitor the timeliness and effectiveness of Child Protection's referrals to other services as set out in the Commission's recommendation, nor does it appear to monitor rates of unsuccessful engagement, re-referrals and re-reports. This recommendation is critical to support a more coordinated and integrated approach to the protection of children.
3		That the Department of Health and Human Services review and revise all foundational practice guidance, training and tools to embed children's participation in decision making during the investigation, protective intervention and protection order phases of Child Protection intervention.	Accept	Complete	The department implemented the SAFER children framework (SAFER) from 20 November 2021. SAFER places emphasis on the 'voice of the child' requiring the child's voice, views and wishes to be captured and included in planning and decision-making forums, such as case plan and care team meetings across all Child Protection phases. The Child Protection Manual has been updated to reflect and embed participation by the child and young person in decision making and to ensure their voice is heard, in all phases of child protection intervention, case planning, reunification, cultural plans for Aboriginal children and leaving care.	Complete	

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4		<p>That the Department of Health and Human Services develop practice advice in relation to children involved with Child Protection who are identified as at risk of suicide. Practice advice should confirm the importance of information gathering, information sharing and service coordination, and include requirements to gather and consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information regarding the child's involvement with different mental health services • a child's mental health diagnosis, • any known history of exposure to abuse, harm or trauma • a child's treatment plan and (where relevant) any actions taken or planned to address any history of exposure to abuse, harm or trauma • the existence of any parent-related issues that may be impacting a child's ability to successfully engage in therapeutic intervention • the existence of any placement-related issues that may be impacting a child's ability to successfully engage in therapeutic intervention • identifying which service or agency involved is able to co-ordinate a child's access to mental health and other relevant services. 	Accept	In progress	The department has commenced a preliminary internal review of the current practice advice in relation to children and young people involved with child protection who are identified as being at risk of suicide with the view to strengthen such advice. Further review of the current practice advice is pending release of Victoria's new suicide prevention and response strategy, due late 2023.	Planned for implementation	The Commission considers this is important work. The recommendation requires the Department to develop specific practice advice regarding children involved with Child Protection who are identified as at risk of suicide, and the Commission hopes it is progressed with some urgency.
5		That the Victorian Government commit to proceeding with, and investing in, the Child Link Register, with a view to ensuring commencement of its operation by 31 December 2021.	Accept in principle	Acquitted	NA	Acquitted 2021-22	

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continued

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6		That the Department of Health and Human Services develop and implement a suicide prevention strategy for children known to Child Protection that incorporates any relevant findings and recommendations made by the Royal Commission into the Victorian Mental Health System.	Accept	In progress	As part of the development of Victoria's new suicide prevention and response strategy, a series of roundtable discussions were held with sectors and organisations representing communities at increased risk of suicidality, including a roundtable focused on children and young people at higher risk of suicide. A series of codesign workshops with people with lived and living experience of suicide were also held, bringing together people with diverse experiences and perspectives. The workshops involved people with lived and living experience of suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts survivors, families and carers, and people bereaved by suicide. The strategy is due for release in late 2023.	Planned for implementation	The Commission looks forward to seeing the final strategy, including its focus on children and young people known to Child Protection as recommended, later in 2023.