



COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



## WHAT IS THE COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

The Commission for Children and Young People is an independent body that advocates for the rights safety and wellbeing of all children and young people in Victoria.



## ABOUT THE IN OUR OWN WORDS INQUIRY

In 2019 we did an inquiry into out-of-home care in Victoria. We did the inquiry because we wanted to understand what it's like to be in care, what's working and what needs to change.



### WHO DID WE SPEAK TO?

We spoke to over 200 young people living in care from all around Victoria.

## WHAT IS OUT-OF-HOME CARE?

Kids of all ages usually go into out-of-home care when it's not safe to stay at home with their parents.

There are about 8000 kids in care. Most are in kinship care - being cared for by relatives.

Some are in foster care looked after by volunteers and a smaller number, around 400 live in residential care or 'resi' usually in a unit with other kids with workers instead of carers.

## ABOUT THIS SUMMARY

This illustrated summary shows the main things we heard from young people about what things are not working so well for them in care as well as what things might be more like if the Commission's recommendations are acted on by the government.

# MY VOICE

Kids have a right to participate in decisions that impact them, but in reality that often doesn't happen.



One time I had ten minutes notice. They just came to school and told me you are moving... I had been there for four and a half months... Child Protection did not say why I was moving. I always thought I was doing something wrong. No one told me, so I blamed myself.

I remember coming home from my first day at school and celebrating with a cake. Then I was told I had to move placement and leave school.



Kids just get left in the dark a lot, like they just need to be kept informed... if they just communicated more it would make everything a little bit easier.



The amount of DHHS workers that get changed, I reckon I've had maybe eight or nine in total and they don't even know me.

You never got to know them so you never got to trust them. They never stuck around or said what their job was, or how they could help us.

# MY HOME & SAFETY

Kids have a right to a stable home, but many kids are moved from place to place and kids in resi said it felt unsafe and not like a home at all.



I have not felt safe in any of my placements...

I tend to lock myself in my room and shut myself off.



One kid goes and in twenty minutes another comes in.

Like I literally always have a backpack ready just in case I'm moved. No joke.



Resi is just a place to go when there's nowhere else to go.

Everyone didn't have rules, we all did what we wanted.

I've been bullied and assaulted by other kids.



In kinship care, we never get checked. No one checked if the placement was going ok.

My last foster career was the worst person I have ever set eyes on. They would come into my room and say what a worthless piece of crap I am.



# MY FAMILY

Contact with family helps Kids understand who they are and how they fit in the world, but lots of Kids were split up from siblings and had less contact than they wanted with family.

I had a brother who was sixteen months older and they tried to keep me and him together. In the end my brother stayed with a foster family and I was moved.

I just wanted to be with my family so I kept running away.



They kept forcing me to talk to my parents. This really got on my nerves... I didn't want to talk to my parents.

I think that should be the person's decision if they want to speak to their parents or not.

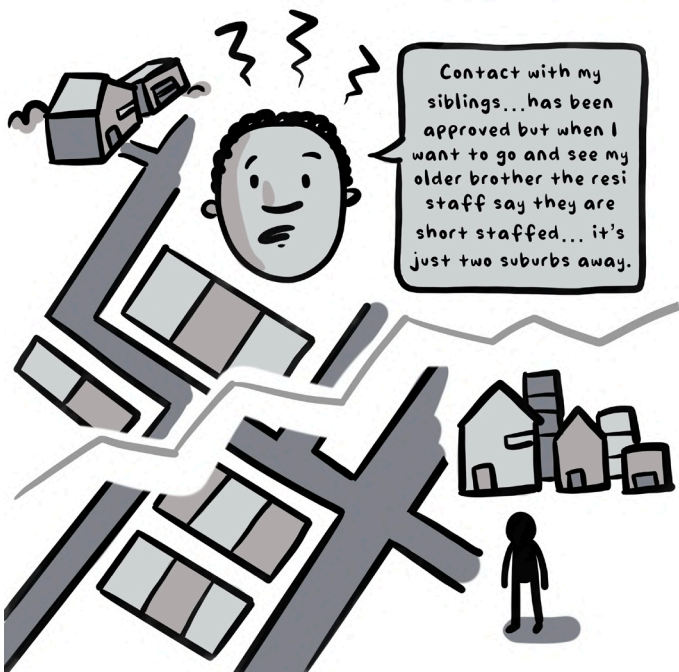
# MY FRIENDS and COMMUNITY

Having friends and being involved in activities outside home and school is really important for Kids happiness, but many Kids told us that it was hard to Keep connected because of rules or the availability of workers or carers to help.

I'm only allowed to have friends over, I can go to one friend's house. You need to have your friends searched by DHHS. It just takes so long and you just feel so different to other Kids.



Contact with my siblings... has been approved but when I want to go and see my older brother the resi staff say they are short staffed... it's just two suburbs away.



# MY CARERS

Strong relationships with carers is really important growing up. Some kids said they felt unsafe and unsupported or that their carers didn't have the right training or help to look after them.



# MY CULTURE

A lot of Aboriginal Kids come into care not knowing where they are from, or about their culture

OK, so I'm Aboriginal...  
what does that mean?





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The Commission said that a lot needs to change so that Kids can get the support they need to be safe, stable and happy, including:



More support to stop Kids going into care.



More money to make sure all Kids in care get the support they need.



More support for Aboriginal Kids to connect to their culture.



More and better ways for Kids to have a say about their lives.



A trusted and stable worker to help them.



More support from carers and workers to help Kids heal from trauma.

with these changes — life might be a bit more like this:



# MY VOICE

My workers take the time to listen to me and involve me in decisions about me.



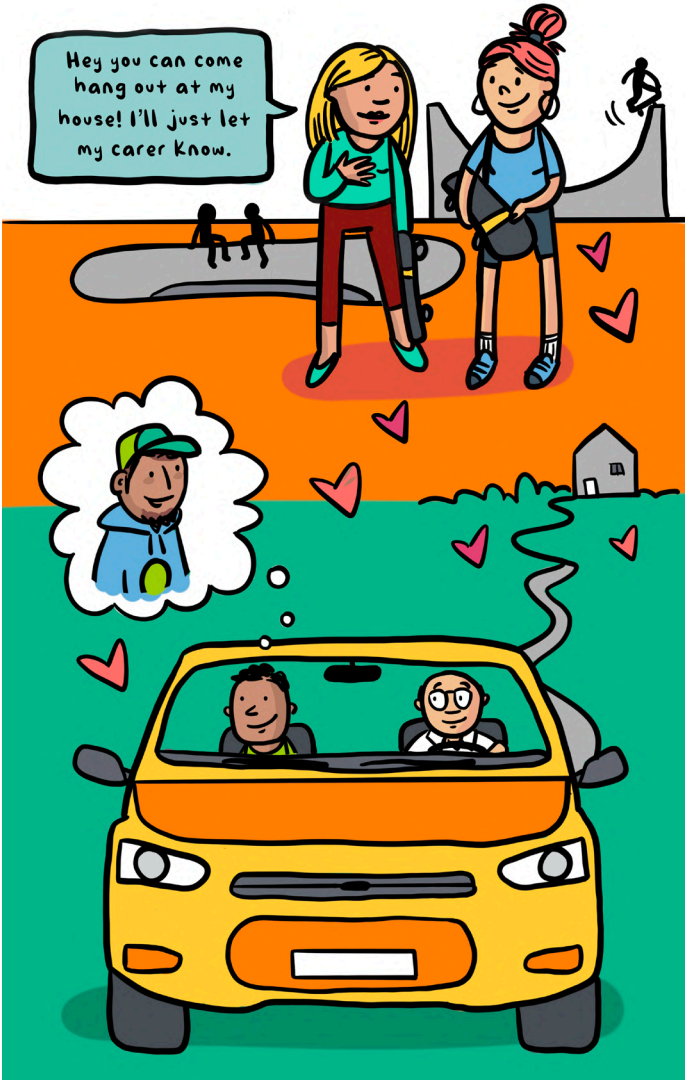
# MY HOME & SAFETY

I have a house that feels like home where people care about me.



# MY FAMILY, FRIENDS and COMMUNITY

I'm helped to be in contact with my  
siblings and my friends.



# MY CARERS

My carers & workers know how to talk to me when I'm not feeling ok.



# MY CULTURE





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### **INTERESTED IN KNOWING MORE?**

Head to: [ccyp.vic.gov.au/upholding-childrens-rights/systemic-inquiries/in-our-own-words](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/upholding-childrens-rights/systemic-inquiries/in-our-own-words) to see the whole report and watch a short video we made summarising the report



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