

Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry

The comments below have been compiled on behalf of the State-wide Children's Resource Program.

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3. The quality, structure, role and functioning of: family services; statutory child protection services, including reporting, assessment, investigation procedures and responses; and out of home care, including permanency planning and transitions; and what improvements may be made to better protect the best interests of children and support better outcomes for children and families.

a. family services

Positives

Having ChildFIRST involvement as a voluntary process has allowed families to stay involved and seek help without feeling pressured. They can see involvement as a positive and conscious choice they have made, to be supported within the system rather than against it.

Negatives

Workers feel that a better feedback mechanism could be developed so that they are not left in limbo assuming that someone has taken up the referral/report. Or that nothing has in fact happened and families are moved between waiting lists

There is still the reluctance to report for fear of the breakdown of the relationship between family and worker and that nothing will happen anyway.

With the high numbers of reporting to ChildFIRST / CPU is there a danger that ChildFIRST workers are taking on cases that would normally be dealt with by CPU.

3.5 Out of home care including permanency planning and transitions

There is a severe lack of placements for children in the system and carers are often unsupported once they have the child with them.

Further support and assistance is required for carers of children, under the child protection systems, that go into care. Providing workers with the time to link into the family and provide more holistic support could mean we are able to keep carers in the system longer and that more people would consider providing care to children.

4. The interaction of departments and agencies, the courts and service providers and how they can better work together to support at-risk families and children.

The Enhanced C&MH nurses program has been positive; they are engaging with vulnerable families, this program needs to be expanded.

Promoting available training to all workers that have access to children especially the [workers](#) that back up the child protection system such as family violence and homelessness workers including providing training in regards to child trauma. Children may be suffering from trauma but the workers may not recognise this and therefore the child does not receive appropriate support.

CRAF training should be increased across all sectors including Child Protection and Police, with the possibility of making this training mandatory.

Family violence training for Magistrates and court officials could benefit children. A greater understanding of family violence could mean that the courts consider the issues for children as a priority over the relationship with the abusive parent.