



**Early Childhood Australia**  
A voice for young children

**OUR  
VISION:  
EVERY  
YOUNG  
CHILD IS  
THRIVING  
AND  
LEARNING**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Thursday 31 March 2016

### **Early childhood services can play greater role in education about and prevention of family violence: Victorian Royal Commission response**

Early Childhood Australia commends the Victorian Government on its undertaking to accept all 227 recommendations of the full report from the Royal Commission into Family Violence released yesterday.

As stated in the report, early childhood services are uniquely placed to support children and families experiencing family violence, to educate parents about the impacts of family violence on young children and to implement prevention strategies like respectful relationships education with young children.

Currently, early childhood educators receive very limited family violence training, despite the fact that families with young children are at greater risk of family violence.

'We agree that, "it is essential that early childhood services and schools augment their capacity to recognise when children are experiencing family violence and provide assistance including linking them to suitable services"', said ECA CEO Samantha Page.

'We also understand that because of the current lack of child-focused specialist family violence services for children and young people, there are limited referral pathways for schools and other universal services to utilise.'

ECA strongly supports the key role respectful relationships education plays in schools and supports any measure to extend this into early childhood and primary school as:

*These programs successfully introduce concepts around gender that challenge existing rigid gender stereotypes that create inequity and violence supportive attitudes and behaviours. This approach works systemically to prevent family violence through creating cultures that are based on principles of equity and respect. **Further extension of this work in both the early childhood and primary school settings is needed to ensure that these important messages are being embedded from an early age and in all phases of development.** It would be beneficial for this to be incorporated in to government policy and curriculum development across all education settings (Royal Commission into Family Violence, Summary and recommendations, p. 1582).*

We are pleased to see the following recommendations that reflect concerns raised in ECA's own submission to the Royal Commission:

#### **Recommendation 21**

The Victorian Government ensure that all refuge and crisis accommodation services catering to families have adequate resources to meet the particular needs of the children they are accommodating, including access to expert advice and secondary consultations in supporting children (within 12 months).

#### Recommendation 23

The Victorian Government give priority to funding therapeutic interventions and counselling— including age-appropriate group work—for children and young people who are victims of family violence (within two years).

#### Recommendation 188

The Victorian Government resource an initiative (either inside or outside government) (within 18 months) to:

- i. oversee prevention of family violence activities in Victoria
- ii. provide policy and technical advice to policy makers—including government—on primary prevention
- iii. provide to organisations technical advice and expertise on building primary prevention in their organisations and within communities
- iv. coordinate research that builds evidence around the primary prevention of all forms of family violence
- v. ensure that accredited workforce development training in primary prevention is available through registered training organisations.

This Victorian initiative should be undertaken in close collaboration with Our Watch, ANROWS (Australia's National Organisation for Women's Safety) and other relevant bodies.

#### Recommendation 189

The Victorian Government mandate the introduction of respectful relationships education into every government school in Victoria from prep to year 12. Implementation should be staged to ensure school readiness and to allow for ongoing evaluation and adaptation. It should be delivered through a whole-of-school approach and be consistent with best practice, building on the evaluation of the model being tested by the Department of Education and Training through Our Watch (within five years).

#### Recommendation 213

The Victorian Government establish family violence principal practitioner positions in the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Justice and Regulation (by 31 December 2016).

#### Recommendation 221

In the 2016–17 State Budget the Victorian Government give priority to:

- i. providing an immediate funding boost to increase the capacity of specialist family violence services and Integrated Family Services to respond to existing demand
- ii. implementation of the Commission's recommendations that relate to that budget period.

**View the full report, summary and recommendations here:**

[http://www.rcfv.com.au/MediaLibraries/RCFamilyViolence/Reports/RCFV\\_Full\\_Report\\_Interactive.pdf](http://www.rcfv.com.au/MediaLibraries/RCFamilyViolence/Reports/RCFV_Full_Report_Interactive.pdf)

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