

About this Communique

The Department of Education and Training (DET) – Community Sector Organisation (CSO) Governance Group is a quarterly forum for communication, consultation, engagement and collaboration between the Department and community sector. Meetings are co-chaired by DET and the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) and reflect topics of mutual interest to DET and the sector. You can read more about the partnership agreement that underpins this work on [VCOSS](#) and [DET's](#) websites.

This Communique has been prepared by VCOSS to increase the visibility of this forum.

What was discussed in the March 2021 meeting?

The focus of this meeting was Mental Health and Wellbeing.

Mental health

Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System Final Report

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System Final Report was released on 2 March 2021, the day prior to the Governance Group meeting.

Angus Clelland, CEO, Mental Health Victoria provided the Governance Group with an overview and analysis of the key findings and recommendations, including those that specifically relate to children and young people. This includes the development of 13 well-resourced infant, child and youth mental health and wellbeing services.

Justin McDonnell, Executive Director, Wellbeing, Health and Engagement, DET shared initial reflections on the Final Report from DET's perspective, including the role DET will play in the implementation of Recommendation 17.

The Governance Group welcomed the report as a roadmap for real, positive change that puts people with lived experience of mental illness at the centre of service design and delivery. The group reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring the voices of children and young people are central to all our work, including the implementation of Royal Commission recommendations.

Further information on Mental Health is available at: <https://finalreport.rcvmhs.vic.gov.au/> and <https://finalreport.rcvmhs.vic.gov.au/fact-sheets/>.

Wellbeing

There are a wide range of existing wellbeing programs that support children and young people. Many successful programs and initiatives have one or more of the following characteristics: they are purposefully designed to empower children and young people; they are underpinned by strong partnerships; and they are often (though not always) place based.

Case studies were provided by the following presenters:

Koorie Outreach Support Program

Lionel Bamblett, General Manager, Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) presented on the Koorie Outreach Support Program (KOSP). The program, delivered by VAEAI, was funded for six months to support Koorie learners and their families/carers during periods of remote learning, and during transitions back to onsite learning. The program's Outreach Facilitators and Education Consultants worked with children, young people and families/carers to connect Koorie learners to tailored supports to succeed in their education.

Across the program, VAEAI identified two key areas of need: tutoring support and support to address student engagement. The KOSP had positive outcomes for learners and their families/carers through connecting learners and families/carers into appropriate services and reengaging learners into education.

VAEAI is interested in and welcomes discussion in relation to supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of Koorie learners. You can contact VAEAI by calling (03) 9481 0800 or via email at vaeai@vaeai.org.au.

Further information and support documents can be accessed at: <https://www.vaeai.org.au/launch-koorie-outreach-support-program/> and <http://www.vaeai.org.au/documents/>.

Youth Live4Life

Bernard Galbally, Chief Executive Officer and **Rebecca Morecroft, Director of Community Engagement** of Live4Life presented on this award-winning, evidence-based community initiative that was featured as a case study in the Royal Commission's Final Report.

Live4Life undertakes community-led prevention activities to improve youth mental health and reduce youth suicide. It takes a whole of community approach and builds the capacity of young people to recognise, seek and offer mental health support for mental health concerns; and the whole community to look after and support young people. Young people who participate in the model report it's transformative, builds resilience and self-esteem. Peer-led messaging is a key strength.

You can access more information on Youth Live4Life at <https://www.live4life.org.au/> and <https://www.live4life.org.au/what-is-live4life>.

Early Childhood Education

Susan McDonald, Executive Director, Early Childhood Education Division, DET presented on the importance of early childhood education as a key intervention and prevention measure to support wellbeing. The Victorian government has a progressive universal approach and want all children in the year before school to attend kindergarten. The government is currently rolling out universal three-year-old kinder to provide access to two years of high-quality early learning. This is supported by the Victoria Early Years Learning Development Framework that centres wellbeing and School Readiness Funding (SRF). SRF focuses on three key areas; communication, wellbeing, and access and inclusion.

More information on Early Childhood Education is available at: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/learning/Pages/veyldf.aspx>

Next meeting

Our next meeting will be on the theme of Student re-engagement. Please contact VCOSS if there is something that you'd like to share with us, to guide our planning for this meeting:

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