

Communique Three

This is the third communique from the Early Years Compact Board, released December 2018.

THE EARLY YEARS COMPACT 2017-2027 - Supporting Children And Families in the Early Years provides an opportunity for State and local government to work together in new ways with families, services and communities to give all children the best start in life.

In July 2018 the Compact Board confirmed that state-wide focus should continue on Year 1 priorities to enable Victoria's 17 Area-based Compact governance groups to build on relationships formed in 2017 and consolidate activity commenced during 2017-2018. These priorities are:

Priority 1 - Increase the participation of children in Out of Home Care and children known to Child Protection in early years services – improve sharing of data and information about children.

Priority 2 - Increase the participation of Aboriginal families in early years services with a focus on Maternal and Child Health and Kindergarten.

Priority 3 - Improve the identification and referral of children and families at risk of family violence, including by implementing the additional Maternal and Child Health family violence consultation visit and delivering family violence training to Maternal and Child Health nurses.

The Compact Board would like to acknowledge and thank members of Local Government, DET and DHHS for continuing to meet this year across 17 Areas in Victoria. Partners at the Area level continue to engage in constructive conversation and progress meaningful actions under the state-wide priorities, including establishment of specific working groups to drive program and cultural change.

DEVELOPMENT OF A GUIDING FRAMEWORK AND TWO-YEAR EVALUATION OF THE COMPACT

The Compact Partners Working Group is progressing work to assess and appoint an external supplier to:

- develop a 'best practice' governance model or guiding framework to support and sustain Area-based activity to be delivered in mid-2019
- design a methodology for evaluating and monitoring the efficacy of the Compact over the life of the 10-year agreement
- undertake evaluation of the first two years of the Compact in the second half of 2019.

This work was commissioned by the Compact Board in July and will proceed through the Compact Partners Working Group with oversight from the Compact Steering Group.

Development of the guiding framework will be informed by a review of current governance arrangements, including observations of governance meetings both centrally and in areas, and co design workshops with central and regional staff.

PROCESS TO IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS SYSTEM-BASED BARRIERS TO SUCCESS OF THE COMPACT


The Compact Board wants to ensure system-based barriers identified and raised at Area meetings are reviewed and addressed by senior leaders at the Area and Central level (as appropriate). System barriers are issues that inhibit or negatively impact on achievement of the Compact's state-wide priorities, which require collective problem solving across partner agencies.

In July 2018, the Board endorsed a broad process to enable these barriers to be identified, recorded, actioned and communicated. The practical operation of this process is being worked through by Compact partners through the Compact Partners Working Group and the Compact Steering Group. This includes options to monitor and share progress of actions and consideration of a shared online portal to facilitate this.

More details on the process will be shared with partner agencies (MAV to socialise with Local Government) and at Area-based meetings in Term 1 of 2019.

THREE-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN ANNOUNCEMENT; NEW PROVISION PLANNING WORKING GROUP

The Victorian Government has committed to rolling out at least five hours of subsidised kindergarten for all Victorian three year-old children by 2022. As work progresses the Compact will become a key enabler to support shared service delivery and infrastructure planning between partner agencies.



This new Working Group includes members from Local Government, MAV, DET and DHHS, and will undertake joint activities to enable more consistent and coordinated approaches to kindergarten provision planning at state-wide, regional and local levels.

OTHER UPDATES ON COMPACT PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

As outlined above, there has been substantial activity and effort in 2018 from partner agencies in line with Compact priorities and principles. Other key highlights in 2018 include:

- a workshop in September to socialise the Compact and its aims with Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (LAECGs), to support LAECGs' future attendance at Compact area meetings
- signing in November of a refreshed [Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care](#), with additional signatories that include Aboriginal and Community Service Organisations. Communication and monitoring of the refreshed agreement will progress through the Central Implementation Group which provides regular reports to the Compact Steering Group.
- completion of the Aboriginal Maternal and Child Health (AMCH) Initiative service model trials and evaluation. Evaluation findings will inform the expansion of AMCH services in 2019 and broader service improvements to benefit all Aboriginal children and families
- completion of the Enhanced Maternal and Child Health Program Guidelines and approval to expand the program over the next four years. The Murdoch Children's Research Institute has been appointed to undertake an evaluation in 2019
- regular DET engagement with the Early Years Management sector on delivery of kindergarten services, with particular focus on the rollout of School Readiness Funding from 2019
- Fifty-two successful Local Government applications under the Central Enrolment Development Grants process to introduce or enhance central enrolment schemes
- completion and promotion of the new *Resource Guide for Municipal Early Years Planning* by MAV

- first meeting of the Support and Safety Hubs (Orange Doors) State-wide Reference Group, which includes MAV representation and will advise on future implementation, evaluation and evolution of the Orange Doors.

'Ensuring that every effort is made to enable all children, regardless of their circumstances, to access foundational early years education and family services is a key element to the work that is undertaken through the Compact.'

'Through our collective commitment to making sure information is available to families and carers, access pathways are easily understood, and agencies have the information they need to ensure early years services are accessible to all children, we are seeing an increase in enrolment, and attendance in vital services for children.'

'This partnership is driving improvements in outcomes for kids in both the short term, through accessing the services, and, more importantly, the longer term by providing them with the start they need on their education journey.'

Danny O'Kelly, Deputy Secretary South Division, DHHS, Compact Board member

FURTHER INFORMATION

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Or visit the [Early Years Compact](#) web page