**COMMUNIQUE ONE**

# this is the first communique from the Early years Compact Board which met FOR THE FIRST TIME on 18 August 2017.

The Early Years Compact, *Supporting children and families in the Early Years: A Compact between the Department of Education and Training, Department of Health and Human Services and Local Government (represented by the Municipal Association of Victoria) 2017-2027,* has been developed to establish a closer working relationship between DET, DHHS and Local Government with the aim of lifting outcomes for young children and families.

Victoria’s State and Local Governments want all children and their families to benefit from the lifelong gains the early years can provide.

The Compact recognises the key role local government plays in supporting and responding to the needs of children and families at the local level.

It provides an opportunity for new ways of working together, to support Victorian families and young children, wherever they live.

In practice the Compact will ensure that planning, coordination and information sharing is integrated across the Victorian early years sector.

It is a key enabler for the Victorian Government’s *Early Childhood Reform Plan* and strengthens *Roadmap for Reform: strong families, safe children,* a commitment supporting Victoria’s most vulnerable children.

## NEW WAYS OF WORKING TOGETHER

The Compact is a commitment to work together in new ways to improve outcomes for children and families by:

* Identifying and implementing what is working well and changing what is not
* Using a systems and place-based approach to deliver well-connected, inclusive and high quality services tailored to local communities, with a particular focus on vulnerable children and families
* Systemic sharing and analysis of information, data and evidence
* Engaging families and children in decision making about the services and supports they need
* Working in a transparent and mutually accountable way to design, plan and deliver on agreed priorities, respecting each party’s roles and responsibilities.

## Compact governance

There are three levels of governance for the Compact:

* **Early Years Compact Board**

Monitors the state-wide implementation of the Compact

* **Compact Steering Group**

Provides advice to the Board on annual priorities

* **Area-based governance**

Senior DET, DHHS and LG leaders at local level identify local priorities and provide collective accountability for local implementation of state-wide and local priorities

## LIFTING Outcomes FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Through the Compact we will work to ensure:

* All young children are engaged, confident and creative learners
* All children are safe, cared for and experience optimal health and development
* Vulnerability, location and disadvantage do not determine outcomes for young children
* Families feel well supported by high quality, inclusive services for children and families in the early years
* Families are connected to culture, actively participate in community life and can access help when and where they need it.

## High level strategic priorities

The focus of our shared efforts will be:

1. Driving better outcomes
2. A more coherent and empowering system
3. Stronger place-based governance and planning
4. Promoting early childhood
5. Supporting service quality
6. More inclusive services.

## A TEN YEAR COMMITMENT WITH ANNUAL PRIORITy Activities

To deliver on the strategic priorities and outcomes annual priorities will be agreed each year. They will be reviewed and updated through the Compact governance processes, informed by feedback from the local level.

## State-wide Compact priorities for 2017-2018

The Compact Board has agreed on three state-wide priorities, focused on supporting vulnerable children and families, for the first year:

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
2. Increase participation of Aboriginal families in early years services, with a focus on Maternal and Child Health and kindergarten services
3. Improve the identification and referral of children and families at risk of family violence, including implementing the Maternal and Child Health family violence consultation visit.

The Compact Board also agreed on a range of other priorities to be progressed centrally and locally in 2017-18. Progression of some of these will depend on local circumstances. All priorities sit under four themes:

* Child and family health and development
* Early childhood education and care
* Connected care
* Place-based planning.

More information on the Compact priorities is provided in supplementary materials which support this communique.

## Area based governance and implementation arrangements

The Compact will be implemented at the local level – leveraging off the many successful approaches and arrangements that already exist in local areas around the State, including the Child and Youth Area Partnerships and Best Start.

The Board has agreed on a phased approach to area-based governance and implementation arrangements.

### Phase 1: Initial Compact area-based meetings – by end December 2017

The purpose of the initial meetings is to bring DET, DHHS and LG senior executive leaders together, to discuss the Compact, agree on 2017-18 Compact priorities/activities they will focus on and, identify any existing partnerships/place-based arrangements they could leverage-off for future Compact meetings.

### Phase 2: Compact area-based governance – initial four sites – by end April 2018

The initial sites will help us test materials and approaches that best support local areas to have informed discussions and make evidence based decisions.

To facilitate these discussions between DET, DHHS and LG senior executive leaders, data packs and other materials will be developed for the four initial sites:

* Brimbank-Melton
* Southern Melbourne
* Ovens Murray
* Loddon-Campaspe

### Phase 3: Compact area-based governance – full roll out by end December 2018

Learnings from Phases one and two will inform the full roll-out in 2018.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Progress on area-based governance and implementation arrangements will be reviewed at the next meeting of the Early Years Compact Board in early 2018. A second communique will be issued after that meeting.

## If you have questions about the Compact, please contact

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