**COMMUNIQUE TWO**

This is the second communique from the Early Years Compact Board following its second meeting on 22 February 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.

**UPDATE ON PHASES 1 AND 2 - MEETINGS IN ALL SITES AND DATA LED DISCUSSIONS IN INITIAL SITES**

The Compact Board acknowledges the positive engagement of partners with the Compact and substantial efforts to establish and build on existing local relationships through area-based meetings in late 2017. First local Compact meetings were held in 17 areas across Victoria to discuss the Compact, its aims and priorities with senior representatives from Local Government, DHHS and DET.

*“Local Governments are keen to progress practical and effective action for their areas, and acknowledge that, as this is a 10-year agreement there is still lots to be achieved between the Compact Board and Area Working Groups once relationships and expectations are firmly established. Also, we welcome increased CEO engagement in the Compact in their capacity as senior decision-makers and influencers.”*

Bruce Myers, Director, Community and Cultural Services, Swan Hill Rural City, Compact Board Member

The four initial sites of Brimbank Melton, Southern Melbourne, Ovens Murray and Loddon Campaspe combined discussions of the Compact with data led discussions. Second meetings with refreshed data packs have commenced for these areas where terms of reference and governance structures are being progressed.

Importantly, these early meetings have generated immediate actions including the clarification of the differing requirements of the Victorian No Jab, No Play legislation and the Commonwealth No Jab,

No Pay measures. This has highlighted the 16-week grace period for vulnerable and at risk children who cannot meet immunisation requirements to enrol in early childhood services. This is differentiated from the Commonwealth No Jab No Pay measures which restricts family welfare payments to children without up to date immunisation records. The consistent implementation of this grace period will support the attendance of more vulnerable children at kindergarten.

*“I am pleased with current progress. The level of engagement from the local early years services and departments has been encouraging. The initial focus on understanding the local area based data is now translating into setting local priorities. The challenge now is to sustain this initial enthusiasm and commitment and develop action plans that address the identified priorities.”*

Mick Naughton, Director, Children and Families Policy, DHHS, Compact Board Member

**PHASE 3 – TOWARDS FULL IMPLEMENTATION**

In recognition of areas’ feedback for evidence to inform Compact discussions, development of data packs for the remaining 13 areas was brought forward from June to February 2018 to support data led conversations at the second round of meetings.

**STATE-WIDE COMPACT PRIORITIES FOR 2018-2019**

Based on a recommendation from the Compact Steering Group, the Compact Board approved the continuation of the state-wide Compact priorities developed and implemented for the first year of the Compact (2017-2018). This will provide certainty for area based governance groups and an opportunity to consolidate activity for full implementation by December 2018.

|  |
| --- |
| **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. |

**COMPACT CASE STUDY 1**

The Board would like to promote examples of best practice which highlight the principles of the Compact.

Brimbank City Council is committed to ensuring that all children have equal opportunity to access a high quality funded kindergarten, in particular to improve participation for vulnerable children.

Brimbank has introduced an Early Years Access Officer to further support the successful connection of the child, family and kindergarten service. The model enhances centralisation of administrative services delivered by Council to coordinate funded kindergarten programs in its local area, particularly for vulnerable children. The navigation of early childhood services to support specific family requirements has proven to be very challenging for some families in Brimbank. The Early Years Access Officer provides information and assistance to families with understanding the early childhood system and the additional services available.

Since the implementation of the Early Years Access Officer role, there has been a steady increase in the number of filled Early Start Kindergarten places, and numbers over the last two years have almost doubled.

Some key responsibilities of the Early Years Access Officer include:

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

If you have questions about the Compact, please contact:

DET staff:

**Sarah Man**

Senior Policy Adviser, Early Childhood Implementation early.years.compact@edumail.vic.gov.au

DHHS staff:

**Toni Morton**

Manager, Early Years toni.morton@dhhs.vic.gov.au

For Council staff:

**Wendy Allan**

MAV Early Years Policy Adviser wallan@mav.asn.au

* Identify and contact families experiencing difficulty accessing a kindergarten program
* Provide appropriate and culturally relevant support and guidance to families, to support children with accessing a kindergarten program
* Refer children and families to other services and supports where required
* Provide follow up with families whose children have not taken up a kindergarten place.

Other actions introduced in Brimbank to support children accessing kindergarten include:

* Notional kindergarten registration completed as part of the second Maternal and Child Health Key Ages and Stages appointment
* Translation of Brimbank Kindergarten Registration information so that it is available in multiple languages.

**COMPACT CASE STUDY 2**

In the North East Melbourne Area (NEMA), the Compact provides a further lever to strengthen the partnering arrangements between DET, DHHS and Local Government to progress the Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care. Current initiatives include a proposal to offer secondary consultation, which would see a Maternal and Child Health nurse spend half a day on a weekly basis (rotation model) in the Child Protection office, to provide consultation to staff and strengthen the partnership. A DET Koorie Engagement Support Officer would also attend and be available for consultation. Action already in place includes DET and DHHS meeting individually with local government to clarify quarterly data, and ensure that all children who have entered Out of Home Care are engaged with the Maternal and Child Health Service and other appropriate early years services.

*“Critical to the success of the Compact is equal, strong engagement and participation across all partners, collective trust and accountability for an agreed local area target. This collective lever will enable NEMA to focus on an overall increase in kindergarten participation across the early years.”* Chris Thompson, DET Area Executive Director NEMA