

# Roadmap for Reform: children and families

Progress and  
directions 2018



**VICTORIA**  
State  
Government

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Where the term 'Aboriginal' is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 'Koorie' is retained when it is part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

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## Minister's foreword



We have achieved so much since the launch of the *Roadmap for Reform: strong families, safe children – the first steps* (the Roadmap) in April 2016, and there is so much more to do.

Together we have built the strongest possible partnership for change, illustrating the depth and breadth of our shared commitment to putting children and families first.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed, particularly the Roadmap Implementation Ministerial Advisory Group.

The Roadmap was the start of a long-term plan for change, but it was also vital that we made rapid progress to address significant challenges.

In every Budget, the Andrews Labor Government has invested heavily to support this reform, with an unprecedented \$858.6 million investment to support children, families and young people through the 2018–19 State Budget. This is on top of an investment of \$168 million in 2016–17 and \$161 million in 2017–18.

In this document, *Roadmap for Reform: children and families – Progress and directions*, it is my pleasure to outline the achievements we have made together and to set out the next steps.

The vision we have is a shared one – that all children reach their full potential by living and thriving in safe and supportive families where they have strong attachments to parents, kin, carers and community and can embrace their cultural and spiritual identity.

The Roadmap for Reform is the Victorian Government's blueprint for transforming the child and family system from a crisis response to early intervention and prevention. The Roadmap work consolidates and builds on the government's landmark reforms in family violence, particularly through establishing The Orange Door (previously known as Support and Safety Hubs).

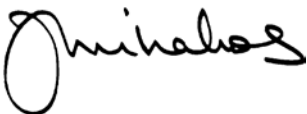
Central to our reforms is a commitment to Aboriginal self-determination and self-management. The ground-breaking establishment of Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care program realises the implementation of Section 18 of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* and is premised on the belief that outcomes for Aboriginal children in the statutory child protection system will be improved when services and supports are provided by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.

Funding has helped build strong foundations for earlier intervention, with \$29.2 million to expand Child FIRST and family services to provide support for an additional 2,000 families, with 20 per cent of the funding targeted to Aboriginal families.

I acknowledge the resilience of children and families and of kinship carers, foster carers and permanent carers sharing their homes and caring for our children.

I reaffirm our commitment to those children who cannot live with their parents, to ensure as many as possible can live in safe and supported home-based family arrangements enabling the best possible outcomes.

Thank you all for your commitment to this work. I look forward to working with you during the next stage of these vital reforms as we strive to make a greater difference to the lives of vulnerable Victorian children, young people and their families.



**Hon. Jenny Mikakos MP**  
Minister for Families and Children

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# Acknowledgement of Aboriginal Victoria

The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Victoria's Aboriginal communities and their rich culture and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's First Peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we live and work. We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life and how this enriches our society more broadly. We embrace the spirit of self-determination, self-management and reconciliation, working towards equality of outcomes and ensuring an equitable voice.

As we work together to ensure Victorian Aboriginal communities continue to thrive, the Victorian Government acknowledges the invaluable contributions of Aboriginal clients, the workforce and communities across Victoria to this work and look forward to a continued partnership.

# Background

## Roadmap for Reform: the first steps

In April 2016, the Victorian Government released the *Roadmap for Reform: strong families, safe children – the first steps* (the Roadmap).

The Roadmap outlined our shared commitment to build a better future for children, young people and families. It set the direction for transforming the child and family system in Victoria and specified initial actions under three reform directions:

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**Reform direction 1:** Building supportive and culturally strong communities and improving access to universal services

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**Reform direction 2:** Supporting children, young people and families in need with integrated wraparound supports and targeted early interventions

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**Reform direction 3:** Strengthening home-based care and improving outcomes for children and young people in out-of-home care.

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## Roadmap for Reform: the next steps

In June 2017, we brought together 130 representatives from across the child and family system, academia and government for a third Roadmap Symposium. Through the work of the symposium, we identified the following vision and three key priorities.

**All vulnerable Victorian children reach their full potential by living and thriving in safe and supportive families where they have strong attachments to parents, kin, carers and community and can embrace their cultural and spiritual identity.**

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### **1. Building family capability and child development**

- 1.1 Strengthening wraparound supports and early interventions for children, young people and their families
- 1.2 Progressing recommendations to better identify and support victim-survivors of family violence
- 1.3 Investing in building family capability and supporting Aboriginal self-determination.

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### **2. Effective pathways of support**

- 2.1 Creating new pathways in and out of the system
- 2.2 Strengthening wraparound supports, risk assessment and early interventions for children, young people and their families
- 2.3 Strengthening home-based care and improved outcomes for children and young people in out-of-home care.

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### **3. Shared accountability for outcomes**

- 3.1 Embedding outcomes in our system
  - 3.2 Creating an evidence-informed learning system
  - 3.3 Building new funding models
  - 3.4 Improving quality and safety.
- 

The actions outlined in the Roadmap complement other streams of government reform including *Ending family violence: Victoria's plan for change* and other family violence reforms, the Education State initiative, *Victoria's 10-year mental health plan*, social housing reforms to improve access to family-appropriate social housing for vulnerable families, and the *Back to work* strategy to increase economic participation and reduce risk factors associated with unemployment, poverty and isolation.



# Achievements to date

## Stabilising and building the foundation

The Roadmap was established to address enduring challenges in the child and family system.

Many vulnerable children and young people, particularly Aboriginal children, cannot access the supports that they need. The focus of service delivery and investment has been on the crisis end of the system, with not enough capacity to respond effectively to risks and needs earlier on. Many families known to Child Protection do not access universal and targeted services, and families accessing Child FIRST often have increasingly complex needs.

The scale of reform, as envisioned in the Roadmap, involves fundamental system change over time as well as making immediate improvements to service capacity and quality. The focus of activity to date has therefore been to consolidate and improve our core services while building a foundational platform for further reform.

**Focusing on our core services** has involved:

- addressing immediate concerns from carers
- improving the quality of services to children, particularly in out-of-home care ('care services')
- shining a spotlight on the importance of early intervention
- implementing the Royal Commission into Family Violence recommendations to improve the safety of women, children and families.

**Foundational reforms** include:

- building an evidence base of what services really make a difference
- shifting the focus to outcomes
- reforming funding to enable more flexible service delivery
- prioritising quality and safety
- supporting the workforce and sector through the changes needed.

## Aboriginal self-determination and self-management

The Victorian Government is clear that better outcomes for Aboriginal people must be led by Aboriginal people. Therefore, in partnership with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs), we are committed to driving our collective efforts to advance Aboriginal self-management and self-determination for Aboriginal people in Victoria.

The Roadmap is underpinned by guiding principles including that Aboriginal communities are best placed to design, develop and deliver strategies that proclaim and affirm Aboriginal self-determination and self-management resulting in culturally safe services for all Aboriginal people.

“ **Strengthening Aboriginal family law – that’s treaty. Governing your family is the first law – our social structures have been broken, we want to put our family laws back together.** ”

Design yarn participant

Designing with Aboriginal communities has enabled the Victorian Government to action efforts that place Aboriginal voices and perspectives at the forefront. A series of ‘design yarns’ with Aboriginal clients and frontline workers across the state have highlighted the Aboriginal journey in our service system, ensuring Aboriginal people are at the centre of system and service policy design.

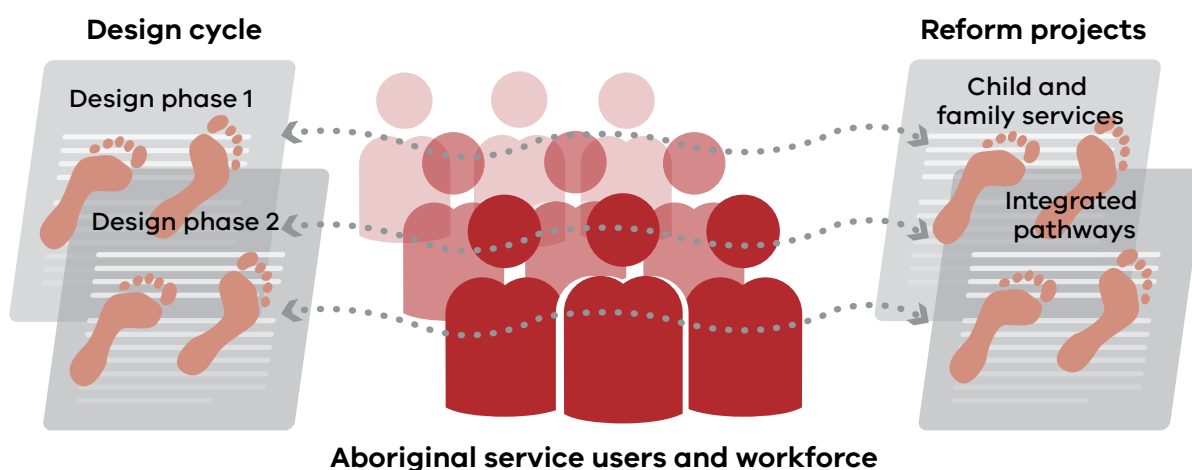
The design yarns have included:

- informing the Aboriginal workforce about the Roadmap journey
- identifying key insights into the needs of Aboriginal people
- using design tools so Aboriginal people can take carriage of designing and delivering policies and programs
- enabling Aboriginal people to contribute to ministerial, government and ACCO decision making
- testing and validating design elements of future Roadmap directions.



Figure 1 shows how the design yarn approach places Aboriginal service users and the workforce at the centre of the design and implementation process.

**Figure 1: The design yarn approach**



## Partnership and collaboration

Collaboration has been fundamental to the Roadmap's success to date. Three symposiums were held between August 2015 and June 2017 to develop the directions for the child and family system. Many sector organisations, academics, practitioners and policy staff have participated in symposiums, workshops and information sessions. In September 2017, a child protection workforce symposium heard ideas about the changes needed to improve the system.

The Roadmap Implementation Ministerial Advisory Group (RIMAG) has been critical in influencing how we can most benefit vulnerable Victorian children and families. RIMAG has been a key partner and contributor to the design of our next steps.

Building the voice and experience of carers, young people and families in design is critical, for example, designing of the new model for kinship care included extensive consultation with carers, young people who have experienced care, the sector and ACCOs.

Two years on from the Roadmap launch, we have made significant progress, but there is still a lot more to do to realise our vision.

Details about the current RIMAG membership can be found at Appendix 1.

## Strengthening the foundations of core services

### Building culturally strong communities and improving access

The government recognises that the needs of Aboriginal children and young people are best met by Aboriginal community services, allowing them to provide support to children and their families in a way that best meets their cultural and community needs.

“ In some areas, the gap in Aboriginal disadvantage has not closed – it’s grown even wider.

The fact is, nothing will change until we realise this obvious truth: control of Aboriginal health should be in the hands of Aboriginal communities.

And better outcomes for Aboriginal people must be led by Aboriginal people. Not bureaucrats and politicians. ”

Premier Daniel Andrews, 12 April 2018

This is demonstrated in the following list of achievements.

In an Australian first, the first authorisations by the departmental Secretary under Section 18 of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* demonstrates commitment to empowering Aboriginal self-determination. This authorises Aboriginal agencies to perform specified functions for up to 36 Aboriginal children subject to a protection order (through the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care program or 'Nugel').

A key pillar of the 2018–19 State Budget includes \$47.3 million to implement the *Wungurilwil Gagapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement* – a groundbreaking tripartite partnership between the Aboriginal community, Victorian Government and community service organisations that empowers ACCOs to increase the cultural competence and accessibility of mainstream services.

- Specific support will also be available for Aboriginal families and children to support cultural planning and connection to culture, country and community.
- The Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care program will be expanded to enable ACCOs to manage case planning and decision making for more Aboriginal children in care.
- Case management for Aboriginal children subject to protection orders and care services will continue to be transferred to the Aboriginal community to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care.
- Maternal and child health services will be extended in ACCOs and local government through the Aboriginal Maternal Child Health Initiative, offering families choice and flexibility in accessing universal services.

The *Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017–2027* has been introduced. The plan articulates Victorian Aboriginal peoples' aspirations for health, wellbeing and safety.

The Aboriginal Workforce Development Initiative, with funding of \$17.7 million over four years from the Family Violence Industry Plan and funding from the Department of Education and Training, has commenced across Victoria. This Initiative has enabled Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to develop their own workforce plans and build their workforce and organisational capacities.

### Supporting early intervention and connecting to universal services

The government is committed to giving children the best start in life and has invested in this critical age and stage of development. We have proactively connected vulnerable children and families to supports through universal services such as early childhood services, schools, hospitals, community health services and informal networks.

A \$101.7 million investment in the 2018–19 State Budget will deliver family services and other early intervention programs.

Early intervention family service programs will continue to be funded to support vulnerable families. Child FIRST and family services work with families at risk of becoming involved with child protection or out-of-home care. This investment will enable the child and family system to identify families at risk earlier and connect them with the right support services.

Support programs that focus on early years interventions will also be continued, including Cradle to Kinder and Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies.

The LOOKOUT program will be expanded to improve access to kindergarten and the transition to school for children in care.

The *Education State: Early childhood reform plan* (Education State initiative) includes holding kindergarten places open for families most in need and meeting increasing demand for two free years of kindergarten for Aboriginal children and children known to Child Protection.

The Enhanced Maternal and Child Health program is expanding. Once fully implemented, the program will be offered to 15 per cent of Victorians aged under three years (up from 10 per cent). The universal maternal and child health service now provides an additional consultation for women and children at risk of, or experiencing, family violence.

The Early Start Kindergarten program for vulnerable three year olds and the school readiness funding for pre-school children has been increased.



### Better connecting children and families with specialist services

**Targeted and timely supports for children and families with specific needs are essential to prevent these needs escalating into crises. The government has invested strongly in expanding specialist services so people can access the help they need to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.**

We have expanded community-based treatment services for parents whose children are subject to family reunification orders to hasten access to treatment.

We have expanded mental health services to detect and treat mental illness in women earlier, including depression during pregnancy and postnatally.

The 'Healthcare that counts' framework was introduced in March 2017 to assist Victorian health services respond to vulnerable children and drive system-wide improvements to deliver coordinated and high-quality care.

We have increased investment in the leadership and responsiveness of the public mental health system to engage, assess and treat children (aged 0–12 years) with behaviour disorders linked to mental illness such as conduct disorder (and its precursors), depression and anxiety, as well as helping their families/caregivers.

We have designed and tested new medium-term housing options for vulnerable young people targeted at areas of highest need.

Relocatable studios have been provided to young people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness including those leaving care through the Kids Under Cover program.

### Integrating supports for children and families with multiple needs

The Victorian Government committed to implementing all 227 recommendations from the March 2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence, with a primary objective of ending family violence. An unprecedented investment of \$1.9 billion was delivered through the 2017–18 State Budget to implement key recommendations.

Family Safety Victoria was established in July 2017 to put the necessary safeguards in place to keep women and children safe.

We established The Orange Door, which will be progressively rolled out across the state over four years, with the first five launching in 2018.

The 2018–19 State Budget committed \$49.9 million to support victims of family violence and sexual assault. This includes flexible support packages to assist victim-survivors with the costs of escaping family violence. Packages can fund relocation costs, furniture, clothing and security measures. This investment will also provide operational funding for the Wyndham Multi-Disciplinary Centre (opening mid-2018) and more counselling support for those impacted by sexual assault.

We rolled out Risk Assessment and Management Panels (RAMPs) in 18 locations statewide to help agencies share critical information and facilitate comprehensive risk assessment and action planning for victim-survivors at the highest risk of family violence. In the first 12 months of operation, more than 620 cases received a RAMP response.

Many innovative responses have been trialled, for example:

- Intensive Family Services (200 hours in 2017–18) to respond in collaboration with Child Protection where children are subject to a family preservation order or family reunification order
- Caring Dads, in partnership with the Children's Protection Society and the Gandel Foundation, works with fathers who have exposed their children to violence or neglect
- Trials of family violence perpetrator interventions that target diverse groups.



## Strengthening home-based care and support for carers

Kinship, foster and permanent carers are highly valued and vital to the child and family system. Recruitment, training and support for carers is essential to achieving better outcomes for children requiring protection and support. By increasing client funding and wider supports, we are supporting carers to provide consistent and quality care for the children in their care.

Vulnerable children deserve safe, comfortable and home-like environments where they can heal, recover and thrive. Improving the quality of residential care and all forms of care services is a priority.

A new \$33.5 million model for kinship care, launched in March 2018, is part of a new package of measures for kinship carers.

The 2018–19 State Budget includes \$390.7 million for more home-based care placements and support for carers including support under the Treatment Foster Care Oregon model. Children and young people will also be supported through a range of therapeutic treatment options.

A new statewide helpline is assisting permanent carers across Victoria who need urgent advice or support. Launched in April 2017, the line is run by Permanent Care and Adoptive Families.

Since its launch in January 2016, the Fostering Connections campaign has fielded more than 4,600 queries about becoming a foster carer and more than 780 new carers have welcomed a child into their home for the first time.

The Carer KaFE is better supporting foster and kinship carers through a combined foster and kinship carer training strategy. To date, more than 1,600 carers have attended.

## Laying the foundation for future reform

### Trialling innovative initiatives

**Trialling and evaluating innovative models of service delivery enables us to build an evidence base of what works to improve outcomes for children and families.**

In the 2018–19 State Budget investment includes continuing:

- Better Futures Supporting Young Care Leavers Trial, a program providing proactive support to young people who are about to turn 16 to connect them with a support worker who will assist them as they transition from care into adulthood
- Funding for ACCOs to identify innovation within their services and build the skills and capabilities of the ACCO workforce.

The number of Targeted Care Packages has increased, successfully preventing entry to residential care or supporting transition from residential care for more than 500 children since March 2015.

The South Initiative has designed and delivered nine innovative service models for children and young people in, or at risk of entering, care services. They aim to divert children from entering care, improve experiences for those requiring care and develop more supported pathways out of care.

Funding of \$6.1 million in January 2018 has enabled an increase in evidence-based programs. Seven evidence based programs are now being trialled in Victorian child and family services, including:

- SafeCare®
- Functional Family Therapy - Child Welfare®
- Family Foundations®
- Multisystemic Therapy – Psychiatric®
- Tuning Into Kids™ and Tuning Into Teens™
- Triple P®
- Parents Under Pressure™.

The Keep Embracing Your Success intensive support service will better prepare young people with complex needs to transition from residential care into home-based care by utilising mental health clinicians to support young people in care.



### Investing in developing a learning system

**We are introducing a future learning system that applies evidence about practice and models of care to inform service delivery and improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families. Continuing to learn from new and innovative service models will inform future service delivery.**

Learning system grants have funded 14 diverse community service organisation projects under the *Children and families research strategy*.

The Outcomes, Practice and Evidence Network (OPEN) held its first research symposium in October 2017. Coordinated by the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, OPEN is building the capability of the workforce and supporting sector engagement with evidence-informed practice.

The 2018–19 State Budget includes funding for OPEN to continue this important work.

The first draft of the menu of evidence-informed practices and programs was published in December 2016 (see 'Creating a learning system' later in this document).

Testing of client data collection in the child and family system will establish a systematic approach to measuring and monitoring outcomes. To date, more than 300 practitioners have signed up to participate.

## Supporting the workforce and industry planning

**The Roadmap identified the importance of supporting the workforce and industry transition planning to support the sector.**

A further \$225.5 million in the 2018–19 Budget will support an additional 450 child protection practitioners and the after-hours response. This builds on last year's investment of \$72.2 million.

Launched in December 2017 and co-designed with the sector, the *Building from strength: 10-year industry plan for family violence prevention and response* aims to sustainably shift how we prevent and respond to family violence by setting out a long-term vision for the specialist and universal workforces that intersect with family violence.

The Enhanced Pathways to Family Violence project will see placements expanded across community services including the child and family system during 2018 and 2019. An investment of \$4.8 million in 2017–18, and \$5 million in 2018–19 will allow a substantial expansion of this program.

We have trained more than 1,300 residential care workers across the state to meet mandatory minimum qualifications for residential care workers.

The *Child protection workforce strategy 2017–2020* will help recruit, retain, develop and support the child protection workforce, embedding child protection as a critical component of performing statutory functions within a whole-of-system response.

We have supported the sector's peak body, The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, in its industry and sector transition planning.

## Improving quality, safety and our legislative base

**A key government priority is to keep children and families safe by implementing a range of safeguards and systems that ensure critical information can be shared between services, as well as increased accountabilities and standards to protect children and report allegations of abuse.**

A \$43.4 million investment in the 2018–19 Budget to implement the recently passed Child Information Sharing legislation will ensure staff are trained in how best to share information to promote the wellbeing and safety of children. The reforms will complement the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme created by the new Part 5A of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* by allowing professionals to work together to respond to the full range of issues experienced by children and families.

The Community Services Quality and Safety Office was established in the Department of Health and Human Services (the department) in December 2017 to share improvement and innovations in the community services system. This enables improvements in client safety, the effectiveness of interventions and the experience of people who rely on services.

Minimum compulsory Child Safe Standards (in response to the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry) have been introduced to strengthen the child safety requirements of organisations, including the department, to ensure they are well prepared to protect children from abuse and neglect.

We have introduced the Reportable Conduct Scheme (*Children Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2017*) to mandatorily report and investigate child abuse allegations made by employees or volunteers of organisations including the department. The Client Incident Management System has improved oversight mechanisms including incident analysis and increased accountability for service providers.

## Connected pathways to support

The original Roadmap directions and priorities are still sound, and the Roadmap remains the blueprint for how we move forward. However, we continue to learn, develop and evolve the thinking about how best to realise these priorities. Building on the strong foundations and learnings of the past two years of Roadmap implementation, future directions over the next five to 10 years focus on new 'pathways' to support. The pathways approach has been generated with significant input from the RIMAG and feedback from regional consultations.

The pathways approach looks at how all parts of the child and family system (The Orange Door, child and family services, Child Protection, care services, including Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care) connect to work with vulnerable children and families, as well as how the system links to other service platforms.

The three proposed pathways to support are based around the needs of vulnerable children and families. This approach shifts away from the traditional tiered primary, secondary and tertiary structure of the current system, which divides services and creates barriers to families accessing the joined-up support they need. Instead, the pathways are characterised by three common ways of working:

- timely and culturally sensitive support **to make every contact count** towards child and family safety and wellbeing
- **shared decision making and action**, including empowering children, young people, families and carers to work alongside professionals to explore solutions that meet their needs
- **flexible and tailored support** that is proportionate **to the changing needs** of children and families.

Aboriginal self-management is critical to the pathways approach. While many Aboriginal children are thriving, the pathways will prioritise self-management and increase opportunities for Aboriginal communities to lead the healing and recovery of their children, young people and families.

The three pathways, which increase in intensity, are described in Box 1.

**Box 1: The three pathways to support**

**1. Early help**

Children and families with emerging needs and vulnerability who require particular assistance from universal services with extra support from the child and family system and community resources to achieve child and family wellbeing and capability.

**2. Targeted and specialist support**

Children and families experiencing a range of needs with increasing vulnerabilities or risks. Some children in this pathway may have experienced or are likely to experience significant harm and, in some circumstances, may need to reside away from their families for a period of time.

These children, families and carers require sustained child and family services support in collaboration with universal services, specialist services and community resources to promote child and family safety, wellbeing and capability.

**3. Continuing care**

Children in enduring care arrangements who have experienced significant harm and will not be returning to their birth family.

These children, their carers and birth families have enduring needs across many domains and require continuing support from child and family services in collaboration with universal services, specialist services and community resources to promote children's opportunity to form secure attachments and reach their developmental potential.



Moving to the pathways approach will require a shift in the way services are currently provided. Two key 'transformation themes' are outlined below.

## **Connected operating models with a common practice approach**

The pathways approach provides better access to, and greater continuity of, child and family services for vulnerable children and families through a more unified child and family system with connected operating models. The three connected operating models are The Orange Door, child and family services (including ACCOs and care services) and Child Protection (including the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care program). Creating a unified child and family system will change the way these services work together and with vulnerable families to make every contact count, facilitate shared decision making and action and deliver flexible and tailored support.

Practitioners within each of these connected operating models will use the pathways to deliver a more consistent mix, sequence and intensity of services and supports necessary to help children recover from harm and improve family capability. This includes community and strengths-based, collaborative work towards shared goals with children and their families and empowering Aboriginal people to self-manage and to have more control over their futures.

A key aspect of the pathways approach is implementing a lead practitioner model to enable children, families and carers to connect with a coordinated service response. Following assessment, the practitioner would take a lead role to coordinate and help connect people to the range of services they require, providing a more seamless experience. Depending on the needs of the family, a lead practitioner may be from a universal service, child and family service, an ACCO or The Orange Door.

A common practice approach, including a common assessment and planning framework for child need and risk, will underpin shared decision making across the pathways. This will advance the appropriateness, quality and safety of support through a more systematic application of evidence about practice and models of care that improves outcomes for vulnerable children and families.





## Linking with services

Children and families with emerging needs often do not receive the help they need until their needs have escalated to crisis point. The pathways approach enshrines shared responsibility for identifying, protecting, supporting and improving the lives of children and families experiencing vulnerability. The services and supports children and families need sit across universal services, child and family services, the broader network of government-funded services, and the community.

A new form of child and family support worker (28 in total, funded through the 2018–19 Budget) will be embedded in a range of universal services such as maternal and child health services, kindergartens and playgroups within the communities where the partnerships are established. These workers will provide early help for families as soon as parenting problems arise or where more support is needed to prevent escalation and divert them away from more intensive child and family services or Child Protection. They will also strengthen community and peer support around these families. Importantly, the two components of this initiative – the partnerships and the new workers – will help us learn about the ways we can adapt our services and systems in other communities and take these learnings to scale.

The pathways approach builds on the broad range of available community assets and prosocial activities to strengthen connections between children, families and the community. Extended family, friends, kin, neighbourhood houses, sport and recreation groups and other community resources all offer opportunities to build enduring systems of support.

To this end, we will be engaging further with universal and specialist services, and the community, to scope the network arrangements that are needed to underpin our transformation to the pathways approach and to achieve the vision of a joined-up service system.

Designing service pathways around the client experience and strengthening the understanding and co-operation between the operating models of different types of services will make it easier to get help. Investment in building the understanding of the dynamics of family violence and child development, and clear pathways to support, will enable universal services (including schools, hospitals and general practitioners) to be more confident in identifying and linking people to experts working at The Orange Door.

Access into The Orange Door includes referrals, online or phone options, outreach or out-posted workers or direct access through The Orange Door. This will help address the issues that people have experienced in the past when accessing family violence and child and family services.

For a person seeking help, the first step is often the hardest. The Orange Door will make sure people get the most out of their first contact. For victim-survivors of family violence, the pathways approach will mean it is no longer the responsibility of a woman to seek help and take the necessary steps to assure her family's safety. Specialist family violence and child and family services will focus on the risk of a perpetrator causing further harm. For children whose safety and healthy development is at risk, there will be clearer and quicker pathways to support much earlier – before they experience the harm of chronic and pervasive trauma. Responsibility will be shifted from women and youth to the communities and services they interact with, including those who know and suspect perpetrators of family violence or families under stress.

# Preparing our system for the pathways approach

To implement the pathways approach, we are developing systematic reforms that will enable the system and workforce to make the changes needed.

## Applying an outcomes focus

Shared accountability for achieving better outcomes for children and families is at the heart of the Roadmap reforms. Applying an outcomes focus places people at the centre of planning, decision making, resource allocation and service delivery. When we measure outcomes, we start to gather information on the impact of services on people's lives. This information helps us understand what works, what doesn't, and why and where we should target our efforts to achieve the greatest benefit.

The *Department of Health and Human Services outcomes framework*, published in 2016, includes both client and system outcomes (Figure 2). Outcomes for children and families are distinguished from system outcomes, which include how we deliver services and whether those services are appropriate, effective and sustainable. System outcomes are supported by a range of enablers including flexible funding models, evidence, quality and safety frameworks and the workforce development required to realise the Roadmap vision.

Figure 2: Department of Health and Human Services outcomes framework



## Creating a learning system

We continue to move towards a learning system that brings together data, analytics, research and evaluation to ensure the service system is informed by the best available knowledge. An exciting initiative that forms a major part of the learning system is a menu of evidence-informed practices and programs for the system. The child and family system definition of evidence-informed practice is:

“ The integration of the best research evidence with practice expertise and client values. ”

The menu will provide up-to-date research evidence – a repository of ‘what works’ in the child and family system – supplying information to the sector on effectiveness and outcomes, implementation and delivery costs. For the Roadmap priority of shared accountability for outcomes to be realised, understanding which interventions are most effective for children and families with particular characteristics is essential, including getting the right intensity and sequencing of supports.

How children and families experience the services they receive is an important component of a learning system and a quality framework that enables safe and effective services that meet people’s needs. Feedback from children and families about their experience in the system will drive continuous improvement. As the knowledge base builds, the views of children and families, combined with more sophisticated use of data and analytics, will form part of the evidence base of what works.

The outcomes, Practice and Evidence Network (OPEN) plays an important role in supporting the sector in enabling the shift to evidence-informed practice.



## Building new funding models

A simpler way of funding services will remove barriers that prevent providers from working flexibly and will provide wraparound support to children and families. It will enable a more seamless and continuous service system, setting it up to move towards outcomes-focused performance management in the longer term.

The department, in consultation with the sector, has been designing a new funding model that supports integration across the child and family system. The new funding model will still offer funding certainty to providers to ensure that services are well planned and sustainable but will also allow providers to tailor services ('scale up' and 'scale down') based on a child or family's needs.

Funding structures will be more consistent across child and family services to support a unified system that aligns with the pathways. Discrete funding activities will be categorised into seven new activities. The activity structure, as shown in Figure 3, will be implemented in stages in 2018–19.

The new funding model will lay the foundation for the service system to move towards:

- linking performance management with outcomes
- linking funding to delivering evidence-informed responses.

These changes align with the whole-of-Victorian-Government social services pricing framework being developed by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, which will implement a more consistent pricing approach that better reflects the cost of service delivery and provides more flexible, coordinated support for individuals and families.



**Figure 3: Proposed new activity structure for the funding model**

<b>Intake and Access</b>	The provision of an initial contact response to individuals, children and families.
<b>Individual, Child and Family Support</b>	Individual, Child and Family Support includes case management functions, such as assessment and review of the needs of clients, as well as planning, facilitation and advocacy for services and supports.
<b>Placement Support</b>	The provision of a safe and secure placement for children with a foster carer or carer family. Includes recruitment, assessment, training and accreditation of carers.
<b>Flexible Funding</b>	Brokerage available to individuals, children and families for the purchase of items to address the holistic needs, outcomes and objectives identified in their case or care plans.
<b>Specialised Interventions</b>	Highly specialised support or emerging interventions for individuals, children and families.
<b>Staffed Accommodation</b>	Round-the-clock staffed accommodation, which includes upkeep and maintenance of accommodation facilities.
<b>System Enablers</b>	System Enablers are system-wide or state-wide supports and initiatives that require discrete funding.

## **Improving quality and safety**

The recently established Community Services Quality and Safety Office will help practitioners, service providers and local area service networks to improve the quality, safety and effectiveness of community services. This will occur through continuous monitoring and feedback and an increase in evidence-informed approaches. The office will help steer performance and catalyse practice improvement and innovation.

## **Supporting the workforce**

The child and family system relies on committed, empathetic, skilled and experienced workers who operate in complex and challenging environments.

Delivering the pathways approach requires a system-wide approach to workforce development, focussed on attracting and retaining high quality workers, supporting new practice approaches based on outcomes and evidence, and implementing culture change to promote collaboration. A Child and Family Services Workforce Strategy is currently being developed under RIMAG, with input from regional consultations.



Key elements of the workforce strategy will address:

- workforce availability by developing and analysing workforce data, and planning and attracting the graduate pipelines and distribution needed
- workforce capabilities and quality by determining and accessing the right training and skills
- workforce diversity by designing for diversity and cultural safety in the workforce and supporting inclusion and advancing Aboriginal self-determination
- worker health, wellbeing, safety and engagement by supporting workplace practices and policies that ensure worker wellbeing
- leadership and collaboration by strengthening practice, leadership pathways, and system accountability for delivering outcomes
- person-centred, integrated care by supporting workers to partner with carers and families.

The workforce strategy will leverage government investment in the education and training system, particularly through Skills First and the Regional and Specialist Training Fund, administered by the Department of Education and Training. The 2018–19 State Budget announcement of 30 free TAFE courses, including the Certificate III/IV and Diploma in Community Services is a commitment support to the necessary growth of community services workforce.

Building the capacity and capabilities of the Aboriginal workforce to support self-management and the expansion of Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care will be a key element of the workforce strategy.

A sector-led Aboriginal Workforce Strategy is being developed, to set longer term directions for building the Aboriginal workforce. This strategy is expected to be completed by the middle of 2018.

## Industry planning and sector transition

The Roadmap identified the need for industry planning. The Human Services and Health Partnership Implementation Committee is developing a sector-led community services industry plan with support from the Victorian Council of Social Service and the department. The plan will support reform of the community services sector, establishing a 10-year vision and strategic actions to sustain the community services sector.

The child and family system's transition plan, led by the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare and in consultation with the sector, identifies the support and actions required to address sector-specific issues, challenges and reform implications in the short to medium term over the next four years. This includes:

- workforce capability across the service continuum, as well as considering workforce demand and supply issues
- organisational capacity and readiness, including how organisations will consider their own business strategies, operating models, systems and processes while remaining true to their mission.

The child and family system transition plan has identified four actions to support reform activity across the sector:

- using best practice to support our children, young people and families
- building an appropriately qualified and skilled workforce
- developing well-resourced and effective organisations
- growing a strong, responsive and resilient sector.

Realising connected pathways is the next step in continuing the Roadmap vision. Supporting and collaborating with the sector is central to achieving this.

## Conclusion

Since its launch in April 2016, the *Roadmap for Reform* has delivered significant progress in providing access to additional services and to improving the quality of those services. This has included trialling new and innovative models while simultaneously beginning to improve our evidence base. This progress has been the result of the hard work of committed partners, sector workers, clients and carers.

However, to sustain this progress and to continue to build family capability and child development – and to achieve greater outcomes for children and families – the pathways approach will be a critical system-wide change.

The pathways approach looks at how all parts of the child and family system connect to work with vulnerable children and families, as well as how the system is connected to other service platforms. The ultimate goal is to make it easier for vulnerable Victorians to access the services they need.

Continuing our shared purpose, shared accountability and partnership with the sector, we will keep pursuing our aim for all children to live in safe and supportive family environments with strong attachments to parents and carers where they receive every opportunity to have the best start in life. For this to occur, the tenets of child safety, health and wellbeing and supporting families must be integral to all Victorian Government services.

We will also continue to prioritise Aboriginal self-determination and work in partnership with Aboriginal people to place the control of Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety in the hands of Aboriginal communities.

Changes of this scale are not easy and take time – they require significant investment in and greater support for our dedicated workforce. The Victorian Government will continue to prioritise capacity and capability building among the broader child and family workforce by working in close partnership during the transitional phases of reform and beyond. The department has already begun sector-led industry transition planning and upscaling efforts to enable us to implement the pathways approach and increase our focus on evidence-informed practice.

The Victorian Government remains wholeheartedly committed to the Roadmap for Reform and will continue to work in close partnership with RIMAG. The Roadmap sets the foundations for generations to come, to ensure every Victorian child lives in a safe and caring environment that enables them to reach their full potential.

This is important work – we are all striving to make a difference for Victorian children and families, particularly those who need our services the most.

# Appendix 1: Roadmap Implementation Ministerial Advisory Group membership

## RIMAG members as at April 2018:

Anne McLeish, Director, Grandparents Australia

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Aileen Ashford, Chief Executive Officer, Children's Protection Society

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Cathy Carnovale, State Coordinator, CREATE Foundation

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Clare Hargreaves, Manager, Social Policy, Municipal Association of Victoria

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Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People

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Deb Tsorbaris, Chief Executive Officer, Centre for Excellence in child and family welfare and Co-Chair of RIMAG

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Emma King, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Council of Social Services

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Fiona McCormack, Chief Executive Officer, Domestic Violence Australia

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Frank Oberklaid OAM, Director, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Royal Children's Hospital

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Katie Hooper, Chief Executive Officer, Foster Care Association of Victoria

---

Liana Buchanan, Principal Commissioner, Commission for Children and Young People

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Lisa Griffiths, Chief Executive Officer, OzChild

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Leon Wiegard, Branch Co-ordinator, Australian Services Union

---

Michael Bell, President, Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance

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Michael Perusco, Chief Executive Officer, Berry Street

---

Muriel Bamblett AM, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

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Natasha Anderson, Victim Survivors Advisory Council Member

---

Paul McDonald, Chief Executive Officer, Anglicare Victoria

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Rebecca Falkingham, Deputy Secretary, Family Violence and Service Delivery Reform, Department Premier and Cabinet

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Robyn Miller, Chief Executive Officer, MacKillop

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Sue Clifford, Chief Executive Officer, Family Safety Victoria

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## Appendix 2: Definitions

Term	Definition
Aboriginal	The term 'Aboriginal' refers to the First Peoples of Australia and includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
Aboriginal self-determination	Principles of self-determination and self-management are central to improving outcomes for Aboriginal people. The ability of Aboriginal people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural development is an essential approach in overcoming Aboriginal disadvantage.
Carer	A carer is recognised as a person who provides care to a child. This may include the kinship care, foster care and permanent care of a child or young person.
Care services	Care services (also referred to as 'out-of-home care') provide placement and support services to children who Child Protection has assessed as being at risk, or where their parents are unable or unwilling to care them for a period of time.
Child	An infant, child or young person is a person who is under the age of 17, or under the age of 18 where a protection order exists in relation to him or her.
Earlier intervention	Intervention that occurs when vulnerabilities have been identified for the child, young person or family. Child and family services provide critical, timely and responsive services before risks and concerns escalate and lead to Child Protection intervention. By contrast the term 'early intervention' refers to intervention at a stage before vulnerability has been identified and therefore applies to universal services.
Family	Encompasses children, mothers, fathers, parents, siblings, kin, carers and care families.
Child and family system	Relates to the system overall which includes The Orange Door, child and family services (including ACCOs and care services) and Child Protection (including the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care program).

Term	Definition
Family violence	<p>This is defined under s.5 of the <i>Family Violence Protection Act 2008</i> as:</p> <p>(a) Behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person if that behaviour: (i) is physically or sexually abusive; or (ii) is emotionally or psychologically abusive; or (iii) is economically abusive; or (iv) is threatening; or (v) is coercive; or (vi) in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person; or</p> <p>(b) Behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, behaviour referred to above.</p>
Specialist services	<p>Services designed to meet specific needs, including the specific needs of vulnerable children and families. They include disability, mental health, LGBTI (such as The Royal Children’s Hospital Gender Service), housing and homelessness, alcohol and other drugs, financial counselling and early childhood services, as well as aspects of the justice system such as youth justice, legal services and the courts.</p>
Therapeutic	<p>Refers to environments, experiences, practice, interventions or programs that are intended to help a child or family work towards recovering from trauma.</p>
Universal services	<p>Publicly funded services accessible by all members of the community including vulnerable cohorts. They include education, health, maternal child health and early childhood services.</p>

