

Immediate actions to overhaul child safety

The Victorian Government will overhaul child safety and the regulation of early childhood education and care that will put child safety at the centre of every decision and rebuild trust in the sector.

On 2 July 2025, the Premier commissioned an independent Rapid Child Safety Review (the Review) in response to distressing allegations of abuse in childcare centres.

The Review, led by Mr Jay Weatherill AO and Ms Pam White PSM, has identified key actions for government to take to improve child safety – including actions Victoria can take to accelerate the child-safety reforms being considered nationally.

The Victorian Government accepts and will act urgently to implement all 22 recommendations of the Review to strengthen safety standards in early childhood education and care, to keep Victorian children safe.

Reforms led by the Victorian Government

The Victorian Government will overhaul child safety – reforming early childhood education and care in Victoria, including new and strengthened independent authorities to regulate the system.

New Early Childhood Education and Care Regulator

This independent, nation-leading regulator will more than double the frequency of compliance checks, conducting checks more frequently than any other state or territory, visiting providers at least once every 12 months to ensure they are delivering quality early childhood education and care services that the community can trust.

The independent regulator will be established by the end of this year. This nation-leading body will also be responsible for the Early Childhood Workforce Register introduced in July.

Strengthened Social Services Regulator

To strengthen safety around children, the government will bring the Working with Children Check (WWCC), the Reportable Conduct Scheme and the general education and guidance function for the Child Safe Standards into the Social Services

Regulator. At the same time, these schemes will be overhauled to ensure predators can be more quickly detected, excluded and never allowed to work with children again.

This includes providing the SSR with powers to consider unsubstantiated allegations and intelligence in deciding whether to grant clearances and proactively share this information with other regulators.

To support the Social Services Regulator, we'll also:

- give greater powers to the WWCC scheme so they can immediately suspend clearances while investigations take place
- allow the Regulator to consider unsubstantiated allegations and intelligence and decide whether to grant, suspend or cancel a WWCC clearance
- reform the Reportable Conduct Scheme so that information relevant to child-safety risk, whether substantiated or not, is proactively and consistently shared with relevant regulators and agencies.

Victorian Government actions to Rapid Child Safety Review recommendations

The below table summarises the recommendations relating to reforms being delivered by the Victorian Government. The remaining recommendations will be taken by the Victorian Government to the Commonwealth Government and are included in a separate table.

The recommendations can be read in full in the published Review.

Recommendation		Summary of recommendation	Action	Timeframe
4	National Early Childhood Worker Register	(4.3) The Victorian Government will ensure the Victorian Register is both compatible with a National Register and consistent with the findings of this Review.	The Victorian EC Workforce Register was established in July 2025.	Legislation for Victorian Early Childhood Worker Register to be brought in October 2025, and design finalised within 6

			Give the regulator strong powers to complement the Worker Register, while national reforms are progressed.	months. Scheme to be established within 12 months
5	Require best practice for recruitment and induction	The government will issue an updated Statement of Expectations to the independent Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Regulator (see Recommendation 9).	Update the Statement of Expectations to the ECEC Regulatory Authority to embed this requirement, alongside clear guidance on recruitment and induction.	Within 6 months
6	Working with Children Checks	<p>(6.1) The Working with Children Checks (WWCC) regulatory framework will be strengthened to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ allow a broader range of intelligence from relevant bodies to be obtained, shared and used in assessments ▪ permit WWCC re-assessments based on the broader range of information and intelligence ▪ require organisations to demonstrate they have engaged a WWCC clearance holder to help 	Amend the <i>Worker Screening Act 2020</i> to enable unsubstantiated information and intelligence that reveals concerning patterns of behaviour to be considered to assess, refuse, suspend or revoke a Working with Children Check, alongside risk assessment frameworks, training	Bills in Parliament in August 2025 (immediate suspensions and recognition of national negative notices) and remaining changes in October 2025.

		track movement of workers/volunteers across workplaces/sectors.	and guidance for assessors. The legislative amendments will also require organisations to verify and validate that volunteers/workers hold WWCC clearances.	
		(6.2) A dedicated review process will be established for WWCC decisions, which will replace the ability to seek review at VCAT.	Amend the <i>Worker Screening Act 2020</i> to reform current review processes, including enabling reviews to be undertaken by reviewers with expertise in understand child-safety risks, alongside developing guidance, tools and training for reviewers.	Bill in Parliament October 2025.
		(6.3) All applicants must complete mandatory online child safety training and testing before being granted a WWCC.	Amend the <i>Worker Screening Act 2020</i> to mandate that every individual applying for WWCC has undergone training and testing, alongside the design	Bill in Parliament October 2025.

			and delivery of child safety training resources, and systems necessary to capture information around training compliance.	
		(6.4) The WWCC screening authority will be resourced to undertake more manual assessments and interventions under new WWCC settings.	See above for how the new settings are proposed to be operationalised	Ongoing
7	Change the Reportable Conduct Scheme to improve information sharing	(7.1) Clear proactive powers will be granted to ensure information can be shared with relevant regulators and agencies, even if it is unsubstantiated.	Amend the <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005</i> so that there are no barriers to sharing information, even if unsubstantiated, if relevant to assessing someone's suitability to work or volunteer with children	Bill in Parliament October 2025.
		(7.2) Administration of the Reportable Conduct Scheme will be funded so that it keeps pace with demand.	See above for how the new settings are proposed to be operationalised	Ongoing

8	Establish a new Shared Intelligence and Risk Assessment Capability and bring child safety risk information together in one place	(8.1) A new Shared Intelligence and Risk Assessment Capability will be established that provides up-to-date information via the latest technology, equips assessors with fit-for-purpose risk assessment tools, and complements other regulatory schemes so there is a common foundation across social services, disability and aged care.	Design a new intelligence and risk assessment capability to be used across sectors, informed and supported by evidence-based risk-assessment tools, training and resources (including technology). The new capability will be established in legislation, enabling required information sharing, and use of the information.	Bill in Parliament October 2025.
		(8.2) Bring together administration of the Working with Children Check and Reportable Conduct schemes in a single entity to strengthen the safety net around children.	Amend the <i>Social Services Regulation Act 2021</i> , <i>Worker Screening Act 2020</i> and <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005</i> to merge Working with Children Check and Reportable Conduct Scheme into the Social Services Regulator.	Bill in Parliament October 2025

9	An independent Early Childhood Regulator	The ECEC Regulator will be made independent of the Department of Education with stronger powers.	Establish a new and strengthened independent authority, enabled by a new standalone Act, with responsibility for regulating early childhood services under the National Law.	Bill in Parliament October 2025
10	Most rigorous inspection regime in the country	The ECEC Regulator will conduct more visits to services each year, including at least one unannounced visit per service every 12 months.	Undertake an immediate substantial increase in Authorised Officers in the ECEC Regulator to increase the frequency of compliance visits and quality assessments.	Within 24 months (Full target of annual visit per service within 24 months. Number of services with annual visits will progressively increase until full target.)
11	Modern risk assessment for a complex and growing sector	(11.1) A Capability Review for the ECEC Regulator will be initiated as a priority; to modernise its approach and ensure it has access to the best available tools and training.	Immediately undertake a Capability Review of the ECEC Regulator. Develop a revised risk assessment framework, tools and training to support the Regulator	Within 12 months

			in its work.	
13	Funding for effective regulation	(13.1) The ECEC Regulator will be appropriately funded to deliver its functions, including for the recommendations of this Review.	Undertake an immediate substantial increase in Authorised Officers and other specialised enforcement, monitoring and legal officers in the ECEC Regulator Call for the Commonwealth Government to reinstate contributions to the cost of regulation	Ongoing
17	Make accessing information about service quality ratings easier for parents	(17.3) The ECEC Regulator will issue a modified ratings certificate for services.	Immediately commence the development of modified ratings certificate, ahead of issuance for services.	Within 12 months
		(17.4) The ECEC Regulator will more regularly publish the full scope of permitted compliance and enforcement activity information on its website.	Increase the frequency of publication of compliance and enforcement activity on the QARD public-facing website: Enforcement	Within 12 months

			action taken by the Regulatory Authority vic.gov.au	
18	Support parents to raise and report concerns	(18.1) The government will work with experts to promote evidence-based advice for parents on prevention education, signs of grooming and how to raise concerns.	Commence development of materials and establish a consultation process with parents and stakeholders.	Within 12 months
		(18.2) Advice for parents on how to make complaints or raise concerns with services and the ECEC Regulator will be updated, including via the public complaints and enquiry hotline.	Commence development of materials and establish a consultation process with parents and stakeholders	Within 12 months
21	Professional support program on quality, child safety and safeguarding	(21.1) The Department of Education will partner with Early Childhood Australia to expand its Children's Safety and Safeguarding in Early Childhood Settings professional support program of webinars and resources.	Commence development of new safety and safeguarding program, noting this will follow the establishment of national mandatory training (Rec 20, see table below).	Subject to national timeframes

22	Give workers the confidence to raise concerns	Provide training and clear guidance on how ECEC staff can report concerns, allegations and complaints, as part of a 'speak-up' culture.	Commence development of materials and establish a consultation process with the sector and stakeholders	Within 12 months
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The Victorian Government is calling for further reforms from the Commonwealth Government to make the safety of children paramount

The Review found that the Commonwealth Government funding system provides large incentives for people to open services and charge fees, but limited incentives for quality or safety. The Victorian Government will work with the Commonwealth Government and other jurisdictions to make changes to the National Law for additional reforms that are essential to keep children safe.

The Victorian Government will push for a raft of changes to the National Law, including imposing higher penalties on operators who breach the National Law.

Victoria supports a national Early Childhood Worker Registration Scheme, and we are working with the Commonwealth Government, state and territory governments to put this in place. But we're not waiting to fill this gap.

Victoria will also work with other states and territories to push for the Commonwealth Government to reinstate contributions to the cost of regulation, and to agree to clearer national and state government roles in managing the large and complex market of early childhood education and care, including establishment of National Early Childhood Reform Commission to provide dedicated focus on national ECEC reforms.

We are also working urgently across states and territories and with the Commonwealth Government towards the mutual recognition of negative notices, so that a person denied a Working with Children Check or where it has been revoked in one jurisdiction cannot be granted or hold a Working with Children Check in another.

The below table summarises the recommendations that the Victorian Government will take to the Commonwealth Government. Victoria calls on the Commonwealth Government to work with states and territories to action these as a priority through National Law changes, reinstatement of Commonwealth Government funding to the cost of regulation, joint policy work and targeted trials. The recommendations can be read in full in the published Review.

Recommendation		Summary of recommendation
1	Safety, rights and best interests of children	The government will advocate for changes to the National Law to make the safety, rights and best interests of children the paramount consideration for staff in services, managers, service providers, their owners, funders and board members.
2	Commonwealth-led rethink of early childhood system	(2.1) The government will advocate for the Commonwealth Government to lead a rethink of the ECEC system, which prioritises quality and safety, reconsiders the current funding model and reliance on the market, and sets a 10-year reform strategy to fundamentally reform the ECEC system, including careful planning for workforce growth and quality.
		(2.2) The government will advocate for the Commonwealth Government to establish an improved process for trusted, high-quality providers taking over services that have had their funding or other approvals cancelled.
3	National Early Childhood Education and Care Reform Commission	The government will advocate for National Education Ministers to establish and resource a time-limited Early Childhood Reform Commission, to lead and prioritise national ECEC reforms.
4	National Early Childhood Worker Register	(4.1) The government will advocate for work to establish a National Early Childhood Worker Register covering all early childhood education and care staff across Australia to be accelerated.
		(4.2) Amend the National Law to give regulators the ability to deregister individuals based on an assessment of their suitability to work in ECEC settings
6	Working with Children Checks	(6.5) The government will work with the Commonwealth Government and other States and Territories to develop a national approach to the WWCC laws and advocate for an improved national database to support real-time monitoring of WWCC holders.

11	Modern risk assessment for a complex and growing sector	(11.2) The government will advocate for: the Commonwealth Government to commission the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission to investigate ways to address the complex legal structures and arrangements in the ECEC sector, so authorities have the information, tools and powers they need.
12	Increase penalties for offences	The government will call for a material increase to the maximum penalty amounts for offences under the National Law.
13	Funding for effective regulation	(13.2) The government will call for the Commonwealth Government to both reinstate funding for State and Territory ECEC regulators and increase this funding to recognise the significant growth in the system.
14	Improve staffing arrangements in services	The government will advocate for a national review of staffing arrangements in early childhood education and care centres.
15	Improve lines of sight in centres	The government will advocate for the Commonwealth Government to fund a Child Safe Buildings Grants Program for works that address physical barriers to clear lines of sight in existing centres.
16	Trial the use of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV)	The government will call for a national trial of CCTV in early childhood education and care settings.
17	Make accessing information about service quality ratings easier for parents	(17.1) The government will advocate for improvements to the information available to parents about service quality and compliance on the Starting Blocks website.
		(17.2) The government will call for the National Law to require services to display on their website their quality ratings and any enforcement actions against them.

19	Stronger action on poor quality training courses	The government will advocate for Commonwealth Government action to improve ECEC training and placements, including stronger Australian Skills Quality Authority powers to address poor-quality registered training organisations.
20	Mandatory child safety training	(20.1) The government will call for accelerated national mandatory child safety training for all people involved in the provision of ECEC, through a change to the National Law.
		(20.2) The government will advocate for the Commonwealth Government to fund time release for staff to undertake relevant training.
21	Professional support program on quality, child safety and safeguarding	(21.2) The government will call for the Commonwealth Government to fund a Child Care Quality Improvement Program for childcare subsidy-approved services, similar to the Victorian Kindergarten Quality Improvement Program.