

6.3 NOM NO. 3-2023 - RESPONDING TO THE AUSTRALIAN CHILD MALTREATMENT STUDY (ACMS)

Submitting Councillors: Dr Josh Fergeus and Dr Anjalee de Silva

MOTION

That Council:

1. *Notes the alarming findings of the Australian Child Maltreatment Study (ACMS)¹;*
2. *Considers that all levels of government must urgently respond in order to help prevent and reduce child maltreatment across Australia;*
3. *Distribute key findings of the ACMS to all Council Officers, noting that this is a subject which is likely to require especially sensitive communication;*
4. *Requests that the Chief Executive Officer gives due consideration to the ACMS report "The prevalence and impact of child maltreatment in Australia" and provide recommendations to Council regarding a suitable response. This may include community education, communications, practice and policy changes, and projects.*

BACKGROUND

The Australian Child Maltreatment Study (ACMS) findings were released earlier this month. The ACMS "aims to identify for the first time how many Australians in the general population experienced any of the five types of child abuse and neglect (physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and exposure to domestic violence).

Supported by the Australian Government, this is the first study in Australia to collect this important information. The findings from this study are critical to inform policy and practice which may help prevent and reduce child maltreatment in Australia.

Among many extremely serious and alarming findings are the following headline matters:

- 62.2% of Australians aged 16 and over have experienced child maltreatment (child abuse or neglect);
- 39.6% have experienced exposure to domestic violence;
- girls are at greater risk for most types of maltreatment across the whole population, and far more likely to experience sexual and/or emotional abuse;
- more than 1 in 3 girls and almost 1 in 5 boys experience sexual abuse; and
- 2 in 5 experience more than one kind of maltreatment².

¹ <https://www.acms.au/>

² Ibid

Not only is this harrowing in itself but the impacts of child abuse and neglect last a lifetime and have the capacity to impact on every aspect of a person's life.

The authors of the ACMS have called on all levels of government to absorb, understand and respond to these seminal findings.

ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLANS AND STRATEGIES

This notice of motion aligns with the Council Plan 2021-2025, the Monash Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025, and in particular Council's commitment to being a Child and Young People Friendly City (CYPFC).

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– OFFICER’S REPORT**

Submitting Councillor: Dr Josh Fergeus and Dr Anjalee de Silva

Responsible Officer: Russell Hopkins, Director Community Services

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BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

No budget implications.

IMPACT ON INTERNAL RESOURCES

No impact on internal resources.

COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES

Monash currently has a range of strategies and policies that support the safety of Monash children and young people. These include:

- Monash Child Safeguarding and Reportable Conduct policy and procedures
- Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Gender Equity Framework
- Free From Violence Project
- Monash Draft Reconciliation Action Plan

RELEVANCE TO WORK ALREADY UNDERTAKEN BY OFFICERS OR COMMITTEES

The Children Youth and Family Services Department currently delivers services and primary prevention support to children and young people who at risk of (or who have experienced) maltreatment. These include:

- Maternal and Child Health (including Enhanced MCH)
- Brine Street Child Care Centre
- Integrated Family Services
- Youth Services

¹ <https://www.acms.au/>

A number of these services are subject to the requirement of the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) and are Information Sharing Entities.

- CISS enables authorised organisations and services to share information to promote the wellbeing or safety of children.
- FVISS enables authorised organisations and services to share information to facilitate assessment and management of family violence risk to children and adults.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Officers will review and consider the *Responding to the Australian Child Maltreatment Study* in the development of the next Monash Children Young People and Family Strategy.