

8.3 NOTICE OF MOTION- THE SAFETY OF LOCAL CHILDREN IN STATE CARE

Submitting Councillor/s:	Dr Josh Fergeus
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RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Notes with significant concern information shared by the Victorian Children’s Commissioner which reveals that there have been 160 reports of children in state-run residential care being the victims of child prostitution over the last year¹**
- 2. Notes with significant concern that while residential care is meant for children aged 12-17 years, that children as young as 6 are being placed in residential units around Victoria²**
- 3. Writes to the Minister for Children outlining these concerns with respect to local children and requesting information on how the Victorian Government intends to keep children in residential care in Monash safe from sexual trafficking and exploitation.**

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing states that children and young people who live in residential care are often those who have experienced the greatest level of trauma and who, therefore, require the most expert therapeutic care and support.

Placement in residential care is based on assessment of each individual child’s needs. This includes consideration of alternative placement in home-based care, and in particular kinship care, wherever possible.


The Commission for Children and Young People is an independent statutory body that promotes improvement in policies and practices affecting the safety and wellbeing of Victorian children and young people, with a particular focus on vulnerable children and young people.

The Commissioner, Liana Buchanan, recently revealed the extent of reported child sexual exploitation within the State’s residential care system.

ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

¹ <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/jess-was-put-in-state-care-at-15-it-was-so-bad-she-ran-away-137-times-20240517-p5jejq.html>

² Ibid



Monash values all children and young people. Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance for the abuse of children and young people. Council has endorsed the Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities.

Our commitment to children should extend in particular to the most vulnerable children in our community, those most at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. This should include advocacy to other levels of government on their behalf where necessary.

CONCLUSION

This motion is in line with Council's commitments to local children and young people.

ATTACHMENT LIST

1. Officers Response to NOM [8.3.1 - 2 pages]

OFFICERS REPORT

THE SAFETY OF LOCAL CHILDREN IN STATE CARE

Submitting Councillor: Cr Dr Josh Fergeus

MOTION

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- 1. Notes with significant concern information shared by the Victorian Children's Commissioner which reveals that there have been 160 reports of children in state-run residential care being the victims of child prostitution over the last year¹;**
- 2. Notes with significant concern that while residential care is meant for children aged 12-17 years, that children as young as 6 are being placed in residential units around Victoria²;**
- 3. Writes to the Minister for Children outlining these concerns with respect to local children and requesting information on how the Victorian Government intends to keep children in residential care in Monash safe from sexual trafficking and exploitation.**

OFFICER RESPONSE

While Council has no direct role in the provision of State-run residential care it does have a role in providing a range of services and programs to support the needs of children, young people and their families and at times, providing referrals to appropriate State or Commonwealth agencies.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Residential care for Victorian children and young people is a State Government responsibility. There is no budget implication for Monash City Council.

IMPACT ON INTERNAL RESOURCES

Several government departments contribute in various ways to the care, protection and safety of children and young people.

The Monash Children Youth and Family Services department undertakes strategic planning regarding the needs of Monash children, young people, and their families. Whilst there is no anticipated impact of the notice of motion on internal resources, the forthcoming strategic planning for this cohort may identify different roles for Council in prevention activities.

COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES

This Notice of Motion relates to Monash Council Plan, Strategic Objective – Inclusive Services; fostering an equitable, just, and inclusive Monash.

RELEVANCE TO WORK ALREADY UNDERTAKEN BY OFFICERS OR COMMITTEES

Monash delivers a family services program that promotes the safety, stability and development of children, young people, and their families. The focus of this program is to building capacity and resilience of vulnerable families. This program, funded by the Victorian Government, supports vulnerable young people and their families who are -

- likely to experience greater challenges – as the child/young person's development has been affected by the experience of risk factors and/or cumulative harm; and/or
- at risk of concerns escalating and becoming involved with Child Protection – if problems are not addressed.

Monash delivers services to protect children and young people and improve family functioning. The aim is to build family capacity and reduce the likelihood of further intervention, including the need for treatment and intervention services such as out of home care.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- **Out of home care**

The Victorian Department of Families Fairness and Housing oversees the delivery of the residential care service for children and young people.

- **Monash Child Safety**

Monash Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy details the organisational responsibility in adhering to the Victorian Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme. This policy outlines Council's commitment to:

- being a child safe organisation
- zero tolerance for the abuse of children and young people

- **Monash – a Children and Young People Friendly City**

Council has endorsed the Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities. A child friendly city is a city, town, community or any system of local governance committed to improving the lives of children within their jurisdiction by realizing their rights as articulated in the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).