



9 March 2022

LDM80555

Deputy State Coroner English  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
65 Kavanagh Street  
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

*By email: cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au*

Dear Deputy State Coroner

### **Finding with Inquest into the death of Baby A - COR 2015 0868**

Thank you for your letter dated 6 January 2022, enclosing a copy of the Finding into the death of Baby A, which includes a recommendation directed to the department. The following is the department's written response to this recommendation, provided pursuant to section 72(3) of the *Coroners Act 2008 (Vic)*.

On behalf of the department, I would like to extend our sincere condolences to the family and loved ones of Baby A for their tragic loss.

### **Response to the Coroner's Recommendation**

The department is responding to the recommendation made under section 72(2) of the *Coroners Act 2008 (Vic)* that "consideration be given to including public hospitals in the group of agencies authorised to use the Child Link database when it becomes operational in December 2021".

The department will implement the recommendation by undertaking policy scoping and consultation to investigate the key benefits, opportunities and limitations of extending access to prescribed roles within Victoria's public hospitals, for the purpose of providing advice to Government on this matter. Changes to the scope of authorised Child Link users require regulatory change.

With recognition of the planned implementation approach for Child Link in 2022, and the current pressures placed on public health services through the Covid-19 global pandemic, the department will seek to commence this process with the Department of Health from mid-2022.

### **Further Information about the Child Link Register**

Established under Part 7A of the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)* ("The Act"), the Child Link Register ("Child Link") is a critical enabler to the Child Information Sharing Scheme and will support key professionals to improve outcomes for children and young people in Victoria. The department leads the delivery of the Child Information Sharing reform, including the Child Information Sharing Scheme and Child Link, on behalf of the whole of the Victorian Government.

Child Link is a digital tool that displays consolidated information about a child to a prescribed group of authorised professionals who have responsibility for child wellbeing and safety. These authorised

professionals currently include Maternal and Child Health nurses, principals and key staff at schools, early childhood teachers and Child Protection practitioners.

The information displayed on Child Link is limited by the Act and includes key information about a child and their family and the child's participation in key early childhood and education services. It indicates whether there have been any child protection orders in place associated with the child or their sibling, including whether the order confers parental responsibility or places the child in out of home care.

Child Link commenced operation on 31 December 2021 in accordance with legislative timeframes. In 2022, Child Link is being implemented through a phased and scaled approach to user and service access focused on supporting local networks of services to adopt and use Child Link. The initial implementation period is anticipated to provide the department with critical insights that will inform the long-term approach to implementing Child Link and achieving its intended objectives.

### **Information Sharing under the Child Information Sharing Scheme**

The department continues to work closely with key partners and stakeholders across government to embed a culture of information sharing and collaborative practice in the promotion of child wellbeing and safety. Established under Part 6A of the Act, the Child Information Sharing Scheme expands legal permissions for professionals working in prescribed organisations and services to share information with each other to promote the wellbeing and safety of a child or group of children. Those prescribed may share information without the consent of the child or family, where sharing the information meets legal threshold tests.

In April 2021, universal education, justice and health services (including public hospitals) were prescribed under the Child Information Sharing Scheme, and the associated Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme and Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework (MARAM) led by Family Safety Victoria. The introduction of universal services builds on the existing foundation of prescribed organisations that have operated under these reforms since 2018, including Child Protection and Victoria Police.

The Child Information Sharing Scheme and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme are key reforms that can assist the service system reorient towards prevention and early intervention and support proactive and integrated service responses. In 2021-22, the Victorian Government invested \$96.9 million over 4 years for continued implementation of these reforms across government and prescribed services. This support will assist acute and universal services integrate their service responses and improve professional confidence and decision making in requesting and sharing information to keep children safe and well.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Lisa Gandolfo, Executive Director, Victorian Child Information Sharing Division, at [lisa.gandolfo@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:lisa.gandolfo@education.vic.gov.au) or (03) 7022 0660.

Yours sincerely



**Kim Little**  
Deputy Secretary  
Early Childhood Education