



Secretary

Department of Health

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Will Doolan
Coroner's Registrar
Coroner's Court of Victoria

Via e-mail: C/- cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au

RE: COR-2015-0868

Dear Mr Doolan

Thank you for your letter of 6 January 2022 in relation to the investigation and finding with inquest into the death of Baby A with a recommendation for the Department of Health (the department). The department acknowledges the tragic death of Baby A, and I extend my sympathies to his family.

In her findings, Deputy State Coroner English asked the department to respond to the following recommendation:

- ***That consideration be given to establishing positions similar to the initiative at the Child Protection Divisional Office at Footscray of a Royal Children's Hospital Clinical Nurse Coordinator, in each Divisional Child Protection Office linked to the local hospital or major health service.***

Effective collaboration between health and child protection practitioners makes a real difference to the health and wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people and the department supports this recommendation in principle. As outlined below a range of departmental initiatives align with Coroner English's recommendation, that over time will strengthen collaboration and partnership between health and child protection practitioners.

As noted by the Coroner, the Vulnerable Children's Health project operates across the Western Melbourne and Brimbank-Melton areas by embedding a nurse employed through the Royal Children's Hospital in local Child Protection offices. The project has improved access to early consultation, screening, and health system navigation for children, families and carers. Healthwatch, a similar project in the North-Eastern Metropolitan and Hume-Moreland areas also provides early specialist health consultation and health system navigation support for children in care and their families.

Established as pilots and funded until 30 June 2022, both projects have increased access to health assessments, improved child protection practitioner's health literacy and improved

care coordination. The department continues to work with the Department of Fairness, Families and Housing to improve access to these and similar models of care.

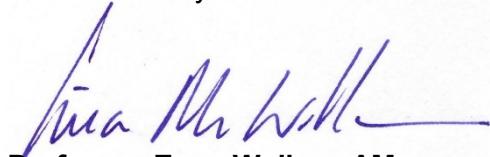
Recommendation 19.3 of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System will see the establishment of three Infant Child and Family Health and Wellbeing Hubs (hubs). With funding of \$41.3million over four years and \$13.1million ongoing hubs will provide integrated multidisciplinary health and mental services and family support for children aged 0-11 years and their families.

Like Healthwatch and the Vulnerable Children's Health Project, hubs will also offer screening, secondary consultation, assessment and system navigation for children and families at risk of entering or escalating within the child protection system. While hub models of care will be tailored to meet the needs of local communities, improved collaboration and information sharing between health and social services, including Child Protection is a shared priority.

I also note the Coroner's recommendation to the Department of Education and Training (DET) on considering public hospitals as an agency authorised to use the Child Link database to enhance information sharing, collaborative risk assessment and management. The department will work with DET to explore the opportunities and challenges of expanding Child link to public hospitals from July 2022. I understand that Jenny Atta, Secretary of the Department of Education and Training has responded on behalf of DET.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact Alison Boylan, Director in the Priority Population Groups and Communities Unit at the Department of Health at alison.boylan@health.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Professor Euan Wallace AM
Secretary

08/03/2022