



## Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

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Dear Ms Sanderson

### **Investigation into the deaths of Child 1, Child 2, Child 3 and Child 4**

In State Coroner, Judge John Cain's *Finding with inquest into the deaths of Child 1, Child 2, Child 3 and Child 4* on 28 November 2024, 7 recommendations were directed to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department) inclusive of 4 elements of recommendation 7 (a-d) directed at the Victorian Government.

I write to advise the department has considered the recommendations, inclusive of consultation with Department of Premier and Cabinet as related to recommendations 7 (a-d). A response to the 7 recommendations is enclosed with this letter.

The department works towards ongoing refining of practice, processes and systems that lead to significant long-term improvements in meeting the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people in Victoria.

Should you have any queries, please contact Kirstie-Lee Lomas, Chief Practitioner, Office of Professional Practice [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

**Peta McCammon**  
Secretary  
24 / 03 / 2025

# Attachment 4

Response to the Coroner's Recommendations in Finding with Inquest (Cluster Filicide)

Child 1, Child 2, Child 3 and Child 4

**The DFFH response need to contain sufficient detail to address all elements of the recommendation. The Coroners Court of Victoria's guidelines suggest including one of the following in response to each recommendation:**

- (a) The Coroner's recommendation has OR will be implemented.**
- (b) An alternative to the Coroner's recommendation has OR will be implemented (if the recommendation will be part-implemented, consider this an alternative to the Coroner's recommendation).**
- (c) The Coroner's recommendation is under consideration.**
- (d) There are unresolved issues with the Coroner's recommendation that needs to be addressed.**
- (e) The Coroner's recommendation cannot be implemented.**

## **Recommendation No: 1**

- a) Compliance with Child Protection's obligations to consult with ACSASS, and to produce cultural plans, and be sufficiently monitored that non-compliance trigger oversight and enforcement of such obligations (whether through SAFER or other oversight mechanisms).*
- b) DFFH and VACCA to publish an update about the outcome of the Aboriginal-led State-wide Cultural Planning Forum, and any outcomes relevant to these findings.*
- c) The Court endorses Recommendation one of the Yoorrook report and that Aboriginal-controlled organisations be funded sufficiently to be able to meet the demand to undertake these roles.*

## **Response**

### **Recommendation 1a and 1b**

#### **The Coroner's recommendations are under consideration**

Recommendation 1a of the Coroner's findings aligns with recommendation 16 of the Yoorrook for Justice report. Recommendations 1a and 1b are already partially met in practice.

The department already engages the Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency (VACCA) and select, gazetted Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to deliver the Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Service (ACSASS) and Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making (AFLDM) programs across Victoria. These programs support child protection practitioners to make culturally safe decisions for First Peoples children and families in touch with the child protection system, in compliance with section 12 of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (CYFA). However, due to resourcing limitations, these programs may not always be engaged in all cases, where needed. The department therefore supports in-principle recommendation 16 of the Yoorrook for Justice report but notes that further assessment work and consideration is required, including with regards to staffing, training and infrastructure implications. This will need to be done in partnership with ACCOs and for consideration in future budget cycles.

Recommendation 1a of the Coroner's findings also references recommendation 22 of the Yoorrook for Justice report.

Regarding recommendation 22 of the Yoorrook Justice report, the department notes the recommendation is under consideration. While the department recognises the policy rationale of the recommendation, it is exploring an alternative means to improve cultural plan compliance. This will include through the department working alongside a working group to oversee the development and implementation of a new cultural plan model. The working group consists of the Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People’s Alliance (VACYPA), the VACCA Statewide Coordinator, Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP), and department representatives.

In line with recommendation 1b of the Coroner’s findings, any agreed redesign to the current cultural plan model will need to be first communicated to and approved by the Aboriginal Children’s Forum (ACF) as the key governance forum for Aboriginal-led children and family services prior to being communicated more widely.

**Recommendation 1c**

**The Coroner’s recommendation is under consideration.**

Recommendation 1c of the Coroner’s findings aligns to recommendation 1 of the Yoorrook for Justice report. Recommendation 1 of the Yoorrook for Justice report is under consideration by Government. In the interim, the department is continuing to progress a number of critical reforms, to work towards an Aboriginal-led and self-determined child protection system which is commensurately funded to support this transition. This includes:

- Operationalisation of the *Statement of Recognition Act 2023*, which introduced a Statement of Recognition and binding principles that apply to all decision-makers under the CYFA including the department, authorised ACCOs, contracted community service organisations and the Children’s Court of Victoria.
- Refreshing the *Wungurilwil Gaggapduir Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement* and associated Strategic Action Plan, which seeks to facilitate the transfer of decision-making regarding First Peoples children involved with child protection from government to ACCOs, actively empowering them to make informed decisions and take appropriate action.
- Work to continue the Community Protecting Boorais pilot program, which enables authorised ACCOs to undertake investigations of child protection reports regarding Aboriginal children, rather than the department. Increasing and formalising the ACCO caucus leadership role in setting the agenda for each ACF.

The department will actively address funding considerations through the design and delivery of these initiatives to ensure ACCOs are appropriately resourced to undertake these news functions.

**Recommendation No:2**

*That Child Protection, as part of the work they are doing to reform and improve Child Protection Manual, incorporate easy access to a singular policy and simple tool relevant to cumulative harm assessment being undertaken.*

**Response**

**The Coroner’s recommendation is under consideration.**

The department will undertake a project to review the policy settings and associated guidance to practitioners regarding assessment of cumulative harm and make any updates as required. The project will be undertaken internally and is planned to conclude by end of 2025.

**Recommendation No:3**

*a) That DFFH engage a suitably qualified consultant or an internal person to conduct a review of the operation and effectiveness of the SAFER Framework with particular reference to its identification and assessment of risk associated with a parent entering a relationship with a new partner or any other person who is regularly in the house.*

*b) That DFFH publicly report on the implementation and evaluation of the SAFER framework.*

*c) That DFFH ensure mandatory training for protective workers and supervisors incorporate a positive obligation on staff to be assessing the risk of any new partner that may potentially have any contact with the subject children, whether they are residing in the home or not, and incorporate assertive engagement such that the risk assessment is always prioritised, even when it may impinge upon the parent and partner's privacy.*

## **Response**

### **Recommendation 3a**

#### **An alternative to the Coroner's recommendation will be implemented.**

The SAFER risk assessment framework is currently undergoing formal evaluation by the Evidence and Information Branch within the Department of Health. This is the first formal external evaluation of the framework, and its application as intended, in assessing and managing risk to children since its implementation in November 2021. This follows an updated literature review (the review) carried out in 2024 by Australian Catholic University in partnership with Flinders University which reviewed all the evidence-based factors and essential information categories drawn on within the SAFER framework. Changes are underway to align SAFER to contemporary evidence and findings of the review.

The intent of recommendation 3a is captured in the Child Protection manual (the Manual) in policies and advice about identification and assessment of new relationships and assessment of all adults in the home of a child known to child protection is an existing expectation of practice. The department works to reinforce practice through bi-Monthly practice papers distributed to the workforce within the SAFER newsletter, which provide focus areas of practice to enhance practitioner' formal knowledge and assist in their application of that knowledge when carrying out their risk assessment and review of risk assessments. There are also monthly practice webinars/forums for the entire child protection workforce which focus on areas of practice to enhance and uplift formal knowledge and capability. Where appropriate findings and recommendations from child death inquiries and coronial investigations inform the practice webinars/forums.

The department is committed to working with child protection practitioners through the provision of updated practice advice and support to re-iterate the importance of identifying and assessing all adults spending time and residing in the home, throughout each intervention.

### **Recommendation 3b**

#### **The Coroner's recommendation cannot be implemented.**

The evaluation has been procured for internal use only and as such, is specifically focused on continuous improvement. The evaluation contributes to quality improvement in the assessment of child safety, improve efficiency and accountability of SAFER. The evaluation serves to improve internal process, as such are not made public.

### **Recommendation 3c**

#### **An alternative to the Coroner's recommendation has been implemented.**

The mandatory Practice Induction Program (PIP) and existing practice advice, policy and procedures incorporates the intent of this recommendation.

<p><b>Recommendation No:4</b></p>
<p><i>a) That Child Protection undertake an impact evaluation of SAFER broadly, and to include the terms as set out in recommendation 13 of the Yoorrook Report, noting my earlier recommendation at 3(a).</i></p> <p><i>b) Professional development reinforcing the importance of entering data into the CRIS system, and systems for oversight to ensure mandatory tasks are completed in a timely fashion and the system can be easily audited for compliance be expedited.</i></p>
<p><b>Response</b></p> <p><b><u>Recommendation 4a</u></b></p> <p><b><u>The Coroner's recommendation has and continue to be implemented.</u></b></p> <p>In response to Yoorrook Rec 13, the department commenced the evaluation process in early 2024, with the review referenced in response to recommendation 3 of this document. Evaluation planning commenced at the same time, with a partnership approach between Evidence &amp; Insights and a First Peoples evaluator to consider SAFER and its application specifically for First Peoples children. Procurement of the First Peoples evaluator was not successful, and a further Request for Quote is currently out to market.</p> <p><b><u>Recommendation 4b</u></b></p> <p><b><u>The Coroner's recommendation has and continue to be implemented.</u></b></p> <p>The PIP, the mandatory program for all new child protection practitioners at all levels, includes focus and reinforcement of the importance of timely and accurate case recording. The importance of case recording is also routinely reinforced through other child protection delivered courses, materials, and webinars.</p> <p>These professional development/capability uplift programs are underpinned by the Manual, which outlines the emphasises the importance of timely case recording on client safety and outcomes, as well as its relevance to the obligations under the Public Records Act. The Manual details specific documents and notes which are required, by policy, to be recorded in CRIS contemporaneously (specifically within 24 hours).</p> <p><a href="#">Case recording   Child Protection Manual   CP Manual Victoria</a></p> <p><a href="#">Information sharing in child protection practice   Child Protection Manual   CP Manual Victoria</a></p> <p>There are existing mechanisms for oversight of specific tasks and actions via the departmental reporting functions, which are distributed and accessible across the state.</p> <p>All areas of the department's Child Protection program have access to significant data dashboards which provide timely data for review and oversight by operational areas. Examples of data accessible include frequency and recording/reporting on client visits throughout an intervention and completion of timely statutory case planning and review points. Areas utilise data to identify where and when there are focus areas requiring additional capability uplift, such as the importance of case recording to their workforces.</p> <p>The SAFER dashboard, which is under testing at present, is a tool which will enable managers to look at the timeliness of aspects of risk assessment being updated (after an L17, for example) and will draw their attention not only to the completion of the tasks associated with SAFER risk assessments, but to then apply a case reading review process to consider quality of that risk assessment. Training will be provided to areas by the SAFER team, in use of these tools, when this dashboard becomes available for broader use.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation No:5</b></p>

<p><i>Child Protection update current policy regarding consequences of non-engagement with voluntary services including consideration of re-report or not closing until engagement has been confirmed with Child Protection. In the event of non-engagement, focus on risk assessment and mitigation should be prioritised.</i></p>
<p><b>Response</b></p> <p><b><u>An alternative to the Coroner's recommendation will be implemented.</u></b></p> <p>The department has been advised that in November 2024 the CCYP established an inquiry in accordance with Part 5, section 39 of the <i>Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012</i>, to look at the effectiveness of referrals made by child protection to support services. The inquiry will focus on effectiveness of these referrals in managing risk to children.</p> <p>The terms of reference of the CCYP inquiry include examining the service response to children and young people whose circumstances are assessed as not meeting the threshold for statutory intervention, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the effectiveness of referrals to support services</li> <li>• the number of referrals that are closed and result in re-reports, the reasons for closure, and the outcome, including whether there are further re-referrals to the same service</li> </ul> <p>The department will work with the CCYP in respect of this inquiry and consider its recommendations in considering appropriate updates to current policy.</p> <p>In addition, child protection practice and the SAFER risk assessment framework requires practitioners to update the essential information categories and carry out a review of risk assessment to inform decision making. The consultation and collaboration with professionals and support services is a key aspect of practice in understanding the non-engagement and its impact in identifying and assessing any changes in risk (increase or decrease) to be able to appropriately respond.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation No:6</b></p>
<p><i>That the 'Unborn Child Reports – advice' clarify the circumstances that will mandate that a case conference be convened and include advice that Child Protection seek to identify and address any material or practical needs of the parents prior to birth.</i></p>
<p><b>Response</b></p> <p><b><u>The Coroner's recommendation is under consideration.</u></b></p> <p>The department response to unborn reports has been revised in recent years to more closely align to the intent of the CYFA as it relates to unborn children.</p> <p>The Manual advice on unborn reports is currently under review. Recommendation 6 will be considered as part of this review.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation No:7</b></p>
<p>a) <i>The Victorian Government develop a further workforce (beyond 2024) plan to address the workforce challenges currently facing the whole of the community and social service sectors in Victoria, including appropriate caseloads, for and attrition rates of Child Protection practitioners.</i></p> <p>b) <i>In consultation with the sector, the Victorian Government review the relevant Enterprise Agreement governing Child Protection Practitioners with the view of assessing the adequacy of current wage and leave entitlements, ensuring they are competitive within the industry and that conditions and wage progression is attractive to staff.</i></p> <p>c) <i>The Victorian Government explore new or consider expanding current opportunities to increase the pipeline of workers entering the social service industry, consideration should be given to traineeship models, expanding the Shift to Social Work or like programs, paid study and free tuition.</i></p>

d) *The Victorian Government expand the Shift to Social Work program to increase intake and encourage the recruitment of social workers in Victoria. This program should also be extended to include the Bachelor of Social Work.*

e) *The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing publicly report on the progress of the Child Protection Workforce Strategy 2021–2024 and upon its completion, undertake an evaluation of the effectiveness of this strategy, and make the findings of this evaluation public.*

## Response

### Recommendation 7a

#### The Coroner's recommendation has and will continue to be implemented.

Developed in February 2023, the department's *Community Services Workforce Strategic Directions 2023-27* recognise the full 'continuum' of workforce development, from the supply of new entrants (or potential entrants), through retention and skills development, and including effective utilisation to maximise productivity and outcomes. The four strategic directions are:

1. Growing the **supply** of new workers to community services
2. Improving the **retention and wellbeing** of skilled workforce
3. Enabling workforce **capability and productivity**
4. Effective workforce **system foundations**

The department has also developed a *Child Protection Strategic Workforce Plan (2023-26)* which focusses on improving the attraction and retention of Child Protection Practitioners. The plan is an internal document that identifies priority areas and activities needed to address Child Protection workforce challenges. There are 6 focus areas including culture and leadership, safety and wellbeing, attraction, capability and career development, Aboriginal workforce, and Child Protection Operating Model (CPOM).

A range of initiatives and programs are in place or are being implemented to address workforce challenges across community services and the child protection system.

#### *Whole of Community Services workforce initiatives*

- Switch to Social Work is an employment-based Master of Social Work (Child and Family Practice) program. It was created to address skill and workforce shortages in the child and family services sector and encourages career switchers to move into the children and family services sector, including Child Protection. The State Budget allocated \$13.5 million to fund this program.
  - At the time of writing, 58 participants are commencing their second year of the program. There are 8 Switch to Social Work students undertaking their field placements in Child Protection.
- The Inclusion Scholarships for Social Work Placements program supports future social workers by helping reduce the financial burden of placements for students. They support more Bachelor and Master of Social Work students to finish their degrees and start their careers, particularly those who face more barriers to completing their degree or who are underrepresented in the social services workforce.
  - To date 290 scholarships have been awarded, with 132 more offers being made in 2025.
- The Victorian Government has developed a new professional Community and Social Services Graduate Program, to provide stronger training and support for practitioners in their first year of work and attract more graduates into the sector.
  - The program aims to improve retention of new entrants to the community services sector – including child protection and offers a structured and supported early career pathway including professional learning, quality supervision and peer networking.

- The first round of the program commenced in October with a cohort of approximately 70 graduates, of which 16 are DFHH child protection staff. Round 2 of the program will commence in February 2025.
- The Jobs that Matter campaign was launched in August 2022 to support recruitment of community services sector workers, including Child Protection workers. It also ran in October 2023 and June 2024.
- The department has developed Best Practice Supervision Guidelines, videos and discussion guides for the family violence, sexual assault, and child wellbeing workforces.
  - High quality supervision is central to developing and sustaining the sectors' workforces.
  - Developed in collaboration with the sectors, the Guidelines and videos are for use during individual, group or peer supervision sessions, staff induction, policy development and supervision training.

*Child Protection specific initiatives*

- The Child Protection Employment Program provides social work students or students who have recently graduated and hold a relevant social work, welfare, community, or behavioural qualification.
  - The 2022-23 State Budget invested \$5.4 million over 4 years to continue this program which provides an important recruitment pipeline for Child Protection. Eligibility criteria was extended to include recent graduates or those due to finalise their study during 2024.
  - In 2024, 123 employees commenced in this program with 96 successfully graduating and accepting roles in Child Protection. The Child Protection Employment Program has again been funded to deliver 100 new graduates into Child Protection in 2025 and 2026 with applications closing on the August 4 for the 2025 program.
- The International Recruitment Strategy supports qualified and experienced practitioners to relocate to Victoria. To date, 62 international employees have commenced with just over half commencing in a regional location.
- The successful 'Go Where You're Needed' local recruitment campaign was relaunched in June 2024. The campaign aims to recruit new Child Protection Practitioners across metropolitan and regional Victoria. This program will go live again in January/February 2025 with a greater focus on senior level vacancies across the state.
- Leveraging the high level of interest in the Switch to Social Work Program, the department worked with La Trobe University to create a new Graduate Certificate in Child Protection (using 4 subjects from the Master of Social Work) and has trialed the Switch to Child Protection Program – an 8-month 'earn and learn' program targeting career switchers to join Child Protection at the CPP4 level.
- The Child Protection Student Placement Program offers students the opportunity to gain broad knowledge of the child protection industry while applying theory to practice. Placements are high quality, supervised and professionally challenging. Students are placed in divisional child protection teams with a qualified Child Protection Practitioner supervisor who sets and assesses the tasks the students observe, participate in, and undertake during their placement.

As well as the above targeted child protection initiatives, the department undertook an extensive review of the existing CPOM workforce structure; first introduced in November 2012.

- Following a formal consultation process with child protection staff and the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) between the 30 July and 1 October 2024, a refreshed, contemporary workforce model has been endorsed and is currently being implemented.



- The intended benefits of the new model aim to support improved staff supervision, case allocation, and retention of staff and robust case planning and risk assessment. Implementation of the new model has commenced and aims to be fully implemented by June 2025.

The funded child protection workforce capacity has increased by 85.5% since 2014. The Child Protection workforce has increased by 477 FTE over the 3 year period from 2019-20 to 2023-24. This represents growth of 23% over these years.

### **Recommendation 7b**

**The Coroner's recommendation has and will continue to be implemented** (with respect to the Enterprise Agreement applying to the department's Child Protection Practitioners and the adequacy of current wage and leave entitlements)

The current Enterprise Agreement covering Child Protection Practitioners is the *Victorian Public Service Enterprise Agreement 2024* which came into effect 19 August 2024. This Agreement applies to most Victorian Public Service employees and Victorian Government departments and other public service entities and applies a core suite of employment conditions to all employees covered.

- These conditions are the result of enterprise bargaining between central Victorian Government agencies and the relevant public sector unions and are informed by the Victorian Government Public Sector Wages Policy which provides for higher wages and agreement outcomes compared to both the previous 2019 and 2022 Wages Policies.
- In addition to the core suite of common employment, the Agreement contains an appendix which applies specifically to the Department's employees, in particular Child Protection Practitioners. The appendix contains a range of additional and improved employment conditions for Child Protection Practitioners including:
  - 1 week of additional annual leave for all Child Protection Practitioners.
  - 1 week of professional development leave for all Child Protection Practitioners.
  - An annual \$650 clothing allowance.
  - A Child Protection Practitioner Retention Allowance equivalent to a payment of \$15,000 over 3 years for certain Child Protection Practitioners in six (6) identified local government areas with low attraction and retention rates.

The Enterprise Agreement will operate until its nominal expiry date of 9 April 2028, and it is replaced by a subsequent enterprise agreement. The Department will prepare for negotiations for a replacement Agreement by ensuring the current employment conditions package is attractive for staff and remains competitive in the sector.

### **Recommendation 7c**

**The Coroner's recommendation has and will continue to be implemented.**

The department has taken a strategic approach to increasing the pipeline of workers entering community services, this includes consideration of entry-level, mid-level and expert/senior-level practitioners to ensure new entrants, as well as more experienced practitioners who have work experience, transferable skills and practice expertise are supported through a relevant pathway.

#### *Entry-level*

- The Inclusion Scholarships for Social Work Placements program supports future social workers by making it easier to complete practical placements. The scholarships help reduce the financial burden of placements for students. They will support more Bachelor and Master of Social Work students to finish their degrees and start their careers.

- The program will support Victorians who face more barriers to completing their degree or who are underrepresented in the social services workforce.
- The Victorian Government has committed to deliver the new Community and Social Services Graduate Program.
  - The program aims to improve retention of new entrants to the community services sector – including child protection. It offers a structured and supported early career pathway including professional learning, quality supervision and peer networking.
  - The first round of the program commenced in October with a cohort of approximately 70 graduates, of which 16 are DFHH child protection staff. Round 2 of the program will commence in February 2025.

#### *Mid and Senior-level*

- The learnings from the Switch to Social Work Program's model led to the development of the Switch to Child Protection Program. Expanding on the program, the department worked with La Trobe University to create the Graduate Certificate in Child Protection (using 4 subjects from the Master of Social Work) and launched the Switch to Child Protection Program – an 8-month 'earn and learn' program targeting career switchers to join child protection at the CPP4 level.
  - 7 practitioners successfully completed the program on 31 October 2024.
  - Planning has commenced for a 2025 mid-year intake of up to 30 practitioners with a regional focus.
- Pending evaluation of the Switch programs, the Victorian government will use the learnings of these earn and learn models to continue to support the child protection and the social services sector workforces. This may include development of future switch programs that are targeted towards specific sub-sectors or cohorts, such as in support of the Aboriginal sector.

The department also continues to advocate and provide advice in relation to federal policies such as paid placements, increasing commonwealth supported places for social work degrees, and tuition supports.

#### **Recommendation 7d**

##### **An alternative to the Coroner's recommendation has been implemented.**

The learnings from the Switch to Social Work Program's model will be considered and inform government's future considerations for the program direction. The program trial has also been expanded, to lever the opportunity to utilise the new curriculum and has led to the development of the Switch to Child Protection Program.

- Expanding on the program, the department worked with La Trobe University to create the Graduate Certificate in Child Protection (using 4 subjects from the Master of Social Work) and launched the Switch to Child Protection Program – an 8-month 'earn and learn' program targeting career switchers to join Child Protection at the CPP4 level.
- This expansion has resulted in a more responsive program, with quicker completion rates, partly due to the qualification level (Graduate Certificate) and short course approach, which acknowledges that career switches may already have existing qualifications, core skills and capabilities and just require support to transition into the sector.

Extending the program to include the Bachelor of Social Work is not fitting with the design principles or needs of the target cohort.

- The focus of the program is on supporting people to change careers, so requiring participants to undertake a Bachelor of Social Work would lengthen the time and cost required to complete the

program and transition into the industry. In some cases, a Bachelor of Social Work may be a lower-level qualification to what participants already possess.

- The Switch to Child Protection Program Graduate Certificate, includes Master of Social Work subjects, in acknowledgement of the mid to senior-level experience of program participants.

Other programs, such as the more entry-level Inclusion Scholarships and the newly introduced Graduate Program, are designed to support Bachelor and Master of Social Work students.

### **Recommendation 7e**

#### **An alternative to the Coroner's recommendation has been implemented.**

The [Child Protection Workforce Strategy 2021–24](#) (the Strategy) overall will not be evaluated, however several initiatives and programs identified in the Strategy have been implemented and the department has evaluated an element. For example, evaluation of the Child Protection Reinforcement Package undertaken in September 2023 and July 2024. The evaluation will not be published but is informing other work the department is doing to support the child protection workforce.

- An internal Child Protection workforce data dashboard has been created. The dashboard enables better data understanding of child protection recruitment, vacancy and retention rates in recent years. This data is actively reported and monitored by the department to inform workforce planning. The data provides evidence that the strategy and other initiatives are having an impact.
- A flexible approach to evaluation was outlined in the Strategy, recognising that some actions may become outdated as the operating environment evolves. The Strategy also states that when opportunities arise, new actions will be introduced to align with workforce and sector needs and improve responsiveness to service demands. It also states that progress was to be continually monitored and reviewed, ensuring adaptations are evidence-based. These findings would then guide investment and the development of future workforce strategies.

In line with the above, since its publication, elements of the *Child Protection Workforce Strategy 2021-24* have been superseded by other projects and initiatives, so it is difficult to measure or attribute effectiveness to the Strategy alone. Other projects and initiatives include:

- Development of a Child Protection Strategic Workforce Plan (2023-26) which focusses on improving the attraction and retention of Child Protection Practitioners. The plan is an internal document that identifies priority areas and activities needed to address Child Protection workforce challenges. There are six focus areas including culture and leadership, safety and wellbeing, attraction, capability and career development, Aboriginal workforce and CPOM.
- A focus on other related priority areas, such as advancing Aboriginal self-determination with the development and expansion of the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care program. A significant shift for the child protection system.

The department's introduction of the Community Services Workforce Strategic Directions 2023-27 which includes a range of initiatives and programs to address workforce challenges across community services and the child protection system.