

Media Release

The Hon Luke Donnellan MP

Minister for Child Protection

Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers

Acting Minister for Veterans



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CELEBRATING VICTORIANS WHO PROTECT VULNERABLE CHILDREN

A champion of evidence-based family supports who has overseen system-wide reform during an outstanding 35-year career and an anti-family violence program for dads are among this year's Victorian Protecting Children Awards winners.

The annual awards highlight practitioners, workers, carers and community members who go above and beyond to protect the state's most at-risk children. This year they recognised excellence in education, innovation, leadership and improving outcomes for children.

Beth Allen, who recently retired from the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, won the prestigious Robin Clark Leadership Award. The award honours the memory of Robin Dennis Clark, a visionary who greatly influenced children and families policy and practice in Victoria.

Beth was recognised for her work championing evidence-based system-wide reforms. She pioneered placing the voices of clients at the centre of child protection – an approach now regarded as best practice – and was pivotal to the Victorian Government's transformation of the child and family system through its *Roadmap for Reform*.

She was also instrumental in driving implementation of reform to the *Children Youth and Families Act* to enable Aboriginal children to be delegated to the care of Aboriginal organisations, helping to retain a connection to culture and community.

Kids First Australia won the Minister's Award for Innovation in Protecting Children, for their Australian-first early intervention program engaging fathers who have used family violence.

The Caring Dads program helps participants develop fathering skills and take responsibility for the effect of their violence on their children and their children's mother, and has led to a decrease in violence.

The Government is ensuring all children are provided with the same opportunities in life through a massive \$1.2 billion boost to the children and families system in the *Victorian Budget 2021-22* – on top of the unprecedented \$1 billion in last year's Budget, providing more support than ever before for at-risk children, their families and carers.

The awards are one of many celebrations taking places across the sector for the 2021 Child Protection Week, which runs from 5-11 September.

For the full list of Victorian Protecting Children Awards winners from across the child and families services sector, visit dhhs.vic.gov.au/protectingchildrenawards.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Child Protection Luke Donnellan

"Congratulations to the award winners, and thank you to all the staff and carers who dedicate themselves to helping children and families in need."

"Child protection workers do a vital job – there are few careers that offer the opportunity to make such a profound difference on the lives of vulnerable young people."

"We are grateful to everyone who has continued this important work throughout the pandemic, often in challenging circumstances."

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