

Media Release

Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Premier



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CHILD SAFETY OVERHAUL

Every parent deserves to trust that when they drop their child off at childcare they are safe and protected.

The recent allegations of shocking abuse in childcare centres have broken that.

They have broken families' trust and they've broken my trust – as Premier and as a mum.

That's why the Victorian Government is announcing a child safety overhaul.

We will take immediate action to strengthen the Working With Children Check and child safety in early childhood education and care settings with a \$42 million boost to the sector, by:

- **Accepting and implementing all 22 recommendations** of the independent Rapid Child Safety Review
- Bringing legislation to the next sitting week to allow for the **immediate suspension of individual Working with Children Checks (WWCC)**
- Establishing a **new, nation-leading regulator** that will more than double the frequency of compliance checks
- **Beefing up the Social Services Regulator (SSR)** by bringing the WWCC, the Reportable Conduct Scheme and Child Safe Standards under the one roof by the end of the year, giving it new powers, removing silos and weeding out predators
- **Introducing mandatory child safety training** and expanding professional support programs, including through changes to the National Law, to build a greater culture of speaking up, and
- **Calling on the Federal Government to prioritise quality and safety** in the national childcare system.

The work has already started and will continue in the coming weeks and months to restore trust in the sector.

Rapid Child Safety Review

The Review was commissioned by the Government following serious allegations of child sexual abuse in early childhood education and care (ECEC). Led by Mr Jay Weatherill AO and Ms Pam White PSM, the Review was delivered to the Government on 15 August 2025.

The report makes 22 recommendations to improve child safety. Of these:

- 6 recommendations are directed at strengthening the Victorian ECEC regulator and their functions
- 3 recommendations include improvements to training, professional development and education for those working in the ECEC sector and families
- 2 recommendations go to reforms to governance and regulatory functions, including WWCC and the RCS.
- 11 recommendations propose advocacy to the Commonwealth or advocacy in national forums.

The report sets out clear actions to reinforce Victoria's regulatory framework, strengthen awareness about identifying and raising child safety concerns, and advocate for urgent action to occur at the national level.

By accepting all recommendations, the Government is ensuring stronger safeguards are in place to protect Victorian children and support families to have confidence in the Working With Children Check and the safety of early childhood education and care.

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New early childhood education and care regulator

The early childhood education and care sector has expanded with rapid growth and we need to not only catch up but stay ahead of these changes to address future risks.

The Government will establish an independent, strengthened authority to regulate early childhood services under the National Law, and will more than double the frequency of compliance checks.

The independent regulator will be established by the end of this year. This nation-leading body will also be responsible for the Early Childhood Workforce Register introduced in July.

This strengthened regulator will provide families with confidence that children are safe and supported.

Beefed up Social Services Regulator

For too long too many pieces of information about an individual have been left and gone unchecked.

We need a better understanding of child safety to protect all children - including those at risk due to disability, neglect, family violence and other forms of abuse.

That's why we're taking action to strengthen the safety net around children, bringing the Working with Children Check (WWCC), Reportable Conduct Scheme and Child Safe Standards into the Social Services Regulator (SSR) by the end of this year.

Child safeguarding schemes will also be overhauled to ensure predators can be quickly detected, excluded and never allowed to work with children again.

This includes providing the beefed up SSR with powers to consider unsubstantiated allegations and intelligence in deciding whether to grant clearances and proactively share this information with other regulators.

The Government will also introduce legislation into Parliament next week to make some immediate changes to Working with Children Check, including to immediately suspend clearances while reassessments are finalised.

All people applying for a working with children clearance will also be required to undertake mandatory online training and testing, with review rights removed from VCAT for those who have had their clearance refused, revoked or suspended.

Giving workers and parents the confidence to raise safety concerns

Those who are best placed to respond to and report child safety concerns must be equipped with the tools and confidence to raise them.

That's why the Government is taking action to introduce the national mandatory child safety training for all early childhood education and care workers and expanding the professional support program, including through proposed changes to national law, to build a greater culture of speaking up.

We will also work with experts to provide parents and carers with evidence-based advice and online training on prevention awareness, signs of grooming and how to raise concerns.

Anyone with concerns about the safety of children in early childhood services should call the Regulatory Authority on 1300 307 415. Reports can be made anonymously. All notifications are taken seriously and investigated.

Call for immediate action from the Commonwealth

This is a national system that requires a national response.

We cannot do this alone.

We now have a partner in Canberra and we call on them to make the safety of children paramount in recognition of the significant role they play in the early childhood system.

The Government will push for immediate changes to the National Law, including imposing higher penalties on operators who breach the National Law and establishing a national Early Childhood Worker Register.

The Government will also advocate for the Commonwealth to lead a reform of the ECEC system to prioritise quality and safety, directly support regulatory functions and to set a 10-year strategy to fundamentally reform the national system.

Quotes attributable to Premier Jacinta Allan

"I will do everything in my power as Premier to make sure child safety comes first – that's why we're announcing a child safety overhaul."

"This is a national system that requires a national response, and we'll keep working with the Federal Government to deliver it."

"I acknowledge the work of Jay Weatherill and Pam White in leading this urgent review and thank them for delivering the report to improve children's safety."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn

"Reforms to the early childhood education and care settings are crucial to ensuring Victorian children are cared for and learn in safe environments."

"These changes will enable us to better share information across settings where children are cared for, learn and play – so that they are safe."

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Sonya Kilkenny

"The reformed Victorian Working with Children Check scheme will ensure greater information sharing and transparency so we can take immediate action to protect children."

"By strengthening the scheme, we're sending a clear message that any risk to child safety will not be tolerated anywhere."