

Media Release

The Hon Jenny Mikakos MLC
Minister for Families and Children
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EXPANDING MANDATORY REPORTING TO BETTER PROTECT KIDS

The Andrews Labor Government is ensuring the safety and protection of children comes first by expanding the list of mandatory reporters.

Minister for Families and Children Jenny Mikakos today announced the gazettal of additional groups to expand the list of professionals who will be mandated to report information about child abuse or harm.

From 1 March next year, the list of mandatory reporters to child protection will be expanded to include those who work in out of home care (excluding voluntary foster and kinship carers), early childhood and youth justice, as well as registered psychologists.

School counsellors will be mandatory reporters starting 31 January, 2020. Training will be provided to each of the profession groups so that they are fully aware of their obligations.

Mandatory reporting refers to the legal requirement for certain professionals to report a reasonable belief of child physical or sexual abuse to child protection authorities.

Currently, teachers, school principals, doctors, nurses, midwives, and police officers who believe a child is being physically or sexually abused are required to report this to the authorities. Failure to do so is a criminal offence.

Under current laws, priests and people in religious ministry are exempt from mandatory reporting laws.

A re-elected Andrews Labor Government will end this special treatment and amend the Children, Youth and Families Act to make it mandatory to report information about child abuse or harm disclosed during confession to child protection authorities.

A re-elected Labor Government will also introduce amendments to ensure that, under the failure to report offence, contained in the Crimes Act, information disclosed in the context of a religious confession is not exempt.

This work to introduce additional mandatory reporter groups will acquit recommendations 7.3 and 7.4 of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse to mandate a minimum set of mandatory reporters. It also supports the Labor Government's commitment towards national consistency.

Expanding the groups of mandatory reporters is an important step in protecting children from abuse and is aligned with the child safe standards and reportable conduct scheme introduced by the Labor Government.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Families and Children Jenny Mikakos

"The systemic and horrific abuse revealed by the Royal Commission must never be allowed to happen again."

"We are doing everything we can to protect future generations of children from abuse – and there will be no excuses for anyone who works with children and young people not to report."