# **Yoorrook Justice Commission**

## Draft Witness Statement

## WITNESS STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH ANNE BLANDTHORN

I, Elizabeth Anne Blandthorn, Minister for Child Protection and Family Services and Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, of 50 Lonsdale Street Melbourne, in the State of Victoria, say as follows:

## A. Acknowledgement

- 1. I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country on which I live and work, and the Traditional Owners of Country across all lands and waters now known as the State of Victoria, and I pay my respects to their Elders past and present.
- 2. I acknowledge the strength and resilience of First Peoples in Victoria who have faced historical and ongoing injustices, and the courage it has taken for survivors of historical and current injustices to tell their stories to this Commission.
- 3. I acknowledge the profound impact of colonisation and the role that governments, including decision-makers who have held Ministerial portfolios similar to those I now hold, have played in historical injustices towards First Peoples in Victoria, including the removal of children from their families and communities and their disconnection from Country and culture.

## B. Scope of statement

- 4. I make this statement to the Yoorrook Justice Commission (**Commission**) in my capacity as Minister for Child Protection and Family Services in the State of Victoria.
- 5. In preparing this statement, I have consulted with subject matter experts within the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. I confirm the contents of this statement are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.
- 6. The Commission's questions invite me to reflect on current rates of over-representation of First Peoples children in the Victorian Child Protection and care system, progress (and barriers) to date in addressing over-representation, and how any future changes to the system will be implemented to align with the Government's commitment to Treaty and the need for the right to self-determination and other human rights of First Peoples to be protected.
- 7. This statement builds on, and should be read in conjunction with, the Victorian Government's submission to the Commission regarding systemic injustices in the Child Protection system. Consequently, this statement does not seek to replicate points already made in the Victorian Government's submission.

Witness Statement of Elizabeth Anne Blandthorn Minister for Child Protection and Family Services – March 2023

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## C. Professional background and relevant qualifications

- I was elected to the Legislative Council, representing the Western Metropolitan Region, in November 2022. I currently hold the offices of Minister for Child Protection and Family Services, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council. I was appointed to each of these roles in December 2022.
- Prior to my election to the Legislative Council, I was a member of the Legislative Assembly, having been elected in November 2014. I was previously the Minister for Planning from June 2022 to December 2022, and I have held various other Parliamentary positions since being elected to Parliament.
- 10. My professional qualification is a Bachelor of Arts.

## D. Child Protection and Family Services Portfolio

- 11. The Child Protection and Family Services portfolio is responsible for the protection of vulnerable Victorian children and young people from harm caused by abuse and neglect within their families. It provides support to families to keep children safe, strengthen families and help them thrive. Its key responsibilities include:
  - a. Supporting children, young people and families experiencing, or at risk, of harm.
  - b. Preventing and responding to risks to children's safety and wellbeing.
  - c. Supporting children and young people who are unable to remain safely in the family home.
  - d. Responding to historical harm and abuse and providing support to people who grew up in care prior to 1990.
- 12. As Minister, my powers and responsibilities under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (CYFA) include, *inter alia*, to establish and maintain Child Protection services, and to promote a clear definition of the respective responsibilities, in relation to children at risk of harm, of protective interveners, community services and other persons and bodies working with children and their families in a professional capacity.
- 13. The Secretary and their delegates exercise the Secretary's powers and responsibilities set out in the CYFA, and I am advised that a departmental witness has responded in more detail to questions from the Commission regarding the current departmental policy, practice and operational settings of the Child Protection system, as well as connections to the wider child and families service system.

Witness Statement of Elizabeth Ann	e Blandthorn Minis	ster for Child Pr	rotection and Fami	ly Services – March 202	23
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## E. Existing Child Protection system

#### Rates of over-representation and the ongoing legacy of colonialism and dispossession

- 14. I am deeply concerned about the over-representation of First Peoples children across all stages of the Child Protection system. Whilst the intent of the Child Protection and Family Services portfolio is to keep children safe and support families to remain together wherever possible, I acknowledge that intervening in the life and affairs of a family, even to protect the right of a child or young person to safety, is one of the most significant acts the state can undertake.
- 15. I am advised by my department that, as a direct result of historical injustices and the legacy of colonialism, known risk factors that are closely correlated with Child Protection involvement, such as family violence, substance abuse, homelessness, and poor mental health, statistically present with greater frequency in First Peoples families.
- 16. I am aware of the significant efforts that have been made to reform Victoria's legislative, policy and investment priorities and affirm the Government's commitment to enabling the design and implementation of a children and families system that is led by First Peoples.
- 17. Whilst progress and improvements have undoubtedly been made in this time, particularly in relation to transferring decision-making for some First Peoples children to Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisations (ACCOs), Victoria's rates of over-representation have not narrowed.
- Since I have taken on this portfolio in December 2022, I have prioritised meetings with First Peoples community leaders and ACCOs to deeply listen and hear directly from them what needs to change.
- I acknowledge and appreciate that I have not yet had the benefit of speaking to as many people as the Commission has heard from, and that there is not one view across First Peoples on the best way forward.
- 20. Most commonly, leaders and organisations have advised me that what is needed is a genuinely self-determined approach that includes additional investment in early intervention and prevention, as well as greater and more flexible arrangements that provide for First Peoples-led decision-making and support for First Peoples children and families where child safety and wellbeing risks are present.

## Moving towards greater self-determination within the current Child Protection system

- 21. I am advised that, to date, the Victorian Government has been working in partnership with First Peoples and organisations to drive efforts to address the over-representation of First Peoples children in care through the following frameworks and agreements including:
  - a. Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023 (VAAF) and the Self-determination Reform Framework; and

Witness Statement of Elizabeth Anne Blandthorn Minister for Child Protection and Family Services - March 2023

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- b. Wungurilwil Gapgapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement.
- 22. The VAAF commits the Government to facilitate self-determination through four critical enablers: to prioritise culture, address trauma and support healing, address racism and promote cultural safety, and transfer power and resources to communities.
- 23. The Victorian Government recognises the critical role of self-determination in addressing the over-representation of First Peoples children in the Child Protection system, and in meeting Target 12 of the National Agreement for Closing the Gap (National Agreement) (which is to reduce the rate of over-representation of First Peoples children in care by 45 per cent by 2031) and Target 2 of the VAAF (which is to reduce the over-representation of First Peoples children in care).
- 24. I am advised that, until now, the Victorian Government has focused on understanding the drivers of Child Protection and care through the establishment of Taskforce 1,000 and the implementation of subsequent recommendations aimed to address over-representation.
- 25. This has led to the implementation of governance structures and co-designed approaches such as the Aboriginal Children's Forum and a range of reforms that have gradually built the momentum to where we are today. I recognise that successful reforms are built on good foundations, are gradual and iterative, and are underpinned by self-determination.
- 26. The collective effort to build knowledge and evidence and to support and listen to the voices of First Peoples community leaders, knowledge holders and experts indicates a recognition of the need for systemic reform that is First Peoples-led and delivered.
- 27. My discussions with ACCOs have also highlighted that systemic reform needs to respond to and take into account the varying needs and aspirations of local communities. The Victorian Government will be guided by ACCOs and the First Peoples community as to how to sequence and pace future changes to the current service delivery system.

## Partnership Forum

- 28. The Partnership Forum was established in May 2022 and is the Victorian Government's formal partner for Closing the Gap. The Partnership Forum is intended to ensure implementation is community-led.
- 29. The Partnership Forum is going through an establishment phase and the Terms of Reference are still to be agreed upon. First Peoples community members of the Partnership Forum include people from 13 elected organisations that represent 14 sectors across the health, housing, education, land and waters, and justice sectors. Sector organisations are also joined by delegates from the Aboriginal Caucuses of Aboriginal Governance Forums, including the Aboriginal Children's Forum, the Dhelk Dja family violence forum, the Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum, and the Aboriginal Strategic Governance Forum.

Witness Statement of Elizabeth Anne Blandthorn Minister for Child Protection and Family Services - March 2023

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- 30. In 2023, the Department of Premier and Cabinet and my Department will work with the Partnership Forum on the approach to updating Victoria's Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2021-2023, including the actions to achieve Priority Reforms and socioeconomic outcomes in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement).
- 31. The Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report is Victoria's reporting mechanism for the National Agreement. This report takes a holistic, outcomes-focused and transparent approach to reporting, enabling the community to hold the Government to account to ensure meaningful progress is made against our commitments. Victoria's annual reporting on the National Agreement was tabled at Joint Council on Closing the Gap on 16 December 2022.

#### Budget and funding allocations

- 32. The Government submission sets out current funding levels for the Child Protection and Family Services portfolio.
- 33. I understand further work is required as part of the Government's National agreement commitment to examine spending on First Peoples-specific services and quantify the benefit that First Peoples receive from mainstream community services.1
- 34. However, I have been pleased to learn on coming into the portfolio that my department has a strong focus on achieving investment in ACCOs, in proportion to the demand for child and family services for First Peoples children and families.
- 35. First Peoples organisations receive 15 per cent of family and parenting services funding. This funding is on a 'sliding scale' for less intense family services proportional funding at a level equal to the proportion of First Peoples children in reports to Child Protection (9 per cent), and for more intensive family services, proportional funding equal to the proportion of First Peoples children in entries to care (24 per cent).
- 36. I recognise and acknowledge that there is more work to do to ensure proportional funding for our early help and parenting services. In recent years, the Victorian Government has invested in Koori Supported Playgroups in four sites across Victoria. In these programs, parents and children enjoy a range of activities that together support strengthening the child-parent relationship and connection to culture. My department is continuing to explore opportunities to expand the delivery of these critical services with ACCOs.
- 37. Any increase in funding for services requires ACCOs to have a sustainable workforce and associated infrastructure in place to deliver services. Workforce recruitment challenges are being faced across community services, particularly in regionally based organisations and within

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Victorian Government submission to the Yoorrook Justice Commission – Response to Issues Paper 2: Call for Submissions on Systemic Injustice in the Child Protection System, 17 March 2023, [59].

Witness Statement of Elizabeth Anne Blandthorn Minister for Child Protection and Family Services - March 2023



ACCOs. The Victorian Government has invested through the Aboriginal Workforce Fund in supporting First Peoples organisations to upskill and boost their workforce and organisational capability.

## F. Recent actions

## Statement of Recognition Bill

- 38. During the last term of Parliament, two Bills were introduced that sought to amend the provisions in the CYFA for protecting children and providing community services for children and families:
  - a. The Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Child Protection) Bill 2021 (2021 CP Bill).
  - b. The Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition and Other Matters Bill) 2022 (**2022 SOR Bill**).
- 39. Although these Bills lapsed at the expiry of the previous Parliament, they provided for significant reforms to further progress self-determination and self-management for First Peoples children and families and to strengthen provisions that uphold the primacy of culture for the safety of First Peoples children.
- 40. One of my first actions since commencing in the Child Protection and Family Services portfolio has been to deliver on our election commitment to re-introduce the *Child and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition, Aboriginal Self-Determination and Other Matters) Bill 2023* (the Statement of Recognition Bill). The Statement of Recognition Bill includes all aspects of the 2022 SOR Bill along with, amongst other reforms, the five key elements of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle from the 2021 CP Bill.
- 41. If passed, the Statement of Recognition Bill will advance First Peoples self-determination and First Peoples models of care by:
  - a. Introducing a Statement of Recognition in the CYFA accompanied by binding principles to guide decision-making regarding First Peoples children, as co-designed with nominated members of the Aboriginal Children's Forum, which decision-makers, including Child Protection practitioners, will be required to follow.
  - b. Introducing a Statement of Recognition in health legislation including non-binding principles to guide decision-making.
  - c. Enabling the effective functioning of Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care by expanding the functions that can be authorised to First Peoples-led agencies.
  - d. Legislating all five elements of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, namely: prevention; participation; partnership; placement; and connection.

Witness Statement of Elizabeth Anne Blandthorn Minister for Child Protection and Family Services - March 2023

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- 42. Critically, the Bill will enable the commencement of the Community Protecting Boorais pilot, a new initiative that will enable First Peoples-led teams at the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency and Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative to investigate Child Protection reports.
- 43. I am aware that there is not unanimous support from the First Peoples community and service organisations for the Statement of Recognition Bill. I have met with a number of First Peoples organisations to hear and understand their concerns which include: limited opportunity to engage with the Bill (and the two earlier Bills) prior to introduction; that the Bill should go further and place additional obligations on decision makers to prioritise consideration of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle; that current legislative provisions such as those contained in the 2014 permanency amendments disproportionately impact First Peoples children and families; and that these provisions are not being addressed as part of current legislative amendments to the CYFA.
- 44. Any future proposals to amend the legislative provisions for protecting children and providing community services for children and families in the CYFA, made under this Government, will be subject to stakeholder engagement. Engagement with First Peoples community and organisations as part of any such consultation process will be undertaken in a way that progresses the Government's commitment to self-determination and recognises the importance of First Peoples-led decision-making and support for First Peoples children and families, as I have outlined earlier in this statement.

## Strengthening the First Peoples-led service system

- 45. In December 2022, the Premier, the Hon Daniel Andrews, spoke of the need to change the Child Protection system in order to better meet the needs of First Peoples children. The Premier and I have commenced a process of engagement with First Peoples leaders that support my portfolio to commence discussions about how this might be achieved. I provide further information later in the statement on how any agreed changes will support self-determination, human rights and align with Treaty processes.
- 46. I know First Peoples communities are best placed to design, develop and deliver strategies that build a culturally safe system to better support First Peoples children and families. Early results of First Peoples-led practice models show that, even with the system pressures and constraints of our current legislation, policy and practice, these models are working.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See Victorian Government submission to the Yoorrook Justice Commission – Response to Issues Paper 2: Call for Submissions on Systemic Injustice in the Child Protection System, 17 March 2023, [47]-[51] regarding Family Preservation Response and Aboriginal Innovation pilots.

Witness Statement of Elizabeth Anne Blandthorn Minister for Child Protection and Family Services - March 2023



- 47. I am listening closely to First Peoples community leaders, knowledge holders and experts, including witnesses who have appeared before the Commission, to hear and understand their views about how best to reform the system.
- 48. Nevertheless, as outlined in the government's submission to the Commission, we are aware that the current service system is failing to meet the needs of First Peoples, including the need to provide access to culturally appropriate services that help prevent or address risk factors as early as possible and in a culturally appropriate and holistic manner. In particular we have heard that we must do the following to start addressing these failures:
  - a. Refocus our effort and investment in earlier intervention responses to support vulnerable families in need sooner.
  - b. Provide a more accessible service system that First Peoples can trust to support their engagement in early intervention family services or 'diversionary' placement prevention and reunification services.
  - c. Address systemic issues where Child Protection legislation, policies and procedures are driving interventionist approaches and support timely and deeper engagement with children and families to.
  - d. Consider how best to culturally support the long-term care arrangements and exit pathways for First Peoples children when they cannot be safely reunified with their parents.
  - e. Improve how we identify conscious and unconscious bias and racism and its impacts on decision-making in the Child Protection system.
- 49. In January and March this year, the Premier and I met with representatives of the Koori Caucus of the Aboriginal Children's Forum to hear and to better understand the priorities for a self-determined First Peoples-led service system. We are clear and adamant that the reforms must be First Peoples-led and built on the foundations of self-determination.
- 50. These discussions are ongoing and there remain a number of areas to be further explored to strengthen the First Peoples-led service delivery system for First Peoples children and families and reduce the rates of over-representation. These may include:
  - a. Keeping children safe and connected to family, culture, community, and Country; noting the limited number of First Peoples-led and designed early help and prevention programs currently operating to divert vulnerable First Peoples children from the Child Protection system.
  - b. Proportional funding to ACCOs and responding to their requests for greater flexibility to allow them to deliver more responsive and holistic services.

Witness Statement of Elizabeth Anne Blandthorn Minister for Child Protection and Family Services - March 2023

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- c. Continuing to implement programs that transfer greater decision-making power to the First Peoples community and First Peoples agencies, rather than the department exercising statutory powers following consultation with local ACCOs.
- d. Developing a culturally attuned community services workforce, both in ACCOs and in mainstream services, so that First Peoples children and families have a choice of culturally safe and appropriate service options.
- e. Further developing First Peoples-led research and evidence.
- 51. As a result of these initial meetings, my Department is working with the Aboriginal Children Forum's Koori Caucus to further scope detailed opportunities to improve the system and transition to ACCOs more service delivery to First Peoples children and families across the continuum of family services, child protection and care.
- 52. In the case of the Child Protection system, the Wungurilwil Gapgapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement commits the State to work in partnership with ACCOs and the children and families' services sector to address the over-representation of First Peoples children and young people.
- 53. The Aboriginal Children's Forum is the current governing body of the agreement, and the Victorian Government is committed to working with representatives of this Forum and others to deliver existing commitments and to determine future priorities and aspirations, including a more self-determined Child Protection system that will strengthen the foundations for Treaty negotiations.
- 54. The next meeting of the Aboriginal Children's Forum is expected to discuss further development of proposals to increase First Peoples-led service delivery within the current Child Protection and Family Services system. I am looking forward to attending the Aboriginal Children's Forum and in participating in this next round of discussions.

## G. Approach to future changes to the Child Protection system

- 55. As outlined in the Government submission, I believe we have a historic opportunity to build on the work of this Commission, as the nation's first truth-telling Commission, together with the expertise of Victoria's strong First Peoples-led service system, to progress as quickly as possible the necessary changes to the Child Protection and Family Services system, and supporting systems as needed, to reduce the rate of over-representation of First Peoples children in the system.
- 56. There is already significant evidence of this Government's commitment to move to a more selfdetermined system and to support greater investment in ACCOs to achieve this aim.

Witness Statement of Elizabeth Anne Blandthorn Minister for Child Protection and Family Services - March 2023

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- 57. For example, two ACCOs have already been authorised to make decisions for First Peoples children through the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC) program, and another three ACCOs are progressing to become authorised. These authorisations combined with case management by ACCOs of First Peoples children mean that almost 50 per cent of First Peoples children in the Child Protection system are now supported by an ACCO.
- 58. Additionally, as outlined above, in February this year the Government introduced the Statement of Recognition Bill, and has commenced discussions with ACCOs on what else is required.
- 59. As we progress these discussions, we will need to be mindful of potential barriers to reform, and ensure any proposed changes are consistent with Treaty processes and have First Peoples self-determination and human rights embedded at their core.

## Potential barriers to reform

- 60. Any process of reform is a significant undertaking that presents many challenges along the way. Within my portfolio some of these challenges or potential barriers to reform include:
  - a. Uncertainty about how the reforms might need to be incorporated into Statewide and Traditional Owner treaties, acknowledging that the work on reforms should not be held up by the Treaty process.
  - b. Ensuring that we adequately support ACCO workforces and invest in supports that enable ACCOs to build their organisational readiness and planning capacity.
  - c. Achieving more sustainable and culturally appropriate funding arrangements for First Peoples organisations and workforce supports.
  - d. The speed with which agreement on the details of proposed reforms can be reached with First Peoples community and sector partners, with protracted disagreement and lack of consensus having the potential to slow down the process of reform and change.
  - e. Whether or not changes can be achieved working within the CYFA.

#### **Relationship with Treaty Process**

- 61. As outlined in the government's submission, the Victorian Government endorses the representative role of the Assembly and recognises the significance of the Assembly's electoral and representative structure for all First Peoples in Victoria, and is committed to a rigorous Treaty process supported by the Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018 (the Treaty Process Act).
- 62. In accordance with the Treaty Process Act's guiding principles, the Victorian Government is working in good faith to advance the Treaty process.

Witness Statement of Elizabeth Ar	nne Blandthorn Minister for Chil	d Protection and Family Services - March 202
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- 63. I am aware that the State has a legal obligation to be ready to negotiate across the Treaty subject matter outlined in the Treaty Negotiation Framework, which includes Child Protection system issues.
- 64. The Treaty Process Act is an important first step on the pathway to Treaty, and the Victorian Government is taking care not to pre-empt future Treaty developments. Statewide Treaty allows for the negotiation of an ongoing, First Peoples' representative decision-making body for all First Peoples Victorians.<sup>3</sup> As stated by the Assembly in its submission to the Commission, Treaty is a process that has the potential to bring about structural reform and transformation.<sup>4</sup>
- 65. At the same time, the Government is also mindful of the commitments already made and processes underway to address immediate challenges and improve outcomes for First Peoples children throughout Victoria. In the context of the Child Protection system, the Government has existing commitments to transfer decision-making power and resources to First Peoples, including under the VAAF. Given the immediacy of the issues we face, we are also listening to experts in First Peoples service delivery and community members who do not want us to pause much-needed reforms that are taking the next steps towards a more First Peoples-led service system, and keep more First Peoples children and families together.
- 66. This means that the design and implementation of a reformed Child Protection system for First Peoples children will need to be sufficiently fluid and flexible to respond to and align with the progress and outcomes of Treaty negotiations.
- 67. Continuing efforts to achieve the existing target of 100 per cent of First Peoples children in First Peoples care, as well as better supporting families at risk of Child Protection involvement with culturally appropriate diversionary and early intervention services, will be an important next step towards addressing the over-representation of First Peoples children in the Child Protection system.

## Importance of self-determination, human rights and First Peoples' led reforms

68. The Victorian Government is committed to self-determination as a primary driver of First Peoples affairs policy in Victoria. Consistent with this approach, reforms undertaken by this Government of the Child Protection system to improve outcomes for First Peoples children and families will be guided by the self-determination guiding principles as defined in the VAAF.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> First Peoples Assembly of Victoria and the State of Victoria, Treaty Negotiation Framework, 2022, cl. 25.3(b).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, Submission to the Yoorrook Justice Commission, 5 December 2022, 13, https://www.firstpeoplesvic.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Assembly-Submission-to-Yoorrook-Critical-Issues-December-2022-.pdf; First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria and the State of Victoria, Treaty Negotiation Framework, 2022, cl. 3.3 (b): 'a Statewide Treaty will support First Peoples as a collective to exercise self-determination, including, if agreed, by structural reform to government in Victoria'.

Witness Statement of Elizabeth Anne Blandthorn Minister for Child Protection and Family Services - March 2023



- 69. Treaty provides a pathway to further the commitment to self-determination. A new self-determined system will also provide opportunities to consider earlier intervention approaches that are responsive to community needs, and how a statutory service can best function to both protect children from harm and address the drivers of over-representation. It is within the context of these First Peoples' led ambitions that the Government is seeking to be guided by the Commission's recommendations.
- 70. A key focus of the current Child Protection system, and any next steps in progressing system changes, is to prioritise greater self-determination through First Peoples-led design and delivery of effective service models. Within my portfolio responsibilities, some of the current practical actions being taken within current service delivery system structures include:
  - a. Continuing and strengthening the existing governance and partnership approaches embedded in the Aboriginal Children's Forum, which promote mutual accountabilities and transparency of efforts to shift the system from one of crisis intervention to one of prevention and early intervention.
  - Continuing the transfer and expansion of responsibility and decision-making for First Peoples children to ACCOs, including by enabling ACCOs to respond to Child Protection reports so that opportunities for earlier intervention and diversion are promoted.<sup>5</sup>
  - c. Implementing priority actions under the Wungurilwil Gapgapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement, including the equitable allocation of new investment in ACCOs to support their aspirations for future service delivery and expand the programs and services that they deliver across the continuum of family services, Child Protection and care services.
  - d. Through the Aboriginal Innovation Fund, funding the pilot of new First Peoples-led models of early intervention and support, such as the Bendigo District Aboriginal Co-operative's program which works with pregnant mothers who are the subject of unborn reports to provide intensive and culturally appropriate support in order to reduce the risk that babies will need to be removed.
- 71. In addition to the right to self-determination, the broader human rights of First Peoples' children and families will be protected in three ways:

Witness Statement of Elizabeth Anne Blandthorn Minister for Child Protection and Family Services - March 2023

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> For example, the amendments proposed by the Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition, Aboriginal Self-determination and Other Matters) Bill 2023 currently before the Victorian Parliament.



- a. By ensuring that the rights set out in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Charter) inform the development of First Peoples-led and self-determined support systems that take a whole-of-life perspective for First Peoples children and families.
- b. The Charter and the self-determination principles and enablers in the VAAF underpin the implementation of that service system. In this way, when First Nations people engage with the system, their cultural rights and their traditional and cultural practices can be protected and preserved.
- c. Greater investment in First Peoples-led early help to reduce entry into the Child Protection system– this requires culturally effective prevention and earlier intervention programs that support families to be strong, capable and connected to Country, culture and community.
- 72. I look forward to the Commission's recommendations regarding future models and to working in partnership with First Peoples community, leaders and organisations to progress this important work.

## H. Conclusion

- 73. As a member of the Cabinet and in acquitting my portfolio responsibilities related to Child Protection and Family Services, all my decisions are, and will be, carefully calibrated to continue to advance self-determination, respect human rights and seek to support the safety and wellbeing of First Peoples children and families.
- 74. I look forward to the Commission's recommendations, so that we can together forge a new relationship between First Peoples and the State of Victoria based on equality, truth and justice.

Sign here:

Print name: ECIZABETH BLANDTHORN

Date: 24. 3.23

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