

Dear Commissioners,

Submission in response to Education Issues Paper

The Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the Yoorrook Justice Commission's Issues paper on Education. We would like to direct the Yoorrook Justice Commission to our most recent systemic inquiry.

CCYP is an independent statutory body that promotes improvement in policies and practices affecting the safety and wellbeing of Victorian children and young people. In November 2023, we tabled *Let us learn: Systemic inquiry into the educational experiences of children and young people in out-of-home care*.

Our inquiry examined the educational experiences of children and young people in out-of-home care, including the factors that affect their educational outcomes and ability to stay engaged in education.

Our findings and recommendations drew on:

- consultations with 101 children and young people, and surveys with a further 88 children and young people, from all across Victoria who were living in or had recently left care
- consultations with over 350 other stakeholders across Victoria, including carers, educators, Child Protection practitioners and staff of community service organisations and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
- submissions from individuals and organisations
- data and information from the Department of Education and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.

One of the key findings of this report is that racism continues to occur in schools and that schools are often not culturally safe places for Aboriginal children and young people, particularly those in care.

Throughout our consultations, Aboriginal children spoke to me about the racism they experience in the Victorian education system. We saw a continuation of the exclusion from education that began with colonisation and continues today.

The report shows that for Aboriginal children and young people low expectations and racism can lead to educational disengagement. For those living in care, these experiences are exacerbated because of their removal from family, kin and country.

Through this inquiry, I heard how much Aboriginal children and young people, their families and carers value education and want support to do well.

CCYP called on the Department of Education to develop a clear and distinct policy that addresses racism in Victorian government education settings to be accompanied by youth friendly resources for Aboriginal children and young people. The report also called for better

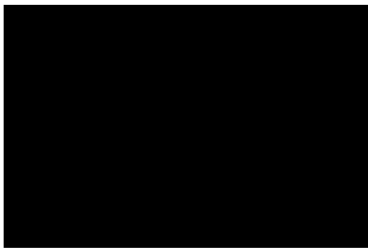
supports for Aboriginal children and young people in care, and an audit of the Report Racism Hotline to improve its effectiveness.

The education system is among the most powerful tools at our disposal if we are to break the entrenched cycles of disadvantage unjustly imposed on Aboriginal children and young people – especially those in care.

Let us learn highlights that it is necessary to challenge and dismantle damaging negative stereotypes about Aboriginal children and young people's within the education system. Furthermore, it is crucial that schools are culturally safe and racism is addressed in order for Aboriginal children and young people to excel.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this inquiry with the Yoorrook Justice Commission.

Yours sincerely,



Meena Singh
Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People