Children and Young People at Risk Summit

by informa

9-10 November 2026 | Novotel Melbourne on Collins

CONFERENCE DAY ONE | Monday 9th November 2026

08:15 Registration & Arrival Barista Coffee

08:55 DAY ONE OPENING

09:00 Welcome to Country

09:05 Opening Remarks From the Chair
Judith Atkinson, *Chief Executive Officer,* **Concern Australia**

09:10 OPENING KEYNOTE | Cultural Identity, Connection and Community
Leela Gray, *Chairperson*, **Multicultural Youth Group**

09:40 PRE-RECORDED KEYNOTE | First Nations children and cultural safety in child protection
Sue-Anne Hunter, *National Commissioner,* **Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People**

10:00 COMMISSIONERS PANEL | State-by-State Perspectives
- Current challenges in each jurisdiction
- Policy differences and their impacts
- Opportunities for knowledge sharing
- Cross-border service delivery issues

Jodie Griffiths-Cook, *Children and Young People Commissioner,* **ACT Human Rights Commission**
Dr Hannah Tonkin, *NSW Women's Safety Commissioner*
Moderator: Judith Atkinson, *Chief Executive Officer,* **Concern Australia**

10:45 KEYNOTE | Bridging the gap between recognising children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right and ensuring they are adequately protected and supported in practice
Dr Hannah Tonkin, *NSW Women's Safety Commissioner*

11:15 Networking Break | Morning Tea & barista coffee

12:15 From Recognition to Action: Delivering for children and young people through Australia's Second Action Plan to End Violence against Women and Children
Matt Tyler, *Adjunct Associate Professor (Research), Faculty of Business and Economics,* **Monash University**
Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Professor (Practice), Faculty of Business and Economics,* **Monash University**

12:45 PANEL | Belonging Before Crisis: Early Intervention for Multicultural Young People
Multicultural young people can face a range of challenges, including social exclusion, disengagement, discrimination, and barriers to accessing support. This panel will explore the role of belonging, cultural identity, mentorship, community connection and positive pathways in supporting multicultural young people before they reach crisis point. Bringing together community leaders, advocates and lived-experience voices, the discussion will focus on practical early intervention approaches that strengthen resilience, improve outcomes and help young people thrive.
Igor Tomic, *Manager, Initiatives - North West,* **Violence Reduction Unit**
Leela Gray, *Chairperson*, **Multicultural Youth Group**
Moses Riek, *Youth Mentor*
Moderator: Tasneem Chopra, *OAM- Director,* **The Culture Lens**

13:30 Networking Lunch

14:30 The Anchor of Practice: Building a Resilient Professional Identity in Complex Risk Environments
Jennette Evans, *Statewide Principal Practitioner, Child Protection,* **Victorian Department of Families, Fairness & Housing**

15:00 Networking Break | Afternoon Tea & barista coffee

15:30 When Safety Comes First: A Child-Centred Framework for Responding to Family Law and Safety Concerns in Schools
Jenn Deighton, *Child Safety and Family Coordinator,* **Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese**
Mitch Huie*, Head of Student Wellbeing & Counselling,* **Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese**
Sonya Roy, *General Council & Company Secretary,* **Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese**

16:00 CLOSING PANEL | Working Together for Culturally Responsive Care
Sarah MacLeish, *Co-Managing Director & Founder*, *Arches Accommodation Supports,* **The Arches Foundation**
Tegan Lucas, *General Manager – Practice, Safeguarding and Quality*, **The Arches Foundation**
Kelly Raedler, *Operations Manager,* **Yalga Connect**
Tahlia Anderson, *Practice Improvement Manager,* **Yalga Connect**

16:45 Closing Remarks from Chair

16:50 Networking Drinks & Canapes

Children and Young People at Risk Summit
by informa

9-10 November 2026 | Novotel Melbourne on Collins

CONFERENCE DAY TWO | Tuesday 10th November 2026

08:30 Registration | Breakfast bite and arrival barista coffee

09:00 DAY TWO OPENING

09:05 Opening Remarks From the Chair
Louise Edmonds, *Founder*, **Grooming Recognition**

09:10 OPENING KEYNOTE | The campaign that reformed the nation and the future of Corporate Parenting
We've made significant progress in recognising that care should not end at 18. The next step is ensuring every young person leaving care has the same opportunities, support, and sense of belonging that any good parent would want for their own child. The presentation will cover the progress made so far for care leavers, and what we need to do next.
Paul McDonald, *Chair,* **Home Stretch,** *Chief Executive Officer,* **Anglicare Victoria**

09:40 KEYNOTE | The Digital Blind Spot: Why technology designed to protect children, can also create new risks if misused
Adriana Jones, *Award winning Cyber security expert & Founder,* **The Innocent Souls Foundation**

10:10 PANEL | Before, During and After: The Critical Moments That Protect Children
This discussion would explore the journey of child abuse prevention from identifying grooming behaviours before abuse occurs, through responding when a child discloses, to supporting recovery after trauma. Together, the panel would provide attendees with practical tools they can immediately apply in childcare, education, community organisations and family settings.
Adam Washbourne, *Trauma Counsellor and Founder,* **Fighters Against Child Abuse Australia**
Sinead Storch, *Early Childhood Education Specialist*
John Cardamone, *Disclosure specialist and survivor advocate*
Moderator: Louise Edmonds, *Founder*, **Grooming Recognition**

10:55 Networking Break | Morning Tea & barista coffee

11:30 From fragmented practice to shared accountability: Enhancing systems for early school leavers in Victoria
The Victorian Early Leaver Connection Initiative (VELCI), including a summary of the initiative and its outcomes, and reflections on work to move VELCI from discrete program delivery to a coordinated system for early school leavers.
Megan Kerr, *Director, Policy, Design and Coordination, Senior Secondary Pathways Reform Division*, **Department of Education Victoria**

12:00 PANEL | Breaking Barriers, Building Trust: Culturally Sensitive Strategies for Tackling Bullying and Supporting Refugee Youth
- Addressing bullying in refugee communities
- Overcoming barriers to accessing support
- Strategies for engaging with families and children in culturally sensitive ways

Ron Prasad, *Co-Founder,* **Beat Bullying With Confidence Foundation**
Yusuf Kasap, *Practice Lead Counselling and Mental Health,* **Wyndham City Council**

Neda Erjaei, *Child Wellbeing and Safety Lead,* **Whitehorse City Council**
Moderator: Heba El-Hakim, *Strategic Projects & Communications Manager,* **Community Languages Victoria**

12:45 Networking Lunch

13:45 Living Learning: Flexible Education, Stronger Futures
Drawing on program outcomes, practice insights, and participant experiences, the session will highlight the critical role of integrated supports, relationship-based practice, and personalised learning pathways in improving outcomes for young people who have previously disengaged from traditional schooling. The presentation will also examine key learnings for service providers, educators, policymakers, and community organisations seeking to create more inclusive and responsive systems of support.
Noeleen Denby, *Living Learning Operations Manager,* **Melbourne City Mission**

14:15 CLOSING PANEL | Importance of Community
- What does an effective support ecosystem look like in practice?
- Can you share an example where community intervention changed a vulnerable young person's life trajectory?
- How do we ensure that the voices of young people themselves are centered in community-based solutions?
- In what ways has the digital age transformed community support structures for young people at risk – both positively and negatively?

Dr Rumbi Mabambe, *Executive Director,* **Chain Reaction Foundation**
Effeh Badu, *Founder,* **Daybreak Optimus**
Neda Erjaei, *Child Wellbeing and Safety Lead,* **Whitehorse City Council**
Moderator: Heba El-Hakim, *Strategic Projects & Communications Manager,* **Community Languages Victoria**

15:00 Closing Remarks from Chair

15:05 Conference Concludes