

# Investigation into family violence exposes critical need for workforce training, identifying perpetrators

December 7 2016, by Jane Gardner

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A leading Victorian family violence expert has responded to the Victorian Commission on Children and Young People report, *Neither Seen nor Heard*, which exposes multiple 'systemic issues' with the current child protection system.

The report, tabled in Parliament today, investigated the deaths of 127 [children](#) between 2013 and 2016, more than half of whom were victims of family violence.

Professor Cathy Humphreys, Professor of Social Work at the University of Melbourne, says the report highlights a gap in training for [child protection](#) workers and inadequate risk assessment.

It also shows an inadequate response to violent men who are not seen, not referred, and not identified as a risk to children and their families.

"The systemic factors raised echo those of the Victorian Family Violence Royal Commission. These factors all require significant workforce development, capacity building and training for Child Protection workers," Professor Humphreys added.

"In particular, there is a significant skills deficit around the workforce engaging more effectively with family violence perpetrators.

"This report is thankfully not a witch-hunt of individual workers, but rather points to systemic issues which need to be addressed by organisations, specifically those involved with child protection.

"This is a critical issue and one that arrives at a time when family violence is a key policy priority for the Andrews' Government."

The report recommends boosting support for mothers who are victims of violence, understanding and identifying child sexual abuse and improving the response to Aboriginal children and their families.

"My experience is that policy workers and senior managers in child protection have been working overtime to explore new guidelines, new approaches and capacity building with the Department and has seconded workers from the specialist family violence sector to address these issues.

"However, the resources to appropriately train the workforce in frameworks to address the needs of children living with [family violence](#) is the critical area where there is a need for serious investment. This has been identified by the Royal Commission into Family Violence and echoed in this [report](#).

"The government has promised full implementation of the recommendations. We will be watching this space with keen interest to ensure that lessons have been learned from the tragic deaths of children."

Provided by University of Melbourne

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