



29 April 2011

The Hon. Philip Cummins  
Chair  
Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry  
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Dear Mr Cummins,

**Re: Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry – RACGP Victoria  
Faculty Submission**

Thank-you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry. The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) Victoria Faculty welcomes this inquiry and hopes the outcomes will minimise the adverse affects on children who find themselves in situations of vulnerability.

At present, general practitioners, bring registered medical practitioners, are mandated to report their concerns, suspicions or beliefs regarding suspected physical abuse and sexual abuse to Child Protection and Family Services – Department of Human Services. The RACGP Victoria Faculty understands that consideration may be also be given to adding emotional/psychological abuse, neglect and exposure to family violence to the mandatory reporting requirements.

The RACGP Victoria Faculty acknowledges improvements are required in the linkages between general practice, state services and other key organisations in being able to manage children who are at risk of, or have experienced neglect and abuse.

The RACGP Victoria Faculty suggests a multi-disciplinary model be developed that would improve and open the communication channels between general practice, state services and other key organisations to assist in minimising the adverse affects of children are at risk of, or have experienced neglect or abuse.

We also suggest that resources be developed and made available to general practices that will assist them in supporting at risk families and children in their practices. Of particular importance are areas of

adolescent presentations to general practice, where the only child health workers of ready access may be the general practitioner.

Support for at risk children throughout all socioeconomic groups in many communities, and particularly in rural areas, is under-resourced and the resources that are available are strained by demand. This is especially the case in communities with prominent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, where general practitioners need to negotiate cultural differences such as notions of shame, and cultural “trust gaps”, as well as delivering appropriate patient care.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this submission, or would like to discuss other issues, please feel free to contact Emma Stonham, Acting State Manager, RACGP Victoria Faculty on 03 8699 0468 or email [emma.stonham@racgp.org.au](mailto:emma.stonham@racgp.org.au).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. C. Rawlin'.

Associate Professor Morton Rawlin  
Chair, RACGP Victoria Faculty