

## Media Release

Wednesday October 11, 2023

### Alannah & Madeline Foundation Launches Trauma-Informed Practice Guide for Early Childhood Organisations

The Alannah & Madeline Foundation, in collaboration with Monash University's Health and Social Care Unit (HSCU), proudly announces the launch of the *Trauma-Informed Practice: A Guide for Early Childhood Organisations* (TIO Practice Guide). This invaluable resource, developed with the support of Gowrie Victoria and funded by the Bowden Marstan Foundation and the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, equips early childhood organisations to integrate trauma-informed approaches into their operations.

Childhood trauma is a prevailing concern in Australia, affecting over 62% of children and young people.<sup>1</sup> Trauma during childhood can have profound and lasting effects on cognitive, social, and emotional development. High-quality early years education plays a crucial role in identifying issues early and ensuring appropriate assessment and support for affected children and families.

However, educators face challenges, including limited training in understanding and responding to trauma and vicarious trauma due to exposure to children's traumatic experiences. With workforce shortages and high turnover, organisations struggle to recruit and retain educators in the early years.

Lee Cameron, Director of Trauma Informed Programs at the Alannah & Madeline Foundation shared that, *"Through our work directly supporting frontline ECEC professionals, the Alannah & Madeline Foundation's Trauma Consultancy (TraCS) team recognised the need for trauma informed approaches to be embedded within organisations."*

*"There is a clear need for a holistic approach. We cannot rely on solely adopting an individual, child-orientated practice. For ECEC professionals to be able to effectively practise in a trauma informed way, simultaneous organisational-level action and support is required."*

The TIO Practice Guide, which was officially launched today at Gowrie Victoria by The Hon Dr Anne Aly MP, Minister for Early Childhood Education & Minister for Youth offers a comprehensive solution by addressing both individual educator training and structural/organisational issues. By promoting trauma-informed practices within early childhood education services, this guide provides a pathway to better outcomes for children, families, and the workforce.

Benefits of implementing trauma-informed practice in early childhood education include understanding and interpreting challenging behaviours, creating safe environments, building

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Maltreatment Study 2023 - <https://www.acms.au/findings/>



trusting relationships, promoting emotional regulation, fostering resilience, and empowering children. Trauma-informed practices also minimise the risk of re-traumatisation and encourage parent and community engagement, leading to positive long-term outcomes.

The TIO Practice Guide's impact is far-reaching, aiming to:

- Increase understanding of trauma and its impact on staff, children, and families in early education and care settings.
- Ensure well-supported staff delivering education and care programs.
- Foster supportive Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) environments for staff as well as children and families.
- Acknowledge and respond to vicarious trauma experienced by educators and staff.

The development of the TIO Practice Guide involved collaboration with key stakeholders, including the Alannah & Madeline Foundation Trauma Consultancy Service, Monash University's Health and Social Care Unit, and a diverse group of professionals from the early childhood education, community services, and child, youth and family sectors.

To ensure its effectiveness, the TIO Practice Guide was rigorously tested through a Community of Practice involving 17 educators from five ECEC organisations across Victoria. Feedback from participants underscores the Guide's usefulness, with a significant proportion indicating positive changes resulting from its implementation.

***Trauma-Informed Practice: A Guide for Early Childhood Organisations* is available for free download at: <https://www.alannahandmadeline.org.au/what-we-do/care-programs/tracs/trauma-informed-practice-a-guide-for-early-childhood-organisations>**

Learn more about Alannah & Madeline Foundation's Early Years program, ***Trauma Consultancy Service (TraCS)*** that supports educators working with children affected by trauma: <https://www.alannahandmadeline.org.au/what-we-do/care-programs/tracs>

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The Alannah & Madeline Foundation was founded 26 years ago by Walter Mikac AM, and a small group of volunteers in memory of Walter's young daughters Alannah and Madeline Mikac, aged just six and three, who tragically lost their lives along with their mother and 32 others at Port Arthur in Tasmania on 28 April 1996. The Foundation was established with the belief that *"all children and young people should be able to live a happy and safe life, free from violence and trauma."* Our mission continues today through our Care, Prevention and Advocacy programs – we fight for their right to be safe, so their future is strong. [www.alannahandmadeline.org.au](http://www.alannahandmadeline.org.au)

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