
The response outlines significant reforms including benchmark standards for schools responding to child abuse allegations, minimum child safe standards, a new reportable conduct scheme and new criminal offences. These reforms will ensure that children in Victorian schools and children’s services are even safer.

Minimum standards for schools responding to allegations of child abuse

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is leading the development of new legislation that will require all schools to implement a policy for responding to allegations of child abuse as a condition of registration.

This will mean all schools – including non-government schools – will be obliged to comply with benchmark minimum standards when responding to abuse allegations.

The Department will consult with stakeholders including schools and their peak bodies as this work progresses.

This legislation is on track to be introduced into Parliament this year.

Child safe standards

Minimum child safe standards will be introduced for organisations that have direct and regular contact with children – including child care services, kindergartens, schools and out of school hours care services.

These will build on the strong policy and legal requirements already in place to ensure that children are safe.

Key stakeholders and the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) will be consulted about the detail, scope and implementation of the standards. The child safe standards will be principles-based to allow organisations to tailor their responses to their circumstances and build on existing policies, practices and regulatory arrangements. Where organisations require a change in practice, the CCYP will provide support to ensure they are able to meet the standards. The standards will be introduced in phases to allow appropriate time to ensure that organisations are well placed to meet the standards.
Reportable conduct scheme

A new reportable conduct scheme will be introduced for organisations with the highest level of responsibility for children. The scheme will require organisations to report allegations and findings of child abuse involving their workers to the CCYP.

The CCYP will have additional functions including contributing to the development of new standards for investigating child abuse allegations and building the capacity of organisations to prevent, detect and respond to abuse.

The reportable conduct scheme will not interfere with reporting obligations to police or with police investigations.

Common Guiding Principles

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Department of Human Services have developed new Common Guiding Principles, which provide guidance on how departments should ordinarily respond to civil claims involving child sexual abuse allegations.

The Common Guiding Principles aim to ensure that departments respond to sexual abuse claims in a compassionate and consistent manner. These policy guidelines complement the existing Victorian Model Litigant Guidelines, which set the standard for how departments behave in all civil litigation.

Criminal offences

The Victorian Government has introduced three new criminal offences to protect children from abuse. These are:

- An anti-grooming law, which prohibits any communications with a child or their parents or carers with the intention of engaging the child in a sexual offence;
- A new offence for people who hold a position of responsibility who fail to protect a child from sexual abuse when they know someone associated with their organisation poses a risk of sexually abusing children; and
- A new offence for people who fail to inform police if they know or believe that a child has been sexually abused.