

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 2: A CHILD SAFETY POLICY OR A STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Guidance for schools in developing their response

Child Safe Standard 2 (Standard 2) requires schools to develop and publicly communicate a Statement of Commitment to child safety or a school child safe policy. This guide outlines what is required by schools for compliance with Ministerial Order 870 and provides further guidance on developing a school child safe policy.

Everyone in society has a moral responsibility to keep children safe and to protect them from harm. A Statement of Commitment to child safety helps raise awareness about the importance of child safety in the school and the community and affirms the organisation's commitment to child safety and expectations.

A child safe policy is an overarching document that provides key elements of an organisation's approach for child safe environments.

In preparing for compliance schools are expected to:

- **Develop** a Statement of Commitment to child safety for your school – see further advice in the *Statement of Commitment* section below.
- **Identify** the actions the school proposes to take, per Standard 1, to put the school's Statement of Commitment to child safety into effect and articulate the timeframe for this.
- **Determine** the timeframes for the school governing authority to authorise the statement as well as the timeframes for informing the school community about the statement.

In preparing for compliance schools are encouraged to:

- **Develop** a child safe policy – see further advice in the school policy on child safe environments section below. This policy would include the Statement of Commitment to child safety as well as the tools the school uses to create a child safe school.
- **Please note** that schools will be required to demonstrate evidence of a full child safety policy (including a statement of commitment to child safety) within the 2017 school review process and beyond. The Department would therefore expect that all schools work towards the preparation of such a policy in time for their school review.

BACKGROUND

On 26 November 2015, the Victorian Parliament passed the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015* to introduce seven child safe standards (the Standards) into law. The Standards apply to all organisations involved in child-related work in Victoria.

[Ministerial Order No. 870](#) provides the framework for how schools will be required to comply with the Standards. Overall responsibility for ensuring compliance rests with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

The Ministerial Order specifies the following requirements for schools regarding Standard 2:

- 1) *The school governing authority must ensure that the school has a child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety that details:*
 - a) *the values and principles that will guide the school in developing policies and procedures to create and maintain a child safe school environment; and*
 - b) *the actions the school proposes to take to:*
 - i. *demonstrate its commitment to child safety and monitor the school's adherence to its child safety policy or statement of commitment;*
 - ii. *support, encourage and enable school staff, parents, and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters; and*
 - iii. *support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.*
- 2) *The school governing authority must inform the school community about the policy or statement, and make the policy or statement publicly available.*

DEVELOPING THE SCHOOL'S STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

A Statement of Commitment to child safety describes the values and principles that will guide the school in developing procedures to create and maintain a child safe school environment, and protect children from child abuse. An example can be found [here](#).

The example references the cross-cutting principles for the Standards, in particular that the school recognises different cohorts of students and their different values and needs. This includes the cultural safety, as well as the safety and wellbeing of, Aboriginal children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability

DEVELOPING A SCHOOL POLICY ON CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

A school policy on child safe environments would typically include the Statement of Commitment to child safety and also include the policy elements the school uses to create a child safe school. The policy may include the more detailed information, or cross-references to, other Standards such as the Code of Conduct, human resources and recruitment practices, procedures for reporting concerns, and risk management strategy and procedures.

A high quality child safe environments policy will include sections relating to:

- PURPOSE
- SCOPE & AUDIENCE
- STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT & PRINCIPLES
- POLICY AND PROCEDURES
 - A child-safe culture
 - Personnel understand their roles and responsibilities/Code of Conduct
 - Human resources practises and training
 - Reporting a child safety concern or complaint
 - Risk reduction and management
 - Listening to children
 - Confidentiality and Privacy
- POLICY EVALUATION AND REVIEW
- DEFINITIONS
- RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS
 - School Policy & Advisory Guide – Duty of Care
 - School Policy & Advisory Guide – Child Protection Reporting Obligations
 - DET Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework

Detailed guidance on what a school child safe policy might include is available [here](#).

SUSTAINING AND IMPROVING THE SCHOOL'S COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

There are a number of ways in which the school may demonstrate their continuing commitment to child safety, including:

- incorporating the Statement of Commitment and policy in ongoing staff, volunteer and contractor induction processes and maintain records of this process
- enabling professional learning and training of staff to build deeper understandings of child safety and prevention of abuse at your school in line with your stated policy
- using the Statement of Commitment and policy to shape school procedures and practice and inform other child safe related policies in the school (Social Media Policy, Child Protection – Reporting Obligations Policy)
- ensuring regular and consistent communication which models the values and principles articulated in the Child Safe Policy
- reviewing and updating the policy in response to emerging thinking, evidence and practice about the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

A number of resources and sites that provide more ideas are provided below.

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

- Victorian Government, Education & Reform Act 2006, Gazette No. S2, January 2016, *Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools*, Ministerial Order No. 870.
- Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority (2016) Information Sheet. CHILD SAFE STANDARD 2: A child safety policy or a statement of commitment to child safety
- Commission for Children and Young People (2015) A Guide For Creating A Child Safe Organisation, Version 2.0.
- [A step-by-step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child FIRST](#)
- [Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people](#)
- [Protecting Children - Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations](#) - elearning module
- State of Victoria (2010) Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people: A joint protocol of the Department of Human Services Child Protection, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Licensed Children's Services and Victorian Schools