# Secretary’s Message

Secretary Gill Callister:

“Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children in our early childhood, school and training settings is our highest priority.

“Victorian families put their trust in us to keep their children safe as they learn.

“In response to the Betrayal of Trust Parliamentary Enquiry,

the Victorian Government has introduced Child Safe Standards

across all organisations in the community where children spend time.

“This will build a stronger and more consistent approach to preventing and responding to child abuse.

“Schools should be the safest place for children after the family home, and these new standards will support the work that Principals and Teachers do to protect

all students from abuse and neglect.

“These standards build on, and strengthen this work across all our services.

“Victorian early years services, schools and training providers are being progressively required to meet the Child Safe Standards from 2016.

“This includes all Victorian schools - whether government, Catholic or independent.

“By the first of August 2016, schools needed to meet the standards or have a plan

to do so by the end of the school year.

“We need to ensure strong, effective processes are in place within schools and other organisations to respond to and report allegations of suspected child abuse.

“The PROTECT resources available on the department's website provide the framework for this.

“Meeting the Standards is about considering the needs of all children, particularly those who may be vulnerable due to age, family circumstances, abilities,

or indigenous, cultural or linguistic backgrounds.

“I previously led Victoria’s Child Protection Services and I know that a strong culture and commitment to child safety must be integrated in, and across,

all our services.

“These standards are about building a culture of child safety and protection.

“Child abuse is not tolerated in organisations that serve our children and families.

“I encourage you to contact the Department, the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority and other agencies and use the resources and guidance available.

“I do believe by implementing these standards across our education system, we have an opportunity to show great leadership on the safety and protection of children.

“I look forward to working with you on this important work.”