

Executive summary

The Systemic Review is a demonstration of the department's commitment to accountability and learning to improve systems to protect the children and young people of today and tomorrow. The Systemic Review was conducted in accordance with the Terms of Reference⁸ and the principles and methodology outlined in this report, and was overseen by the Independent Monitor.⁹

Historical child sexual abuse was defined in the Terms of Reference as 'sexual abuse of a child in a government school by a staff member employed by the department in a government school, where that abuse occurred on or prior to 31 December 1999'.¹⁰

The Systemic Review identified the following matters of historical child sexual abuse:

- **483**¹¹ civil claims
- **293** applications made under the National Redress Scheme for people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse
- **65** individuals that the department has assisted, directly or indirectly, following disclosures made since the restorative engagement and support function was established on 28 June 2023.

In producing the following information, the department acknowledges the past institutional failings that enabled or contributed to child sexual abuse occurring in Victorian government schools.

Observations and learnings

The Systemic Review affirmed the key findings of the Board of Inquiry.

The Board of Inquiry identified the below 6 significant and systemic failures which contributed to the inadequacy of the department's response to child sexual abuse at the relevant time:

1. An absence of policies and procedures.
2. An absence of guidance to staff.
3. A culture that prioritised the reputation of the education system over the safety of children.
4. A lack of staff training.
5. Poor record-keeping and information-sharing practices.
6. No systemic reviews.

See **The Systemic Review affirms Board of Inquiry key findings.**

The Systemic Review made the following additional observations:

⁸ DE, *Systemic Review into Historical Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian Government Schools* (Systemic Review Terms of Reference), n.d., subcl 3(1).

⁹ Minister for Education (Vic), *Ministerial Order No. 1458: Appointment of an Independent Monitor for the Department of Education's Systemic Review of Historical Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian Governments Schools*, 3 February 2025.

¹⁰ *Systemic Review Terms of Reference*, n.d., subcl 2(e).

¹¹ One victim-survivor brought 2 civil claims against different perpetrators, which explains why the total count of civil claims is 483 but the number of victim-survivors is 482.

1. An estimated 15% of Victorian government schools in operation between 1950 and 1999 have been named in civil claims or National Redress Scheme applications; 29% of secondary schools are named.

There were **403** Victorian government schools named in a civil claim or National Redress Scheme application relating to historical child sexual abuse. This includes:

- **249** primary schools – approximately **12%** of all primary schools in operation during 1950 to 1999.
- **143** secondary schools – approximately **29%** of all secondary schools in operation during 1950 to 1999.
- **11** special government schools – approximately **8%** of all special schools in operation during 1950 to 1999.

See **Observations and Learnings; Analysis of civil claims files; Government schools where historical child sexual abuse occurred** for analysis about the schools named in civil claims.

See **Observations and Learnings; Analysis of redress applications** for analysis about the schools named in redress applications.

A full list of the schools named in the civil claims is provided in **Appendix 2 – List of schools named in a settled civil claim relating to historical child sexual abuse**.

2. Children in ‘special schools’ were approximately 5.6 times more likely to experience child sexual abuse than children in mainstream schools.

While it is estimated that **0.9%** of students who attended a Victorian government school during 1950 to 1999 attended special schools (as they were then known), **5%** of victim-survivors who brought a civil claim were abused in special schools.

See **Observations and Learnings; Analysis of civil claims files; Government schools where historical child sexual abuse occurred**.

3. Most victim-survivors who have brought a civil claim are male, and were 12 years old or younger when the abuse commenced. On average, it has taken 42 years for victim-survivors to bring a civil claim.

There were **482** victim-survivors who had brought a civil claim relating to historical child sexual abuse.

- The majority of victim-survivors (**366** or **76%**) were male.
- The majority (**341** or **71%**) were 12 years of age or younger when the abuse commenced. The highest prevalence of abuse occurred among **9** to **13** year olds, indicating that this cohort were at particular risk. Ages ranged from **4** to **18** years.
- On average, victim-survivors were subjected to abuse over a period of approximately **2 years**.
- On average, it took **42 years** for a victim-survivor to bring a civil claim.

See **Observations and Learnings; Analysis of civil claims files; The victim-survivors**.

4. The alleged perpetrators named in the civil claims were overwhelmingly male, with their age at the time of the alleged abuse ranging from 20 to 69 years of age.

There were **195** employees named as alleged perpetrators in the civil claims.

- The majority (**174** or **89%**) were male. Male alleged perpetrators were therefore overrepresented based on the estimated proportion of male teachers in the government teaching workforce at the time.
- The median length of employment with the department was **26 years**.
- The median age of the alleged perpetrators was **35 years** of age. Ages ranged from 20 to 69 years.
- Almost half (**95** or **49%**) of alleged perpetrators had a disciplinary record on their personnel file. Of these disciplinary records, **80** related to allegations of child sexual abuse (meaning that **41%** of the alleged perpetrators had a disciplinary record relating to child sexual abuse).

See **Observations and Learnings; Analysis of civil claims files; The alleged perpetrators**.

5. Alleged perpetrators held roles at all levels, with 23% of alleged perpetrators being a principal or equivalent at the time of the abuse.

Of the **195** alleged perpetrators identified in the civil claims, **44 (23%)** were principals (including head teachers at primary schools without a principal) or vice-principals (including assistant principals) at the time of the abuse. Therefore, alleged perpetrators who were in a principal-class role were over-represented based on their estimated proportion of the government teaching workforce during the period under review.

See **Observations and Learnings; Analysis of civil claims files; The alleged perpetrators**.

6. A third of alleged perpetrators had multiple claims of abuse made against them.

Of the **195** alleged perpetrators, **64 (33%)** were named in multiple civil claims.

The Systemic Review undertook case studies of **6** perpetrators who were named in settled civil claims by 10 or more victim-survivors, and who were not subject to the Board of Inquiry. Three perpetrators are deceased, and details of their offending are in the public domain. These perpetrators are named and information about the school and the department's response to the complaints and incidents alleged in the civil claims are disclosed. These perpetrators are:

- Reginald Adrian Crick
- Robert Leonard Morris
- Timothy Richardson.

Three perpetrators are still living. They cannot be named and details about their conduct cannot be disclosed as doing so may jeopardise current or future criminal proceedings. Pseudonyms have been applied and limited information is disclosed. These perpetrators are referred to as:

- *Perpetrator A*
- *Perpetrator B*
- *Perpetrator C*.

See **Appendix 3 – Perpetrator case studies**.

7. Alleged perpetrators were rarely dismissed in response to child sexual abuse.

Of the **195** alleged perpetrators:

- **7 (3.5%)** were dismissed due to child sexual abuse allegations. Based on the low number of dismissals, it can be inferred that allegations of sexual abuse were historically not reported, believed or properly investigated, or that employees chose to resign or retire in response to allegations (and therefore left their employment before they could be dismissed)
- **69 (35%)** resigned, with just under half (**32** or **16%**) having evidence of allegations of child sexual abuse in their personnel files
- **66 (34%)** retired, with **8 (4%)** having evidence of allegations of child sexual abuse in their personnel files. If a teacher retired rather than resigned, they were eligible for employment as a replacement (emergency) teacher. Emergency teachers were engaged at short notice to fill an unforeseen staffing need as a result of illness or approved leave. As there was no central function during the period under review that had a role in the probity checking or regulation of emergency teachers, and as placements were not recorded on a staff member's Teaching Service Record or personnel file, the Systemic Review was unable to confirm how many of the alleged perpetrators who retired subsequently engaged in emergency teaching.

See **Observations and Learnings; Analysis of civil claims files; The alleged perpetrators.**

8. Teachers were transferred to other schools in response to allegations of child sexual abuse.

Based on the review of the civil claims, responding to child sexual abuse allegations was often managed at the school level. It appeared that alleged perpetrators were often transferred to another school, without apparent consideration being given to an alleged perpetrator's ongoing risk to children. Once a teacher left a school or exited the teaching service, the matter was considered resolved and, often, no further action was taken. The Systemic Review observed that, on average, alleged perpetrators were employed at **5** government schools during their career.

Historical personnel records available in the civil claims files often did not include reasons for a staff member's transfer between schools. It was therefore possible that a school which received a transferred teacher was not aware of previous allegations of child sexual abuse, if any, against that staff member.

See **The Systemic Review affirms Board of Inquiry key findings; Board of Inquiry finding 3.**

9. There was a consistent lack of evidence in the civil claims files of contemporaneous records being made about reports of child sexual abuse.

There were many cases in which victim-survivors recalled making reports of abuse to school staff, and there were no records of these complaints.

Based on the victim-survivor's allegation in a Statement of Claim, reports appeared to have been made to the school at the time of the abuse in approximately **97** civil claims (**19%** of civil claims).

The Systemic Review was able to identify evidence that a report was passed on to the department at the time of the abuse in **29** civil claims (**6%** of claims), either by the school or by the victim-survivor's family directly.

See **Observations and Learnings; Analysis of civil claims files; Reporting the abuse.**

See **The Systemic Review affirms Board of Inquiry key findings; Board of Inquiry finding 1.**

10. There was a lack of awareness amongst school communities of grooming behaviour or the risk of child sexual abuse.

Based on the allegations made in the civil claims, there were instances where there was no apparent awareness among the school community of behaviour that is now understood to be child sexual abuse (such as taking sexually explicit photographs of students), or behaviour that is a high risk for child sexual abuse (such as sleepovers at a teacher's private residence) that today would be understood to be grooming.

For example, it was observed that a substantial proportion of civil claims alleged abuse by an employee at a non-school location or activity (**39%** of civil claims), such as at private residences (**27%** of civil claims).

See **Observations and Learnings; Analysis of civil claims files; Patterns of offending.**

See **The Systemic Review affirms Board of Inquiry key findings; Board of Inquiry finding 2.**

11. There was an over-reliance on police investigating allegations of abuse.

When police investigations did not progress, or did not result in any criminal charges, schools and the department often considered that the investigation was complete and took no further administrative or disciplinary action.

See **The Systemic Review affirms Board of Inquiry key findings; Board of Inquiry finding 2.**

Conducting the Systemic Review

The Systemic Review considered material received by the department prior to 30 June 2025.

The department has endeavoured to provide an accurate interpretation of the information it holds from the above records. The department acknowledges that the information contained in this report does not provide an exhaustive account of historical child sexual abuse in Victorian government schools. This is because:

- the data outlined in this report captures information collected and analysed at a point in time (that is, information received by the department prior to 30 June 2025)
- poor historical record keeping practices have meant that some records are incomplete, unclear, unable to be located or do not exist. This issue was also encountered by the Board of Inquiry.¹² For this reason, the department has focussed on the only centrally searchable record collection available, being the civil claims files
- research from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) indicates that on average victim-survivors take 23.9 years to disclose the abuse, with men taking longer to disclose than women.¹³ Some victim-survivors will never disclose the abuse.

Therefore, the department accepts that the following information is non-exhaustive, and that the full extent of historical child sexual abuse in the Victorian government school system may never be known.

¹² *Board of Inquiry report*, 2024, pp 239–240, 373.

¹³ The average for women was 20.6 years and for males was 25.6 years: *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* (Institutional Abuse Royal Commission report) (Final Report, 2017), vol 4, p 9.

The department's current approach to protecting children and young people in government schools

The child safety framework in Victorian government schools has evolved significantly since the period under review, and the department acknowledges that the work of child safety is ongoing.

A summary of the current approach to child safety is in **Appendix 4 – Current child safety policies and procedures**.