
SCHOOL POLICY & FUNDING ADVISORY COUNCIL

OFFICIAL STATEMENT NO.13: NOVEMBER 2021

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SCHOOLS

Council acknowledges the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on school communities. Council commends the work schools have undertaken to return to on-site learning and continue following COVIDSafe directions. Especially as schools near the conclusion of Term 4 for 2021, Council extends sincere appreciation to all school leaders and staff for their efforts this year and throughout the pandemic to keep their communities safe and maintain a focus on student learning.

Council remains committed to continued collaboration between the school sectors to ensure school communities are consistently supported through the ongoing impact of COVID-19, particularly for areas of shared challenges such as navigating rapid changes to restrictions and directions for schools.

BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS

The Department of Education and Training (the Department) supports the education sector, including non-government schools, each year to prepare for the high-risk weather season. Council noted the continued impact of COVID-19, as well as recent storm and flood events, on community resilience.

Council also discussed the continuing upcoming work, with the support of the CSIRO, to review the Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) for early childhood services and schools.

2022-2025 FUNDING AGREEMENTS AND 2022 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The current four-year Funding Agreement and annual Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Victorian Government and the non-government schooling sector expires on 31 December 2021.

The Department has worked closely with the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) and Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) to develop the proposed Funding Agreement and MoU. Council endorsed the new 2022-2025 Funding Agreements and 2022 MoU and these will be provided to all funding recipients for signing.

REGULATORY POLICY UPDATE

Council discussed key developments in regulatory policy that seek to ensure the safety of school staff and communities and the balancing of competing rights.



A new regulatory framework for boarding schools commenced on 18 June 2021. The framework responds to the recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse that boarding schools should be monitored to ensure they meet the Child Safe Standards. The Victorian Registrations and Qualifications Authority is now finalising the registration of school boarding premises who completed a self-assessment process in September 2021.

The *Education and Training Reform Amendment (Protection of School Communities) Bill* passed both Houses of Parliament on 22 June 2021. The Bill empowers authorised persons to issue School Community Safety Orders to parents, carers and other adult members of the school community who engage in harmful, threatening or abusive behaviour. These powers will be available to all Victorian schools from mid-2022 and Ministerial Guidelines will be developed that will outline how the scheme will operate for both government and non-government schools.

The *Equal Opportunity (Religious Exceptions) Amendment Bill 2021* will amend the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 to remove and narrow the religious exceptions to anti-discrimination regulations.

ABOUT

Established in 2015, the School Policy and Funding Advisory Council (Council) provides advice to the Minister for Education on regulatory, policy and funding issues that affect public and non-government schools.

Council meets three times each year and Official Statements are shared with the school community after each meeting. The Department provides secretariat support to the Council.

Previous statements can be found online on the Department's website:

www.education.vic.gov.au/spfac.aspx

NOVEMBER 2021 MEETING

The July meeting was attended by the following appointed members or their delegate:

- Jenny Atta, Secretary, Department of Education and Training (the Department) (Chair and representative for the Department)
- Jim Miles, Executive Director, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV)
- Michelle Green, Chief Executive, Independent Schools Victoria (ISV)
- Professor Kwong Lee Dow, Independent Member (representing the interests of students in all Victorian schools)
- Dr David Howes, Deputy Secretary, Department of Education and Training (representing the government school sector).

Contact the Department if you need this information in an accessible format. Please phone (03) 7022 0903 email sp.fac@education.vic.gov.au



Ms Jenny Atta (Chair)
Secretary
Department of Education
and Training

Mr Jim Miles
Executive Director
Catholic Education
Commission of Victoria

Ms Michelle Green
Chief Executive
Independent Schools
Victoria

Prof. Kwong Lee Dow
Independent Member
University of Melbourne

Dr David Howes
Deputy Secretary
Department of Education
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MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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COUNCIL SECRETARIAT

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