
SCHOOL POLICY & FUNDING ADVISORY COUNCIL

OFFICIAL STATEMENT NO.12: JULY 2021

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SCHOOLS

Council acknowledges the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on school communities, especially in light of the recent lockdowns and additional periods of remote and flexible learning. Council commends the work schools have undertaken to return to on-site learning and continue following COVIDSafe directions.

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.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TUTOR LEARNING INITIATIVE

The Tutor Learning Initiative announced in October last year is supporting all government and eligible non-government schools throughout 2021 to deliver targeted teaching support to students whose learning has been disrupted because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Both government and non-government schools have experienced a number of benefits in implementing the initiative. These include the increased capacity of schools to provide individual attention to students, the opportunity to re-engage students who had become disengaged through the periods of remote and flexible learning, and the provision of emotional and wellbeing support to students in addition to academic support.

Council discussed the unprecedented opportunity provided by the Tutor Learning Initiative for Victorian schools to explore what can be achieved with a more differentiated learning model, as well as opportunities to extend these benefits through embedding the various approaches to implementing the Tutor Learning Initiative in the education system going forward.

ABORIGINAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE CURRICULUM

Established by Council in 2018 to raise the achievement and aspirations of Koorie students across all school sectors, the Koorie Education Working Group designed and piloted a curriculum workshop to strengthen support for teachers across all sectors to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the Victorian Curriculum.

The workshop, which is a key highlight of the recent cross-sector collaboration occurring in the area of Koorie education, was intended to address a need for a consistent approach to engaging with Aboriginal communities and resources across the school sectors.

Council noted the significant impact participation in the workshop had on teacher confidence levels in understanding protocols of engagement with Aboriginal communities, identifying appropriate resources, and curriculum and lesson planning. Council agreed to explore ongoing incorporation of the curriculum workshop into the forward work plan and to investigate potential application of the workshop approach for addressing other complex issues such as improving student attendance.



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The COVID-19 pandemic, including prolonged lockdowns, school closures, and the move to remote and flexible learning, as well as ongoing recovery from the 2019-2020 bushfires, have caused sustained challenges for school communities.

In response to these challenges and to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health Services, the 2021-22 Victorian State Budget provides \$217.8 million in new support for schools. This investment recognises the important role schools play in providing universal support for the mental health and wellbeing of young Victorians, and ensuring mental health and wellbeing is a core part of a student's experience at school.

The reforms include the creation of a new \$200 million Schools Mental Health Fund to support Victorian government schools to improve student mental health and wellbeing. Supports available for non-government schools include an evidence-based Menu of resources that schools can select from depending on need and the expansion of the Mental Health in Primary Schools Pilot to include 10 Catholic schools.

Council affirms its commitment to continued collaboration to address shared challenges relating to providing supports for staff and student mental health and wellbeing across sectors.

VICTORIAN ACADEMY OF TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP

The Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership (the Academy) is a new statutory authority that provides a specialist, cross-sector entity dedicated to teaching and leadership excellence. The development of the Academy responds to the lack of professional learning focused on development of high-performing teachers and limited access to high-quality professional learning for rural and regional schools.

Council commends the collaborative approach across school sectors to establishing the Academy and confirmed the ongoing commitment of the Victorian Government to ensure that the Academy is accessible and valuable for all teachers, regardless of school sector.

The Academy will commence operations at the newly renovated 41 St Andrews Place, Melbourne, in January 2022. Regional locations will open from mid-to-late 2022.

REGULATORY POLICY UPDATE

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

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. Existing boarding school premises are now required to be registered under the scheme and have until 18 September 2021 to submit a self-assessment of compliance with the prescribed minimum standards to the Victorian Registrations and Qualifications Authority.

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.



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

JULY 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 telephone (03) 7022 2820 or 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 and Training
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MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria	media@cecv.catholic.edu.au	(03) 9267 0228
Department of Education and Training	media.unit@education.vic.gov.au	(03) 8688 7776
Independent Schools Victoria	enquiries@is.vic.edu.au	(03) 9825 7200

COUNCIL SECRETARIAT

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