
SCHOOL POLICY & FUNDING ADVISORY COUNCIL

OFFICIAL STATEMENT No. 10: **NOVEMBER 2020**

CROSS-SECTOR RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Council acknowledges the significant challenges students, school leaders, teachers and families have faced during this unprecedented and difficult year. In recognition of this, supporting student health and wellbeing is the key priority for all three school sectors for Term 4.

Council discussed important lessons to be drawn from the periods of remote and flexible learning and the staged return to school. These include identifying enablers of successful at-home learning, and ensuring that the connections built between schools and families during the periods of remote and flexible learning are maintained and built upon.

Council remains committed to continuing communication and collaboration to ensure a consistent response to and support for school communities across all sectors. Council is also committed to dialogue to identify ongoing challenges and draw on lessons learnt to continue to improve outcomes for student.

BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS

Bushfire recovery activities have been collaboratively implemented across all sectors in 2020 and have laid the foundation for preparation for the 2020-2021 bushfire season.

Council discussed key challenges, including fatigue across all sectors resulting from the previous bushfire season and the COVID-19 crisis. Council further discussed opportunities for resource sharing and agreed to ongoing collaboration across sectors to support schools in preparing for bushfire season.

THE 2021 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Council endorsed the 2021 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), developed in collaboration between the Department of Education and Training (the Department), the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) and Independent Schools Victoria (ISV). As for previous years, the MoU commits the Department, CECV and ISV to continuing to work together to support high quality educational outcomes across all Victorian schools and the Victorian Government's vision for Victoria as the Education State.

The 2021 MoU formalises additional commitments which reflect ongoing substantive work across the sectors on child safety reforms, including the implementation of reforms which respond to the recommendations of the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations (Betrayal of Trust) and the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (the National Redress Scheme).

THE 2021 AUSTRALIAN EARLY DEVELOPMENT CENSUS

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) collection, which occurs every three years, will take place from 3 May to 20 July 2021.

The AEDC provides a snapshot of how well children are faring when they commence school. The findings reflect policy and program impact, including what is being done well and what needs to be improved to support healthy child development. The data helps us understand how children and young people are developing before they arrive at school and has been shown to predict later health, wellbeing and academic success. The 2021 data collection will provide Australia with more than ten years' worth of data on childhood development at entry to school.

Council discussed the benefits of the AEDC for schools and communities, which include providing baseline data for schools to implement evidence-based interventions to improve childhood development. This is timely given the impact of both COVID-19 and bushfires on student wellbeing in the past year.

The Department, CECV and ISV will collaborate to provide schools with information and resources on the benefits and uses of the data and processes for participation prior to the data collection period in 2021.

REGULATORY POLICY UPDATE

Council discussed key developments in regulatory policy that seek to ensure child safety. The *Education and Training Reform Amendment (Regulation of Student Accommodation) Act 2020*, which responds to the recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse that boarding schools should be monitored to ensure they meet the Child Safe Standards, received royal assent on 4 November 2020. A Regulatory Impact Statement, which outlines the benefits and potential impacts of the new regulatory scheme, will be released for public consultation following Ministerial approval.

The whole-of Victorian Government policy to require joining the National Redress Scheme as a condition of receiving government funding was finalised in September 2020. Drafting of Guidelines to support the implementation of the policy is currently underway.

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 2020 MEETING

The November 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)
- Ian Burrage, A/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 on 03 7022 2820, or email sp.fac@edumail.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	Mr Ian Burrage A/Deputy Secretary Department of Education and Training
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COUNCIL SECRETARIAT

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