

Media Release

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INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS WELCOME SUPPORT FOR ONLINE STORY TIME DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

The Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) has welcomed [today's announcement by copyright stakeholder groups](#) of special arrangements for school story times during the COVID-19 crisis, which will ensure teachers are able to continue to read stories to students whether they are learning from the school or at home.

ISCA Chief Executive Officer, Dr David Mulford, today said that, "The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted a serious issue where Australia's current copyright laws do not technically allow many of the activities that teachers need to do to provide remote learning to Australian students, including reading stories to children online. This announcement means that the important learning activity of children's story time will be allowed to be carried out virtually for the duration of the pandemic."

The announcement represents an agreement between the Australian Publisher's Association (APA), the Australian Society of Authors (ASA) and the National Copyright Unit (NCU). It will allow teachers to live-stream story times to students, and if not possible to live-stream then to distribute view-only recordings. The policy is temporary and will stay in place for as long as schools are required to provide remote learning due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Dr Mulford said that, "This announcement is a positive example of stakeholders working cooperatively to prioritise children's education under difficult circumstances, and we thank APA, ASA and NCU for moving swiftly on it. However, this is an issue ISCA has raised with the Australian Government as we believe it would be preferable to include a minor adjustment to the Copyright Act to allow schools the freedom to implement online material quickly and efficiently, without the concern that they may later be exposed to legal liability. This is very important as schools prepare for term two."

The Copyright Act currently contains an exception (s200AB) that allows schools and teachers to use some forms of copyright content in "special cases". This "special case exception" would clearly apply to remote learning for the period of the current COVID emergency, except that it does not apply to text, artworks/graphics, webpages, sheet music and online broadcasts. ISCA has requested the Australian Government urgently modify the exception to ensure schools can legally deliver remote education to Australian students during the COVID crisis.

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