



# ISA STATEMENT OF SUPPORT: CHILD SAFETY PRACTICES

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DATE 2 DECEMBER 2022

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Every organisation has a role to play to be child safe. Independent Schools Australia supports the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations which guides organisations to develop and implement approaches that support the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

## 1. INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS AUSTRALIA

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Independent Schools Australia (ISA) is the peak national body representing the interests of the Independent school sector. ISA's role is to undertake national advocacy for Independent schooling in Australia, represent of the Independent school sector to government and other organisations, and promote the choice, diversity and contribution Independent schools make to education.

ISA comprises eight-member state and territory Associations of Independent Schools (AIS) and through these associations, acts of behalf of 1,187 Independent schools with 667,259 students. Independent schools are a diverse group of non-government schools serving a range of different communities. Many Independent schools provide religious or values-based education. Others promote a particular educational philosophy or interpretation of mainstream education.

Independent schools are not-for-profit institutions. Many Independent schools have been established by community groups seeking to meet local needs. There are also schools that seek to reflect the religious values of a particular community or to practice an internationally recognised educational philosophy such as Rudolf Steiner, Montessori or the International Baccalaureate.

## 2. NATIONAL STRATEGY TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE 2021-2030

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ISA supports the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030 (National Strategy) vision that all children and young people are protected and safe from sexual abuse and victims and survivors are supported and empowered. ISA agrees with the key themes of the National Strategy and commends this nationally coordinated, strategic framework for preventing and responding to child sexual abuse.

ISA supports the following key themes of the National Strategy through whole school approaches to child safety and with ongoing support from the Associations of Independent Schools resources and professional development.

- Awareness raising, education and building child safe cultures
- Supporting and empowering victims and survivors
- Enhancing national approaches to children with harmful sexual behaviours
- Offender prevention and intervention
- Improving the evidence base

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### 3. COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

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ISA and AISs are committed to working with the National Office for Child Safety on the ongoing safety and wellbeing of young people, in accordance with the recommendations from the Royal Commission and key themes in the National Strategy.

In 2022 ISA was involved in several consultation opportunities in relation to these issues:

#### **Submission to Inquiry into Social Media and Online Safety March 2022**

Independent schools are very mindful of the many ways in which social media and online interaction can impact the mental health and wellbeing of students. Students have access to a growing number of different online and social media platforms for the purposes of learning and recreation from an increasingly younger age. Online safety is an important area in which Independent schools can, and do, provide advice and resources to educate students and their teachers about the potential dangers and negative consequences of online interactions.

#### **Media Guidelines for Responsible Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse**

ISA participated in this survey to provide input into the development of both evidence-based guidelines for journalists to refer to when reporting on child sexual abuse, and a guide for victims and survivors when dealing with the media

#### **National Office for Child Safety**

ISA continues to engage with the Safe Sectors Leadership Group and provide feedback to the development of resources to support implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

#### **Australian Human Rights Commission**

ISA met with the representative from the Australian Human Rights Commission to provide input to the proposed secondary-aged students and schools surveys on consent education and the prevalence of sexual harassment in schools.

#### **The National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse**

ISA has accepted the invitation to have a representative on The National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse *Practice and System Improvement Advisory Panel* and welcomes this opportunity to contribute feedback on national actions.

ISA and AISs support work that mitigates risks to child safety, in line with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and National Strategy. We promote a culture of safety and wellbeing, protecting children and young people from abuse and exploitation.