

Friday 25 October 2019

Education Updates

Abuse of children not a 'matter of history', says commissioner

The Victorian Commissioner for Children and Young People, Liana Buchanan, says her latest annual report shows that organisations need to do more to protect children from abuse. [Click here to read more...](#)

Young people need more mental health support, says Productivity Commission

A draft Productivity Commission report recommends appointing dedicated 'wellbeing leaders' in all schools. [Click here to read more...](#)

School wellbeing programs missing the mark – NAB Survey

The National Australia Bank's latest survey of Independent secondary school students suggests that they are sceptical of school efforts to support their wellbeing. [Click here to read more...](#)

Royal Commission calls for submissions on disability concerns in education

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability has called for responses to an issue paper addressing concerns in the education sector. [Click here to read more...](#)

eSafety Hub gets update

eSafety commissioner Julie Inman Grant says the government's new online safety hub provides the 'world's most comprehensive suite of information, resources and reporting tools'. [Click here to read more...](#)

Commonwealth Bank promoting credit cards to kids – Choice

Consumer rights group Choice says the Commonwealth Bank's Dollarmites school banking program is 'spruiking the benefits of credit cards to Year 3 students'. [Click here to read more...](#)

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Abuse of children not a 'matter of history', says commissioner

The Victorian Commissioner for Children and Young People, Ms Liana Buchanan, says her [latest annual report](#) shows that organisations need to do more to protect children from abuse.

Over the past two years the commission has administered new schemes, including the reportable conduct scheme, aimed at ensuring that organisations prevent, report and respond to child abuse.

[Ms Buchanan said](#) that while the commission had seen 'increased engagement and improved compliance' by many institutions, her report 'should serve as an urgent reminder that abuse of children by organisations is not a matter of history'.

Since July 2017, when the reportable conduct scheme came into effect, organisations have made 1611 mandatory notifications to the commission, 'amounting to a total of 2697 allegations of harm to children by workers, volunteers or religious leaders'. Almost a third (31 per cent) of finalised matters had been substantiated.

Physical violence against a child accounts for the highest proportion of allegations (41 per cent), followed by sexual misconduct (17 per cent).

Ms Buchanan said there was still a 'clear failure' by some institutions to interview all relevant witnesses, especially children and young people, when investigating incidents under the oversight of the commission.

'While we are seeing improved responses by organisations in some sectors, I am concerned about low reporting in others, including health, disability and religious organisations,' she said.

– Teachers accused of abuse, Tom Minear, *Herald Sun*, 1 November 2019

Young people need more mental health support, says Productivity Commission

A draft [Productivity Commission report recommends](#) appointing dedicated 'wellbeing leaders' in all schools.

Productivity Commission chair Michael Brennan said that despite the 'huge impact' of mental ill-health and suicide on the community, mental health is treated as an 'add-on to the physical health system'.

He said that 75 per cent of people who develop a mental illness show symptoms in the 'critical schooling and employment years' before they are 25, resulting in long lasting effects 'not only in [their] job prospects but many areas of [their] lives'.

'Getting help early is key to prevention and better outcomes', he said.

The report calls for changes to the health system, which Mr Brennan said isn't 'meeting community expectations', despite mental-ill health and suicide costing the nation 'up to \$180 billion per year'.

It also calls for changes in 'schools, workplaces, housing and the justice system'.

The report recommends that all schools employ a 'dedicated wellbeing leader ... to oversee school wellbeing policies, coordinate with other service providers and assist teachers and students to access support'.

It says that the government should review existing school wellbeing programs, with a view to redirecting funding 'towards the employment of school wellbeing leaders in government schools'.

The commission has invited submissions and comments on the draft report, which can be [lodged at its website](#), until Thursday 23 January 2020.

– early checks needed to ease mental risks. Stephen Lunn, *The Australian*, 31 October 2019

School wellbeing programs missing the mark – NAB Survey

The National Australia Bank's (NAB) latest survey of Independent secondary school students suggests that they are sceptical of school efforts to support their wellbeing.

According to NAB, one in three of the more than 400 students who took part in the [NAB Independent Schools Survey 2019](#) said they were 'highly anxious'. A quarter reported that they were 'very unhappy'.

Almost two thirds (63 per cent) of the students said the main cause of their disquiet was 'the growing pressure of schoolwork, tests and grades'.

Some students reported school wellbeing programs weren't worth the loss of study time, saying they were tokenistic, irrelevant, outdated, unqualified, boring and poorly executed.

[NAB says](#) that some of students who identified as highly anxious were among the least positive about school wellbeing programs.

Other findings in the survey include that students are concerned that the school curriculum does not adequately prepare them for life after school, especially with regards to financial literacy, technology and 'real world' experiences.

- Anxious students give thumbs down to wellbeing programs. Rebecca Urban, *The Australian*, 28 October 2019

Royal Commission calls for submissions on disability concerns in education

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability has called for responses to an issue paper addressing concerns in the education sector.

The commission says the [issues paper](#) (also available in [Easy Read PDF](#) and [Easy Read DOCX](#)) outlines its understanding of the barriers faced by students with disability. The paper also addresses topics raised by disability advocates and academics at a forum in Melbourne last month.

These include:

- research suggesting that children with disability experience higher rates of suspension and expulsion from schools, or excluded from school activities, such as excursions or sports events
- an increase in the segregation of children with disability into special education units/classes or special schools – especially for students with autism and for First Nations students.

The Royal Commission is encouraging responses from individuals and organisations to the issues paper, if possible, by 20 December 2019. It says, however, that submissions will be accepted after this date.

The Royal Commission's first public hearing on education in Townsville will be livestreamed on the [Royal Commission website](#) from Monday 4 November 2019.

Responses to the issues paper should be provided:

- via email, to DRCEnquiries@royalcommission.gov.au
- in writing, to GPO Box 1422, Brisbane, Queensland 4001

The commission asks for respondents to advise if they consent to their responses being made public on its website.

- Disabled kids 'need strategy for inclusion'. Judith Ireland, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 October 2019

eSafety Hub gets update

eSafety commissioner [Julie Inman Grant says](#) the government's new [online safety hub](#) provides the 'world's most comprehensive suite of information, resources and reporting tools'.

Ms Inman Grant says the site provides practical, evidence-based advice, developed with experts to ensure that parents and educators can easily find what they are concerned about. Visitors to the site can also find tools to report 'youth-based cyberbullying, adult cyber abuse and image-based abuse, including so-called 'revenge porn' and sextortion ... from every page'.

Illegal content, including child sexual abuse material and material promoting terrorism or other violent crimes, can also be reported through the online safety hub.

The Australian Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, Mr Paul Fletcher, said the online safety hub would 'promote safer, more positive online experiences and help Australians learn more about safeguarding themselves and their children from online harms'.

Commonwealth Bank promoting credit cards to kids – Choice

Consumer rights group Choice says the Commonwealth Bank's (CBA) Dollarmites school banking program is 'spruiking the benefits of credit cards to Year 3 students'.

Choice makes the [claim in its submission](#) to an Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) review of school banking programs.

ASIC is investigating how such programs are implemented and marketed, how students engage with these programs, and the type of accounts students establish at school and later in life.

Choice CEO Alan Kirkland said there was 'widespread concern' in the community about how banks marketed their products in schools.

Mr Kirkland said the CBA shouldn't be introducing students in Year 3 to the idea of credit cards.

'Credit cards are complex products with tricky terms and conditions that are designed to make money for banks', he said.

Choice has also urged ASIC to consider the competition implications of school banking schemes. Mr Kirkland said allowing one bank 'unrestricted access to market in a school raises serious competition concerns'.

[CBA refuted the claim](#) that it markets credit products to children, calling it 'categorically misinformation'.

The bank said it has a 'strong and respected track record of providing quality financial education programs' and that was 'always looking at ways we can improve our financial education programs'.

– Concerns over CBA programs in schools. John Collett, *The Age*, 31 October 2019