

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Recommendations by DoE Inquiry into child sexual abuse welcomed

Commissioner for Children and Young People Leanne McLean today called on the State Government to design child safe systems in Tasmanian schools to protect students from sexual abuse.

“I welcome the findings of the Independent Inquiry into the Tasmanian Department of Education’s Responses to Child Sexual Abuse,” Ms McLean said.

“I also welcome the Department’s acceptance of all its recommendations.”

Ms McLean said the Inquiry’s findings and recommendations again demonstrate the pressing need for improved child safe systems and practices, and independent oversight in Tasmania.

“Every child has the right to be protected from violence, mistreatment and abuse, including sexual abuse, no matter where they are.

“This right to be protected from harm is one of the fundamental rights guaranteed to children by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.”

Ms McLean said she agreed wholeheartedly with the report’s authors that the system must be designed to prevent child sexual abuse from occurring in schools.

“We must have a system that deals sensitively, promptly and in a child-friendly manner to any concerns or allegations raised.

“The principle of acting in the best interests of children and young people should always be the central pillar and tenet of any system for safeguarding school students.

“Fundamental to this principle is empowering children and young people to have a voice.

“As the Inquiry found, students were often ignored, not believed or accused of lying.

“This helped foster a culture that protected adult perpetrators of child sexual abuse and left children traumatised and open to further abuse.”

Ms McLean said introducing child safe systems cannot be limited to Tasmanian schools alone.

“Children and young people have contact with a range of services and organisations.

“It is therefore incumbent upon Tasmania to prioritise the development and implementation of a child-safe legislative framework, including standards that must be met by any entity that



provides services to children. This child safe framework must include independent oversight and a reportable conduct scheme to oversee investigations of allegations of abuse.

“I acknowledge the many victim survivors – children and adults – who have suffered and survived harm while in educational and other institutions. We must remember that the trauma of abuse does not stop when the abuse stops.

“If you or a child you know has suffered abuse and needs support, please reach out for help. You can contact:

- 1800 Respect
- Lifeline on 13 11 14
- Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS) on 1800 697 877
- Relationships Australia on 1300 364 277
- Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800

The Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice & Referral Line is the first point of contact for child wellbeing and safety: 1800 000 123.”

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