

Media Release

The Hon James Merlino MP

Deputy Premier

Minister for the Coordination of Education and Training – COVID-19

Minister for Education

Minister for Mental Health



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IMPROVING SAFETY IN VICTORIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS

New laws to register and regulate school boarding premises will be rolled out in 2021, under reforms to keep Victorian children safe.

Minister for Education James Merlino today announced that the *Education and Training Reform Amendment (Regulation of Student Accommodation) Bill 2020* had passed in the Upper House, paving the way for requirements to be implemented next year.

The Bill expands the functions and powers of the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) to include the registration and regulation of school boarding premises.

The changes mean school boarding premises will be required to comply with registration requirements, similar to those that apply to schools, including in relation to child safety and managing the risk of child abuse.

This will apply to all boarding premises at government, Catholic and independent schools.

The Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 will be amended to outline the standards school boarding premises must meet, including compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards. The VRQA will develop guidelines for school boarding premises, outlining what is required to meet the minimum standards.

Since the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, which identified boarding schools as a high-risk environment for students, boarding schools have been working to ensure that they are child safe environments.

The regulation of school boarding premises for compliance with the Child Safe Standards consolidates and builds on the work schools are already doing to keep Victorian children safe.

If school boarding premises are found to be non-compliant with any standards for registration, the VRQA will have the power to take compliance or enforcement action, which could include suspension or cancelling of registration.

These new requirements will commence by mid-2021.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

“The passing of this Bill means that we’re delivering on this important recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse to make sure we keep children safe.”

“These changes mean school boarding premises must be registered and meet Child Safe Standard requirements, helping keep our kids safe when they’re away from home.”