

Betrayal of Trust implementation



In April 2012, the Victorian Government initiated a landmark inquiry into the handling of child abuse allegations within religious and other non-government organisations.

The inquiry's final report, [Betrayal of Trust](#)¹ was tabled in Parliament on 13 November 2013 and contained 15 recommendations. The Victorian Government tabled its response on 8 May 2014 giving support or in-principle support to all of the recommendations. Work to implement the Victorian Government's response is well underway. This work falls into three categories:

- criminal law reform
- creating child safe organisations
- civil law reform

While this work continues, the Victorian Government will also follow closely and engage with the national [Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#)² and consider any relevant findings and recommendations made.

Criminal law reform

The first priority of the Victorian Government has been the immediate safety of children. The Victorian Government has introduced three new criminal offences to further protect children from abuse.

The three new offences are:

- a [grooming offence](#) which targets communication, including online communication, with a child or their parents with the intent of committing child sexual abuse
- a [failure to disclose offence](#) that requires adults to report to police a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child (unless they have a reasonable excuse for not doing so)
- a [failure to protect offence](#) that applies to people within organisations who knew of a risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.

All allegations of child abuse are investigated by the [Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams \(SOCITs\)](#)³ at Victoria Police, who are specialist detectives trained to investigate the complex crimes of sexual assault and child abuse. Victoria Police has also established a dedicated taskforce, the [Sano Taskforce](#)⁴ to investigate historic and new allegations of child sexual abuse that have emanated from the inquiry.

Creating child safe organisations

The Victorian Government is implementing a range of measures to create child safe organisations. These measures will strengthen the capacity of organisations to prevent and respond to the risks of child abuse.

The Victorian Government has introduced new child safe standards that aim to drive cultural change in organisations, so that protecting children from the risks of abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice. The standards are being implemented in two phases, and will become compulsory by 2017 for all organisations that provide services to children.

The Victorian Government is also developing a reportable conduct scheme that will require organisations with a high level of responsibility for children to report allegations of abuse to the Commission for Children and Young People. These organisations include out-of-home care service providers, youth justice services, schools, child care and disability services for children.

For more information about the child safe standards or the reportable conduct scheme, see the [Overview of child safe standards and reportable conduct scheme](#) or visit the [Department of Health and Human Services website](#)⁵.

The Victorian Government has also introduced measures that ensure that in the future, all Victorian schools will be required to implement the child safe standards and adopt consistent policies for responding to allegations of abuse.

The Victorian Government has enhanced its [Working with Children Check](#)⁶ scheme so that all ministers of religion are required to get a Working with Children Check, unless their contact with children is only occasional and incidental to their work as a minister.

Civil law reform


The Victorian Government is implementing a range of civil law reforms to provide better access to justice for victims of institutional child sexual abuse.

The Victorian Government released a [consultation paper](#)⁷ in August 2015 concerning a potential Victorian redress scheme for victims of institutional child abuse. Submissions for the consultation paper have now closed.

The government is considering all of the submissions it received to the public consultation paper, which have identified a range of issues that are essential to developing a Victorian redress scheme.

The *Limitation of Actions Amendment (Child Abuse) Act 2015* passed through the Victorian Parliament in 2015, and became operative on 1 July 2015. The Act completely removed the limitation periods that apply to civil actions founded upon child abuse, with both retrospective and prospective effect.

The reforms also removed the 12-year long-stop limitation period for wrongful death actions in relation to child abuse brought by dependants of a deceased victim. The Act was developed following extensive internal and external consultation, and is an important step in allowing greater access to justice for survivors of child abuse.

Work is also continuing on the implementation of other civil law reforms that were recommended by Betrayal of Trust. These reforms raise significant and complex issues, as has been noted by the Chair of the [Royal Commission](#) .

In September 2015, the Royal Commission released its final report on redress and civil litigation. The Victorian Government is considering the findings of the Royal Commission as part of its civil law reform work.

Common Guiding Principles


The [Common Guiding Principles](#) provide guidance on how Victorian government agencies should ordinarily respond to civil claims involving allegations of child sexual abuse.

The Common Guiding Principles are policy guidelines that complement the [Model Litigant Guidelines](#).

Report abuse

Reporting a child in immediate danger:

- Emergencies call 000 (triple Zero) 

- Your local police station 

You may speak to police confidentially even if you do not want to be involved in an investigation. Any information you provide to police may assist them in other investigations and in the prevention of further child abuse.

You can also make a confidential report by calling:

- Crime Stoppers 1800 333 000 


Concerns about the safety of a child or young person who may be at risk of harm:

- Child protection contacts - Department of Human Services 

- Child Protection Crisis Line 13 12 78 (After hours) 

If you've experienced child abuse in the past:

- Victoria Police's Sano Taskforce 


- Victoria Police's Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams 


How to report a crime:


- Victims of Crime website 

- Victoria Police website 

Support services

- Sexual Assault Crisis Line
1800 806 292 

- Victims of Crime Helpline
1800 819 817 

- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 

- [Survivors of child sexual abuse, including a guide for parents](#)
- [Better Health Channel](#)
- [Community Health Directory](#)
- [Find more support services on the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse website](#)