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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RESPONSE TO REQUEST FROM ROYAL COMMISSION REGARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS (HSB)

1(a) Formal policy, guidelines and guidance applicable to children with HSB

The Department's [Child Protection policy](#) provides procedures and guidelines in relation to reporting allegations of sexual abuse perpetrated by a child (section 4.4). Where HSB is considered to be an indicator of possible child sexual abuse, staff must follow procedures as outlined in the Department's *Child Protection* policy.

All staff employed by the Director General are responsible for the care, safety and protection of children. This responsibility extends to the identification and timely response to concerns regarding the possible sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse of a child. The definition of child sexual abuse used in the Department's *Child Protection* policy includes a reference to sexual behaviours that are harmful to a child.

It should be noted that the Department's [Student Behaviour policy](#), defines behaviour as 'A student's learned actions, identified in a school's code of conduct, that contribute to the student's growth and development and the school's good order and proper development'. Accordingly, the terminology "harmful sexual behaviours" is not a term ordinarily used in Department's policies and guidelines.

The Department's [Student Behaviour policy](#) requires schools to plan and provide the educational support needed for every student. In line with the policy and procedures, students displaying harmful sexual behaviour (misconduct) must be provided the individualised support needed for them to learn appropriate social behaviour.

The Department's [Student Attendance policy](#) emphasises support for every student to attend school, as well as the use of positive strategies to reclaim attendance for any student who is not attending, possible as a consequence of HSB.

The Department's [Equal Opportunity, Discrimination and Harassment policy](#) applies to all employees and includes the responsibilities of principals and line managers to provide working and learning environments free of unlawful discrimination and harassment.

The Department provides online services to students in public schools for learning-related activities and strives to protect students from exposure to inappropriate online material and activities. The Department's [Students Online policy](#) outlines the expectations of principals and teaching staff and the [Students Online guidelines](#) provide actions for those who have been notified of inappropriate or unwelcome activity by students or members of the public.

1(b) Efforts to address children with HSB which are not recorded in formal policy, guidelines or guidance

The Department's [Student Behaviour policy](#) encourages schools to use positive educational responses to promote socially appropriate behaviour and to minimise or eliminate HSB. This approach is especially emphasised in the case of HSB, as HSB may be a symptom or manifestation of disability, prior sexual abuse or general wellbeing or welfare issues.

Where students are judged by the principal to be intentionally engaging in misbehaviour, the use of disciplinary sanctions may be used, provided they are used within the context of an overall plan of support to promote behaviour.

In addition, through an interagency initiative with the Department for Child Protection and Family Support (CPFS), the Department of Health and Western Australia Police, the Department facilitates workshops across the state that specifically address responses to children and young people with sexual behaviours.

The Department's School of Special Educational Needs: Behaviour and Engagement (SSEN:BE) provides support to schools to cater for students exhibiting the most extreme and complex types of student behaviour which may include HSB. After an assessment process where school and regional support has been reviewed, a decision may be made that SSEN:BE is best placed to provide support to a student either at the student's enrolled school or at one of SSEN:BE's engagement centres. In these cases, the assistance provided would be multidisciplinary, which would include a documented education plan that details social and psychological support.

The Department's School Psychology Service provides specialist support to school staff in the areas of student behaviour, learning, and mental health and wellbeing. School psychologists negotiate a service plan with the school principal. This may include the development and implementation of risk management plans and individual safety plans as requested by schools. In response to identified need and negotiated with schools, school psychologists may also present in-school workshops and information sessions, as well as parenting programs outside school hours.

Where a student presents a risk to other students and/or staff, schools may access support through the Department's Exceptional Needs Funding (ENF) process. ENF is available to support schools with students who demonstrate high needs in relation to extreme and challenging behaviour, complex health needs or complex learning needs.

In Department early childhood settings, the operational norm of applying higher staff-to-child ratios in most early childhood classes (as high as 1:10 in Kindergarten) may facilitate the identification of HSB in very young children.

2. Programs, services, education and training to prevent and/or identify sexual abuse by children of other children

Although no direct training on HSB is provided to staff, all staff who have contact with children are required to have completed the Child Protection and Abuse Prevention or Child Protection Professional Learning online professional learning. Professional learning covers responding to normal, concerning and very concerning sexual behaviours. HSB is viewed as both a possible indicator that a child has been sexually abused and/or has perpetrated sexual abuse.

The Department's website provides information and resources for staff regarding harmful sexual behaviours in children and young people. Information and resources include:

- [Sexualised behaviours in children](#) – outlines when sexual play in children may or may not be an indicator of abuse;
- [Guidelines for responding to sexualised behaviours in children](#) – outlines age specific expected, concerning and very concerning behaviours and responses staff should take;

- [Responding to forced sexualised behaviours between school students](#) – provides guidelines for principals detailing age specific responses; and
- [Sexual harassment brochure](#) – provides information for students and strategies for dealing with sexual harassment at school.

Since 2009, it has been policy requirement that schools implement preventive curriculum for all students. This is supported by online and face to face professional learning (as above) and [K-10 curriculum resources](#) (accessible by Department staff only). Supplementary resources include:

- *Keeping kids safe* – an activity book for Aboriginal students;
- *Protective behaviours: Feeling safe staying safe* – a teaching resource for students with Special Needs; and
- *A teenager's guide to personal safety* – a resource to raise the awareness of the grooming process used by perpetrators of child sexual abuse.

Parent workshops are provided for schools on request.

Child protection and/or abuse prevention (protective behaviours) face to face professional learning is available on request. Audiences include school staff, pre-service teachers and residential staff. Training is delivered by Department staff and training providers contracted by the Department. Face to face child protection updates (overview of current child protection issues) are provided to principal networks and to provisionally registered school psychologists through the induction program in their first year of employment with the Department.

The Department provides a specialised child protection consultancy service to schools. Staff may seek advice in relation to recognising, responding to and reporting HSB.

The Department's [Student Attendance Toolkit](#) provides resources and professional learning available to schools to assist in implementing the *Student Attendance* policy. The toolkit links to the *Child Protection* policy, to ensure staff are directed to the most appropriate information where non-attendance is thought to be related to child safety or wellbeing concerns.

The Department's In School Chaplaincy program provides support, where appropriate, to students who are demonstrating, or who are victims of, HSB.

All SSEN:BE staff that work with students have undertaken Youth Mental Health First Aid and Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention professional learning. Mental Health First Aid is the help given to someone developing a mental health problem or in a mental health crisis. The first aid is given until appropriate professional treatment is received. Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention is designed for professionals and para-professionals in the human services area whose roles bring them into regular contact with people at risk of suicide.

School psychologists, in the course of their work may encounter students who exhibit HSB. School psychologists provide counselling and may refer to other agencies or services. Services provided by school psychologists may be preventative or responsive in nature and deal with individual students, groups of students or the whole school. Both direct student support services and indirect services (consultation with parents and other people who deal with the student) can be provided. Services provided by school psychologists include consultation, assessment, intervention, monitoring and evaluation.

The Department's School of Special Educational Needs: Disability (SSEN:D) provides a service on request to schools including sexuality and relationship education (SRE) and/or protective behaviours/education (PB/E); individualised resources, access to resources through the Statewide Services Resources and Information Centre and/or support for educators to provide access to SRE and PB/E curricula.

This may involve differentiating or adjusting the curriculum to meet the individual needs of students with disability. SSEN:D consulting teachers may also support schools by providing information about outside agencies, e.g. Disability Service Commission (psychology services), Sexuality Education Counselling and Consultancy Agency (SECCA) – a non-profit organisation providing support to people with disabilities to learn about human relationships, sexuality and sexual health, People 1st Programme (P1P).

SSEN:D notifies and provides professional learning opportunities for consulting teachers on SECCA workshops. Consulting teachers also have access to the SECCA workshop calendar to provide to schools and parents that may be interested in training. SSEN:D have registered with SECCA which provides access to the SECCA library for SSEN:D staff.

SSEN:D is represented on the People with Disability WA Abuse and Neglect taskforce. The taskforce aims to gather information and statistical data to inform future best practice strategies and programs that support advocacy for people with disability to decrease rates of abuse and neglect.

The Department's E-Schooling [website](#) hosts webinars and information about cyber safety programs. This includes the Australian Government's Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner webinars. Webinars are usually 30–40 minutes in length, allow student participation under teacher guidance and include recommended complementary resources.

3. How are these programs, services, education and training evaluated?

Compliance of online learning is monitored and reported annually. Face to face professional learning events are evaluated through an online survey which addresses the AITSL standards for teachers and participant satisfaction.

The Department's In School Chaplaincy Program, is yet to be formally evaluated.

From 2017 the Department will report annually on the extent of protective behaviours education being delivered. An annual survey commenced in 2016 to collect data. It is a reporting requirement that schools participate in the annual protective behaviours education survey.

As Department of Education schools, SSEN:BE and SSEN:D undertake annual school accountability processes. Information on this process is provided at the Department's Evaluation and Accountability [website](#).

E-schooling webinars are delivered by Office of eSafety Commissioner staff. Feedback on numbers participating and student outcomes are gathered after each webinar. The Department is required to follow the Commonwealth reporting process.