Review and Update of the National Safe Schools Framework 2017

A summary of the review process and key findings to inform the update of the National Safe Schools Framework

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Review and Update of the National Safe Schools Framework Summary Report

Executive summary

Education Services Australia was engaged by the Australian Government in 2016 to lead a project in 2017 to review and update the National Safe Schools Framework (the Framework) to ensure alignment with contemporary issues facing Australian school communities.

In conjunction with the Safe and Supportive School Communities (SSSC) Working Group and independent reviewers a detailed process was undertaken to explore the relevance, currency and coverage of essential factors for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of school aged students. The SSSC includes representatives from all educational jurisdictions in Australia, including representatives from the National Catholic Education Commission, Independent Schools Council of Australia and the Australian Government Department of Education and Training.

A requirement of this review was to deliver a report detailing the outcomes of the review and the recommendations for updating the Framework.

Findings from lengthy and detailed consultation with key stakeholders, and research from major Australian and international studies into student safety and wellbeing, resulted in several significant recommendations for updating the Framework.

The revised Framework provides a strong vision statement that acknowledges the rights of all members of the school community to feel safe, connected and well. Building on previous versions, the new Framework comprises key elements, principles and effective practices for promoting learning communities that are safe, inclusive and connected and where positive and respectful relationships optimise learning outcomes.

Following endorsement of the revised Framework, it will be distributed to all Australian schools and will also be available on the Student Wellbeing Hub (studentwellbeinghub.edu.au).

Background

The National Safe Schools Framework, first developed in 2003, remains the central national reference point on student safety and wellbeing for all state and territory governments, non-government education authorities and the Australian Government. The Framework supports these stakeholders to work together to develop strategies to provide a safe, supportive and respectful learning environment for all Australian school students.

The Framework's successive reviews and revisions since its launch have responded to the changing nature of Australian society, particularly in relation to the educational environment and the need to support school communities to address major issues that affect them.

The most recent review of 2010, released and endorsed in 2011, extended the vision of the Framework to reflect the prevailing socio-cultural context at that time, in particular the newly emerging challenges for school communities in relation to online safety, cyberbullying and issues related to violence and anti-social behaviours. In 2013 the Framework was further updated to sit within the Student Wellbeing Hub (previously the Safe Schools Hub), providing an interactive display of the elements and their sub-sections along with a comprehensive suite of video case studies and other support materials to assist schools to successfully implement the Framework.

The most recent call to review and update the Framework has been driven by the need to provide a current, relevant and contemporary vision, building on the foresight of previous versions, as a foundation for ensuring students reach their goals in learning and in life.

The review process

Education Services Australia, on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Education and Training, engaged researchers from the University of South Australia to conduct an extensive review of the Framework with the aim of ensuring the Framework aligns with contemporary issues facing Australian school communities. Specifically, the project aimed to review:

- the currency and coverage of the nine elements in the Framework
- any changes in best practice teaching methodology that may impact on the Framework
- contemporary issues that should be considered for inclusion in a revised Framework
- any updates required to align the Framework to national, state and territory initiatives and policies currently in place to support students' safety and wellbeing.

The University of South Australia research team, Associate Professor Barbara Spears, Dr Carmel Taddeo and Dr Neil Tippett, developed a set of guiding questions, in conjunction with feedback from independent reviewers, and these formed the basis for the structure and design of the planned consultation with key stakeholders:

1. What is the awareness, knowledge, and use of the Framework among key stakeholders?
2. What do key stakeholders think about the current Framework, specifically in relation to the usability, relevancy, currency, scope, language/terminology and outcomes?
3. How well does the Framework align with contemporary issues facing Australian school communities? What are the key social, technological and cultural issues facing school communities?
4. What do stakeholders recommend should be considered, addressed and incorporated in the next iteration of the Framework?
5. What stakeholder needs should be addressed in the next iteration of the Framework, to help ensure relevancy and a sustained and long-term impact?

Methodology

Methodology

- Used a participatory design framework (Hagen et al, 2012) to underpin the stakeholder engagement and data gathering process.
- Employed a parallel convergent mixed method research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).
- Engaged with stakeholders including policy makers, educators, parents, students and pre-service teachers.

The review was conducted based on a participatory design framework that provided ways to involve all stakeholders in the review process as co-designers, helping to identify and define the issues under investigation so that the revised Framework represents the combined result of the people who are destined to use it.

The parallel convergent mixed methodology merged both qualitative and quantitative data, collecting this using the same variables, constructs and concepts, to more accurately produce evidence that captured different individuals' perspectives and provided a greater understanding of the issues under review.

Data collection methods

ONLINE SURVEY
Engaged stakeholders across Australia

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS
Key experts in one-on-one sessions

FOCUS GROUPS
Diverse student groups in three states

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS
State and territory policies, research and quantitative studies

Online survey

The diversity of the education landscape was captured in an online survey which garnered 614 responses from educators, parents and policy makers. School leaders, teachers, wellbeing staff and special education teachers as well as pre-service teachers participated in the survey. Respondents were representative of all Australian educational sectors and jurisdictions. A range of cultural backgrounds was represented as were the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and those in metropolitan, rural, regional and remote areas of Australia.

Semi-structured interviews

Key expert stakeholders across a broad cross-section of areas relevant to the Framework review were identified and interviewed. They included nominated representatives from the SSSC Working Group and the Australian Government Department of Education and Training, policy makers, representatives from peak education bodies, parent associations, allied services and not-for-profit or non-governmental organisations, and national experts with knowledge in the areas of wellbeing, bullying, mental health, and children's use of technology. These 39 interviews canvassed a broad range of opinions and advice that informed the direction of the recommendations to update the Framework. A list of representatives from organisations that contributed to the review can be found in Appendix A.

Focus groups/case studies

In order to capture authentic student voice, focus groups were conducted with 34 young people from New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria to explore their perceptions of safety and wellbeing. Groups of 3–12 students comprised mixed age, gender, cultural backgrounds and socio-economic status. Focus group responses were triangulated with a small number of written responses along with data from literature and recent quantitative research related to student voice on safety and wellbeing.

Document analysis

The SSSC facilitated the collection of the legislation, policies and resources related to student safety and wellbeing in each state and territory across education sectors (see Appendix B). These were then analysed and considered by the researchers for their relationship to the Framework across four areas: alignment with the Framework, use of language, key elements, and resources. In addition, an overview of recent Australian and international research into safety and wellbeing was analysed (see Appendices B and C). Emerging evidence from academic literature informed and guided the researchers by providing contextual statements acknowledging the evidence bases underpinning the Framework and how these might impact upon an updated Framework.

The combination of these methods of data collection with the addition of emerging findings from research studies and current Australian policies on student safety and wellbeing ensured a firm basis for the review of the Framework and for recommendations for its update.

A complete list of references is published in the separate document: **References for the Review and Update of the National Safe Schools Framework**.

Research: Emerging evidence

Researchers identified emerging evidence from academic literature that informed and guided the review process. Findings from these studies acknowledged the need to apply a socio-cultural and socio-technical perspective when considering the following areas:

- the educational, learning, safety and wellbeing needs of students
- the rapidly evolving social, technical and cultural contexts and capitals
- opportunities through school communities for building safe and supportive environments.

Key themes

WELLBEING AND SAFETY

Whole school approaches to student wellbeing have far-reaching positive impacts on mental health and resilience, and also enhance prosocial behaviour and learner engagement.

TECHNOLOGY AND WELLBEING

The cognitive, social and emotional development of children and young people is inextricably linked to the constantly changing and evolving technologies … the quality of relationships and connectedness are the critical factors in wellbeing.

SOCIAL AND SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS

Connectedness is a protective factor for children and young people – when they feel a sense of belonging they are more likely to engage in healthy behaviours, be more successful academically and far less likely to engage in risk-related behaviours. How social and school connectedness is enacted in and between the online and offline worlds of young people is a critical consideration in their wellbeing.

RELATIONSHIPS AND RESPECT

Healthy learning environments for young people are underpinned by respectful relationships where there is a culture of high expectations, collaboration, mutual care and respect.

HELP-SEEKING AND SCHOOLS

Schools play a vital role in helping young people to develop wellbeing literacy … providing them with skills and strategies that enable them to identify when and how they should seek help.

SCHOOL CLIMATE

The core mission of schools is to provide a positive school climate for children where they are able to thrive emotionally, academically and socially.

TIERED-APPROACH TO SUPPORT

Implementing a three-tiered model for behavioural support relies on a whole school integrated approach that positions wellbeing from a strengths-based perspective.

BEST PRACTICE TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

Effective pedagogies are always relational, always based on knowledge of how people learn, and grounded in the principles of quality relationships, respect for individual differences and active participation, while also being informed by research, reflection and critical analysis.

These key areas of interest and concern relevant to safety and wellbeing reflect the breadth of evidence emanating from studies in the domains of psychology, sociology, health and education and enabled researchers to further frame the consultation phase in detail.

Consultation findings

Data gathered over the consultation period resulted in a rich collection of considered feedback on student safety and wellbeing from across the spectrum of stakeholders in the education sector and from others in related fields. The voices of parents, students, educators, policy makers, executives of education peak bodies, and national and international researchers and academics informed the review and update of the Framework.

Researchers based their methodologies on the set of guiding questions and tailored these to specific cohorts in order to address the core aims of the review. Not surprisingly, those who were directly involved with education were most engaged with the Framework and demonstrated their awareness through their understanding, use and familiarity with the Framework while others replied to more conceptual issues around safety and wellbeing.

When data from the surveys and stakeholder interviews were analysed, key findings in relation to the guiding questions emerged.

Currency and coverage of the nine elements of the Framework

Feedback about the status of the Framework as a recognised and useful framework varied considerably across participants. Educators and policy makers in the main revealed a sound understanding of the purpose of the Framework in an aspirational sense, seeing the Framework as:

- a national and uniting document for all Australian schools
- a foundation policy document and point of reference upon which other resources can be built
- a useful guide for implementing a whole school approach to safety and wellbeing
- a support document to help schools provide a positive environment where young people feel safe
- a document against which to assess a school's organisational practices to support student wellbeing.

> **'… It's a broad platform and vision that you can fit and align other initiatives around.'**
>
> (CEO Allied Organisation)

Despite some encouraging responses from educators and policy makers, the majority of survey and interview respondents were either not aware of the Framework, or were unsure of what it was. Furthermore, several key stakeholders mistook the Framework as being the same as the Safe Schools Coalition Australia or the Student Wellbeing Hub.

This lack of awareness of the Framework translated into the low uptake overall with only one-third of educators stating they used the Framework. A worrying trend among pre-service teacher responses was that few knew of the Framework's existence, let alone had used it, which suggests there is currently little discussion of the Framework within initial teacher education programs.

Although seen as informative and accessible the majority claimed the Framework is not a document used by parents, carers, students or pre-service teachers. Educators commented on a lack of focus on how to implement the Framework and use it to address the specific needs related to their school context. Some responded that this could be addressed with a greater alignment to the safety and wellbeing legislation and policies of the states and territories.

Of those who were familiar with the Framework, many responded that it was too wordy, with language that spoke mainly to school leaders, was academic in style and adopted a didactic rather than a positive, strengths-based tone. They reported there were too many elements and the long lists of accompanying 'key characteristics' were unnecessarily complex.

> **'Schools tend to use the Framework reactively, rather than as a prevention strategy ... If the starting point is bullying, then you are looking at reacting ... But it can be used for more than bullying ... its breadth is so much more ... and the elements reflect proactive approaches to relationships, wellbeing and positive behaviour management.'**
>
> (Academic/Researcher)

Changes in best practice methodology

An overwhelming number of respondents felt that the Framework should have alignment to the Australian Curriculum. With support expressed for a whole school approach to safety and wellbeing, it was felt by respondents that the general capabilities of the Australian Curriculum offered opportunities for facilitating this alignment. Several stakeholders supported the notion of making clear how the Framework could be adopted broadly in scope so it could be applied meaningfully to a wide range of situations.

Participants identified key areas of focus that warranted closer consideration and alignment with the revised Framework, both with regard to informing best practice teaching methodology in the area of safety and wellbeing; and ways in which issues of school community safety and wellbeing, including bullying, academic and social pressures, could be explicitly addressed through teaching and learning.

The need for the Framework to guide the professional learning of educators, including pre-service teachers, and assist them in building their teaching capacity was highlighted throughout the survey and interview data. The data identified the important role of teachers as a key source of support for students, particularly as young people navigate tensions around academic and social pressures. Core to best practice teaching methodologies is a focus on creating and maintaining inclusive and interactive classroom environments, which encourage active participation and communication, and foster a sense of belonging among children and young people.

This was regarded as particularly critical given the changing landscape of school settings, with advances in technology already introducing new challenges and opportunities for teaching and learning.

Participants reported that the Australian Curriculum, the Australian Standards for Teachers and the Australian Standard for Principals should be seen as providing a context for the Framework, highlighting the health–wellbeing–academic interrelationships and underscoring the significant role schools play in this dynamic. A recurring theme concerned the impact of a responsive and proactive leadership in raising awareness of, and enacting, the principles and practices of the Framework.

In addition, respondents stressed the need for ongoing awareness-raising through promotional activities and the provision of practical implementation strategies to ensure the uptake and sustainability of the Framework across the sectors.

Contemporary issues to be considered

Findings revealed agreement among a number of respondents that the Framework addresses many issues around safety and wellbeing. However, there was an overall sense that it lacked reference to contemporary issues, considered an essential component for the Framework to have long-term impact and the ability to remain relevant over time.

Participants responded that while the Framework places a strong emphasis on diversity and inclusion it lacks a specific statement around what this means with regard to one's values, beliefs, culture or background. Without a focus on inclusivity and protection against discrimination based on gender, race, disability, or sexual orientation there remain obstacles for building a school culture of connection to others and for fostering a sense of belonging.

There was general consensus that the Framework should reinforce the importance of teaching social and emotional skills, with a focus on building the mental health of all students within a culture that values and promotes respectful relationships. Respondents reiterated the need for the Framework to highlight the importance of creating a positive school climate and recognising its implications for student wellbeing.

Additional feedback from participants revealed the need for the Framework to address issues facing schools in regard to the impact of technology on wellbeing and ways to engage with these emerging challenges. Supporting parents to understand the growing socio-technical and socio-cultural behaviours associated within a changing learning environment was cited as a gap in the current Framework.

Respondents pointed to the lack of focus in the Framework on authentic student voice whereby children and young people can acknowledge their concerns about physical security, bullying, social pressure and academic pressure. By addressing this directly in the Framework, participants suggested that students would feel a greater sense of being connected and respected. They would feel an integral part of a whole school community that focuses on building resilience and help-seeking skills, and positive behaviours. The need for greater clarity in relation to the role of the wider school community was also identified as a gap in the Framework.

The need for the Framework to be accessible and relevant to all school contexts was captured in this quote from a policy maker:

'Allow it to be a living, breathing thing ... so my vision would be that it doesn't matter who's looking at it, they can see how they connect to it and what it means for them ... for the teeniest, tiniest school, teacher, principal, in a remote community. They can still look at this and know what it means for them and what they have to do.'

(Policy Maker, Government)

Student voice

Young people's views of what constitutes being safe at school and how schools can support their wellbeing was a key focal point to inform the review and update of the Framework, providing a mirror to students' lived realities.

Feedback from case studies and focus groups was triangulated with existing studies that incorporated qualitative student voice data with larger quantitative studies into the mental health and wellbeing of Australian youth. The many commonalities that emerged from this process supported and established the legitimacy and trustworthiness of the student voice data in this study.

Australian research studies, including those by Haslam et al (2015), Jose et al (2012) and Slee & Skrzypiec (2016) have explored student voice across a number of broad areas in relation to safety and wellbeing, social and school connectedness, relationships, help-seeking, school climate and use of technology. The views expressed in these studies have resonated with those of the students involved in this review. In addition, research into cultural considerations regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concepts of safety and wellbeing, and a range of current studies into the growing rate of youth mental illness have informed the review and update of the Framework.

WHAT IS SAFETY, ACCORDING TO STUDENTS?

'Being able to learn without having to worry about judgement or anything like that. Bullying is a big issue about being safe at school.'

(Female, 12)

The question of safety focused students on their personal feelings of safety, and reflected an association with positive emotions, such as feeling comfortable, relaxed and carefree, as well as personal characteristics such as feeling confident and resilient. Having trusting relationships was a key to young people feeling safe. Older students tended to respond that they relied on the support of friends to feel safe. Familiarity with their environment contributed to students' feelings of safety and security. An imbalance of power between students and their peers, and between students and adults, led to many children feeling unsafe. Students cited instances of the use of physical power in bullying situations. The concept of power was also identified by older students in relation to sexual or relationship-based abuse. Young people stated that they sometimes felt powerless, given little choice or respect and felt weak and vulnerable around adults.

SOCIAL AND SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS

'You realise that every kid's different, each kid learns differently, each kid's got something different going on whether that's at school or at home or something like that and teachers need to take more time to work with them with that.'

Research has shown a direct link between young people's understanding of safety and wellbeing and their feelings of being acknowledged and accepted. Findings revealed that children and young people see both safety and wellbeing as being influenced by the people within their home, school and community environments. The central overriding concept of inclusion emerged, with students consulted wanting to feel a sense of connection through being recognised, valued and respected members of their school community. Students responded that they felt connected with their school through their friends and this contributed to their feelings of being included and supported. However, some students from differing religious and cultural backgrounds, and students who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, reported experiencing instances of discrimination.

RELATIONSHIPS

'The biggest thing for me was definitely approachable teachers that could relate to you on different levels.'

(Female, 15)

Relationships featured prominently in children and young people's definitions of both safety and wellbeing, demonstrating a clear understanding of the role that parents/carers, family, friends, peers and teachers play in their lives. Within the school community, the views of students tend to focus on their relationships in three areas: among friends, peers and teachers. Children and young people acknowledge the positive impact that other students can have on their safety and wellbeing, providing a source of inspiration, and acting as role models or examples within the school; however, they can also pose a significant risk to children, by exerting a negative influence, including encouraging poor behaviour, such as engaging in risky or illegal activities. Caring teachers and school staff were seen as a critical source of support by children and young people in the review, but the quality of these relationships is heavily dependent on the degree of trust, respect and care afforded to students.

HELP SEEKING

'I think it's good if they [teachers] are trusting figures and have an open mind towards situations.'

(Male, 13)

Research has shown that the likelihood of children seeking help from someone at school links directly to the quality of their relationships and sense of inclusion within the school community. Children and young people of all age groups indicated that they would be more likely to talk to someone they knew and trusted, and who they were confident would respond properly to their situation. That teachers listen was seen as a particularly important factor, with children and young people wanting adults to listen to and acknowledge their concerns. Children and young people wanted adults to help them build skills to handle situations themselves rather than trying to resolve problems. They felt that they were more confident about seeking help when it was needed. They wanted teachers to understand that there were sometimes barriers to students seeking help such as lack of confidence or feelings of embarrassment.

SCHOOL CLIMATE

'We're not "just another student" … students are people and I think teachers can learn more about diversity in their students … it's the key for their learning.'

(Female, 11)

When asked what a school that supports student safety and wellbeing should look like, children and young people showed a clear understanding that this was a whole school issue. They viewed safety as encompassing not only their own role, but also the culture of the school, which defines how all members of the school community treat, value and respect each other. They felt a safe environment could be created by setting rules and behavioural policies that focus on issues such as diversity, equality and bullying and cyberbullying, as well as the use of security devices around the school, such as school gates, locks on doors and security cameras. Students responded that a range of proactive measures should be put in place to create a positive and happy school environment. Also of great concern to children and young people, is that they are recognised as a member of the school community, and provided with a voice that informs key decisions made within the school. Some students

reported feeling undervalued or disrespected within the school, and believed that schools needed to make a more concerted effort to communicate with them, especially when it came to issues that affected their safety or wellbeing.

ONLINE SAFETY

'There's lots of things on social media, power groups you can join, so you can say anything and everything but it's just hard to find lots of good honest groups and also since there's such a variety of people on social media you don't really know who you're talking to.'

(Male, 14)

Surveys on the online habits of children and young people show that the majority have access to the internet both at home and school, and student focus group responses matched findings that indicate many spend a significant amount of time using their mobile phones, tablets, laptops or games consoles. Social media provides an important outlet through which young people are able to connect and share with their peers, family and friends, regardless of their physical location. Engaging in online activities with others, such as posting updates or comments, sharing videos or photos, and receiving likes, positive feedback and encouragement are all ways in which children and young people feel increasingly connected and supported in terms of their safety and wellbeing.

Findings from research correlated with the responses from the young people who took part in focus groups during the review process. Despite these benefits, participants revealed a keen awareness of the dangers that social media and other forms of online communication can bring, including spending too much time online, experiences of abuse and bullying, threats to their privacy, stalking, trolling and exposure to pornography and sexual behaviours, including sexting and grooming.

Key recommendations to update the Framework

The following captures the key recommendations that have emerged in relation to the four main aims of the review following the consultation phase, and collation and distillation of the research and stakeholder feedback:

1. The currency and coverage of the nine elements

The current Framework addresses student safety and wellbeing, although findings from the review indicate that there are too many elements and that related characteristics are unnecessarily complex. Key recommendations to improve the uptake of the Framework include greater linkages with the Australian Curriculum general capabilities and a consideration of ways to promote awareness across school communities.

RETAIN THE CORE CONTENT BUT REDUCE THE NUMBER OF ELEMENTS
Make the Framework less complex and more user-friendly

RAISE AWARENESS OF THE NEW FRAMEWORK
Raise awareness through targeted promotional activities to increase the uptake across all school communities

SUPPORT EVIDENCE-BASED ONGOING REVIEWS
Inform the currency and direction of successive Framework reviews and updates through emerging research

2. Any changes in best practice teaching methodology that may impact on the Framework

Findings highlighted a need to revise the Framework to include ways that schools could best address issues around safety and wellbeing through explicit teaching and learning approaches. Emphasising ongoing professional learning, especially for pre-service teachers, in the revised Framework was seen as essential in order to build capacity for addressing safety and wellbeing issues. This is particularly critical given the advances in technology and other challenges facing schools. Professional learning was also identified as a means of providing teachers with skills to regularly monitor and evaluate their teaching practices.

The critical importance of providing authentic opportunities to include student and community voice, in combination with visible and effective leadership, were identified throughout the findings as clear contributors to progressing wellbeing and safety agendas in schools. A greater alignment with national policies and initiatives, including the Australian Curriculum general capabilities, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Australian Professional Standard for Principals, was seen as a method of strengthening, informing and sustaining the vision and principles of the Framework.

ENSURE PRE-SERVICE TEACHER AWARENESS OF THE FRAMEWORK

Provide ways to engage pre-service teachers to build their capacity to address safety and wellbeing in teaching practices and within technology-rich learning settings

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENT AND COMMUNITY VOICE

Ensure opportunities for authentic student and wider school community voice to inform the ongoing use and effectiveness of the Framework

INCREASE LEADERSHIP TO ENACT THE FRAMEWORK

Examine ways to increase leadership visibility to enact and sustain the vision and principles of the revised Framework

INCREASE ALIGNMENT TO NATIONAL POLICIES

Demonstrate greater alignment to the Australian Curriculum general capabilities, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Australian Professional Standard for Principals

3. The contemporary issues that should be considered for inclusion in the revised Framework

The majority of respondents to the research said the purpose of the Framework was to address both the safety **and** wellbeing of school communities and that the title of the revised Framework should reflect this. They said that an updated version should reflect the intrinsic relationship between these two concepts.

A key recommendation was to place a greater focus on recognising diversity and promoting inclusion within schools so that all students and staff feel visible, acknowledged and respected. Particular feedback was given in relation to the importance of cultural awareness, especially in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the diversity of their settings and needs. The central role of leadership in creating a school's vision was confirmed as was the importance of creating opportunities for collaborative partnerships with students and the community so that all stakeholder voices are heard.

RENAME THE FRAMEWORK

Capture the vision of the Framework, that school safety and wellbeing are intrinsically linked and are critical factors for successful student learning outcomes

FOCUS ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Provide a greater focus on recognising diversity and promoting inclusion so that all students and staff feel visible, acknowledged and respected

4. Any updates that are required to align the Framework to new state and territory initiatives and policies currently in place to support students' safety and wellbeing

Many of the core elements of the Framework are common to state and territory approaches to safety and wellbeing despite findings indicating a significant variation in approaches in how the Framework is used. A foundational Framework that aligns to state and territory initiatives was seen by those consulted as providing a core guiding document for school communities. The revised Framework would support policies and frameworks, and be a resource that schools could refer to in order to create inclusive and supportive school cultures. A greater alignment with state and territory initiatives could be achieved by the Framework incorporating positive terminology to optimise outcomes and identify how a connected, inclusive school culture can positively impact the social, emotional and physical wellbeing of young people.

DEVELOP A FOUNDATIONAL FRAMEWORK
Demonstrate a connected, holistic approach to school safety and wellbeing that links to all state and territory initiatives

USE POSITIVE STRENGTHS-BASED LANGUAGE
Incorporate positive, strengths-based terminology to engage the whole school community and align with other state and territory initiatives

Key changes to the revised Framework

Introduction

This section outlines the key changes to the National Safe Schools Framework which build on and extend the guiding principles of the original Framework.

The revised Framework and supporting documentation for implementing the Framework in schools will be available on the Student Wellbeing Hub website: studentwellbeinghub.edu.au

1. A new name for the Framework

The findings of the review of the Framework recommended a change of name to reflect the Framework's vision as a foundational document to promote both school safety and wellbeing. The proposed name is the **Australian Student Wellbeing Framework**.

The Framework is based on evidence that demonstrates the strong association between safety, wellbeing and learning.

The Framework acknowledges the interrelationship of the many components that contribute to student wellbeing and lead to improved learning outcomes. Schools play a significant role through the development and implementation of whole-school positive academic, social and emotional curricula. The new name reflects the need to address both the safety **and** wellbeing of school communities and to acknowledge the intrinsic relationship between these two core concepts.

In line with other national frameworks, policies and initiatives, adopting the term 'Australian' rather than 'national' identifies the Framework as uniquely belonging to Australia, particularly in an international context.

2. A more concise Framework

The core content of the revised Framework remains relevant to contemporary school community needs and has been retained. The number of elements, however, has been reduced and the content summarised more effectively to reduce complexity and to introduce new elements to capture important new emphases. The revised Framework comprises five elements (*Leadership*, *Inclusion*, *Student Voice*, *Partnerships* and *Support*), with each element accompanied by a principle and a set of effective practices. The elements are no longer numbered, strengthening the interrelationship of all five elements for fostering student and whole-school community wellbeing.

Five effective practices have been developed to assist schools to easily access and implement each of the elements of the Framework within their individual school contexts. The language is succinct and inclusive and employs positive terminology to engage the whole school community.

3. Addressing contemporary issues

3.1 VALUING DIVERSITY AND PROMOTING INCLUSION

The revised Framework explicitly acknowledges the importance of students feeling connected and included, and free from racial, religious, cultural or gender harassment. The revised Framework strengthens the focus on promoting positive, respectful relationships in order to build a culturally safe, socially cohesive school. The revised Framework has addressed this through the element of *Inclusion* where all members of the school community are active participants in building a culture that values diversity, and fosters positive, respectful relationships.

3.2 STUDENT VOICE

The revised Framework acknowledges the key role of students as active participants in their own learning and as collaborators in creating and maintaining a safe, inclusive and respectful school community. The element *Student Voice* emphasises the need for schools to provide authentic opportunities to involve students in decision-making over matters that affect them and to actively teach the social and emotional skills to foster the role they play in collaboratively building a climate of respect for diversity, inclusion and equality.

3.3 ROLE AND USE OF TECHNOLOGY

The revised Framework addresses contemporary issues facing schools today, particularly in a rapidly changing and increasingly technology-saturated world that is reconfiguring what safety and wellbeing mean for all online and physical learning spaces. The revised Framework acknowledges the need for teachers to access professional learning to enhance their capacity to address contemporary issues facing school communities. The regular monitoring of approaches to safety and wellbeing is enhanced through ongoing professional learning.

4. Greater alignment with national, state and territory policies and initiatives

The revised Framework aims to be a foundational document that is at the heart of a holistic, connected and student-focused approach to school safety and wellbeing, and that aligns to state and territory initiatives. Increased alignment with the Australian Curriculum general capabilities, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Professional Standard for Principals aims to build a shared understanding of how to support student learning, safety and wellbeing and further acknowledges the importance of leadership.

5. Greater emphasis on professional learning and ongoing evaluation

The revised Framework places emphasis on the importance of ongoing professional learning by embedding professional learning practice across and within the elements. Professional learning is critical for supporting teachers and building teacher capacity to address issues of importance to student safety and wellbeing and for regularly monitoring and reviewing school wellbeing programs and strategies. The revised Framework acknowledges the impact of ongoing professional learning for developing strategies to sustain culturally respectful, welcoming and inclusive relationships with families and communities and for building links with community organisations and services to support students and families in need. The promotion of positive behaviour and the importance of implementing a whole-school, evidence-informed approach to wellbeing through tiers of support are central components of the revised Framework.

Conclusion

This summary report captures the key points of the review of the National Safe Schools Framework, the recommendations for its update and the key changes to the revised Framework. The review highlights the ongoing commitment of all Ministers of Education to ensuring the provision of safe and supportive educational settings for all Australian students and is an acknowledgement of the importance of schools as places of safety where equity, inclusion and excellence are promoted and wellbeing, creativity and active citizenry are valued and celebrated.

Support for implementing the Framework in schools

The revised Framework will be made available on the Student Wellbeing Hub website: studentwellbeinghub.edu.au

The Student Wellbeing Hub is a central online space that will provide a range of materials to support the implementation of the revised Framework across the whole school community. The Hub also provides resources, advice and strategies for teachers, parents and students to build the safety and wellbeing of all Australian school communities.

List of organisations

Approximately 70 organisations were approached for comment. Representatives of the Safe and Supportive School Communities Working Group and the following organisations were interviewed for the review and update of the Framework.

ORGANISATION NAME

Aboriginal Engagement University of South Australia

Alannah and Madeline Foundation

Association of Independent Schools of South Australia

Australian Council of State School Organisations

Australian Council on Children and the Media

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority

Australian Government Department of Education and Training

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

Australian Parents Council

Australian Primary Principals Association

Australian Secondary Principals Association

Bravehearts

Catholic Education South Australia

Centre for Islamic Thought

Children and Young People with a Disability

Foundation for Young Australians

Headspace

Murdoch Children's Research Institute

National Catholic Education Commission

National Centre against Bullying

National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre

Office of the eSafety Commissioner

Principals Australia Institute

Project Rockit

Raising Children Network

ReachOut

Safe and Supportive School Communities Working Group

South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute

Telethon Kids Institute

List of state and territory legislation, policies and resources (as at November 2017)

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

LEGISLATION
Children and Young People Act 2008
Disability Services Act 1991
Discrimination Act 1991
Education Act 2004
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2011 (ACT)
Health Act 1993
Mental Health Act 2015
Work Health and Safety Act 2011

POLICY
ACT Public School Food and Drink Policy
Responding to Student Accidents/Incidents: Support, Reporting and Insurance Arrangements Policy
Child Protection and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect Policy
Communities Online: Acceptable use of ICT – Parents and Students Policy
Critical/Non-Critical Incident Management and Reporting Policy
Education Participation 2011 (Enrolment and Attendance) Policy
ICT Management in Schools Policy
Management of Eating and Drinking Support in ACT Public Schools Policy
Responding to Student Accidents/Incidents Policy
Safe and Supportive Schools Policy
Students with a Disability Meeting their Educational Needs Policy
Supervision of Students on School Sites Policy
Suspension, Exclusion and Transfer of Student in ACT Public Schools Policy
Use of Personal Electronic Devices Policy

RESOURCES
Australian School Climate and School Identification Measurement Tool
Code of Conduct: Promoting Respectful Relationships in ACT Schools
Engaging Schools Framework
Fact Sheets for Safe and Supportive Schools Policy
Network Student Engagement Teams
Student Wellbeing Curriculum

NEW SOUTH WALES

LEGISLATION

Anti-Discrimination Act 1977
Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012
Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
Disability Inclusion Act 2014
Education Act 1990
Education (School Administrative and Support Staff) Act 1987
Health Services Act 1997
Mental Health Act 2007
Work Health and Safety Act 2011

POLICY

Bullying: Preventing and Responding to Student Bullying in Schools
Nutrition in Schools
Protecting and Supporting Children and Young People
Student Discipline in Government Schools
Student Health in NSW Public Schools: A Summary and Consolidation of Policy
Student Welfare
Work Health and Safety (WHS)
Aboriginal Education and Training
Anti-Racism
Assisting Students with Learning Difficulties
Multicultural Education
Online Communication Services: Acceptable Usage for School Students
Social Media

RESOURCES

Wellbeing Framework for Schools
Supported Students, Successful Students
Behaviour Code for Students
Wellbeing Self-assessment Tool

NORTHERN TERRITORY

LEGISLATION
Anti-Discrimination Act
Disability Services Act
Education Act
Education and Care Services (National Uniform Legislation) Act
Mental Health and Related Services Act
Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act

POLICY
Bullying, Harassment and Violence
Canteen, Nutrition and Healthy Eating
Code of Conduct for Schools
Duty of Care
Education Provision
Mandatory Reporting of Harm and Exploitation of Children
Mobile Phones and Electronic Devices in the School Environment
Multicultural Education
Physical Activity Requirements for School Students
Playground Safety Inspection Procedures
Safety in School Sport
School Wellbeing and Behaviour
Sexual Behaviour in Children
Social Media
Students with Disability

RESOURCES
Health and Wellbeing of Students

QUEENSLAND

LEGISLATION
Anti-Discrimination Act 1991
Child Protection Act 1999
Education (General Provisions) Act 2006
Disability Services Act 2006
Education and Care Services Act 2013
Health Act 1937
Mental Health Act 2000
Work Health and Safety Act 2011

POLICY
Inclusive Education
Smart Choices – Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Schools
Supporting Student Health and Wellbeing
Statement of Expectations for a Disciplined School Environment

RESOURCES
Learning and Wellbeing Framework
Code of School Behaviour
Safe, Supportive and Disciplined School Environment
Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students
Inclusive Education

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

LEGISLATION
Children's Protection Act 1993
Children's Services Act 1985
Disability Services Act 1993
Education Act 1972
Education (General Provisions) Act 2006
Equal Opportunity Act 1984
Health Care Act 2008
Mental Health Act 2009
Work Health and Safety Act 2012

POLICY
Child Protection in Schools, Early Childhood and Care
Cybersafety: Keeping Children Safe in a Connected World
Duty of Care
School Discipline Policy
Screening and Suitability – Child Safety
Supporting Same Sex Attracted, Intersex and Gender Diverse Students

RESOURCES
Wellbeing for Learning and Life Framework
South Australia: State of Wellbeing
Health, e-Safety and Wellbeing

TASMANIA

LEGISLATION
Anti-Discrimination Act 1998
Child Care Act 2001
Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997
Disability Services Act 2011
Education Act 1994
Health Act 1997
Mental Health Act 2013
Work Health and Safety Act 2012

POLICY
Drug Education and Drug Management in Schools
Learner Health Care and Safety
Learner Wellbeing and Behaviour Policy
Social Media
Student Engagement and Retention

RESOURCES
Respectful Relationships
Respectful Schools, Respectful Behaviour – 2016
Respectful Schools and Workplaces Framework
Health and Wellbeing
Staying Safe
Cyber Safety Resources
Student Health Initiative
Alannah and Madeline Foundation – eSmart
Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework

VICTORIA

LEGISLATION

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 (Vic)
Child Employment Act 2003
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
Children's Services Act 1996
Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
Crimes Act 1958
Disability Act 2006
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017
Education and Training Reform Act 2006
Equal Opportunity Act 2010
Family Violence Protection Act 2008
Health Services Act 1998
Mental Health Act 2014
Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
Personal Safety Intervention Orders Act 2010
Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001
Working with Children Act 2005
Victorian Institute of Teaching Act 2001

POLICY

Student Engagement and Inclusion
Student Engagement and Inclusion
- Student Engagement Policy

Child Protection
Child Protection – Reporting Obligations
Child Protection – Making a Report
Child Safe Standards

School Policy and Advisory Guide
School Policy and Advisory Guide
Curriculum
- Health Education Approaches
- Safely Delivering Curriculum

Governance
- Safety Management
- Using Social Media

Student Health
- Care and Support
- Prevention

Student Participation
- Attendance
- Student Engagement
- Students with a Disability
- Transition Year 6 to 7

POLICY
(continued)

Student Safety
- **Drug Prevention**
- **Excursions and Activities**
- **Protection and Support**
  - **Bullying**
  - **Chaplaincy**
  - **Child Protection – Reporting Obligations**
  - **Child Protection – Making a Report**
  - **Child Safe Standards**
  - **Health and Wellbeing Services**
  - **Responding to Student Sexual Offending**
  - **Student Support Services**
  - **Suicide Awareness Strategy**
- **Supervision and Access**
  - **Duty of Care**

Koorie
Marrung

Early Childhood
Best Start Guidelines and Templates

RESOURCES

Bullying
- **Bully Stoppers**
- **Safe Schools**

Child Protection
- **Protect**

Curriculum
- **Respectful Relationships**

Engagement and Attendance
- **Every Day Counts**
- **Navigator Pilot Program**
- **Lookout Education Support Centres**
- **School Focussed Youth Services**
- **Support for Disengaged and at Risk Students**
- **Reconnect: Engagement and Learning Support Program**

Early Childhood
- **Child and Maternal Health Service**
- **Every Toddler Talking**
- **Healthy Minds**

Emergency Management
- **Emergencies and Natural Disasters**

Equity/Inclusion
- **State Schools' Relief**
- **Camps, Sports Excursion Fund**

Health and Wellbeing
- **Doctors in Secondary Schools**
- **School Sport Victoria**
- **Student Health & Wellbeing (schools)**
- **Mental Health**
  - **Student Mental Health and Suicide Response/Planning**
  - **Social and Emotional Learning**
  - **Building Resilience**
  - **Environments**

RESOURCES
(continued)

- ○ **Family and Community Partnerships**
- ○ **Integrated Mental Health Promotion**
- ○ **Building Mental Health Promotion**
- ○ **Managing Stress During Exams**
- ○ **Victorian System of Care Referral Matrix**
- ○ **Safe Minds**
- • **Help Following an Emergency**
- • **School Breakfast Club Programs**
- • **Glasses for Kids Program**
- • **Child Health and Wellbeing Resources (parents)**
- • **Promoting Mental Health (parents)**

Koorie
- • **Aboriginal Best Start**
- • **Marrung Education Scholarships**

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

LEGISLATION

Children and Community Services Act 2004
Child Care Services Act 2007
Disability Services Act 1993
Education and Care Services National Law (WA) 2012
Equal Opportunity Act 1984
Health Services Act 2016
Mental Health Act 2014
Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984
School Education Act 1999

POLICY

School Management
- • **Curriculum and Education Programs**
- • **Inclusive Education**
- • **Student Behaviour**

Safety and Welfare
- • **Duty of Care for Students**
- • **Health**
- • **Occupational Safety and Health**
- • **School Safety and Security**

RESOURCES

Behaviour and Wellbeing
Student Health and Wellbeing

List of international examples of approaches to safety and wellbeing

NEW ZEALAND

Wellbeing for Success: A Resource for Schools

Produced for the New Zealand Government by the Education Review Office, this resource highlights the importance of schools promoting the wellbeing of all students as well as the need for systems, people and initiatives to respond to wellbeing concerns for students who need additional support. The report is split into three sections:

1. Effective Practices for Wellbeing: Explains the framework and identifies five vital aspects for promoting and responding to student wellbeing
2. Improving Wellbeing in Our School: Focuses on how schools support wellbeing, school leaders and staff to use internal evaluation processes to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of their responses
3. Useful Wellbeing Resources: Developed to help schools evaluate and improve student wellbeing

UNITED KINGDOM

A Whole School Framework for Emotional Well-Being and Mental Health

Produced by the National Children's Bureau, this framework builds on government guidance, providing a self-assessment and improvement tool which school leaders can use to support them in implementing a whole school approach for mental health and wellbeing, as well as a resource pack to support the framework's implementation. The framework identified four stages which lead to school improvement:

1. Deciding to act and identifying what is in place already
2. Getting a shared understanding and commitment to change and development
3. Building relationships and developing practices
4. Implementation and evaluation

PROGRAMME FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ASSESSMENT (PISA)

A Framework for the Analysis of Student Wellbeing in the PISA 2015 Study

In 2015, PISA asked students to describe their wellbeing in addition to collecting information on students' subject-specific skills. This paper provides a comprehensive overview and details the policy relevance of the following five dimensions of wellbeing covered in PISA 2015:

- Cognitive Wellbeing: Refers to the skills and foundations students have to participate effectively in today's society, as lifelong learners, effective workers and engaged citizens.
- Psychological Wellbeing: Includes students' evaluations and views about life, their engagement with school, and the goals and ambitions they have for their future.
- Physical Wellbeing: Refers to students' health status, engagement in physical exercise and the adoption of healthy eating habits.
- Social Wellbeing: The quality of their social lives, including their relationship with their family, their peers and their teachers, and how they perceive their social life in school.
- Material Wellbeing: Material resources that make it possible for families to better provide for their children's needs and for schools to support students' learning and healthy development.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)

The Health Promoting Schools Network

This initiative by the WHO is targeted at all nations, and aims to promote health through schools. To achieve this schools are recommended to:
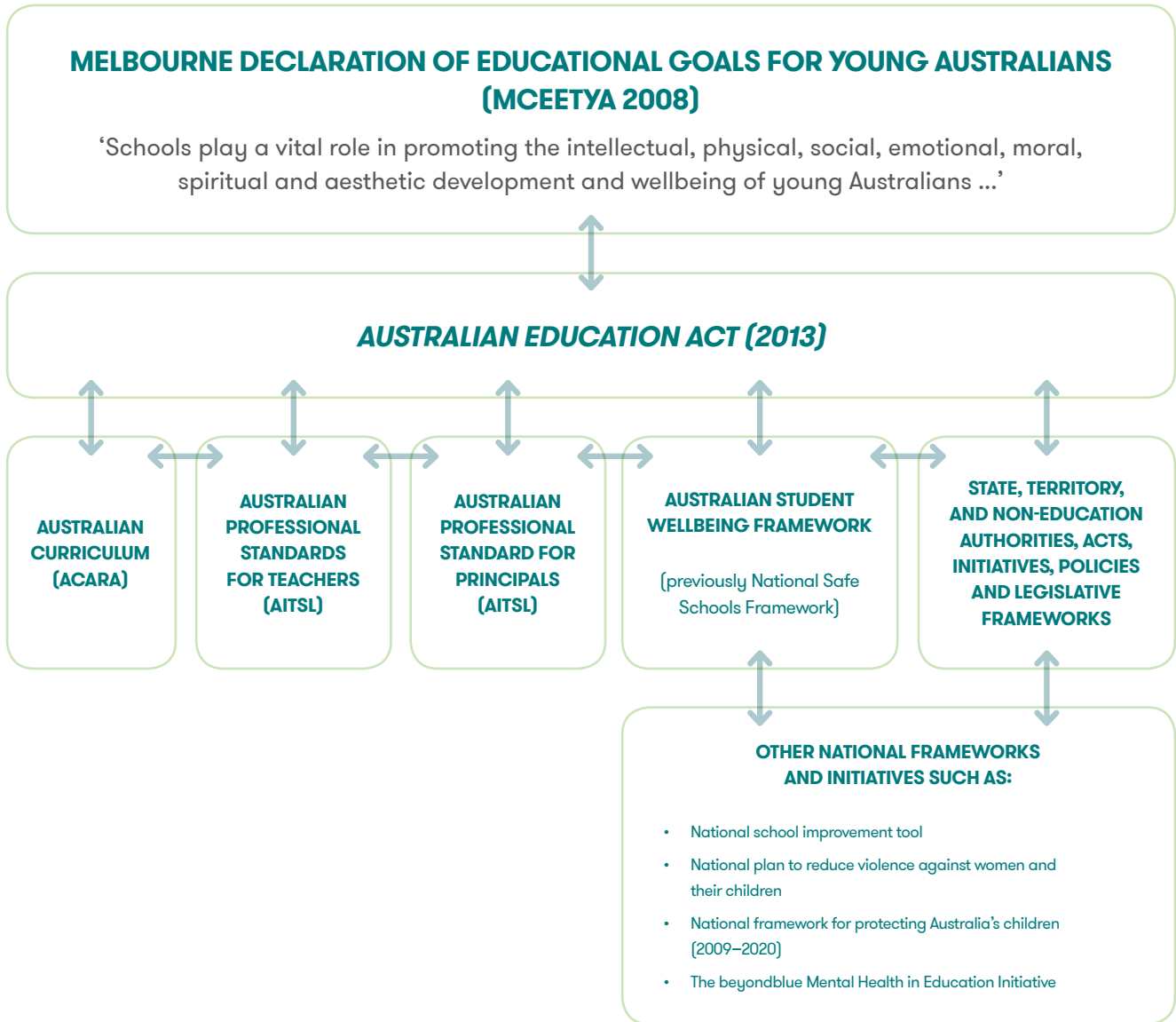
- provide a safe learning and working environment for students and staff
- serve as an entry point for health promotion and health intervention
- enable children and adolescents to learn critical health and life skills.

As part of the initiative, an information series has been produced, which illustrates how selected health issues can serve as entry points in planning, implementing, and evaluating health interventions as part of the development of a Health-Promoting School. Documents in this series include:

- Creating an Environment for Emotional and Social Well-Being
- Improving Health through Schools
- Oral Health Promotion through Schools
- Promoting Physical Activity in Schools
- Skills-Based Health Education and Life Skills
- Sun Protection
- The Physical School Environment
- Violence Prevention.

Education landscape for schools

Links to relevant national, state and territory legislation and international laws are available on the Student Wellbeing Hub.

MELBOURNE DECLARATION OF EDUCATIONAL GOALS FOR YOUNG AUSTRALIANS (MCEETYA 2008)

'Schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians ...'

AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION ACT (2013)

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM (ACARA)

AUSTRALIAN PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS (AITSL)

AUSTRALIAN PROFESSIONAL STANDARD FOR PRINCIPALS (AITSL)

AUSTRALIAN STUDENT WELLBEING FRAMEWORK

(previously National Safe Schools Framework)

STATE, TERRITORY, AND NON-EDUCATION AUTHORITIES, ACTS, INITIATIVES, POLICIES AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS

OTHER NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND INITIATIVES SUCH AS:

- National school improvement tool
- National plan to reduce violence against women and their children
- National framework for protecting Australia's children (2009–2020)
- The beyondblue Mental Health in Education Initiative

References

The full list of 143 references can be found in a separately published document: **References for the Review and Update of the National Safe Schools Framework**.