

Slide 1



This presentation provides an overview of the Victorian Auditor-General's report *School compliance with Victoria's child safe standards*.




The safety of students in schools is a fundamental right. It has been three years since Victoria mandated seven child safe standards for all organisations providing services and facilities to children.

They are enforced in all schools through the school registration framework.

To meet the child safe standards, all schools must comply with 57 requirements, which are designed to be flexible so schools apply them in their own setting.

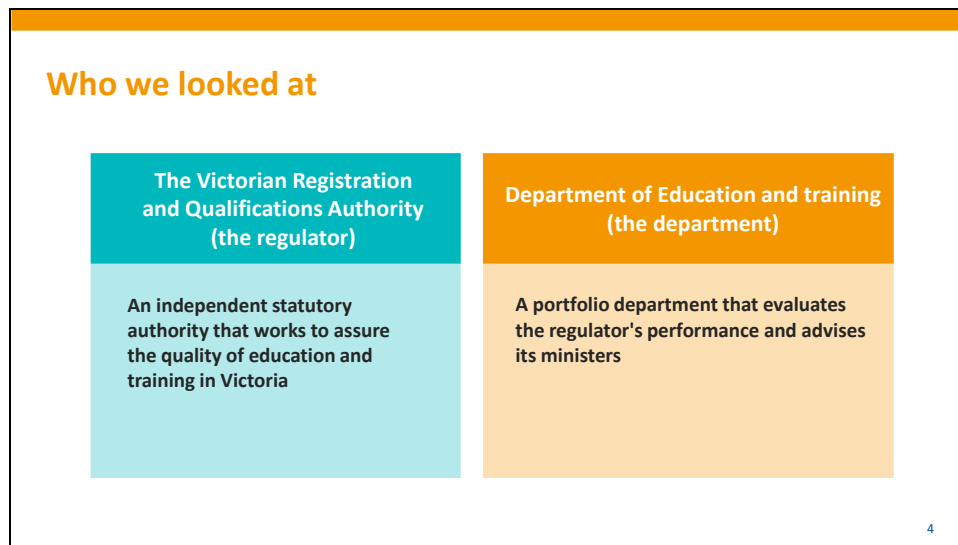
What we looked at



Whether the systems and supports that oversee Victoria's Child Safe Standards assure school compliance

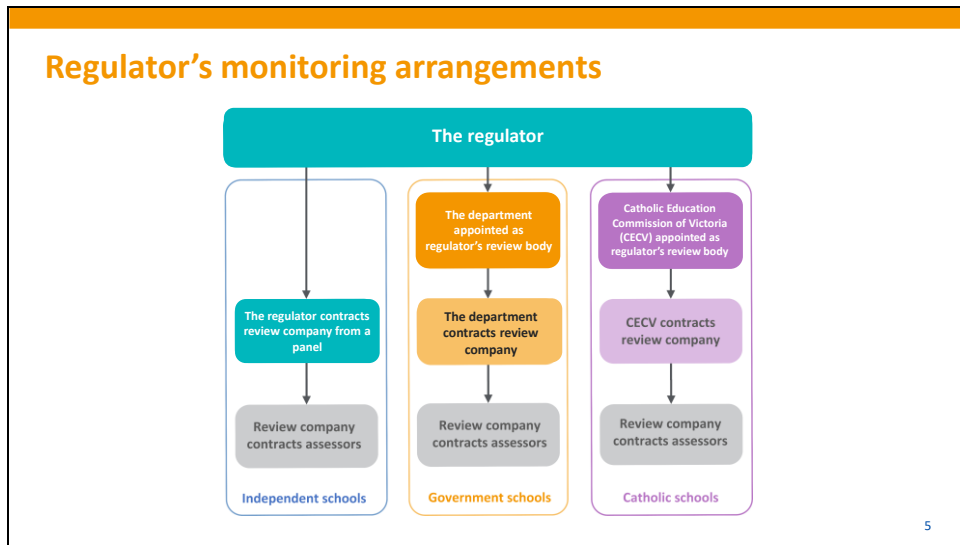
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We examined whether the systems and supports that oversee Victoria's Child Safe Standards assure school compliance.



We looked at the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (the regulator), an independent statutory authority that works to assure the quality of education and training in Victoria;

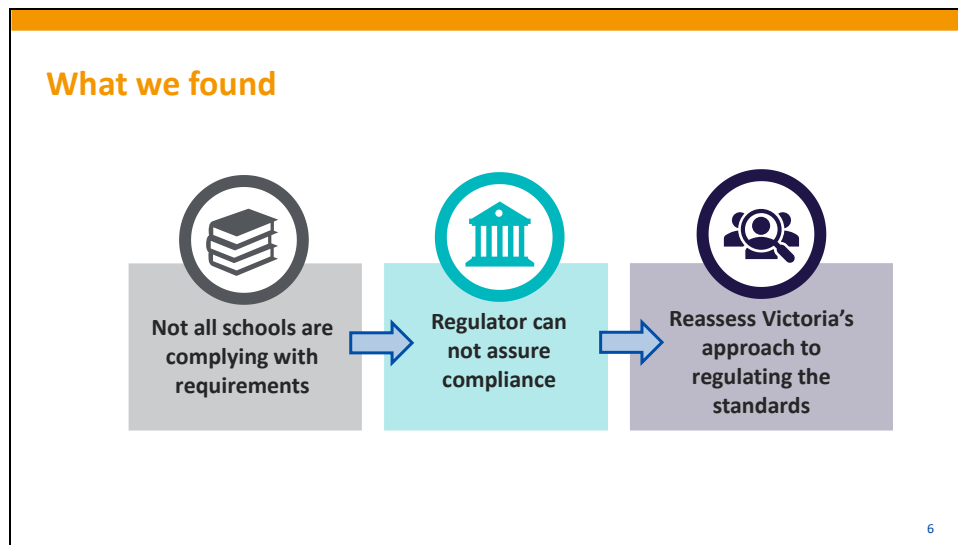
and the Department of Education and Training (the department) - that evaluates the regulator's performance and advises its ministers



The regulator must not register a school unless it is satisfied that it complies. The regulator monitors independent schools by contracting review companies, which then engage individual assessors.

The regulator has appointed the department and the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) as review bodies for government and catholic schools. These review bodies contract review companies that engage individual assessors.

These subcontracting arrangements increase the need for clear governance arrangements and criteria for how compliance is assessed.



While schools have been working to implement the child safe standards, not all schools are complying with them. The regulator cannot assure itself or its Ministers whether schools comply.


We concluded that it is timely to reassess Victoria's approach to regulating the standards.



We found that the regulator's guidance and support to schools is incomplete.

The regulator has taken a deliberate approach to not define what schools must do to comply and as a result, schools apply the requirements inconsistently.

Limited oversight over school compliance



The regulator's light touch approach means it cannot assure school compliance:

- it does not direct its review bodies
- it's processes are not transparent
- its reports on school compliance are unreliable

Schools are held to different requirements

We found the regulator cannot assure school compliance.


The regulator had a 'light touch' approach to regulation when it was established, however has not updated this approach since the child safe standards were introduced. It does not direct its review bodies, who monitor performance on its behalf, or evaluate their performance. It has not specified how compliance will be determined.

As a result, schools are assessed against the requirements in different ways. We found inconsistencies in the way assessors judge compliance, the checklists they use, the number of requirements they assessed, the frequency of assessments, as well as to what extent they rely on school self-assessments.

The regulator has not ensured its regulatory processes are transparent.

The regulator also has not analysed government and catholic school compliance data to identify trends and risks. It collates summary data from the department's and CECV's compliance report with its own data on independent schools to report that 30 per cent of schools do not comply. However, this figure is not reliable.

Department's evaluation was limited



Focused on the regulator's guidance to schools not its assurance arrangements

Future statements should clarify the ministerial expectations of the regulator

We found that the department's evaluation of the regulator was limited in scope. It did not consider the department's regulatory approach to assure school compliance and it therefore did not identify the limitations we have found.

We concluded that future statements should clarify the ministerial expectations of the regulator.

Recommendations

<h3>4 recommendations to the regulator</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide source of guidance on compliance requirements2. Improve transparency of its regulatory assessment processes3. Update its review body appointment processes4. Specify information requirements for review bodies and system administrators	<h3>3 recommendations to the department</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Clarify ministerial expectations of the regulator2. Use our audit to inform future statements of expectations for the regulator3. Advise Minister for Education on implications of Victoria's child safe standards review including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• required amendments to ministerial order 870• assurance framework for schools
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We made four recommendations to the regulator. It accepted one and partially accepted the rest.

The department accepted all three of our recommendations.

For further information, please view the full report on our website:
www.audit.vic.gov.au

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