

Media Release

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Independent Schools Welcome Passing of Copyright Amendment Bill

The Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) commends the Turnbull Government for today passing the *Copyright Amendment (Service Providers) Bill 2017*.

ISCA Executive Director, Colette Colman said that, "We congratulate the Government on the passage of this important bill. It will extend safe harbour provisions in the *Copyright Act* to schools, ensuring they are protected against copyright infringements when students or staff use IT services provided to them."

Without the protections of the safe harbour provisions, schools have been exposed to unintended and unnecessary legal risk from the provision of internet access.

Ms Colman said that, "This reform means that Australian schools will now receive the same legal protections as internet service providers when they provide internet access to staff and students."

Under the safe harbours scheme, rights holders will be able to issue schools with take down notices if staff members or students infringe copyright online. Schools will then be required to take reasonable steps to remove the infringing material. This represents an appropriate balance between schools being protected against costly damages claims whilst also respecting the interests of content creators.

It is important to recognise that the interests of Australian schools are not at odds with those of content creators. Schools purchase over \$700 million of creative content each year, as well as spending approximately \$100 million in licence fees for the use of education content. Safe harbour reform will enable schools and rights holders to have a more efficient mechanism to address online copyright infringement.

Safe harbour reforms are critical to meeting the challenge set out in the recently released *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*. This review has highlighted an urgent need to move Australian classrooms into the 21st Century; a move in which effective internet access is critically important.

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