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REGISTRATION
OPTIONS

FACE TO FACE
OR ONLINE

11TH ANNUAL SCHOOLS LAW & REGULATORY CONFERENCE

What Anti-Discrimination Reform Means for Independent Schools

Managing Psychosocial Hazards in the School Environment

Strategies For Managing Challenging Parents

Navigating Privacy Compliance in Schools

AI in the Classroom: Legal Risks and Compliance for Schools

Legal Duties and Governance in Today's Schools

The Expanding Duty of Care After the T2 Decision

Disability, Discrimination and Inclusive Education

Navigating Reportable Conduct and Child Safe Standards

Legal Duties in Student Mental Health Crises and Self-Harm Incidents

A 1½ day Conference

Thursday 21 and Friday 22 May 2026

Crown Melbourne or Online

Feedback from last year's conference:

- I attended online and I was engaged throughout. I got much from each of the sessions, some new information and much was very affirming of what we currently do in our school. I would recommend to all leaders.
- Personally, I like conferences that are purposeful, content rich and efficient. This was all three.
- Excellent presenters. Well ran event.
- Generally engaging speakers and great information for schools.



Your Trusted CPD Partner for more than 50 Years

DAY 1: THURSDAY 21 MAY 2026

CHAIR – DAY 1, AM: MURRAY BAIRD, PRINCIPAL MURRAY BAIRD ADVISORY AND CONSULTANT PROLEGIS LAWYERS, MELBOURNE

MORNING THEME: MANAGING THE WORKPLACE

9.00 - 9.15am

Introduction and welcome

9.15 - 10.00am

Session 1: Faith, Fairness and the Law: What Anti-Discrimination Reform Means for Independent Schools

With multiple jurisdictions reviewing or reshaping their anti-discrimination frameworks, and federal reform still on the table, independent schools across Australia are facing a period of significant uncertainty. Key religious exemptions long relied upon for staffing, enrolment and behavioural expectations may narrow, shift, or be tested through the courts. This session examines the evolving legal landscape, and explores what school leaders and their advisers need to understand, including:

- The reform trajectory across Australia - what's changed and what's on the horizon
- How religious exemptions and faith-based decision-making may change under proposed federal and state reforms
- The interplay between state-based changes and federal initiatives, including the ALRC recommendations on religious educational institutions
- Recent Victorian litigation supported by the IEU, testing how religious exemptions apply to gender identity issues in independent schools
- Evolving definitions of discrimination, vilification, sexual harassment and victimisation, and how these may differ across jurisdictions
- Key risks for schools operating in multiple states or applying uniform policy frameworks
- Practical steps for independent schools nationwide to prepare for a potentially transformed regulatory environment

Speaker: Sonya Parsons, Partner - NFPs, Human Rights & Social Impact, Mills Oakley, Sydney, NSW

10.00 - 10.10am Panel Comments and Questions

10.10 - 10.55am

Session 2: Hidden Dangers in Plain Sight: Managing Psychosocial Hazards in the School Environment

Schools face unique psychological safety challenges that distinguish them from traditional workplaces. In this session, we will examine how schools can develop comprehensive frameworks to identify, assess and control psychosocial risks, including:

- Understanding psychosocial hazards specific to educational environments
- Systematic risk identification and assessment processes and the importance of consulting with affected workers and health and safety representatives
- Developing effective control measures and intervention strategies, guidance for appropriate management support and employee assistance program integration
- Developing policies and reporting frameworks to create clear channels for employees to report psychosocial hazards
- Consequences of failing to recognise and address psychosocial hazards in the workplace

Speaker: Abbey Burns, Special Counsel, Russell Kennedy, Melbourne, Vic.

10.55 - 11.05am Panel Comments and Questions

11.05 - 11.30am Networking Break and Morning Tea

DAY 1: THURSDAY 21 MAY 2026

11.30am - 12.15pm

Session 3: When Parents Become Problems: Legal Strategies For Managing Challenging Parents

School administrators increasingly face complex and demanding parent interactions that can escalate from routine concerns into serious legal and operational challenges. In this comprehensive session, we will examine practical legal strategies and policy frameworks for identifying, managing, and resolving challenging parent situations, including:

- Legal framework for managing difficult parent interactions and identifying when behaviour becomes harassment
- Complex complaint scenarios and high-risk situations such as disability discrimination claims, separated parent conflicts and student discipline responses
- Protocols for de-escalation, choosing appropriate communication methods and effective record-keeping systems
- Social media and reputational risk management including crisis communication protocols, and staff social media training
- Understanding banning procedures, escalation from warnings to legal action and how to manage vexatious complaint behaviour
- Tips for policy development & parent codes of conduct

Speaker: Fiona Manderson, Head of Compliance, Risk and Legal, Hillcrest Christian College, Qld

12.15 - 12.25pm Panel Comments and Questions

12.25 - 1.25pm Luncheon

CHAIR – DAY 1, PM: ADAM FOSTER, PARTNER, COLIN BIGGERS & PAISLEY, MELBOURNE, VIC.

AFTERNOON THEME: GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

1.25 - 2.10pm

Session 4: Beyond Old School Ties: Legal Duties and Governance in Today's Schools

Many school boards are unprepared for the unique challenges and heightened scrutiny that comes with governing educational institutions. Unlike traditional corporate boards, school directors must navigate complex stakeholder relationships involving children, parents, staff, alumni, and regulators while maintaining the paramount focus on student wellbeing and safety. In this session, we will examine modern governance expectations and explore practical strategies for school boards, including:

- The unique challenges of school governance compared to corporate governance
- The importance of recruiting directors with appropriate governance skills and providing formal training for new board members
- Financial oversight and performance measurement in educational settings
- Establishing formal communication protocols between principals and board chairs, creating rapid response procedures for sensitive matters, and managing regulatory investigations
- Personal liability exposure of directors for governance failures

Speaker: Alistair Macpherson, Managing Director, Vocare Law, Brisbane, Qld

2.10 - 2.20pm Panel Comments and Questions

DAY 1: THURSDAY 21 MAY 2026

2.20 - 3.05pm

Session 5: AI in the Classroom: Legal Risks and Compliance for Schools

The rapid adoption of artificial intelligence tools in schools, from generative AI and plagiarism detection to learning analytics, raises novel legal risks. Schools must balance innovation with compliance across privacy, intellectual property, and duty of care obligations. This session explores:

- Privacy and data protection issues in the use of AI-based tools with student data
- Intellectual property ownership and licensing risks when students or staff use generative AI
- Liability for inaccurate, biased, or harmful outputs generated by AI systems
- Managing student misconduct and academic integrity concerns in the AI era
- Duty of care implications for AI-driven teaching, monitoring, and decision-making tools
- Developing policies and governance frameworks for responsible AI use in schools

Speaker: Paul Gordon, Partner, Wallmans Lawyers, Adelaide, SA

3.05 - 3.15pm Panel Comments and Questions

3.15 - 3.35pm Networking Break and Afternoon Tea

3.35 - 4.20pm

Session 6: Data in the Digital Age: Navigating Privacy Compliance in Schools

Schools collect, use, and disclose vast amounts of personal and sensitive information about students, parents, staff, volunteers, and contractors as part of their everyday operations. This creates heightened privacy and data protection risks, with schools subject to overlapping federal and state/territory laws. This session examines how school leaders and advisers can ensure compliance, including:

- Understanding when the Australian Privacy Principles apply to schools, and how they interact with state and territory privacy frameworks
- Ensuring information collection is reasonably necessary for school activities, obtaining valid consent, and managing sensitive information appropriately
- Handling unsolicited information and meeting notification requirements
- Rules around data use, disclosure, and secondary purposes
- Responding to data breaches, including mandatory notification obligations and practical strategies for breach management
- Enforcement risks, penalty exposure, and the expanded powers of the Australian Information Commissioner
- Building compliance through privacy policies, procedures, staff training, and robust data management systems

Speaker: Georgia Hunt, Special Counsel, Maddocks, Melbourne, Vic.

4.20 - 4.30pm Panel Comments and Questions

DAY 2: FRIDAY 22 MAY 2026

CHAIR – DAY 2: FIONA MANDERSON, HEAD OF COMPLIANCE, RISK AND LEGAL, HILLCREST CHRISTIAN COLLEGE, QLD

THEME: STUDENT RIGHTS AND SAFETY

9.00 - 9.05am

Introduction and welcome

9.05 - 9.50am

Session 7: Beyond the School Gate: The Expanding Duty of Care After the T2 Decision

The NSW Court of Appeal's unanimous decision in *NSW v T2* has arguably extended the scope of schools' duty of care, confirming that liability does not stop at the bell or the school gate. This landmark case has national significance, reshaping how schools must respond to student conduct outside traditional boundaries and hours. This session explores the legal and practical implications, including:

- How T2 expands school liability beyond traditional temporal and physical limits.
- The case's relationship to established negligence principles in the education context
- Designing behaviour management systems that balance victim protection with fair treatment of alleged perpetrators
- Strategies for monitoring and supporting students post-suspension and ensuring accountability
- Developing anti-bullying policies that capture incidents occurring off-campus and online
- Best practice in documentation, incident response, and managing litigation risks
- The impact on school insurance coverage and liability exposure, including key issues for reviewing policy terms

Speaker: Jennifer Parkes, Partner, Hicksons, Newcastle, NSW

9.50 - 10.00am Panel Comments and Questions

10.00 - 10.45am

Session 8: Breaking Down Barriers: Disability, Discrimination and Inclusive Education - The Legal Framework for Schools

Schools and families must navigate a patchwork of state and federal anti-discrimination laws that protect students with disability while requiring schools to provide inclusive education. Understanding these legal duties, and the limits of what can reasonably be expected, is critical to managing risk and ensuring compliance. This session examines the key legal issues, including:

- The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth), the Disability Standards for Education, and state-based discrimination laws: how they apply throughout a student's schooling
- The scope of the obligation to make "reasonable adjustments" and the legal tests for when adjustments become unjustifiable hardship
- Defining what constitutes unlawful educational discrimination, and the legal implications when disputes escalate
- Internal resolution procedures versus external complaint mechanisms through state tribunals and the Australian Human Rights Commission
- Practical strategies for schools to minimise exposure to claims while maintaining lawful, transparent engagement with parents and carers

Speaker: Annie Smeaton, Partner, Cooper Grace Ward Lawyers, Brisbane, Qld

10.45 - 10.55am Panel Comments and Questions

10.55 - 11.15am Networking Break and Morning Tea

DAY 2: FRIDAY 22 MAY 2026

11.15 - 12.00pm

Session 9: Keeping Children Safe: Navigating Reportable Conduct and Child Safe Standards

Schools are under heightened scrutiny to demonstrate compliance with mandatory child safe standards and reportable conduct schemes that now operate across multiple jurisdictions. Failure to implement strong governance, reporting frameworks, and compliant investigation processes exposes schools and boards to significant legal and regulatory risk. This session focuses on the compliance and accountability framework that underpins child safety nationally, including:

- Understanding the scope and operation of reportable conduct schemes across the states and territories
- Aligning school policies, procedures and culture with nationally consistent child safe standards
- Establishing clear internal reporting pathways that meet statutory obligations and satisfy regulator expectations
- Conducting fair, defensible and well-documented investigations into reportable allegations
- Managing interaction with external oversight bodies, including Ombudsman and child protection agencies
- Practical steps for strengthening training, governance oversight, documentation and compliance audits

Speaker: Tal Shmerling, Special Counsel, Moores, Hawthorn, Vic.

12.00 - 12.10pm Panel Comments and Questions

12.10 - 12.55pm

Session 10: Critical Response Protocols: Legal Duties in Student Mental Health Crises and Self-Harm Incidents

Schools are increasingly on the frontline when students experience acute mental health crises or self-harm. These situations trigger heightened legal and compliance obligations, with serious risks if protocols are unclear or not followed. This session provides a legal and practical roadmap for school leaders, boards, and staff, including:

- Meeting duty of care obligations during acute mental health or self-harm incidents, including immediate safety measures and escalation triggers
- Knowing when to involve emergency services, mental health professionals and senior leadership
- Understanding information-sharing boundaries during crisis, including what must be shared with parents, agencies and regulators
- Clarifying the limits of staff responsibilities versus the role of qualified mental health practitioners
- Designing trauma-informed response protocols that minimise risk and support effective decision-making
- Ensuring safe handover, continuity of care, documentation and post-incident review

Speaker: Adam Foster, Partner, Colin Biggers & Paisley, Melbourne, Vic.

12.55 - 1.05pm Panel Comments and Questions

1.05pm Conference Close

GENERAL INFORMATION

Conference Registration Fee

The registration fee includes attendance at the conference and conference papers. Refreshment breaks on both conference days and lunch on day 1 are included for delegates attending the face to face event.

Conference Papers

TEN will not provide printed copies of the conference papers or Powerpoints. Access to the papers & Powerpoints will be available online to all delegates in the lead-up to the conference (as they become available).

CPD

Lawyers: 9 CPD units (substantive law).

CPD Certificate

All delegates attending the conference will receive a CPD Certificate confirming attendance.

The Conference Venue

Crown Towers Melbourne

8 Whiteman Street, Southbank

Discount Delegate Accommodation at Crown

Crown is offering a discount for conference delegates. You can book directly using the below links to one of the 3 hotels that make up Crown Melbourne.

Towers [Crown Towers Hotel](#)

Metropol [Crown Metropol Hotel](#)

Promenade [Crown Promenade Hotel](#)

Travelling to the Conference Venue

Delegates are advised to make their own travel arrangements.

Conference Dress

Smart casual attire is suitable (note: the temperature in the conference rooms can vary depending on where you are sitting. Short sleeves/summer tops are generally OK, but it is advisable that you bring a jacket/long sleeved top just in case you need it).

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