

MEDIA RELEASE

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CATHOLIC EDUCATION WELCOMES EXTENDED PROTECTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) welcomes the Federal Government's decision to ensure educational bodies are not sued for online copyright infringements by their staff and students.

NCEC Executive Director Christian Zahra said the extension of these protections - known as 'safe harbours' - meant that schools and other educational bodies who provide internet access would no longer face the threat of penalties if staff or students illegally downloaded copyrighted material such as films and music.

"Until now, Australia's schools, universities and libraries faced unintended exposure to legal risk for simply providing internet access to their staff and students – a risk not faced by schools in the United States, the European Union, Japan, Singapore and other societies," Mr Zahra said.

"Safe harbours protect commercial internet service providers (ISPs) like Telstra and Optus from being sued for copyright infringement by their customers - but this same protection did not extend to schools, libraries and other bodies who provide internet access in the workplace or classroom.

"Catholic education has been at the forefront of campaigning for this change along with other educational institutions, and we are pleased that the Turnbull Government has responded to our concerns."

Mr Zahra said all schools should cooperate with copyright owners and take steps to fight online piracy.

"Safe harbours includes a simple scheme where copyright owners can send a 'takedown notice' to an ISP if one of its users has been infringing copyright online.

"All ISPs need to do to avoid being sued for damages is take the required steps to take down the material that infringes copyright.

"This change will ensure Australian schools, universities, libraries and archives are protected from legal liability - provided they can show they have taken the required steps to deal with copyright infringement by users of their online platforms."

"Australian schools are model citizens. They do not want to be conduits for online copyright infringement.

"They can now safely provide internet access to their staff and students that is integral to developing the talent and skills - particularly STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) skills – that are at the heart of the Australian Government's innovation agenda."

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