



Key Facts

About the program

The National School Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program will begin in 2012 and expands on the current school chaplains program. The program provides funding to schools to access the services of a school chaplain or secular support worker.

The program began in 2007 with 2700 schools taking part so far. Last year, the Gillard Government committed to extending the program until 2014 for current schools, as well as providing funding for up to an extra 1000 schools. The Government has provided a further \$222 million to expand the program and offer more schools access to the service.

Increasing choice for school communities

The Government is making a number of changes to the expanded program, to maximise the choices available to school communities and strengthen the administration of the program. These include:

- modifying the program to allow for the employment of secular student welfare workers;
- introducing mandatory benchmark provider standards and minimum qualification requirements for workers;
- implementing a strengthened and more transparent complaints management processes; and
- increasing the maximum grant for schools in remote locations to \$24,000 per year.

Minimum qualifications for chaplains and support workers

From 2012, all new workers employed under the program will need to have completed a Certificate IV in Youth Work, Pastoral Care or equivalent qualification. Existing chaplains who do not already hold equivalent qualifications will be required to complete two units of the Certificate IV course: Mental Health and Making Referrals. These are the skills the Commonwealth Ombudsman and other professionals have identified as being the most important to the role of chaplain or support worker.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations will pay for the cost of completing the two units. Chaplains will have 12 months to complete the required units. Existing chaplains can also have their current experience and qualifications formally recognised under Recognition of Prior Learning.

Introducing benchmark standards for providers

Under the expanded program, organisations which provide chaplaincy or student welfare services to schools will have to meet a set of benchmark provider standards. It should be noted that the majority of larger service providers already meet these standards, however making these standards mandatory will ensure that all providers are following best practice. The mandatory standards outlined in the new program guidelines are:

- Providing ongoing professional development and support for workers
- Monitoring of service delivery according to set standards
- Appropriate governance structures to ensure clear responsibilities
- Appropriate risk management and compliance
- Appropriate complaints and grievance resolution processes.

Stronger complaints management process

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) investigates all formal complaints made about the program.

The Government wants to ensure that any complaints made about the program are handled appropriately. We have strengthened the complaints management process to require all schools to have a well-documented process for handling complaints, and implement a strategy to inform students and the school community on how to make a complaint. Additional information will be included in the application package and program guidelines provided to schools.

Further information: www.deewr.gov.au/schoolchaplaincyandwelfare.