

Chaplaincy and student welfare worker services

Policy Statement

A state school community can engage a chaplain or student welfare worker to complement other support services in the school. Chaplaincy or student welfare services may offer students, staff and parents with social, emotional and spiritual support by providing an additional adult role model in the school, and enhancing engagement with the broader community.

Chaplaincy and student welfare worker services are inclusive of, and show respect for, all religious and non-religious beliefs and other stances represented in the school community. All activities and events provided are optional, non-discriminatory and equally available to students of all beliefs. Chaplaincy and student welfare services are provided at the discretion of the school principal, in consultation with the school community.

Establishing a chaplaincy or student welfare worker service

Local community support, including from the Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C)/School Council, is required for the introduction of a chaplaincy or a student welfare worker service. This support is to be documented (e.g. in minutes of a P&C meeting) and will include justification as to why the service is supported, taking into consideration the needs of the student population and the characteristics of the school community.

All state schools are provided an opportunity to access application-based funding for chaplaincy and/or student welfare worker services through State or Australian Government funding.

In addition, state schools may choose to implement a chaplaincy or student welfare worker service at any time using

- school-based funds, and /or community raised funds which have been raised specifically for these services
- volunteer chaplain or student welfare worker services.

Determining whether to engage a chaplain or a student welfare worker is dependent on the purpose for which State or Australian Government funding has been provided (i.e. if National School Chaplaincy Program funding has been allocated for a chaplain, a chaplain must be engaged).

School communities that use school-based funds, or funds raised specifically for these services, may engage either a chaplain or a student welfare worker, with due consideration to the outcome of community consultation and at the discretion of the principal.

State schools do not directly employ chaplains or student welfare workers and are required to engage a chaplain or student welfare worker through an external organisation that has been accredited by the Department of Education, known as an Accredited Employing Authority (AEA). Although the AEA is responsible for the recruitment, selection and employment of the worker, principal endorsement of the AEA's selection is required. The AEA is also responsible for the ongoing professional development, training and professional supervision of the worker in areas pertinent to their role in the school.

The principal works with the P&C/School Council, AEA and, if one exists, the local chaplaincy committee to develop and monitor the role and workplan ([Form 2: Workplan](#)) of the chaplain/student welfare worker, taking into consideration the needs of the student population and the characteristics of the school community.



As part of their recruitment and selection process, before they commence their service, chaplains and student welfare workers must hold a valid blue card, and successfully undertake a school-based induction program which includes completion of the department's [Mandatory All Staff-Training Program – Key messages guide for contractors, volunteers and visitors](#) (the Guide). The Guide includes [Student Protection](#) and [Code of Conduct](#) requirements.

Delivering a chaplaincy or student welfare worker service

Where the school community supports the introduction of a chaplaincy or student welfare worker service, general interaction between students and the worker within the school does not require additional parental consent, unless a religious component (e.g. lunchtime prayer group) forms part of that principal endorsed interaction or activity. While it is not compulsory for any student to participate in activities or receive services from a chaplain or student welfare worker, written informed consent is required for ongoing one-to-one meetings with the chaplain or student welfare worker.

The school principal has the discretion to make final decisions about the delivery of particular activities or programs by the chaplain or student welfare worker. Should a school chaplain wish to organise a program/activity that may have a religious component (e.g. a camp organised by the chaplain/AEA during school holidays; lunchtime prayer group), the school should clearly communicate the details of this activity or program to allow parents/caregivers to make an informed decision about their child's participation or non-participation. Parental consent is required for a student's involvement in such activities/events.

Chaplaincy and student welfare worker services are not [counselling services](#). Chaplains and student welfare workers are not permitted to engage in evangelising or proselytising, nor attempt to undermine a student's religious or other beliefs.

In order to ensure coordinated case management of student support, each referral that a chaplain or student welfare worker makes to an external agency requires the explicit approval of the school's principal, deputy principal, or guidance officer, and consent of the parent (or student if deemed competent by the principal to provide this consent).

Details of the chaplain's or student welfare worker's role in the school, including programs or activities the chaplain or student welfare worker will be offering or organising, should be clearly outlined in the [Form 2: Workplan](#). This should be approved by the AEA, worker, principal and the P&C President or a member of the P&C executive. The Form 2: Workplan should be updated accordingly should the worker's role vary during the contract period.

Managing a chaplaincy or student welfare worker service

Although chaplains and student welfare workers are employees of the AEA and operate in schools as contractors, they are still subject to legislative and departmental procedures that impact on their duties, as well as reasonable directions from the principal (or delegate).

The principal ensures that all chaplain and student welfare worker records in relation to these services are secured in accordance with the relevant provisions of the [Public Records Act 2002](#), the [Information Privacy Act 2009](#) and the [Education \(General Provisions\) Act 2006](#). Schools provide the chaplain/student welfare worker with access to secure storage facilities to enable confidential case records to be securely stored onsite.

The principal reports any instance of suspected inappropriate behaviour or conduct by AEA staff (including the chaplain/student welfare worker), including behaviour considered in breach



of either the *Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service* or the department's Student Protection procedure and guidelines, in accordance with existing departmental protocols to the department's [Conduct and Complaints team](#). Where required, a separate report must also be lodged to the Department of Child Safety, Communities and Women, and Queensland Police Service.

The principal deals with complaints associated with the delivery of chaplaincy and student welfare worker services in a fair and equitable manner, and ensures that all accountability and reporting procedures occur as required.

Forms

- Form 1: Parent/Student Consent form
- Form 2: Workplan

