



Department of **Education**

National School Chaplaincy Programme 2015-2018

Chaplain's Role

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Fact sheet 12: Who is a school chaplain?

For the purpose of the National School Chaplaincy Programme, a school chaplain is a person who:

- is recognised by the school community and the appropriate governing authority for the school as having skills and experience to deliver school chaplaincy to the school community;
- is recognised through formal ordination, commissioning, recognised religious qualifications or endorsement by a recognised or accepted religious institution or a state/territory government approved chaplaincy service; and
- meets the NSCP minimum qualification requirements.



Fact sheet 13: Qualifications of a chaplain

To be employed in public schools, school chaplains must have the following minimum qualifications:

- a Working With Children Check;
- a National Police History Check from the Department of Education;
- a Certificate IV in Youth Work; or
- a Certificate IV in Pastoral Care; or
- an equivalent qualification (as determined by the State); and

This certificate or equivalent qualification must include competencies in 'mental health' and 'making appropriate referrals'.



Fact sheet 14: Roles and responsibilities of a chaplain

School chaplains are responsible for supporting the spiritual, social, and emotional wellbeing of their students. School chaplains, have a key role in supporting the spiritual wellbeing of their students, regardless of faith or beliefs. School chaplains must be able to provide support for a range of day to day matters affecting the school community and communicate effectively with a diverse group of people. They can become involved in a wide variety of issues including health, social and values education and emotional support.

It is expected that school chaplains support and work with the Principal, the school's student wellbeing staff or equivalent to refer students to appropriate services when required. To assist in facilitating this, school chaplains should have or develop an appropriate and suitable external network of professional groups working with the community.

The Principal is responsible for the welfare of students within his/her school. In interaction with students, school chaplains must adhere to existing school operational requirements and report to the Principal or his/her nominated staff member where required.

School chaplains must ensure that all services that are delivered are:

- approved by the Principal;
- have the appropriate prior parental/guardian consent, where relevant, as per existing school policy; and
- have the voluntary consent of students who participate.

To facilitate these conditions of delivery, school chaplains must also:

- assist the Principal in notifying students/parents about all aspects of the chaplaincy including the voluntary nature of the programme and the need for consent forms to be signed prior to participation in services, as appropriate;
- report on services relating to the programme and participate in any monitoring and /or evaluation strategies required by the Principal and/or the Service Provider;
- avoid theological terminology and language that assumes that those with whom they speak share their beliefs and ensure that any faith based statements are presented as personal beliefs rather than as factual assertions;
- ensure that they take responsibility for, and obtain prior approval from the Principal for, any external people they invite onto school premises to provide student activities such as musical shows or lectures or to assist in providing chaplaincy;
- check any content to be presented by external people to ensure they do not proselytise, distribute biased material or undertake any activities inconsistent with the aims and objectives of this programme; and
- deliver services in a way that respects the range of spiritual views and cultural traditions in the school community, and also respects the stated views of parents/guardians to ensure the spiritual and moral education of their children.



Fact sheet 15: What chaplains cannot do

When delivering services under the National School Chaplaincy Programme, school chaplains must adhere to these guidelines and the Code of Conduct.

In their work in schools chaplains must not:

- coerce students to attend activities that have religious content/focus;
- ask or encourage students to proselytise or evangelise within the school;
- deliver activities/services that promote a particular view or religious belief without prior approval and consent; and
- put students in a position of feeling manipulated or intruded upon by intense persuasive conversation.

Services provided by chaplains must not include:

- providing religious education in their schools;
- attempting to convert students to a religion or set of beliefs through proselytising or evangelising;
- initiating faith discussions with a view to coercing or manipulating students to a particular view or spiritual belief;
- taking advantage of the chaplain's privileged position to proselytise, evangelise or advocate for a particular view or spiritual belief (even though the individual school chaplain may respond to questions and in good faith express views and articulate values consistent with his or her own beliefs);
- attempting to undermine students' religious or other beliefs;
- using other methods such as social media-blogs, Facebook, newsletters and/or school websites, to proselytise or evangelise to students within their school, in their role as a programme funded school chaplain;
- providing professional support services, for example counselling or legal or medical advice, unless appropriately qualified to do so and/or consistent with relevant state policies and procedures;
- providing support to students who have indicated that they do not wish to access the service of a school chaplain, or where an appropriate consent process has not been followed;
- performing religious services/rites (such as worship or prayer during school assembly etc), without the appropriate prior consent; and
- expressing views that are discriminatory or biased on the grounds of religious ideology, beliefs or sexuality. Regardless of individual school chaplains' personal and/or spiritual views, they must treat all students with dignity and respect.

School chaplains must not participate in any activity in a private capacity that might impact or be perceived to impact on their delivery of the services under the programme.



Fact sheet 16: Ensuring success of the chaplain in the school

1. Role of the Principal

The Principal, in consultation with the parent body and the school's governing body, is responsible for working with the Service Provider to lead, coordinate and manage all aspects of the chaplaincy services within the school, including complaints management. The Principal may appoint another member of the school's staff to undertake these tasks on his/her behalf.

The Principal or nominated staff member has a lead role in coordinating and managing all aspects of the chaplaincy services within the school.

2. Responsibilities for the NSCP

The Principal is responsible for:

- undertaking and/or coordinating ongoing consultation with the school community at a minimum on an annual basis, to assess the demand, support for, and nature of chaplaincy;
- checking that all school chaplains and other Service Provider personnel who may come into contact with students in their school comply with all legislative, policy and other requirements and permissions necessary (Working With Children Checks and National Police History Checks) to have access to and work on the school premises;
- making every effort to inform all parents and students of the voluntary nature of programme participation;
- ensuring the sufficient procedures are in place for students and their families to consent to the voluntary service;
- completing, endorsing and submitting the school's application for funding;
- endorsing the choice of school chaplain prior to employment;
- overseeing the delivery of the chaplaincy service within the school;
- ensuring that effective complaints handling protocols, including the documentation of complaints to notify the Service Provider and /or the Department of Education (if appropriate) of complaints or issues that may arise;
- ensuring induction to the school is provided to the school chaplain;
- ensuring appropriate facilities and relevant resources are provided as required and as per risk management requirements or as per state or school policy (e.g. appropriate private rooms for one-on-one sessions; lockable filing cabinet; access to relevant IT etc);
- approving all chaplaincy service activities and matters that vary students' school routine and participation or attendance;
- advising the Service Provider of variations in routine such as: absences of the school chaplain and long-term gaps in service when there is no service provision and other day to day management issues;
- ensuring that a school chaplain does not deliver chaplaincy services if a child protection check/police check expires and a renewal is not in place;
- ensuring that details of the chaplaincy programme are published and maintained on the school website; and
- manage complaints/grievances as per the Department's *Disputes and Complaints* policy.



Fact sheet 17: Sample Code of Conduct

1. Why is this a sample?

A Code of Conduct is a document between an employer and employee which outlines the expected behaviour of the employee in the performance of his/her duties. The school chaplain will already have a signed Code of Conduct with the Service Provider when appointed to a school.

2. Do I need to have a code of conduct?

The school may choose to adopt the Service Provider's Code of Conduct and/or the school board/council may choose to develop their own Code of Conduct which reflects their local context.

Should you wish to enter into a separate Code of Conduct with the school chaplain an example is below. Please alter to individualise for your school/community context.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CHAPLAINS SAMPLE

School chaplains are responsible for supporting the spiritual, social, and emotional wellbeing of their students regardless of faith or beliefs. School chaplains must be able to provide support for a range of day to day matters affecting the school community and communicate effectively with a diverse group of people. They can become involved in a wide variety of issues including health, social and values education and emotional support.

It is expected that school chaplains would support and work with the Principal and the school's student wellbeing staff or equivalent, to refer students to appropriate services where required. To assist in facilitating this, school chaplains should have or develop an appropriate and suitable external network of professional groups working within the community.

In providing these services, the school chaplain must sign and observe this Code of Conduct at all times.

The school chaplain must:

1. Adhere to all relevant state policy and legislation, including that concerning child safety, privacy, and confidentiality.
2. Not conduct themselves in a manner which impacts their delivery of the services under the programme. As such, school chaplains must adhere to the program guidelines detailed in the Fact Sheets and the Code of Conduct at all times where conduct in a private capacity might impact their delivery of the services under the programme.
3. Recognise, respect and affirm the authority of the Principal and/or school governing body, and work in consultation with them.
4. Contribute to a supportive, safe, inclusive and caring learning environment within the school.
5. Respect, accept and be sensitive to other people's views, values and beliefs that may be different from his on her own, including respecting the rights of parents/guardians to ensure the moral and spiritual education of their children is in line with the family's own convictions.



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6. Actively discourage any form of harassment or discrimination on the grounds of religious ideology, beliefs or sexuality.
7. Not perform professional or other services for which they are not qualified and if not qualified, refer on to an appropriate service, in line with school protocols.
8. Refer a student to a service or organisation which is best placed to support the student's particular needs in accordance with the student's own beliefs and values.
9. Provide accurate and impartial information about the support and services available in the broader community, including community groups and religious groups.
10. Not put him or herself, or allow him or herself, to be place in a compromising situation, recognising that there are circumstances where confidentiality may be sought by the student.
11. Avoid unnecessary physical contact with a student, recognising however that there may be some circumstances where physical contact may be appropriate such as where the student is injured or distraught.
12. While recognising that an individual school chaplain may in good faith express views and articulate values consistent with his or her own beliefs, a school chaplain must not take advantage of his or her privileged position to proselytise, evangelise or advocate for a particular view or belief.

Acknowledgement by school chaplain

I understand and agree to the terms of this Code of Conduct

Signature of School Chaplain

Name of School Chaplain

Signature of Witness

Name of Witness

Position of Witness

Date