

National Student Wellbeing Program procedure for schools

This is a mandated procedure under the operational policy framework. Any edits to this procedure must follow the process outlined on the [creating, updating and deleting operational policies](#) page.

Overview

This document outlines the procedure for schools providing pastoral care or wellbeing support services through the National Student Wellbeing Program.

Scope

This procedure clarifies the responsibility of government schools providing pastoral care or wellbeing support services in accordance with the [Australian Government National Student Wellbeing Program project agreement 2023 – 2027 \(PDF 9.4MB\)](#) and the Department for Education's (the department) policies.

The procedure applies to government schools that provide pastoral care or wellbeing support services funded by the National Student Wellbeing Program.

It does not apply to non-government schools.

It does not apply to pastoral care or wellbeing support services funded through the use of school cash reserves, school fundraising or fundraising by community partners.



Contents

National Student Wellbeing Program procedure for schools	1
Overview.....	1
Scope	1
Detail	4
Program participation requirements.....	4
Program delivery options	5
Funding arrangements for program delivery	6
PCW and SWSOs minimum requirements.....	7
Recruiting a PCW or SWSO	8
Program reporting and record keeping.....	9
Feedback.....	11
Roles and responsibilities	12
Engagement and Wellbeing Directorate	12
School leaders working with a service provider.....	13
Pastoral care worker or student wellbeing support officers.....	13
Service providers	13
Australian Government Department of Education	13
Cross sector panel	13
Definitions	14
complaint.....	14
detriment.....	14
ordination, commissioning or endorsement.....	14
pastoral care or wellbeing support services.....	14
pastoral care worker (PCW) or student wellbeing support officer (SWSO)	14
project agreement.....	15
proselytise	15
service provider	15
Supporting information	15
Related legislation	15
Related policies.....	15

Record history 15

 Approvals..... 15

 Revision record 16

Contact 17

Detail

The National Student Wellbeing Program (NSWP) aims to support schools to promote the wellbeing of students. The program provides funds that contribute to the delivery of pastoral care or wellbeing support services in the schools. This is done under [the Australian Government NSWP project agreement 2023 to 2027 \(PDF 9.4MB\)](#) and the department's policies.

The [NSWP project agreement \(PDF 9.4MB\)](#) outlines the agreement between the Australian Government and South Australian Government. This is the overarching agreement that provides federal funding for the NSWP to operate in schools. Whilst it is not essential reading for schools, it provides the parameters in which the program can operate.

The Australian Government provides \$7.59 million each year to South Australian government, independent and Catholic schools under the [NSWP project agreement \(PDF 9.4MB\)](#). The South Australian government provides an additional \$1.596 million each year to South Australian government schools.

Participation in the NSWP is voluntary. Schools can decide if participation in the program meets the needs of their community and parents can choose if they want their children to receive the services.

It's not a religious program and does not provide religious instruction or religious counselling to students. The program:

- has eligibility and minimum qualification requirements for pastoral care workers (PCW) and student wellbeing support officers (SWSO)
- provides supports that focus on the social and emotional wellbeing of students
- complements existing student wellbeing programs and services provided by schools.

* funding depends on program delivery option selected

Program participation requirements

School community support is required for participation

If a school wants to participate in the NSWP, they must consult with their school community and governing council:

- to find out if there is support for participation in the program
- to decide how to use the program's funding to promote student wellbeing
- to ensure that there is ongoing community support for participation in the program – this should include an annual review of the decision to participate in the program.

Consultations may occur through:

- a school survey
- inviting feedback through the school newsletter, social media, webpage or app
- discussion at a governing council meeting

- a parent evening/workshop.

Schools must inform the school community of participation in the program. This can be done through the school website, newsletter, enrolment packs and other means. They must advise of:

- the voluntary nature of the program
- the role and services provided by the pastoral care worker or student wellbeing support officer
- parents' right to choose whether their child receives a service from the pastoral care worker or student wellbeing support officer.

Parental consent

Schools must respect a parent's wishes about their child's involvement in the program.

Parents are able to decide whether they want their child to have contact with the NSWP and pastoral care or wellbeing support services at school. This can include:

- involvement with all NSWP services
- involvement with some services but not others
- no involvement with the program, pastoral care worker or student wellbeing support officer.

Schools must comply with the wishes of parents about their child's involvement in the NSWP. School must get parental consent. This should be documented and kept in the child's school files. This could be part of the beginning of year student information update or as a standalone consent.

Schools can add the following statement to the consent form:

'Where I [parent/legal guardian] give consent to my child participating in the NSWP and pastoral care or wellbeing support services at school, I acknowledge that records of services provided are created, maintained and securely stored by the Pastoral Care Worker or Student Wellbeing Support Officer and their employer (an external service provider or the school).'

Schools must make sure all students exempt from the NSWP are:

- not involved with services provided by the pastoral care worker or student wellbeing support officer
- not disadvantaged as a result of the exemption.

Program delivery options

Schools in the NSWP can choose to either:

- engage a PCW or SWSO from a service provider that has a contract with the department
- appoint a SWSO from their existing staff or employ a new staff member.

Schools should negotiate and plan with their service provider or their wellbeing team for the delivery of a minimum of 300 hours of services over the course of a year.

Generally, the allocated service delivery hours should be distributed equally throughout the school year. Schools can decide to allocate more hours at certain times in the year to support special events, activities

and programs.

Funding arrangements for program delivery

NSWP funding is determined by the department. It is paid directly to service providers and schools each quarter.

Funding for schools using an approved service provider

The department provides funding direct to the service provider each quarter.

Schools are required to contribute \$4,280 per annum in metropolitan areas and \$5,136 in remote areas each year to cover the cost to providers for the provision of the service. This will be recovered through the school Resource Entitlement Statement each quarter.

Some service providers charge extra fees for recruitment and service costs which are not covered by the NSWP funding. Schools should clarify:

- which service providers charge additional fees (the NSWP team can assist with this)
- which fees are compulsory and which are voluntary.

Schools may use their cash reserves to pay additional fees or service charges outside of the program's funding.

How service providers can use funds

Schools should negotiate and plan with their service provider (if using a provider) about how the service will be delivered over the course of the year. Service providers are able to use up to 20% of total NSWP funding per school for administration costs. This includes:

- general administration costs
- support or administration staff costs
- training and personal development costs for the PCW or SWSO
- for service providers – reasonable travel for delivering NSWP services to schools, for example fuel, fares, vehicle registration and maintenance.

At least 80% of the total NSWP funding per school must be used to pay PCW or SWSOs salaries or wages and superannuation.

Funding for schools appointing their own SWSO

The department provides funding direct to the school that choose to appoint their own SWSO each quarter.

Schools are allocated \$16,000 in metropolitan areas and \$19,200 in remote areas per annum. 100% of this funding must be used for the salary of the SWSO. This will be provided through the school Resource Entitlement Statement each quarter.

These schools are required to pay for the administrative costs associated with NSWP over and above the

funding provided for the SWSO salary.

Schools may use their cash reserves to pay additional fees or service charges outside of the program's funding.

Unacceptable use of funding

School and service providers cannot use NSWSP funding to pay for goods and services that are inconsistent with the purpose of the program. This includes:

- PCW or SWSO annual leave
- service provider supervisor or line manager hours
- orientation training hours for non-approved transition to minimum qualification candidates
- the purchase of religious education or religious training packages and the purchase of goods related to these activities
- the purchase of capital items, assets or resources including capital works, vehicles, computers and text books
- any existing programs or supports that are already funded by alternate funding sources
- provision of services to other unfunded schools.

PCW and SWSOs minimum requirements

Before a PCW or SWSO can start at a school, they must meet employee qualification, training and screening requirements. The department's NSWSP team monitors compliance with the minimum requirements for the department and minimum qualifications.

Minimum department screening and training requirements

Employers are responsible for keeping evidence and reporting on staff that meet requirements for:

- Code of Conduct (if required)
- minimum qualification check - [application to transition to minimum qualification requirements](#) (if required)
- [RRHAN-EC training](#)
- [working with children check](#)
- must comply with the [protective practices guidelines \(PDF 3.2MB\)](#)
- responding to and preventing bullying and cyberbullying training within 3 months of commencing in a role and refreshed at least once every two and a half years – this training is provided by the [Office of the eSafety Commissioner](#).

Other department requirements and training

Protective practices

Staff must comply with [protective practices guidelines \(PDF 3.2MB\)](#). They can register to complete the online [Protective practices](#) training in plink. This 1 hour course is for anyone who works or volunteers in education and care. It will help to better understand how to use the protective practices guidelines.

Cultural responsiveness

Being culturally responsive is the responsibility of every person working across our workplaces and learning environments.

The department's [Culturally Responsive Framework \(PDF 6.7 MB\)](#) outlines how we can all contribute to creating environments where Aboriginal people can work, learn and thrive. PCW's and SWSOs can find out more about the framework and what it means for them.

[Working Together – Cultural Awareness Introduction](#) online training is available in Plink for PCW's and SWSOs to complete.

Minimum qualification requirements

All PCWs and SWSOs must hold a minimum Certificate IV qualification and be able deliver student wellbeing services. Employers are responsible for keeping evidence and reporting on staff that meet requirements.

An acceptable base is a Certificate IV qualification (or equivalency) that must include competencies in both:

- mental health and making appropriate referrals
- providing pastoral care or working with youth (or both).

Schools can [contact the NSW team](#) for a copy of the department's minimum qualification mapping tool.

Employing someone who doesn't yet have the minimum qualifications

It may be difficult to recruit suitably qualified PCWs or SWSOs in all areas, especially remote and regional areas. Employers can apply for approval to employ a PCW or SWSO who have not yet completed the minimum qualifications. Applications are assessed by a cross-sector panel.

To apply, submit an [application to transition to minimum qualification requirements](#).

This process is by exception only. The candidate cannot start until approval confirmation by the department's NSW team is received.

Recruiting a PCW or SWSO

Schools must participate in the recruitment of a PCW or SWSO either:

- directly, by being on the selection panel or
- indirectly, by endorsing the selection panel report.

Using a PCW or SWSO from a service provider

Service providers must work with school leaders to recruit a PCW or SWSO that suits the needs of the school community.

PCWs and SWSOs from an external service provider are not employed by schools, governing councils or the department. However, schools have the responsibility to provide day-to-day supervision, advice and management.

Service providers may have their own employment terms and conditions for PCWs and SWSOs. This may include conditions in relation to community work, personal relationships and religious participation. Schools should consider whether a service provider's employment conditions may affect the delivery of the program at the school.

Schools can [choose a service provider](#) that has a current service agreement with the department that meets the needs of their community.

Schools should consider that each provider might have different:

- fee structures
- recruitment processes
- ways to deliver the program.

Schools may also identify a new service provider that can provide pastoral care or wellbeing support services for the school. The service provider must contact the department who will assess whether the provider meets the criteria to be contracted for this service.

Recruiting a SWSO as a department employee

Schools in the program can choose to appoint their own SWSO for a minimum of 300 hours of service per year. This is instead of using a service provider.

This could be a new position or extension of hours

for someone already in an ancillary or wellbeing support position.

The department has information for schools about [how they can appoint a SWSO](#) at SS01, SS02 and SS03 classification levels (staff login required).

Program reporting and record keeping

Reporting requirements for service providers

Service providers that employ PCWs or SWSOs must comply with reporting requirements for the NSWSP service delivery. They must report to the department:

- Within 5 working days: SWSO or PCW employment changes.
- Quarterly: about their SWSOs or PCWs. This includes hours of service, minimum qualifications and training requirements.

- Biannually: formal review by the school of the SWSO or PCWs who currently provide NSWSP services.
- Annually: financial acquittal
- Significant incidents: inform the department of any significant incidences occurring during or related to the provision of NSWSP services at a school.
- Other: reporting and extra information when requested to help monitor and evaluate the NSWSP.

Reporting requirements for schools

Schools that employ a SWSO must comply with reporting requirements for the NSWSP service delivery. They must report to the department:

- Within 5 working days: SWSO employment changes to the department.
- Quarterly: about their SWSO. This includes hours of service, minimum qualifications and training requirements.
- Biannually: formal review by the school of the SWSO who currently provide NSWSP services.
- Annually: financial acquittal
- Significant incidents: inform the department of any significant incidences occurring during or related to the provision of NSWSP services at a school.
- Other: reporting and extra information when requested to help monitor and evaluate the NSWSP.

Record keeping requirements

Schools that employ a SWSO and service providers that employ PCWs or SWSOs must:

- create and maintain comprehensive and accurate records of activities and decisions made
- comply with Premier and Cabinet Circular PC012 Information Privacy Principles (IPPS) Instruction that regulates the way South Australian Public Sector agencies and contracted service providers collect, use, store and disclose personal information – this must be balanced with legally permissible information sharing to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

Confidentiality and student records

PCWs or SWSOs must:

- document formal conversations that happen during their delivery of NSWSP services – this could be with students, staff or community members
- document services delivered.

Only people who have authority and reason can access information and records of children and young people.

If preferred, principals may discuss with the service provider to clarify information sharing guidelines, including what can and cannot be recorded in school systems.

Service providers own the records they create. This could be via manual files or electronic records management, potentially stored externally on their own systems.

If a PCW or SWSO is concerned about a student, group of students, or the conduct of an adult at the school, they must speak with the school leader or wellbeing staff and appropriately share information.

Inspections and reviews of service performance

Schools that employ a SWSO and service providers that employ PCWs or SWSO must also comply with the department's inspection requirements.

This includes:

- annual visits to the school or service provider's business
- desktop monitoring of NSWP service delivery.

The department can choose to review, monitor, investigate or audit the performance of the PCW, SWSO, school or service provider at any time.

Changes about suitability to work with children

Schools and service providers are required to report if they become aware that a person they are employing:

- has new assessable information. For example, the person has been charged with or found guilty of an offence or is subject to disciplinary or misconduct proceedings, an intervention or restraining order
- is prohibited from working with children in another State or Territory
- becomes a registrable offender under the Child Sex Offenders Registration Act 2006, or
- makes a disclosure to you under section 66 of the Child Sex Offenders Registration Act 2006.

Schools must immediately notify the service provider and the department if they become aware or reasonably suspects that a PCW or SWSO has been charged with, found guilty of or convicted of an offence which may make them unsuitable to work with children.

Feedback

The department welcomes feedback about the program including good news stories.

- Email: education.NSWP@sa.gov.au
- Post: National Student Wellbeing Program, Department for Education, 31 Flinders Street, Adelaide SA 5000
- Phone: (08) 8226 2002

Complaints

Schools and service providers must make sure there are clear processes for managing complaints and

feedback about pastoral care or wellbeing support services at their school.

Complaints about the NSWP should be resolved at the school level, where possible.

Complaints about PCWs or SWSOs employed by a service provider

Complaints about PCWs or SWSOs employed by a service provider can be lodged:

- with the service provider who employs the PCW or SWSO (they will need to follow the service provider's complaints process)
- with the school to refer to the service provider.

Complaints to schools

If complaints about the NSWP, a PCW or SWSO are lodged directly with schools, schools must:

- notify the service provider or the [NSWP Team](#) within 2 business days of becoming aware that there has been a complaint
- try to resolve the complaint at school level.

Complaints that cannot be resolved at the school level

For complaints that cannot be resolved at school level, the complainant can contact the department's [Customer Feedback Team](#).

This may include complaints about:

- the department's administration of the NSWP
- the school principal or other departmental employees managing the NSWP in schools
- religious content being delivered in schools
- schools not adhering to the department's policies regarding religious activities.

The NSWP team will work with the Customer Feedback team to clarify policy and program requirements.

Investigations of complaints and incidents

A principal or department officer may arrange an investigation of a complaint or incident or an investigation into the actions of a pastoral care worker or student wellbeing support officer or the provision of the program's services.

Roles and responsibilities

Engagement and Wellbeing Directorate

Administration of the NSWP, including:

- monitoring and reporting

- acquittal process
- funding allocation and payments.

Provide policy and practice guidance to schools and service providers to ensure effective program compliance and delivery.

Manage service agreements with service providers.

School leaders working with a service provider

Work with the school community to clarify whether there is support for the NSWP.

Oversee the delivery of the program at their school, making sure that policy requirements are met. Make sure parents are aware of the voluntary nature of program participation.

Implement and maintain record of student exemption from the NSWP. Make sure effective complaint handling processes are in place.

Make sure supervision and guidance are provided for the PCW or SWSO working with individual students or groups of students.

Pastoral care worker or student wellbeing support officers

Pastoral care workers or student wellbeing support officers are responsible for supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of students regardless of their faith or beliefs under the supervision and guidance of school leaders and wellbeing staff.

Service providers

Must meet requirements set out in the [NSWP project agreement 2023 – 2027 \(PDF 9.4MB\)](#).

Must meet and comply with contract obligations outlined in service agreement with the department.

Must work with principals and school leaders to ensure that they provide pastoral care or wellbeing support services that meet the needs of the school community.

Australian Government Department of Education

The Australian Government Department of Education is responsible for

- providing NSWP funding to the SA government under the NSWP project agreement
- monitoring and assessing achievement against milestones in the delivery of the program to make sure that outputs are delivered within the agreed timeframe.

Cross sector panel

The group of government, Catholic and independent school sector representatives are responsible for:

- making decisions concerning program administration in accordance with the NSWSP project agreement
- providing relevant information for submission of milestone reports to the Australian Government in accordance with the project agreement
- making decisions about acceptable minimum qualifications and arrangements for pastoral care workers or student wellbeing support officers to transition to minimum qualifications.

Definitions

complaint

A complaint is defined as an expression of concern or dissatisfaction if a response is explicitly or implicitly expected after an incident or pattern of behaviour by:

- a specific program funded school pastoral care worker or wellbeing support officer
- a specific program service or service provider.

detriment

Harm that is experienced by a person due to another person's actions. It can include intimidation, harassment, discrimination, disadvantage, adverse treatment, humiliation, denigration and other negative outcomes.

ordination, commissioning or endorsement

The way accepted religious organisations recognise an individual as being able to conduct religious activities on their behalf.

pastoral care or wellbeing support services

The practice of looking after the personal needs of students, not just their academic needs, through the provision of general spiritual and personal advice.

pastoral care worker (PCW) or student wellbeing support officer (SWSO)

An individual who has been employed by a service provider to deliver pastoral care services within schools under the program.

project agreement

Agreement between the Australian Government and the states and territories including SA which provides for conditional grants for delivery of the NSWP.

proselytise

The act of seeking to persuade someone to share your beliefs, especially religious or political beliefs.

service provider

A recognised or accepted religious institution that employs pastoral care workers or wellbeing support officers to deliver pastoral care or wellbeing support services within schools through an agreement with the department. A religious institution is a body which is instituted for religious purposes.

Supporting information

[Public Education in South Australia Statement](#)

Related legislation

[Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017 \(SA\)](#)

[Education and Children's Services Act 2019 \(SA\)](#)

[Education and Children's Services Regulations 2020 \(SA\)](#)

[Equal Opportunity Act 1984 \(SA\)](#)

Related policies

[Religious activities in schools and preschools policy \(PDF 594KB\)](#)

[Screening and suitability – child safety policy \(PDF 217KB\)](#)

Record history

Published date: April 2024

Approvals

OP number: 153

File number: DE20/10775

Status: approved

Version: 2.5

Policy Officer: Senior Policy Officer, Engagement and Wellbeing
Policy sponsor: Director, Engagement and Wellbeing
Responsible Executive Director: Executive Director, Support and Inclusion
Approved by: Director, Engagement and Wellbeing
Approved date: 4 April 2024
Next review date: 4 April 2027

Revision record

Version: 2.6

Approved by: Director, Engagement and Wellbeing

Approved date: 4 April 2024

Review date: 4 April 2027

Amendment(s): Minor changes have occurred in relation to how to implement and manage the new delivery option available to schools whereby they can self-appoint their own student wellbeing support officer rather than using an external service provider.

Version: 2.5

Approved by: Director, Engagement and Wellbeing

Approved date: 30 March 2023

Review date: 30 March 2026

Amendment(s): 'National School Chaplaincy Program' renamed to 'National Student Wellbeing Program'. Minor changes have occurred in relation to interpretation of 'Additional Terms' including the worker being either a chaplain or student wellbeing officer as well as changes to minimum qualifications.

Version: 2.4

Approved by: Director, Engagement and Wellbeing

Approved date: 8 February 2022

Review date: 8 February 2025

Amendment(s): The Responding to Abuse and Neglect – Education and Care (RAN-EC) training has been renamed to Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse and Neglect – Education and Care (RRHAN-EC).

Version: 2.3

Approved by: Director, Engagement and Wellbeing

Approved date: 1 July 2020

Review date: 1 July 2023

Amendment(s): Implementation of the Education and Children's Services Act 2019.

Version: 2.2

Approved date: 28 November 2018

Review date: 31 December 2019

Version: 2.1

Approved date: 12 December 2016

Review date: 30 November 2018

Version: 2.0

Approved date: July 2016

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