National school chaplaincy 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 policy documents page.

Overview

This document outlines the procedure for schools providing pastoral care services through the National School Chaplaincy Program.

Scope

This procedure clarifies the responsibility of schools providing pastoral care services in accordance with the Australian Government National School Chaplaincy Program project agreement and the Department for Education’s policies and procedures.

The procedure applies to schools that provide pastoral care services through federal and state funding for the National School Chaplaincy Program. It does not apply to pastoral care services funded through the use of school cash reserves, school fundraising, or fundraising by community partners.
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Detail

The National School Chaplaincy Program (NSCP) aims to support schools to promote the wellbeing of students. The program provides funds that contribute to the delivery of pastoral care services in the schools. This is done under the Australian Government project agreement 2019-2022 and the Department for Education’s policies and procedures.

The Australian Government provides $7.59 million each year to South Australian government, independent and Catholic schools under the NSCP project agreement. The South Australian government provides $1.05 million each year to South Australian government schools.

Schools are eligible for funding up to $20,280 per annum ($24,336 for remote schools).

The NSCP has eligibility and minimum qualification requirements for pastoral care workers.

Principles

This procedure is set out under the Religious and Cultural Activities in Schools and Preschools policy. It reflects the principles within the policy:

- The cultural and religious diversity of the student population must be recognised.
- Children and students should not be unlawfully discriminated against on the ground of their religion, nor that of their parents.
- Education and children’s services provided by government schools, government preschools and children’s services centres are to be secular in nature.
- Schools, preschools and children’s services centres are free to celebrate events that are of significance to their communities (including, for example, by singing Christmas carols).

In South Australian government schools, the NSCP provides supports that focus on the social and emotional wellbeing of students. The program complements existing student wellbeing programs and services provided by schools.

The NSCP is voluntary. School communities can decide if participation in the program meets the needs of their community. Parents and carers can decide if they want their children to receive the program’s services.

School community support is required for participation

If a school wants to participate in the NSCP, they must consult with the 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.
• Parents’ right to choose whether their child receives a service from the pastoral care worker

Schools can withdraw from the NSCP at any time. They must notify the department in writing by emailing Education.NSCP@sa.gov.au.

Respecting parent wishes about their child’s involvement in the NSCP

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

• Involvement with all NSCP services
• Involvement with some services but not others
• No involvement with the program or pastoral care worker

Schools must comply with the wishes of parents about their child’s involvement in the NSCP. This should be documented and kept in the child’s school files.

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

• Not involved with services provided by the pastoral care worker
• Not disadvantaged as a result of the exemption.
Schools can choose a service provider that meets the needs of their community

Schools may choose from the list of pastoral care service providers that have a current service agreement with the department.

Schools may also identify a new service provider that can provide pastoral care services for the school. The service provider must contact the department to arrange a service agreement.

Schools should consider the following areas to decide which service provider will meet the needs of the school community.

Fee structure

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

- which services providers charge additional fees. The NSCP 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.

Recruitment processes and employment conditions

Service providers are the employers of pastoral care workers, and may have their own employment terms and conditions. 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.

Program delivery options

Schools are allocated funding for pastoral care services at their school based on a number of factors including enrolment numbers and location. This allocation may be:

- $18 000 for a minimum of 300 hours of service per year, or
- $20 280 for a minimum of 400 hours of service per year ($24 336 for remote and very remote schools).

Schools should negotiate and plan with their service provider for the delivery of the program 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.
Pastoral care workers work with school leaders and wellbeing staff to deliver pastoral care services across a school. This can include:

Whole school services

- Working with school leaders and wellbeing staff to create a school environment that promotes the wellbeing of all students
- Supporting school camps, excursions and events
- Supporting community activities that connect the school to external partners and organisations
- Supporting school programs such as breakfast clubs, sporting groups, social and other extra-curricular activities.

Group services

- Supporting the delivery of structured social emotional learning programs
- Running recess and lunch time activities
- Providing classroom support
- Supporting learning groups (eg. reading groups, homework groups)

One to one services

- Working with school leaders and wellbeing staff to provide advice, guidance and support for students experiencing difficult situations, including grief, crisis and personal/emotional challenges
- Working with school leaders and wellbeing staff to provide information and referrals to additional supports, including community services
- Providing individual learning support (reading, social skills) as agreed with school leaders and wellbeing staff
- Mentoring and coaching

Schools may change service providers at any time

Schools must make sure that the service provider is meeting the needs of the school community. Schools may change services providers at any time.

Schools should discuss any concerns about service delivery with their pastoral care worker and service providers. The NSCP team can assist if issues are not able to be resolved between the school and the service provider.
Where concerns about service delivery cannot be resolved, schools must:

- Notify the service provider of the ending of the arrangement
- Negotiate an end date for the pastoral care worker
- Notify the department by emailing Education.NSCP@sa.gov.au
- Nominate a new service provider as soon as is practical.

**Schools have responsibility for managing pastoral care workers at their site**

Service providers are responsible for ensuring that they provide pastoral care workers who:

- Meet the minimum qualifications in the project agreement (a Certificate IV in Youth Work or Pastoral Care or equivalent), or have been approved by the cross sector panel to work in schools while they work towards obtaining a minimum qualification.
- Complete the compulsory bullying and cyberbullying training provided by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner

The NSCP team monitors compliance with these requirements and may clarify any queries from schools about these requirements.

While pastoral care workers are not school employees, schools have the responsibility of providing day-to-day supervision, advice and management of pastoral care workers as valued members of their school community.

**Schools must make sure that pastoral care workers meet departmental requirements**

Schools must make sure the pastoral care worker meets departmental policy requirements in providing services at the school, including:

- Comply with the Religious activities in schools and preschools policy.
Schools must participate in the recruitment of a pastoral care worker either:

- Directly, by being on the selection panel
- Indirectly, by endorsing the selection panel report.

**Schools must monitor and supervise pastoral care workers**

Schools have a responsibility to provide monitoring and supervision of pastoral care workers delivering services at their school. Schools must:

- Allocate work to pastoral care workers that is consistent with their role and level of skill.
- Monitor pastoral care workers’ hours of work to make sure the required hours of service are met.
- Supervise pastoral care workers who working to achieve the minimum qualifications and follow any conditions set out by the cross sector panel.
- Make sure that pastoral care workers do not proselytise by promoting a particular world view or set of religious beliefs.
- Make sure pastoral care workers’ work is consistent with the school’s social and emotional wellbeing support for students.

Schools can change their pastoral care worker at any time during the funding period. Changes to pastoral care workers should be negotiated with the service provider, and reasonable notice provided (minimum four school weeks).

**Schools must comply with policy requirements religious activities in schools**

School activities that have religious connotations that are conducted by a pastoral care worker are likely to constitute “religious and cultural activities” under the [Education and Children’s Services Act 2019](https://www.lf-education.qld.gov.au/contentdocs/OfS/319/880521/Act-2019.pdf).

Schools must make sure that any involvement of the pastoral care worker in religious activities meets the requirements of the Religious and Cultural Activities in Schools and Preschools policy, including:

- Notifying parents and carers in writing about any religious activity involving their child.
- Complying with the wishes of parents to exempt their child from participating in religious activities.
- Making sure that a child who does not participate in a religious activity does not suffer any detriment for not participating.
Schools must meet the funding and reporting requirements

The program runs on a calendar year basis. Funding must be used in the calendar year that payment was made. Funding cannot be carried over into a new calendar year.

Schools experiencing a prolonged gap in service of more than one term should contact the NSCP team (Education.NSCP@sa.gov.au) for assistance.

Schools are required to complete the NSCP school services certification once per year. This process allows the NSCP team to follow up any concerns with the program. This generally occurs in Term 2 each year.

Schools may be required to provide additional information to the NSCP team for reporting and monitoring purposes.

Complaints and feedback about program will be responded to

The department welcomes feedback about the program including news stories.

- Email: Education.NSCP@sa.gov.au
- Post: National School Chaplaincy Program, Department for Education, 31 Flinders Street, Adelaide SA 5000
- Phone: (08) 8226 2002

Schools must make sure there are clear processes for managing complaints and feedback about pastoral care services at their school.

Complaints about the NSCP at the school should be resolved at the school level, where possible. If the complaint cannot be resolved at school level, the complainant can contact the department’s Customer Feedback Unit.

This may include complaints about:

- the department’s administration of the NSCP
- the school principal or other departmental employees managing the NSCP in schools
- religious content being delivered in schools
- schools adhering to the department’s policies and procedures regarding religious activities

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

Complaints about pastoral care workers are out of scope of the department’s Customer Feedback Unit as they are not departmental employees. Complaints about pastoral care workers in schools can be lodged:

- with the service provider who employs the pastoral care worker. They will need to follow the service provider’s complaints process
with the schools for referral to the service provider.

If complaints about pastoral care workers or the program’s services are lodged directly with schools, schools must:

- Notify the service provider within two business days if they become aware that there has been a complaint about the pastoral care worker or the pastoral care services in the school.
- Try to resolve the complaint at school level. If the complaint cannot be resolved at school level, the school can refer the complainant to the Customer Feedback Unit.

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

Investigations of complaints and incidents

A principal or departmental officer may arrange an investigation of a complaint or incident or an investigation into the actions of a pastoral care worker or the provision of the program’s services.
Roles and responsibilities

Engagement and wellbeing directorate

Administration of the NSCP 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

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

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 NSCP.

Make sure effective complaint handling processes are in place.

Pastoral care worker

Pastoral care workers are responsible for supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of students regardless of their faith or beliefs.

Service providers

Must meet requirements set out in the NSCP project agreement 2019-2022.

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 services that meet the needs of the school community.

Australian Government Department for Education and Training

The Australian Government Department of Education and Training is responsible for:
- Provide NSCP funding to the SA government under the NSCP project agreement 2019-2022
• 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

Group of government, Catholic and independent school sector representatives responsible for:

• Making decisions concerning program administration in accordance with the NSCP project agreement 2019-2022
• 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 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
• 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 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)
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 National School Chaplaincy Program.

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 to deliver pastoral care services within schools through an agreement with the department. A religious institution is a body which is instituted for religious purposes.

Supporting information

Related legislation

Education and Early Children’s Services Act 2019
Education and Children’s Services Regulations 2020
Equal Opportunity Act 1984
Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA)

Related policies

Religious activities in schools and preschools policy
Public Education in South Australia Statement
Screening and suitability – child safety policy
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Contact

Business unit: engagement and wellbeing
Email: education.nscp@sa.gov.au
Phone: 8226 2002