# NATIONAL SCHOOL CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions

## NATIONAL SCHOOL CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM

### What is the National School Chaplaincy Program (NSCP)?

The NSCP is a Commonwealth Government initiative that funds chaplaincy services in Victorian schools.

The aim of the NSCP is to support the emotional wellbeing of students by providing pastoral care services and strategies that support the emotional wellbeing of the broader school community.

### What is the definition of a chaplain for the purposes of the NSCP?

Only chaplains as defined by the NSCP can be engaged via the NSCP.

The Commonwealth Government defines a chaplain as an individual who:

* is recognised by the school community and the appropriate governing authority for the school as having the skills and experience to deliver school chaplaincy services to the school community; and
* is recognised through formal ordination, commissioning, recognised religious qualifications or endorsement by a recognised or accepted religious institution; and
* meets the NSCP’s minimum qualification requirements

### What is meant by Pastoral Care?

The NSCP defines *pastoral care* as the practice of looking after the personal needs of students and not just their academic needs, through the provision of general spiritual and personal advice.

### Are there conditions attached to the engagement of chaplains via the NSCP?

Subject to compliance with the NSCP requirements, NSCP chaplains may be from any faith or of no faith. Chaplains are not permitted to proselytise and must respect, accept and be sensitive to other people’s views, values and beliefs. Chaplains must comply with State legislation and policies in relation to child protection matters, as well as meet minimum qualification requirements.

### How can schools access further information about the NSCP?

Additional information is available at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/mentalhealth/Pages/nscpchaplaincy.aspx>.

## FUNDING

### How long is the funding for?

The Commonwealth Government has made funding available from 2015 to 2022.

### What is Victoria’s share of the NSCP?

The NSCP provides Victoria with approximately $12.79 million per annum for the engagement of chaplains in Victorian schools.

### How much funding is available?

Funding of up to $20,280 per school per annum is available. An additional $4000 is available for successful remote and very remote schools as defined by the Commonwealth Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia.

### Which schools will receive NSCP funding?

Victorian schools that applied for funding and were successful will receive funding for 2021 and 2022.

### What happens if a school leaves the NSCP?

On notification of a school leaving the NSCP, the cross-sectoral panel may reallocate funding.

## APPLICATIONS

### How were the NSCP applications assessed?

A cross sectoral panel comprising representatives from the Department, Catholic Education Office and Independent Schools Victoria oversaw the assessment process for schools to be funded in 2021 and 2022.

The selection criteria for the applications was based on four criteria:

* demonstrated need
* relative disadvantage
* integration of the chaplain with the school to address the demonstrated need
* availability of other wellbeing services relative to need

Each application was assessed against the criteria on merit.

## Service Agreements

### Do schools need to use the same chaplaincy service provider?

The choice of chaplaincy service provider is a matter for the school. Schools do not need to use the same chaplaincy service provider year to year, but may choose to do so if they are satisfied with the provider’s performance.

The Department does not endorse any specific chaplaincy service provider. Chaplaincy services are provided by a wide range of community organisations that can offer services to schools. Schools should ensure any organisation they wish to work with is able to meet the NSCP requirements.

It is recommended that schools compare chaplaincy service providers’ fees and services to secure value for money.

### Do schools need to employ the same chaplain?

#### Government schools

The choice of chaplain is a matter for the school and chaplaincy service provider. Schools do not need to engage the same chaplain year to year, but many schools will choose to do so if they are satisfied with the chaplain’s performance.

#### Non-government schools

Non-government schools may make their own arrangements with the chaplaincy service provider or with the chaplain directly.

## CHAPLAINS

### What do chaplains do?

Chaplains support the emotional wellbeing of students by providing pastoral care services and strategies that support the emotional wellbeing of the broader school community. They work closely with wellbeing and allied health members in schools to support students and their educational outcomes, staff, families and the wider school community.

Taking account of the definition of a chaplain, chaplains may:

* work as a member of the school’s wellbeing team in the delivery of student wellbeing services
* contribute to improving student engagement and connectedness
* contribute to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive learning environment
* provide pastoral care and guidance to students
* operate within the school community and with external providers.

### Can a chaplain be a person who does not have a religious affiliation or endorsement from a religious organisation?

A chaplain engaged via the NSCP must be recognised through formal ordination, commissioning, recognised religious qualifications or endorsement by a recognised or accepted religious institution as per the Commonwealth Government’s requirements. It is possible for a chaplain who does not have a religious affiliation to be endorsed by a religious organisation.

A chaplain who does not meet this criterion would not be able to be engaged as a chaplain under the NSCP.

### Does a chaplain require specific qualifications or training?

Yes, a chaplain must have qualifications that meet the NSCP’s minimum requirements and possess the established skills and competencies necessary for their role.

It is the responsibility of the chaplaincy service provider or school directly employing the chaplain to ensure the authenticity and suitability of the qualifications provided by individuals seeking to work as a chaplain.

### What are the minimum qualification requirements for a chaplain funded under the NSCP?

Chaplaincy service providers and schools must ensure that chaplains are able to meet the NSCP’s minimum qualification requirements which are either:

* a Certificate IV in Youth Work; or
* a Certificate IV in Pastoral Care\*; or
* a Certificate IV in Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care; or
* an equivalent qualification (as determined by the State), that must include competencies in mental health and responding to client needs.

The minimum qualification must include the following units of competency:

* *Work with people with mental health issues* (CHCMHS001) [Unit details](https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/CHCMHS001); and
* *Respond to client needs* (CHCCCS016) [Unit details](https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/CHCCCS016), which includes making appropriate referrals.

Both units are part of the nationally accredited Community Services Training Package (CHC) under the Australian Qualifications Framework (the list of courses currently included in the CHC package is available at: [CHC courses](https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/CHC)).

\* *Certificate IV in Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care* (CHC42315) has replaced *Certificate IV in Pastoral Care* (CHC41108).

The new *Certificate IV in Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care* builds on the previous certificate and covers all the required units. The main differences are:

* students must complete a 100-hour placement
* students must have undergone professional supervision
* training includes information on not entering into religious discussions and the importance of not proselytising.

NSCP chaplains who have previously been trained and are working under the current certificate requirements can continue to do so. *Certificate IV in Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care* (CHC42315) only applies to new NSCP chaplains.

### How can equivalent qualifications be assessed to see if they meet the minimum requirements?

Qualifications other than the Certificate IV in Youth Work, Certificate IV in Pastoral Care or Certificate IV in Pastoral Care and Chaplaincy need to be assessed for their suitability to meet the NSCP’s objectives and to ensure they provide at least equivalent levels of training in the required competencies.

Substantiating the equivalency of other qualifications/training can be undertaken through:

* the automatic assumption of equivalency where certain conditions are met; or
* employer self-assessment of equivalency.

### What qualifications will be considered for automatic equivalency?

Equivalency will be automatically assumed where the chaplaincy service provider, chaplain, or school can demonstrate that the chaplain holds:

* a Certificate IV or above that is part of the Community Services Training Package (CHC) and includes the ‘Work with people with mental health issues’ and ‘Respond to client needs’ competency units (the list of courses currently included in the CHC package is available at: [CHC08 courses](https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/CHC08)).
* a qualification that is listed on, or consistent with, the requirements for membership of, or registration with, one of the following professional bodies:
* the Psychology Board of Australia (PBA). The courses currently listed can be found at: [APB approved courses of study](http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Accreditation.aspx);
* the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW): [AASW accredited courses](http://www.aasw.asn.au/careers-study/accredited-courses).

### How can employers self-assess equivalency?

Where the appropriateness of the qualifications cannot be assessed through the conditions outlined above, the chaplaincy service provider or school may undertake a self-assessment of equivalency.

This process would need to provide evidence that the qualifications are:

* at a Certificate IV level or above; and
* considered (on face value appraisal) to be directly relevant to the NSCP objectives of supporting the emotional wellbeing of students by providing pastoral care services, and strategies that support the emotional wellbeing of the broader school community; and
* contain subjects/units/content relevant to the mental health and responding to client needs competencies.

Evidence could include:

* course, subject/unit descriptions (to show relevance to NSCP objectives); and
* transcripts showing units/subjects undertaken and related assessment (to show relevance to NSCP objectives and in meeting the NSCP’s minimum requirements).

The chaplaincy service provider or school must document this process and ensure that sufficient evidence is included to validate their decision-making. The Department reserves the right not to accept the claim for equivalency made by chaplaincy service providers or schools.

It is the responsibility of the chaplaincy service provider or school directly employing the chaplain to validate all qualifications and organise any additional training needed.

### How many hours of chaplaincy services need to be provided?

For the $20,280 provided via the NSCP, chaplains are required to provide a minimum of 400 hours of service per year.

### Can a chaplain conduct religious services or ceremonies or lead students or staff in religious observances?

#### Government Schools

Education in government schools is required by law to be secular. Chaplains working in a Victorian government school should not conduct religious services or ceremonies or lead students or staff in religious observances unless agreed to by the Principal.

#### Non-government schools

Chaplains working in non-government schools may conduct religious services or ceremonies or lead students or staff in religious observances as required.

### Can chaplains visit students’ homes to work with them?

NSCP chaplains should not visit students’ homes to work with them or their families.

### Do chaplains need to maintain records of the chaplaincy services?

#### Government Schools

The Department's [Chaplaincy Information, Records and Reporting Policy](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/health/nscpinformationpolicy.docx) must be adhered to by chaplaincy providers and chaplains providing services in government schools. The policy clarifies the roles, responsibilities and obligations of chaplaincy providers and chaplains who provide chaplaincy services in government schools in regard to information, records and reporting.

#### Non-Government Schools

Catholic and independent schools should follow the procedures established by their respective sectors.

### When can chaplaincy services be provided?

#### Government Schools

As per section 3.1(d) Chaplaincy Service Agreement, services in government schools should be provided during the school term and within school hours or at school-related activities approved by the school.

External events conducted by chaplaincy providers during school holidays (such as camps) cannot be considered as the provision of chaplaincy services and should not be included in the minimum of 400 hours of chaplaincy services which must be provided over the course of the year.

Similarly, attendance at such events by Chaplains should not be paid for by the school as part of the service delivery provided by Chaplains.

#### Non-Government Schools

Chaplains in non-government schools should be guided by the policies and practices which apply to their respective sectors.

### Can a chaplain attend camps and excursions?

#### Government Schools

Chaplains in government schools may attend camps and excursions organised by the school. Schools may include chaplains in supervision ratios for excursions, along with other adults such as parent volunteers and education support staff. For most excursions, teachers should comprise at least half the excursion staff. See the Department’s [Staffing and Supervision policy](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/staffing.aspx) for further detail.

#### Non-Government Schools

Non-government schools should seek their own advice about chaplains being included in supervision ratios for camps and excursions consistent with their employment or contractual arrangements**.**

### Can chaplains promote external events?

#### Government Schools

Chaplains in government schools should not promote external events run by religious organisations (such as camps, excursions, youth conferences, and guest speaker presentations) to students in their capacity as NSCP chaplains as this may be perceived as proselytising.

In the event that chaplains from government schools attend such events in a private capacity, they must not conduct themselves in a manner which impacts the delivery of their services under the NSCP, even in a private capacity.

#### Non-Government Schools

Chaplains in non-government schools should be guided by the policies and practices which apply to their respective sectors.

### Can chaplains undertake professional learning out-of-school hours or during school holidays?

#### Government Schools

It is the responsibility of the chaplaincy provider to ensure that the chaplain receives appropriate professional development (see section 4.1(d),(e) of the NSCP Provider Agreement). However, such activity should not be undertaken within the minimum 400 hours of chaplaincy services provided to a government school, unless agreed by the Principal.

#### Non-Government Schools

Chaplains in non-government schools should be guided by the policies and practices which apply to their respective sectors.

### Can chaplains support families involved in family court matters or legal proceedings?

Under the NSCP Code of Conduct, chaplains should not place themselves in a compromising situation when performing their duties.

Becoming involved in a parenting dispute, family law matter or other legal proceeding is not impartial and compromises the chaplain so that they can no longer provide unbiased support to students, families and the community. Likewise, assisting a parent or family to prepare for court proceedings falls outside the services a chaplain should be providing.

### Is there a prescribed dispute resolution procedure?

A chaplain is an employee of the chaplaincy provider. In the first instance, disputes between the Chaplain and the school or between the Chaplain and their employer should be resolved with the chaplain’s manager and the school principal as appropriate, according to the provider’s dispute resolution procedures.

In the event the employee and provider (and school) are unable to reach agreement about a matter that is affecting service delivery to the school, the Department may meet with the provider to discuss the matter in good faith and ensure the provider is complying with its obligations under the NSCP.

### Can chaplaincy service providers charge fees for their services?

The cost of the service fee charged by the chaplaincy provider should be in accordance with clause 2.9(c)(ii) of the Chaplaincy Service Agreement with the school. It is up to schools to secure value for money for the services they purchase.

## CHAPLAINCY SERVICE PROVIDERS

### What does a chaplaincy service provider do?

Chaplaincy service providers recruit, employ, train, supervise and support chaplains appointed to schools.

In the case of government schools, a chaplaincy service provider has to enter into a Provider Agreement with the Department to provide chaplaincy services.

In the case of non-government schools, individual schools may make their own arrange­­­ments with the provider.

Chaplaincy service providers and principals work collaboratively to select a chaplain for appointment to a school and to negotiate and document a work plan which details the duties and tasks the chaplain will undertake in the school.

Chaplaincy service providers are responsible for paying the salary and other employment-related costs for school chaplains providing services under the NSCP as outlined in the Service Agreement.

### Who can provide chaplaincy services to schools under the NSCP?

The NSCP is a different initiative from the former National School Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Programme (NSCSWP). Providers that operated under the NSCSWP may or may not offer services under the NSCP.

A chaplaincy provider who is able to provide chaplaincy services under the NSCP is any organisation which:

* can provide a chaplain in accordance with the NSCP guidelines; and
* in the case of Victorian government schools:
* enters into a NSCP Provider Agreement with the Department; and
* agrees to comply with the Department’s relevant policies and procedures .

The Department does not endorse any specific chaplaincy service provider(s). Chaplaincy services are provided by a wide range of community organisations that can offer services to schools. Schools should ensure that any organisation they wish to work with is able to meet NSCP requirements.

### Who are the current providers?

The Department has entered into NSCP Provider Agreements with the following providers:

| Provider | Website |
| --- | --- |
| CatholicCare Melbourne | [www.ccam.org.au](http://www.ccam.org.au) |
| CatholicCare Sandhurst | [www.ccds.org.au](http://www.ccds.org.au/) |
| CCCVaT School Support Services Ltd | [www.cccvat.com.au](http://www.cccvat.com.au) |
| Centacare Catholic Diocese of Ballarat Inc. | [www.centacareballarat.org.au](http://www.centacareballarat.org.au) |
| CHIPS (Christians Helping In Primary Schools) Inc. | [www.chips.org.au](http://www.chips.org.au) |
| Crossway Baptist Church | [www.crossway.org.au](http://www.crossway.org.au) |
| Discovery Community Care | [www.discoverycc.org.au](http://www.discoverycc.org.au) |
| Doncaster Church of Christ Inc. | [www.doncasterchurch.org.au](http://www.doncasterchurch.org.au) |
| Emerald Centre for Hope and Outreach (ECHO) Inc. | [echo.org.au](http://echo.org.au) |
| Generate Ministries | [generate.org.au](http://generate.org.au) |
| Grace Communion International Ltd | [www.gci.org.au](http://www.gci.org.au) |
| Kardinia Community Services | [www.kardiniachurch.com](http://www.kardiniachurch.com) |
| Korus Connect | [www.korusconnect.org.au](http://www.korusconnect.org.au/) |
| Life! Central Services | [www.lifecentral.org.au](http://www.lifecentral.org.au) |
| onPsych Chaplaincy Ltd | [www.onpsych.com.au](http://www.onpsych.com.au) |
| Scripture Union Victoria | [www.suvic.org.au](http://www.suvic.org.au) |
| Shepparton East Primary School Cooperative Ltd | [www.shepeastps.vic.edu.au](http://www.shepeastps.vic.edu.au) |
| The Salvation Army (Vic) Property Trust Inc. | [www.salvationarmy.org](http://www.salvationarmy.org) |
| The Village Uniting Church, Mount Eliza | [www.mteliza.unitingchurch.org.au](http://www.mteliza.unitingchurch.org.au) |
| Torquay Christian Fellowship | [www.tcfnet.org.au](http://www.tcfnet.org.au) |
| Werribee Baptist Church and Wyndham Community Benevolent Foundation Inc. | [www.werribeebaptist.org.au/home](http://www.werribeebaptist.org.au/home) |
| Young Life Australia Inc. | [younglife.org.au](https://younglife.org.au/) |
| Your Dream Inc. | [www.yourdreamschools.com](http://www.yourdreamschools.com) |

Providers may work with one or more schools. Schools are not required to use a provider from this list.

Schools can approach any organisation to deliver chaplaincy services as long as the organisation can provide a person who meets the definition of a chaplain and complies with the NSCP requirements (see the [Victorian NSCP Guidelines](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/mentalhealth/Pages/nscpchaplaincy.aspx)).

#### Government schools

The chaplaincy service provider must enter into a Provider Agreement with the Department to provide chaplaincy services in Victorian government schools.

Individual Victorian government school councils must also enter into a Service Agreement with the chaplaincy service provider.

#### Non-government schools

Non-government schools may make their own arrangements with the chaplaincy service provider or with the chaplain directly.

### Who will employ the chaplain for a government school?

In the case of Victorian government schools, the school council must enter into a Service Agreement with the chaplaincy service provider.

## CHAPLAINCY/LOCAL SUPPORT COMMITTEES

### Are schools required to establish a chaplaincy/local support committee?

There is no requirement for schools or chaplaincy service providers to establish such committees under the Victorian NSCP.

If a Victorian government school has entered into an agreement with a chaplaincy service provider relating to the establishment of chaplaincy/local support committees, the principal of that Victorian government school should contact the Department’s Legal Division for advice.

### Can schools establish a chaplaincy/local support committee to support the chaplaincy service?

Yes. Schools may create a chaplaincy/local support committee if needed. In many cases, existing student wellbeing committees may be able to support the role of the chaplain.

Such committees should operate within the established governance structures of the school.

In the case of a Victorian government school:

* the committee may be a sub-committee of the school council
* membership of the committee will be established by the school council, and must include the following conditions:
* consist of at least three members
* at least one member must be a school council member, and
* other members could include the chaplain; a chaplaincy service provider representative; a parent body/school community representative; local community representatives; and a student representative as appropriate; and
* the school council determines the purpose of the committee and its terms of reference;
* the committee must meet in accordance with any directions by the school council; and
* the committee must report to the school council in writing.

If a committee is established in this manner it does not require the school council to enter into a further written agreement with the chaplaincy service provider.

### What is the role of a chaplaincy/local support committee?

The purpose and role of the committee will be determined by the individual school/school council.

The purpose of chaplaincy/local support committees may include the following:

* act as an advisory body to assist the school Principal.
* assist the Principal with the planning and implementation of chaplaincy services
* assist the Principal to develop a work plan for the chaplain
* communicate and collaborate with the chaplain
* manage fundraising opportunities.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

### Where can I find further information about the NSCP?

Further information about NSCP requirements is available at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/mentalhealth/Pages/nscpchaplaincy.aspx>.

If you require further advice, please contact the Wellbeing, Health an Engagement Division via email at student.engagement@education.vic.gov.au