# NATIONAL SCHOOL CHAPLAINCY PROGRAMME

Frequently Asked Questions

## NATIONAL SCHOOL CHAPLAINCY PROGRAMME

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

The NSCP is a Commonwealth-funded Programme that provides funding to support the employment of chaplains 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, 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 (see FAQ20); or
* an equivalent qualification (as determined by the States), that must include competencies in mental health and responding to client needs.

### 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?

The NSCP states that chaplains may be from any 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 for four years, from 2015 to 2018.

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

The NSCP provides Victoria with approximately $12.25 million per annum for the engagement of chaplains in Victorian schools.

### How much funding is available?

Funding of up to $20,000 per school per annum is available. An additional $4000 is available for successful rural and 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 received two years of funding in 2015 and 2016. These schools have been offered an additional two years of funding, for 2017 and 2018.

### What do eligible schools need to do to receive the extension of funding?

Eligible schools were required to advise the Department if they wished to continue receiving NSCP funding.

Government schools are required to engage a chaplain through an approved chaplaincy service provider. They must enter into a new Service Agreement if engaging a new chaplaincy service provider, or provide a notice of intention in writing to the existing provider to extend the term of the current Service Agreement, and complete/sign the schedule.

Catholic and independent schools may engage the services of a chaplain through a chaplaincy service provider or through direct employment as appropriate.

### What do chaplaincy service providers need to do?

#### Government schools

In accordance with section 2.1 of the current Provider Agreement, the Department has extended the term of the agreement with chaplaincy service providers for a further two years to 31 December 2018.

Schools must still enter into a Service Agreement with the chaplaincy service provider. If a school gives notice of intention in writing to extend its Service Agreement with its existing chaplaincy service provider, the Schedule to the Agreement must be signed by both parties. A copy of the signed Service Agreement should be sent to the Department.

#### Non-government schools

Catholic and independent schools may make their own arrangements directly with the chaplain or chaplaincy service provider.

### 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 original NSCP applications assessed?

A cross-sectoral panel comprising representatives from the Department of Education and Training, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and Independent Schools Victoria assessed and made decisions about funding according to an agreed set of selection criteria. These criteria were:

* demonstrated need
* integration of chaplain with school’s wellbeing team
* availability of other wellbeing services
* whether a school has an existing chaplaincy service.

The criteria were weighted in the order listed above, meaning that an existing chaplaincy service was not the most important criteria in determining an application’s outcome. This was necessary to ensure that schools that did not previously have a chaplaincy service had an equal chance of obtaining funding.

Schools in disadvantaged communities were well represented among the successful schools, and demonstrated a high level of need for additional student wellbeing support.

## Service Agreements

### Why was the Service Agreement revised?

The schedule in the Service Agreement was revised in 2017 to improve transparency in relation to fees charged by chaplaincy service providers.

### 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.

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).

Both units are part of the nationally accredited Community Services Training Package (CHC08) under the Australian Qualifications Framework (the list of courses currently included in the CHC08 package is available at: [CHC08 courses](https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/CHC08)).

\*A new *Certificate IV in Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care* (CHC42315) has been developed to replace the current *Certificate IV in Pastoral Care* (CHC41108). The new certificate was released in August 2015 and updated in December 2015.

The new *Certificate in Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care* builds on the current 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 (CHC08) and includes the ‘Work with people with mental health issues‘ and ‘Respond to client needs’ and competency units (the list of courses currently included in the CHC08 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 $20,000 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 goverrnment 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 but should not be included when the school is calculating supervision ratios.

#### 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](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/health/nscpprovideragreement2017-18.docx)). 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 |
| --- | --- |
| ACCESS Ministries | <https://www.accessministries.org.au> |
| CatholicCare Melbourne | <http://www.ccam.org.au> |
| CatholicCare Sandhurst | https://www.ccds.org.au |
| CCCVaT School Support Services Ltd | <http://www.cccvat.com.au> |
| Centacare Catholic Diocese of Ballarat Inc | <https://www.centacareballarat.org.au> |
| CHIPS (Christians Helping In Primary Schools) Inc | <http://www.chips.org.au> |
| Crossway Baptist Church | <http://www.crossway.org.au> |
| Discovery Church | <http://www.discoverychurch.com.au> |
| Doncaster Church of Christ Inc | <https://www.doncasterchurch.org.au> |
| Emerald Centre for Hope and Outreach (ECHO) Inc | <http://echo.org.au> |
| Generate Ministries | <http://generate.org.au> |
| Grace Communion International Ltd | <https://www.gci.org/churches/australia> |
| Kardinia Community Services | <https://www.kardiniachurch.com> |
| Life! Central Services | <http://lifecentral.org.au/> |
| onPsych School Welfare Pty Ltd | <http://www.onpsych.com.au> |
| Scripture Union Victoria | <http://www.suvic.org.au> |
| Shepparton East Primary School Cooperative Ltd | <http://www.shepeastps.vic.edu.au> |
| The Salvation Army (Vic) Property Trust Inc | <https://www.salvationarmy.org> |
| The Village Uniting Church, Mount Eliza | <http://www.mteliza.unitingchurch.org.au> |
| Torquay Christian Fellowship | <http://www.tcfnet.org.au> |
| Werribee Baptist Church and Wyndham Community Benevolent Foundation Inc | <https://www.werribeebaptist.org.au/home> |
| Yarra Valley Vineyard Christian Fellowship Inc | <http://www.vineyard.org.au/vineyard-churches/yarra-valley-vineyard-christian-fellowship> |
| Young Life Australia Inc | <http://younglife.org.au/> |
| Your Dream Inc | <https://www.yourdreamschools.com/> |
| Youth for Christ Australia Inc | <https://yfc.org.au/> |

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

Under the NSCP 2015–18, 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.

### Why can’t Victorian government schools employ a chaplain directly?

Under the NSCP agreement, the Commonwealth Government has defined 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 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.

The *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic) prohibits a non-religious body, such as a Victorian government school, from discriminating against a job applicant on the basis of the person’s religious belief/activity or lack of religious belief/activity. In order to give effect to the requirements of the NSCP agreement and not breach anti-discrimination laws, schools are required to engage third party chaplaincy service providers to provide chaplaincy services.

### 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@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:student.engagement@edumail.vic.gov.au)