

**MEMORANDUM TO
PRINCIPALS
SCHOOL EDUCATION DIRECTORS
REGIONAL DIRECTORS**

DN/07/00089

SUBJECT: Commonwealth *National School Chaplaincy Programme*

Dear Principals

Further to my memorandum of 15 December 2006, I can report that the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) has now issued guidelines on the *National School Chaplaincy Programme*. These guidelines are available at http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/policy_initiatives_reviews/key_issues/school_chaplaincy_programme/

In summary, the guidelines say that the aim of the program is to assist school communities to support the spiritual wellbeing of their students, providing greater pastoral care and enhancing engagement with the broader community.

School communities may apply for annual support of up to \$20,000 to engage a school chaplain. The program is voluntary and parents must be informed about the availability of chaplaincy services and given the choice to opt out. There must be extensive consultation with, and support from, the broader school community, about the demand for and role of a chaplain. The person chosen for the role does not have to be called a 'chaplain' and can be a lay person. They will be subject to child protection and criminal history screening.

The funding agreement must be between DEST and an approved organisation that is a legally incorporated entity. Schools will be expected to contribute, by cash and/or in kind. Any decision to provide school resources as "cash-in-kind" support, such as office accommodation or administrative support, must be made by the principal and will need to take account of overall school administrative needs. The funding agreement will include a requirement to risk assess and develop strategies to manage risks, to report on outcomes achieved under the program and to acknowledge the contribution of the Australian Government and DEST.

You may be aware that in a Memorandum to Principals in October 1995, the then Director-General, when releasing material on the implementation of *Special Religious Education (SRE)* in schools, indicated that schools were not to establish chaplaincy positions. It remains the position of the Department that *SRE* should be delivered consistent with section 32 of the *Education Act* and DET policy on Religious Education which makes no mention of chaplains. See https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/curriculum/schools/spec_religious/PD20020074_i.shtml

The Department, however, does not object to chaplains or pastoral care workers assisting "schools and their communities to provide greater pastoral care, general religious and personal advice and comfort to students and staff" as outlined in the objectives of the Commonwealth program.

This is a Commonwealth program administered by the federal Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). The NSW Department of Education and Training will not administer this program centrally. However, NSW government school communities may make applications directly to the Commonwealth for funding under this program consistent with the published DEST guidelines.

Funding arrangements outlined in those guidelines say that the Australian Government will make payments on the basis of a funding agreement with a school community organisation registered under the *Investing in Our Schools Programme* or via a nominated 'project sponsor'. School communities giving consideration to making an application should read the DEST guidelines and seek clarification if necessary by contacting the DEST Hotline on 1300 363 079.

So that we may monitor interest in this program by NSW public schools, it would be appreciated if Principals would inform their School Education Director if the school community makes an application to DEST under this program.

Andrew Cappie Wood

**DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF TAFE NSW**

2 March 2007