

NEWS ITEM

What is chaplaincy?

When the Federal Government announced its chaplaincy programme (The National School Chaplaincy Programme (NSCP)) it took many schools and churches by surprise. Chaplains were unheard of in the public education sector in NSW, although they do exist in other States and sectors.

Many principals, P&C bodies and school communities may have no way of ascertaining whether they need a chaplain, how to apply or who to appoint.

The decision about whether a chaplain will be of benefit to a school is one that needs to be made by the school community in consultation with the principal and this includes parents and citizens.

Religious beliefs

The NSCP guidelines highlight the need to respect the range of religious views and cultural traditions in the school and the broader community. It is at this point that all Anglicans can and should have a say about what happens in their school.

Things to keep in mind

SRE is primarily religious education and not pastoral care. CEY Ministries encourages all Anglicans to see the NSCP as complementary to the SRE programs that already exist.

There will need to be clear local guidelines set for chaplains/pastoral care workers that comply with the NSCP Guidelines and Code of Conduct and that differentiate the role from that of SRE teacher (especially if the one person is fulfilling both functions in a school).

Engaging a Christian chaplain

Where it has been ascertained, by investigation and consultation, that the school community would like to appoint a Christian chaplain the process of negotiation and application begins.

ICCOREIS, representing thirteen Christian denominations, is well placed to provide consultancy services in this area. ICCOREIS has recently engaged the services of an expert in the field of education, Peter Harnwell, a retired secondary school principal.

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Try this Quick Quiz:

- Do you want your child or grandchild, niece or nephew to have access to a chaplain/pastoral care worker at his/her school?
- Are you part of the school council or P&C at your local school, or are you willing to become informed and involved?

Only continue on if the answers are YES

Then here are some questions you could ask your school community:

- Does the P&C/ School council have chaplaincy on their agenda before May?
- Is there a need in the school for spiritual and personal advice and comfort eg in times of grief, separation, trauma?
- Are the values for Australian Schooling ones which this school seeks to promote and does the school need help to do this? (see guidelines – attachment B).
- Does the school have funds or “in-kind support” (such as access to premises, availability of equipment, use of a motor vehicle) that it can contribute towards the school chaplain?
- How will chaplaincy and SRE work together in the school?

The latest NSCP guidelines and applications can be accessed at:

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/policy_initiatives_reviews/key_issues/school_chaplaincy_programme/default.htm