

The Distinctiveness of Chaplaincy
within a
Framework of School Support Services

Chaplaincy Services Division

ACCESS ministries

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Executive Summary

Caring for people within school communities speaks to the core business of education. Meeting the physical, psychological and spiritual needs of school community members is important as schools aim to develop the whole person and produce resilient, competent and successful individuals.

A variety of support services are required to meet the diverse range of needs presented within a school community. Schools often have a range of services provided within their school and community, with services from psychologists, social workers, counsellors, nurses and chaplains all being common support service providers.

These professional services have areas of similarity and distinction. Counsellors, nurses and social workers all provide counselling of some kind, nurses provide health related education, psychologists provide psychological assessment and diagnosis, and chaplains provide pastoral care and encourage spiritual wellbeing.

Providing a holistic and well rounded approach to student well-being is both important and costly. The cost of chaplaincy is far less than many other school support services.

The distinct role of chaplains in providing pastoral care to the school community provides a link between the physical, psychological and spiritual wellbeing of school community members. Chaplaincy also provides a constant presence and ongoing care for all those within the school community. In this way, chaplains are able to provide another dimension of care not offered by other caring professions.

Introduction

There is no doubt that the core business of schools in our society is to educate. “It is widely acknowledged that formal education is the key to a successful future in which students will make a significant and positive contribution to society. Formal education begins at school” (The Government of Western Australia (Department of Education), 2010).

Caring for students and others within school communities speaks to this core business of education. Allowing for students and families to receive assistance from a network of caring professionals, even if this means a temporary withdrawal from class or school activities, allows the school to continue with its core business while those in need receive care and adequate attention. “Students are better prepared for learning when they are healthy, safe and happy. ... [This] requires that each young person is educated in an environment which provides for their individual development” (State of Victoria (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development), 2010).

In their study on resilient behaviours in young people, Howard and Johnson (2000) provide a summary of protective factors which influence young people towards resilient behaviour. Importantly, Howard and Johnson list factors within the school and community that can assist a young person towards displaying resilient behaviours. These factors include: School support staff; supportive and protective adults; a caring, safe and secure school climate; and special programs within the school community.

It is important that schools work towards meeting the needs of those within their community so that the best outcomes for students can be achieved. Because of the variety and complexity of issues presented within school communities, a variety of services and supports are necessary to assist the school in achieving their best possible outcomes. Meeting the needs of school community members physically, psychologically and spiritually are all important as schools aim to develop the whole person and produce resilient, competent and successful individuals. This demands a variety of support services to assist teachers and educators in achieving the school's core business of education.

Within the myriad of support services, chaplaincy is a position which exists to provide a spiritual and pastoral presence to meet needs within a school. The key purpose is to provide the school community with pastoral care. Pastoral care within school chaplaincy aims to provide general spiritual and personal advice, comfort and support to all members of the school community in response to the diverse concerns experienced by students, staff and families. These concerns may relate to family matters, social interactions, coping strategies and questions about the meaning of life.

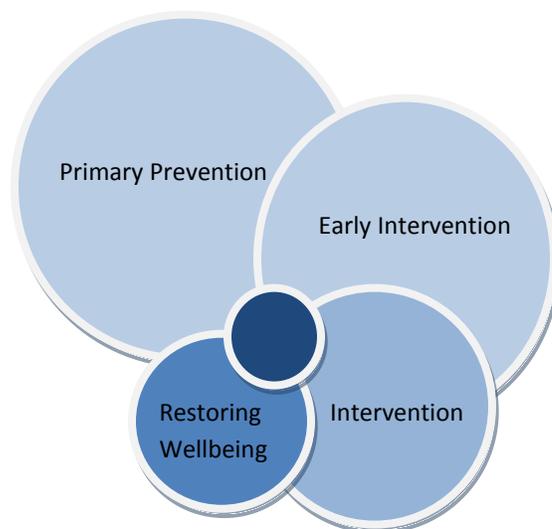
With Counsellors, Social Workers, Chaplains, Nurses and Psychologists providing school support services, what are the points of distinction between these services and how do these services overlap? This paper aims to provide a summary of some school support services and to display how chaplaincy provides a point of distinction in this service provision.

A Framework of School Support Services

To provide a variety of protective factors, and a network of caring adults, schools utilise professionals across a range of disciplines to assist in meeting the needs of their school community. Providing care to a school community often involves the work of a multi-disciplinary team of professionals working towards assisting those within the school community to meet a variety of needs. Many other organisations, such as hospitals, companies, sports clubs and government departments, utilise multi-disciplinary health and wellbeing teams to improve their outcomes. Because schools consist of complex systems with multiple areas of need, it is best practice to utilise a multi-disciplinary approach to achieve higher outcomes.

The Victorian Government’s Framework for Student Support Services is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Framework for Student Support Services



(State of Victoria (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development), 2010).

This framework displays the requirement of a variety of services, and a tiered level of access to those services, in order for school community members to be provided with adequate care depending on individual circumstances and need.

The framework recognises “primary prevention and early intervention as the most effective means of enhancing the resilience of young people” (State of Victoria (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development), 2010).

Understanding the Different Roles

There are many different professional services offered to a school community to provide care and support to individuals and groups within their community. Some of these professions and their key duties are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Key duties of various positions within a multi-disciplinary school support team.

Chaplain ¹	Counsellor ²	Nurse ³	Social Worker ⁴	Psychologist ⁵
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Building relationships and being present in the school community -Pastorally caring for all members of the school community -Implementation of preventative and proactive programs -Promoting thinking about spiritual wellbeing -Referral to and connection with other government and community support services -Connection with church and community groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Counselling students -Assisting parents to make decisions about their child's education -Assessing students' learning and behaviour -Assisting schools in matters of student disability -Liaising with other agencies about student well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Health promotion and education -Individual student health counselling and assessment -School community development activities -Resource and referral service to assist healthy life style choices for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Counselling -Development of programs, procedures and policy to support students and the school community -Supporting designated students and families -Often providing support to a large number of schools within a network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Psychological assessment and diagnosis -Consultative and advisory service for staff -Planning, implementing and evaluating services for the educational, social and emotional development of students -Supporting a designated client base -Often providing support to a large number of schools within a network

1. (ACCESS ministries, 2010)
2. (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2010)
3. (State of Victoria (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development), 2010a)
4. (State of Victoria (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development), 2010b)
5. (State of Victoria (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development), 2010c)

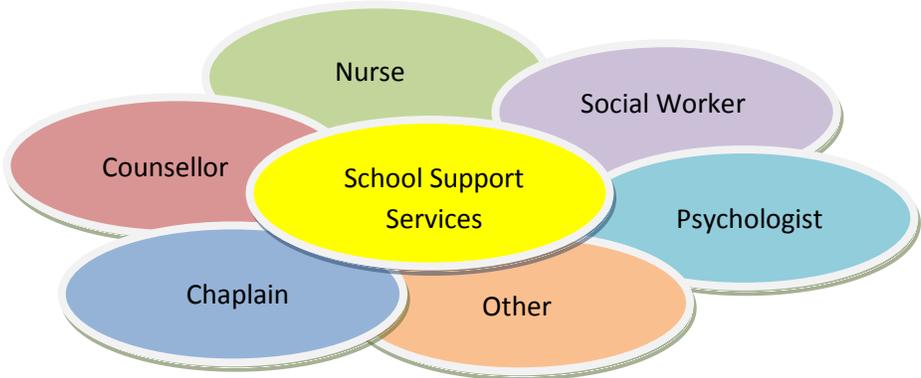
Table 1 shows the similarities and differences between some key positions in a school support team. Some of these roles overlap in the provision of services while others are distinct in their service provision.

Distinctions include: Nurses providing education around health issues; psychologists providing psychological assessment and diagnosis; and counsellors assisting schools in matters of student disability.

Similarities include: Counsellors, nurses and social workers all providing counselling of some kind; and chaplains, counsellors and nurses all providing referral and liaison services with external agencies.

Figure 2 displays how these services work together, but with distinction, to provide support for those within school communities.

Figure 2: School Support Services within School Communities.



The Cost of the Different Roles

The cost of the different support services to school communities can vary considerably.

Most chaplains are employed by not-for-profit religious organisations and placed within the school. Chaplain’s salaries are often paid for by a combination of school and community fundraising, with more than 50% of funding being raised with church and community support. As such, the cost to the school community is normally considerably less than the other services provided. ¹

School counsellors are employees of the school, and are predominantly teaching staff with additional training and experience, and as such are paid according to their respective teaching salary.²

School Nurses within Victoria are employees of the Department of Human Services and are placed in the school.³

Social Workers and Psychologists are employees of their state Education Department and are predominantly placed within a Region to supply services to a number of schools within a network.^{4 5}

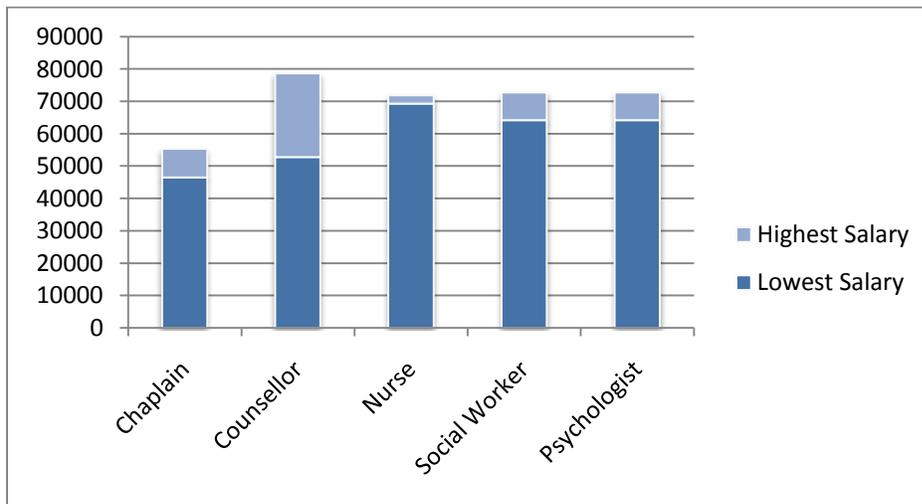
The range of salary costs associated with the different services is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Salaries of Various School Support Professionals

Position	Chaplain	Counsellor ²	Nurse ³	Social Worker ⁴	Psychologist ⁵
Lowest Salary	46527	52745	69288	64150	64150
Highest Salary	55310	78667	71872	72785	72785

These same figures are represented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Salaries of Various School Support Professionals



1. (ACCESS ministries, 2010a)
2. (abcdiamond, 2009)
3. (State of Victoria (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development), 2010a)
4. (State of Victoria (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development), 2010b)
5. (State of Victoria (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development), 2010c)

The Distinctiveness of Chaplaincy

The National School Chaplaincy Program identified one aspect of the chaplaincy role as to “support the spiritual wellbeing of their students, including strengthening values, providing greater pastoral care and enhancing engagement with the broader community” (Australian Government (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations), 2010).

One strong distinctive of the chaplaincy role is the provision of pastoral care for all members of the school community. A definition of pastoral care is provided by the Royal Melbourne Hospital (2010): “Pastoral care is concerned with, and upholds, the importance of the holistic care of individuals by addressing the connections between physical, psychological and spiritual wellbeing.”

Pastoral care within school chaplaincy aims to respond to the diverse spiritual and emotional concerns experienced by students, staff and families within the school community. Pastoral care “seeks to address a person's present needs within their unique circumstances, frameworks of meaning, and spiritual expression” (Royal Melbourne Hospital, 2010). In line with this understanding, “Chaplains are expected to provide general religious and personal advice, comfort and support to all students and staff, regardless of their religious denomination, irrespective of their religious beliefs.” (Australian Government (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations), 2010).

The distinct role of chaplains in providing pastoral care to the school community provides a link in care between the physical, psychological and spiritual wellbeing of school community members. In this way, chaplains are able to provide another dimension of care not offered by other caring professions.

In his report on the benefits of school chaplaincy in 2009, Hughes writes the following:

“Chaplains may be described as supporting the spiritual health of young people as they encourage them to see themselves as individuals of worth and dignity, as they help them to find direction in life and relate respectfully and positively to others... Chaplains do contribute to 'supporting spiritual health' in ways that differentiate them from most school psychologists and teachers. They explicitly encourage students to think about the issues of meaning and direction in life.”

Hughes (2009) goes on to describe three ways in which chaplains provide this support:

“1. General spiritual support. Chaplains deal frequently with spirituality and 'big picture' issues of life in their discussions with students... While chaplains are conscious they should not impose their own belief systems on students, they do encourage students to think about the big issues of life for themselves...”

2. Particular religious support. Chaplains also provide encouragement and support for students who have particular religious beliefs... The chaplain provides a context where specific, as well as general, religious and spiritual issues can be discussed...

3. Crisis support. When crises occur, such as the death of a relative or a friend, people often begin to ask the big questions of what life is all about. They seek an understanding of the limits of life in death. They ask questions about good and evil and about justice and fairness, about loss and grief. At time of crisis, chaplains have a special role in helping people to think through and come to grips with what has occurred.”

Chaplaincy is distinctively different from other support services provided to school communities as chaplaincy is the only profession that addresses the spiritual needs of individuals and the community as a whole.

Chaplaincy is also distinctively different in the way that it provides a *presence within* and *pastoral care to* all those within the school community. In this way, chaplaincy becomes part of the fabric of the school, promoting and building positive relationships, implementing proactive programs and encouraging the wider community to be involved in the life of the school. All of these things are essential ingredients in building resilience in young people (Howard & Johnson, 2000), and because of this chaplaincy provides great strength to a school community.

This strength is often witnessed in the chaplain’s personal intervention and involvement in crisis situations impacting on the life of a school community. Chaplains, who have been present in the school, building relationships and understanding interactions, are present within the school in times of crisis to assist students, staff and families. In these situations the chaplain is able to provide a listening ear, a caring word, connections between community members, referral to appropriate services, and to engage in conversations about the meaning of life.

Working together

Chaplains are an essential part of schools providing holistic care to those within their school community. Chaplains work alongside Counsellors, Nurses, Social Workers, Psychologists and other professionals in school well-being teams. As these professions work together to provide care to those within our school communities, students, staff and families all experience the benefit of collaborative work. Multi-disciplinary teams provide a strength that comes with diversity as each profession brings unique and specific skills to the fore. It is necessary for all caring professionals within a school to work together to provide the means and methods for young people to build resilience and positive life skills. In this way, the physical, mental and spiritual well-being needs of our young people can be adequately addressed.

Conclusion

The core business of schools is to educate young people towards becoming competent, resilient and successful members of society. In this aim to develop the whole person, schools provide members of their community with a variety of support services along with educational opportunities.

A framework of support services can range from primary prevention, early intervention, intervention and restoration of wellbeing. This tiered approach to support services can involve the input of many different professions all working towards the wellbeing of those in the school community. These professions can include Counsellors, Nurses, Social Workers, Psychologists and Chaplains. School communities benefit from the collaborative work of multi-disciplinary teams of professionals working together towards the good of those within the community. These professions provide specific and unique skills and it is the diversity within these teams which provides the greatest strength.

One distinctly unique and valuable contribution to the life of any school is through a chaplaincy program. School chaplains are involved in pastorally caring for the whole school community, providing a presence and building positive relationships with a variety of stakeholders. School chaplains also provide a unique point of difference in addressing the spiritual needs of a school community and promote thinking about spiritual wellbeing. In this way, a school chaplain becomes part of the fabric of the school community, pastorally caring for those in need, modelling positive relationships and implementing proactive programs. A chaplain also encourages involvement between the wider community and the school community as both groups work together towards positive outcomes for our young people. Because of the church and community fund raising that can be a part of a chaplaincy program, the cost of this service to the school community can be significantly reduced, providing a very cost effective service.

Because of these points of distinction, school chaplaincy is a unique service that adds value, depth and another dimension to any school community.

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