

National Student Wellbeing Program

NSW Guidelines for 2023 to 2027



Australian Government



**Catholic
Schools
NSW**

1. Overview

About the National Student Wellbeing Program (NSWP)

The NSWP 2023 to 2027 is an initiative funded by the Commonwealth Government to support the wellbeing of Australian school students through chaplaincy and/or student wellbeing services. The program runs in government, Catholic and independent schools throughout Australia

This program was previously called the National School Chaplaincy Program (NSCP). The NSW Government has administered the NSCP in NSW on behalf of the Commonwealth Government since 2015. From 2023, schools may choose to engage chaplains and/or student wellbeing officers, subject to the requirements set out below in Sections 3 and 4.

NSWP funds can be spent on the provision of pastoral care services (including chaplain and/or wellbeing officer wages) and strategies that support the wellbeing of the broader school community, developed in consultation with the school community, relevant school staff and school principals. These may include volunteering activities, breakfast clubs, excursions, lunchtime activities and parent/carer workshops.

The NSWP is intended to complement services provided by qualified specialists. The NSWP is not designed or intended to provide specialist services to school students, such as professional counselling, professional mental health and psychological services and other allied health services. In addition, the NSWP is not a religious program and does not provide religious instruction or religious counselling to students.

Participation in the NSWP is voluntary for schools and students.

2. Program summary

This document has been prepared for school years 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026 and 2027. It should be read in conjunction with the National Student Wellbeing Program Schedule 2023 to 2027 made between the Commonwealth and the states and territories.

NSW arrangements

The NSW Government administers the NSWP on behalf of the Commonwealth by working with government and non-government sector authorities. Arrangements are as follows:

- Schools who participated in the program in 2022 will receive funding for the 2023 calendar year.
- An application round for all schools will be open in mid-2023, for funding from 2024-2027.

- If a school discontinues participation in the NSW program, their sector authority holds discretion to allocate funding to another school and advise the Department.
- Where a school sources a chaplain or wellbeing officer through a provider, the school may select a provider who best meets its needs.
- NSW government schools are required to purchase services using the Department's procurement processes. A prequalified list of chaplaincy and student wellbeing service providers will be published on the Department's website.
- NSW government schools may inquire about adding a new provider to the prequalified list.
- Non-government and Catholic schools are not required to select a provider from a prequalified list. However, schools must ensure that providers meet the criteria for chaplains and wellbeing officers as described in Sections 3 and 4 below.
- In accordance with the NSW Schedule, the Cross Sector Panel will prioritise schools for participation based on agreed assessment criteria and selection methodology, as well as against any sector-specific criteria.
- It is a Commonwealth Government requirement that funding is only available for school chaplains and student wellbeing officers as detailed in Sections 3 and 4 below. The NSW is not a religious program and cannot be used to provide religious instruction or religious counselling.

Cross sector panel

The NSW Department of Education has established a Cross Sector Panel consisting of government, Catholic and independent school representatives. This is a requirement under the NSW Schedule.

The Cross Sector Panel is responsible for selecting and prioritising schools for program participation. (See [Cross Sector Panel – Terms of reference](#)).

Funding arrangements

The NSW Department of Education, through funding agreements, provides funding to the sector authorities for allocation to individual schools.

As a condition of funding, participating schools will be required to complete reporting and evaluation activities as requested by the sector authority.

A minimum requirement will be for schools to:

- confirm that a chaplain or student wellbeing officer, funded by the NSW, is attached to the school
- provide a report on the number of funded NSW hours received over the course of the year
- provide a financial acquittal at the end of the school year

- provide an example of how the NSWP has supported the wellbeing of a school community within the program year. (Note: this example may be published or used in the evaluation of the NSWP.)

Schools will be eligible to apply for up to \$20,280 per annum, or up to \$24,336 per annum for remote or very remote schools.

School funding allocations will be determined by sector authorities, based on the number of wellbeing service hours to be provided and the overall funding available.

3. Information on applying

All schools in NSW are eligible to apply for funding for program years 2023 to 2027.

Schools can apply for NSWP funding through their relevant sector authority:

NSW Government Schools:

Email: nationalwellbeingprograms@det.nsw.edu.au

Website: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/student-wellbeing/whole-school-approach/wellbeing-support/nscp1>

Catholic Schools:

Email: wellbeing@csnsw.catholic.edu.au

Website: <https://www.csnsw.catholic.edu.au/national-student-wellbeing-program/>

Independent Schools:

Email: dmelrose-rae@aisnsw.edu.au

Website: <https://www.aisnsw.edu.au/teachers-and-staff/funded-programs-and-projects/national-school-wellbeing-program>

Selection methodology

Sector authorities will prioritise schools for participation based on an assessment of school applications against the **core criteria** and **common conditions**, listed below, as well as against any sector-specific criteria.

Selection of schools will include consideration of need, distribution between sectors and other school wellbeing support arrangements.

Each sector authority will manage its own application process. This includes developing sector-specific application forms and setting opening and closing dates for applications.

Each sector authority will assess its applications and forward their recommended list to the NSW Cross Sector Panel. Schools will be eligible for the program once the panel has endorsed the lists.

It is anticipated that participating schools will be announced at the end of Term 3, 2023.

Core criteria

Schools are to provide evidence that:

- demonstrates a need for a chaplain or student wellbeing officer
- shows how wellbeing services will complement existing student support services.

Common conditions

Common conditions are those that apply to all participating schools, providers, chaplains and student wellbeing officers. Schools that apply must show they will put in place appropriate processes that will ensure that:

- i. participation by schools and students is voluntary.
- ii. chaplains and student wellbeing officers may be of any faith or of no faith.
- iii. chaplains and student wellbeing officers must:
 - a. not proselytise;
 - b. respect, accept and be sensitive to other people's views, values and beliefs;
 - c. promote a safe and inclusive school community, where all people are respected;
 - d. have relevant and valid State and Territory Working With Children or Vulnerable People Checks. Where chaplains and student wellbeing officers are not required to have a valid Working with Children or Vulnerable People Check in a State, that State will be responsible for putting in place appropriate processes to ensure that chaplains and student wellbeing officers undertake a National Police Check; and
 - e. meet the NSW's minimum qualification and professional development requirements as set out in Items 5c and 5d of the NSW schedule.
- iv. chaplains and student wellbeing officers are to be aware of and:
 - a. comply with State and Territory laws and policies in relation to child protection and child safety matters;
 - b. comply with, relevant legislation relating to requirements for working with children, and relevant legislation relating to mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect;
 - c. have regard to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (which in 2022, can be viewed on the Australian Human Rights Commission website at <https://childsafeframework.gov.au/national-principles>);
 - d. have regard to the national policies and strategies led by the National Office for Child Safety, including the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework (<https://www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/commonwealth-child-safe-framework-policy-document>).

4. Requirements for chaplains and student wellbeing officers

Chaplains and student wellbeing officers must participate in any reporting or NSWSP evaluation requirements, as requested by the school/sector.

Chaplains and student wellbeing officers must appropriately acknowledge and recognise the roles of the Commonwealth and NSW Governments in the content of any events, announcements, promotional material or publicity relating to activities under the NSWSP.

Qualifications

Chaplains and student wellbeing officers are required to hold a minimum qualification or qualifications equivalent to or higher than a Certificate IV as determined by the States, and this qualification or qualifications must include competencies in:

- mental health and making appropriate referrals; and
- providing pastoral care, and/or working with youth.

Chaplains and student wellbeing officers are also required to undertake a professional learning package in responding to and preventing cyberbullying delivered by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner within three months of commencing NSWSP services and refresh this professional learning at least once every two and a half years. Further detail is below.

In addition to meeting the NSWSP's minimum qualification requirements, a chaplain for the purposes of the NSWSP is 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 through endorsement by a recognised or accepted religious institution.

In addition to meeting the NSWSP's minimum qualification requirements, a student wellbeing officer for the purposes of the NSWSP is an individual who is recognised:

- by school community and the appropriate governing authority for the school as having the skills and experience to deliver student wellbeing services to the school community.

Compulsory professional learning package

All chaplains and student wellbeing officers who are funded under the NSWSP are to complete a three-hour online professional learning package (PLP) aimed at responding to and preventing cyberbullying. The PLP was developed and delivered by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner.

Registration for training is at: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/training-for-professionals/national-school-chaplaincy-program>

Chaplains and student wellbeing officers will be required to provide their professional learning Certificate of Completion to their employers. Schools may also request a copy of the certificate. Employers may also be asked to provide a copy of the certificate to the Department of Education to assist with meeting the requirements of the NSW Schedule.

5. Complaints management

NSW Government Schools

Complaints to government schools about a school chaplain, student wellbeing officer, or the provider of services under the NSW Schedule will be dealt with by the school principal in line with Department of Education Complaints Handling policy and the school's own complaints/grievance handling processes. Government schools must also report complaints to the NSW Department of Education, which will maintain a record of NSW Schedule-related complaints.

Catholic Schools

Catholic schools must enact their general complaints handling processes for managing complaints related to individual chaplains or wellbeing officers. In accordance with the program guidelines, Catholic Schools NSW must be notified of any complaints against chaplains or wellbeing officers. Notifications should be made to Nathan Smith (*Senior Policy Officer, Wellbeing*) nathan.smith@csnsw.catholic.edu.au.

Independent Schools

NSW independent schools should enact their general complaints handling processes for managing complaints related to individual chaplains or wellbeing officers. Schools who receive NSW funding through the Association of Independent Schools of NSW (AISNSW) should notify the AISNSW of any complaints received, by emailing dmelrose-rae@aisnsw.edu.au.