

# **National School Chaplaincy Program**

**Northern Territory Handbook**

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# INTRODUCTION

## What is the National School Chaplaincy Program?

The Australian Government funded National School Chaplaincy Program (the Program) supports the delivery of school chaplaincy services in the Northern Territory (NT) through the provision of a conditional grant of financial assistance, which is administered by the Department of Education.

The aim of the Program is to support the emotional wellbeing of Australian school students through:

- pastoral services and strategies
- strategies developed in consultation with the relevant school staff and school principal that support the wellbeing of the broader school community, for example: coordinating volunteering activities and support, breakfast clubs, lunch time activities, excursions, school incursions, and parent/carer workshops.

The Program commenced on 1 January 2015 and replaces the former Australian Government funded National School Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program (NSCSWP), which ceased at the end of 2014 and was funded directly to schools.

## Program objectives

The aim of the Program is to support the emotional wellbeing of Australian school students through:

- pastoral services and strategies
- strategies developed in consultation with the relevant school staff and school principal that support the wellbeing of the broader school community, for example: coordinating volunteering activities and support, breakfast clubs, lunch time activities, excursions, school incursions, and parent/carer workshops.

The Program assists school communities to support the general spiritual, social and emotional comfort to all students, irrespective of their faith or beliefs. This can include support and guidance about ethics, values, relationships, spiritual issues, and the provision of student welfare and enhancement of engagement with the broader community.

The Program allows qualified chaplains, who meet the program criteria, to provide chaplaincy services to all schools.

## General principles

The following general principles apply to the Program:

- participation in the Program by a school is voluntary
- accessing chaplaincy services by a student is voluntary, even in those schools participating in the Program  
(Schools must inform students and parents of the voluntary nature of the chaplaincy services program and ensure that adequate permission arrangements are in place to confirm prior parental/guardian consent. Schools must ensure that all students, parents and school community members are fully advised of the appropriate consent procedures.)
- chaplains may be from any faith
- chaplains must:
  - not proselytise
  - respect, accept and be sensitive to other people's views, values and beliefs
  - comply with NT laws and policies in relation to child protection matters
  - have regard to the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, and the relevant state and territory responses to the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse (Volume 6 – Making institutions child safe, Volume 10 – Children with harmful sexual behaviours and Volume 13 – Schools)
  - have relevant and valid State and Territory Working With Children or Vulnerable Person Checks
  - [meet the Program's minimum qualification requirements](#);
  - undertake professional learning in responding to and preventing bullying and cyberbullying provided by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner.

## National School Chaplaincy Program Project Agreement 2019-2022

The parameters, role and responsibilities associated with the Program are set out in the [National School Chaplaincy Program Project Agreement 2019-2022](#).

It is recommended that schools participating in the Program, also read the Project Agreement.

## Chaplaincy Services in Schools Policy and Guidelines

Schools must adhere to the requirements of the [Chaplaincy Services in Schools Policy and Guidelines](#) when engaging the services of a school chaplain.

## **CROSS SECTOR PANEL**

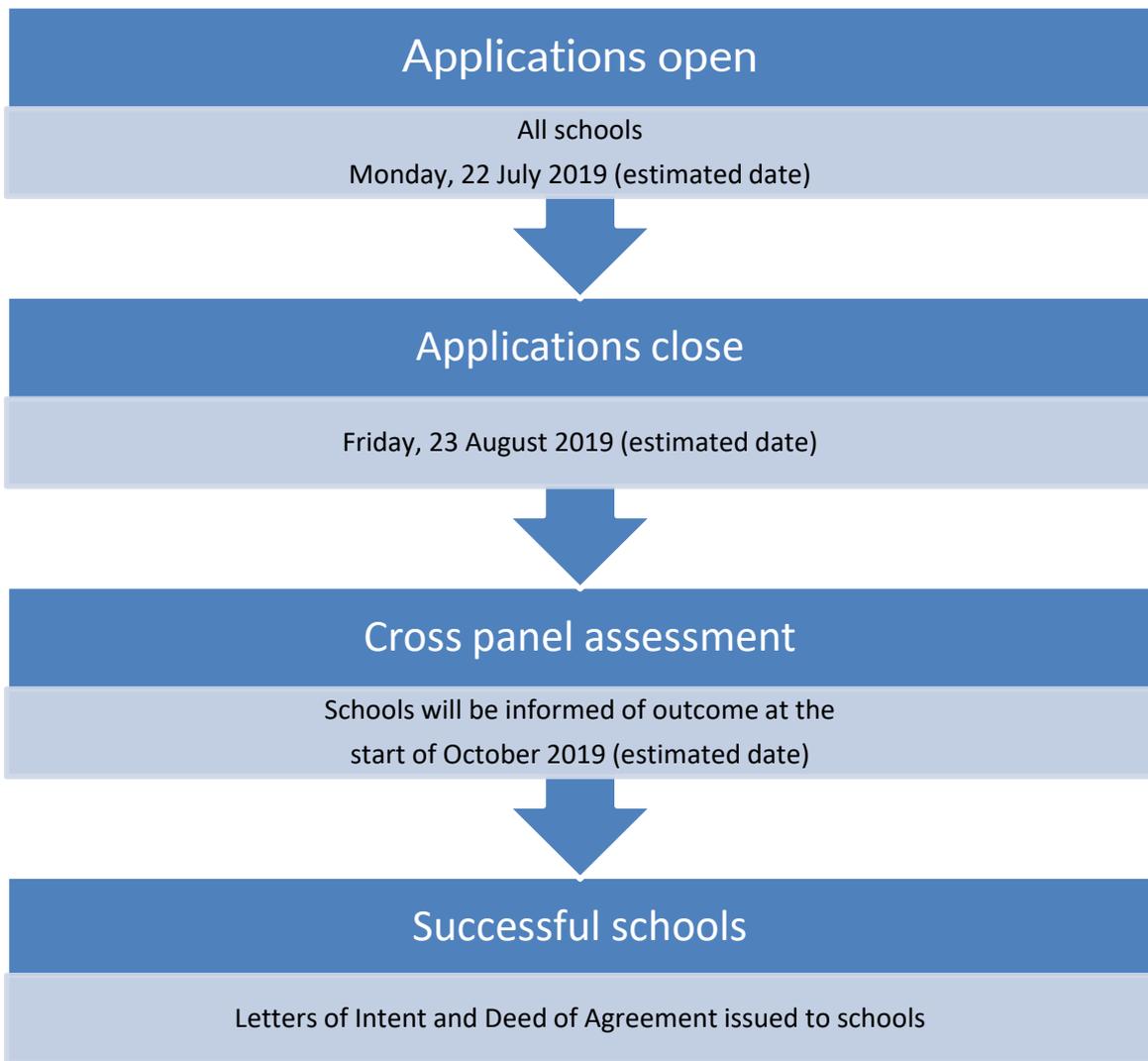
In accordance with the terms of the Project Agreement entered into between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory through its Department of Education, the Territory has formed a cross sector panel with members from the Northern Territory Government (NTG), Catholic Education Office, the Association of Independent Schools and NT Christian Schools.

The role and responsibilities of the cross sector panel are set out in its [Terms of Reference](#). The Department of Education will review the membership of the cross sector panel as appropriate.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

Due to the late signing of the new Project Agreement, schools participating in the Program in 2018 were automatically accepted for 2019.

The Department of Education will seek expressions of interest from all schools in Semester 2, 2019 to participate in the Program from 2020 to 2022.



Schools interesting in participating in the Program must complete the [application form](#) and submit the completed form with all the required supporting documentation by the date stipulated by the Department of Education.

Schools are required to demonstrate they have consulted with their school community prior to submitting their application. Evidence of parent and school council support such as meeting notes should be included in the application.

### How to apply

- Complete all sections of the application form.
- Ensure that all the required supporting information is attached to the application.
- Send the complete form and supporting documentation to the Department of Education.
- Retain a copy of the application.

## ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The cross sector panel will assess eligible applications against the [assessment criteria](#) after the application period has closed.

### Successful applicants

Successful schools will be notified in writing and provided with a Letter of Intent, Deed of Agreement and Code of Conduct for School Chaplains to complete and return to the Department of Education.

### Unsuccessful applicants

Unsuccessful schools will be notified in writing.

## PROGRAM ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### Australian Government

- Provides funding for the program to the NT Department of Education.
- Evaluates program outcomes.

### NT Department of Education

- Has overall responsibility for the implementation of the program, including:
  - developing and updating program requirements as required
  - processing payments in accordance with the Letter of Intent
  - monitoring adherence to the terms of the Deed of Agreement
  - ensuring funds are properly acquitted and accounted for
  - setting the terms of implementation.

### **Cross sector panel**

- Provides advice to the Department of Education on the implementation of the program
- Provides advice on the suitability of the qualification of chaplains selected by schools
- Assesses applications in accordance to the selection criteria
- Facilitates implementation of the program in schools
- Monitors and reviews progress of individual services as informed by sector representatives
- Participates in the program evaluation process.

### **School chaplain**

- Ensures chaplaincy services are not delivered to students who do not have parental permission to receive chaplaincy services
- Maintains adequate records as required by the school, particularly in relation to one-on-one sessions with students (these must be made available to parents if requested)
- Ensure information relating to students assessing chaplaincy services is secured appropriately.

### **School principal**

- Ensures parents and the school council are consulted about the proposed chaplaincy service prior to implementation (the school council's support for the delivery of chaplaincy services must be formally recorded in meeting minutes)
- Ensures the services provided by the chaplain are consistent with Chaplain Services in School Policy and Guidelines
- Ensures the chaplain has a current NT Working with Children Clearance (Ochre Card) and abides by the [Code of Conduct for School Chaplains](#)
- Ensures the schools abide by the signed Deed of Agreement.

The school principal is also required to:

- identify potential risks with program delivery
- develop and maintain an ongoing [risk management plan](#) for the delivery of chaplaincy services, which identifies mitigating actions
- report identified risk to the school's governing body.

The risk management plan must include strategies to address the following areas:

- resignation of chaplain
- poor performance of chaplain
- prolonged absence of chaplain
- mismatch of chaplain to school community needs
- alternate activities for students that do not have parental permission to participate in chaplaincy services
- process to manage concerns or complains relating to the chaplain, service provider and service delivery
- process to respond to diminished support and/or opposition from the school community to the chaplain (person and/or role).

## **Service provider or employing agency**

The service provider is the body that employs / provides chaplains (not the school council).

- Recruits and selects the school chaplain in consultation with the school principal (the service provider must seek the school principal's endorsement of the school chaplain)
- Ensures adequate induction is provided for the school chaplain prior to commencement within a school, including all role requirements and boundaries as per the program requirements, relevant policies and the Code of Conduct
- Checks the school chaplain has the minimum qualifications required, including maintain a copy of the evidence of qualifications
- Checks the school chaplain, and other service provider staff who may come into contact with children, has a current NT Working with Children Clearance (Ochre Card) (the service provides is required to keep a copy of the Ochre Card)
- Monitors the role of the school chaplain in consultation with the school principal
- Maintains the required insurances.

## **FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINT PROCESS**

The school must have an appropriate process for managing concerns or complains relating to the school chaplain, service provider and service delivery.

As the school principal has an overall duty of care and is ultimately responsible for all students and staff within the school setting, all complaints about the school chaplain or chaplaincy service within the school should be directed to the school principal, or a complaints officer designated by the school principal, in the first instance.

The school chaplain must:

- immediately report any complaints relating to the delivery of the program to the school principal and the service provider
- cooperate fully with any investigation into a complaint or alleged breach of the Code of Conduct.

The school principal must:

- work with the service provider and their education sector administration to manage and resolve complaints about the operation of the program in their school
- ensure there is a designated complaints officer (the school principal may choose to take on this role) to manage and resolve complaints received about the operation of the program in their school
- ensure effective complaint handling protocols, including the maintenance of a complaints log, are in place to notify the service provider of all complaints and issues
- refer all Code of Conduct matters and significant complaints to the service provider
- inform their education sector administration and the Department of Education of complaints relating to the program delivery.

The education sector administration (NT Government, Catholic, Christian and Independent) in partnership with the cross sector panel, is responsible:

- for investigating complaints that are within the scope of the program guidelines and their policy.

Mandatory reporting laws specify the conditions under which an individual is legally required to make a report to the statutory child protection service in their jurisdiction. Further details and information about mandatory reporting can be obtained on the [Department of Education Policies website](#) and the relevant sector administration.

## **FUNDING**

The program provides funding for government and non-government schools to engage a service provider to employ a school chaplain.

Chaplaincy services funded under this program may commence from the beginning of the school year for which funding is approved, but only following the signing of a Letter of Intent by the school principal, (which confirms the amount of annual funding allocated), a Deed of Agreement by all nominated parties and the Code of Conduct signed by the chaplain. The completed forms must be returned to Student Wellbeing and Inclusion. The date on the Deed should be left blank and this will be completed when the Deed is signed by the General Manager – Student Wellbeing and Inclusion.

Schools will not receive any funding prior to the proper execution of the Deed of Agreement by all parties and Deeds of Agreement cannot be backdated. The school cannot use funds provided under the program for chaplaincy services that have been provided prior to the signing of an agreement.

The program requires an annual report which confirms that the service provided during the school year met the program requirements. An [annual financial acquittal](#) is also required.

Grant funds will be paid to schools initially following completion of the Letter of Intent and Deed of Agreement and then annually, following receipt of updated Letters of Intent, school progress reports and financial acquittals.

### **Payment arrangements**

The school will be paid according to details provided on their NTG Vendor Identification Number.

### **Delay in Deed of Agreement execution**

If the proper execution of a Deed of Agreement or Letter of Intent is delayed up to and including 30 June in the year of the applicable funding grant, the service provider, in consultation with the school, can determine whether it still believes it can deliver the full annual service allocation, e.g. 400 hours, over the remainder of the year, and must provide details to the cross sector panel of how they intend to provide the service allocation in the shortened time frame. If the cross sector panel is not satisfied that the service provider can provide the entire service allocation or a significant proportion of the service allocation within the shortened timeframe, the cross sector panel can withdraw its offer of funding to the school.

## **Gaps in service**

If a school has had a gap in service within the calendar year due to the resignation of a school chaplain and there is a delay in sourcing a replacement, excess service hours/funds can only be utilised by:

- increasing the school chaplain's service hours, for example providing full time services for a designated period, to ensure no underspend for that calendar year and/or
- employing an additional approved school chaplain to provide additional service hours during the calendar year and/or
- utilising the services of an existing approved school chaplain in the school, who is not funded by the Program, to provide additional service hours that meets the program requirements, by increasing their operational hours in addition to work they are providing under their current role.

## **Change of chaplain**

If a school chaplain is unable to complete the agreed term of chaplaincy service, the school must seek approval from the cross sector panel of the proposed replacement chaplain by sending evidence to the Department of Education that the proposed replacement has appropriate qualifications and meets all the program requirements.

The Department of Education will issue a fresh Deed of Agreement to be signed by all parties when the replacement chaplain is approved.

## **Use of funds**

Program funding is to be used to provide chaplaincy services within the school covered under the Deed of Agreement. School communities may engage the services of more than one school chaplain or may negotiate with another school to engage the same chaplain. The amount of funding available to school communities will not increase if there is more than one school chaplain engaged under this program.

Funding can only be used in the calendar year for which the payment is made. Funding provided for a particular year cannot be 'rolled over' to subsequent years. Any unused entitlement must be repaid.

## **Unacceptable use of funds**

Activities and the purchase of services and goods which are inconsistent with the purpose of the Program will not be funded. This includes:

- any costs incurred by the school prior to 1 January 2019 and prior to the proper execution of a Deed of Agreement
- the purchase of religious education or religious training packages and the purchase of goods related to these activities
- the purchase of capital items, assets or resources including, but not limited to capital works, vehicles, computers and text books
- any existing programs or support mechanisms that are already funded by alternate funding sources
- provision of services to other unfunded schools
- reallocation of funds between schools, that is, transference of unspent funds from one school to another, including schools that have a deficit.

## **PROGRAM MANAGEMENT**

### **Participation/voluntary nature of the program**

It is not compulsory for any student to participate in activities or receive services from a school chaplain.

Parents/caregivers must be provided with information about the availability of chaplaincy services in their school which emphasises the voluntary nature of the Program and explains that members of the school community do not have to participate in this service.

### **Consent arrangements**

Schools must engage in meaningful consultation with the school community, through the school council, prior to implementing a chaplaincy program.

Parental consent forms for a student's engagement with chaplaincy services must be completed annually, recorded appropriately and abided.

Schools must put in place local school procedures to ensure that school chaplains are not party to information relating to non-participating students.

### **Minimum qualifications and requirements for employment as a school chaplain**

Given the range of possible tasks that a school chaplain may be required to undertake in delivering chaplaincy services, and that they are positions of trust, it is necessary to ensure they have a minimum level of skills to provide these support services.

School chaplains also need to have a highly developed ability to identify relevant issues and conduct appropriate referrals in each circumstance where required. As they can often be the first port of call for individuals needing assistance, detailed knowledge of relevant and available services and when they should be used, as well as a keen awareness of their own professional limitations, is a fundamental part of the role.

School chaplains must have:

- a minimum Certificate IV in Youth Work or Pastoral Care
- a Certificate IV in Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care
- an equivalent qualification. The minimum qualification must include competencies in 'mental health' and 'making appropriate referrals' unit/s.
- Chaplains must also undertake professional learning in responding to and preventing bullying and cyberbullying which will be available later in 2019.

Schools and service providers will be required to keep evidence of school chaplains' qualifications and provide the details to their education sector administration prior to the commencement of the chaplain in the program. In addition to minimum qualification requirements, this process includes a signed Code of Conduct and verification of current NT Working with Children Clearance (Ochre Card).

The cross sector panel may request to view evidence of qualifications and outcomes of assessments.

A school chaplain must also meet the following requirements:

- 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
- is recognised through formal ordination, commissioning, recognised religious qualifications or endorsement by a recognised or accepted religious institution
- have a current NT Working with Children Clearance
- undertake professional learning in responding to and preventing bullying and cyberbullying training with the Office of the eSafety Commissioner.

### **School chaplains holding other qualifications**

Where a school chaplain funded under this program holds an equivalent or higher qualification to the Certificate IV in Youth Work or Pastoral Care, in a different but related field (e.g. education, psychology), the cross sector panel will determine if the qualification is appropriate.

### **NT Working with Children Clearance (Ochre Card)**

Prior to participation in this program, all school chaplains and service provider personnel who may come into contact with children under this program must have a current relevant NT Working with Children Clearance (Ochre card) as required under the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007*.

School principals are responsible for ensuring currency of the NT Working with Children Clearance.

Where an allegation of sexual misconduct emerges, the school principal is responsible for:

- informing and seeking advice from their education sector administration
- mandatory reporting to the Department of Children and Families as required under NT legislation
- reporting and seeking advice from the Northern Territory Police.

### **Privacy and confidentiality**

The school is responsible for keeping a record of all reports and considerations which are part of the screening process of the chaplain. All records and information pertaining to an applicant's criminal history check are highly sensitive information and must be treated in strict confidence.

Files containing such information must be accessed by only those people who have the need to know and stored in a secure place to ensure that a reasonable level of security is maintained at all times.

### **Governance structures**

Local governance arrangements must include accountability structures to support the delivery of the program, ensure compliance with the Deed of Agreement, and outline clear responsibilities for:

- overseeing the performance of school chaplain
- risk management
- dispute resolution processes
- financial management, including annual operational and financial planning and auditing processes
- communication management with the school and the department
- fraud prevention strategies.

## **MONITORING AND REPORTING**

### **Progress reports and financial acquittals**

Schools will be required to report on their achievement of the following requirements:

- participation by schools and students is voluntary
- chaplains may be from any faith
- chaplains must:
  - not proselytise
  - respect, accept and be sensitive to other people's views, values and beliefs
  - comply with NT laws and policies in relation to child protection matters
  - meet the Program's minimum qualification requirements.

Progress reports and financial acquittals must cover all calendar year service from 1 January to 31 December (or part thereof) during each school year.

In addition to the above requirements, all schools and service providers must ensure that they have complaints and grievance resolution processes in place. Schools must advise their educational sector administration about complaints that they have received relating to the funded chaplaincy service and how the issue has been resolved by the school.

### **Monitoring**

Progress monitoring of this program is undertaken by the cross sector panel and department's staff within a risk management framework. The department may conduct a range of monitoring activities to verify that chaplaincy services are delivered in accordance with the conditions of the Deed of Agreement.

### **Visits to monitor compliance**

The cross sector panel may be required to visit schools as a result of a complaint during the period of the Deed of Agreement. Monitoring visits provide an opportunity for the cross sector panel to ensure that the delivery of chaplaincy in schools meets the requirements of the Deed of Agreement and Code of Conduct.

## Desktop monitoring

The cross sector panel may also conduct desktop monitoring to oversee program delivery. Schools may be requested to provide additional information throughout the funding period.

This may include, but is not limited to:

- evidence of school chaplain qualifications
- evidence of NT Working With Children Clearance (Ochre Card)
- evidence of parental consent processes
- copies of complaints registers
- follow up on resolution of complaints on a regular basis
- evidence of continued school community support, including meeting notes and/or other information as required
- copies of school community consultation plans
- progress towards provision of service and annual hours
- satisfaction with service provision
- verification of details that have been provided in progress and acquittal reports.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### National agreement

The Commonwealth Project Agreement has been signed by all states and territories and is publicly available on the [Council on Federal Financial Relations website](#).

### Freedom of Information

All documents in the possession of the department, including those in relation to the program, are subject to the [Freedom of Information Act 1982](#) (FOI Act). Decisions regarding requests for access will be made by an authorised freedom of information decision-maker in accordance with the requirements of the FOI Act.

### Privacy

The department is bound, in administering the program, by the provisions of *the [Privacy Act 1988](#)* (Privacy Act).

Personal information collected on the application form will be used by the cross sector panel for the purpose of administering the Program. The cross sector panel may also use this personal information for reporting and evaluation of the Program and use personal contact details collected on the application form in future correspondence with schools.

The department and/or the NT Minister for Education may disclose personal information collected on the application form to media organisations and post on the Minister's and department websites details of any successful schools funded under the Program. This may include the publication of the name of the principal and/or representative of the successful school.

The department will not otherwise use or disclose, without consent, personal information collected on this form unless authorised or required by law.

## GLOSSARY

**Applicant** is a person who applies either for a casual, temporary, or permanent school chaplaincy position.

**Conflict of interest** is a situation where a person's own interests, or a duty towards someone else, may affect the way they carry out a duty towards others, such that an independent observer might reasonably question whether the professional actions or decisions of that person are influenced by their own interests.

**Consultation** is multilateral, open communications designed to obtain ongoing agreement and continued support for chaplaincy services.

**Contact** is any form of physical contact, oral communication (whether face-to-face or by other means) or any form of written communication.

**Department of Education / the department** is the Northern Territory Government Department of Education.

**Employing agency / service provider** is the organisation with whom the chaplain's contract of employment is made. For example: religious representative bodies (such as Northern Territory Council of Churches etc), non-government service providers (such as Salvation Army, Scripture Union NT etc), other religious organisations (mosques, temples etc). This should not be the school council and must be a legal entity capable of entering into a Deed of Agreement with the school.

**Financial acquittal** is a formal statement by the funding recipient (school) of income and expenditure in accordance with the Deed of Agreement and program guidelines.

**Funding recipient** is a school (or governing body for Catholic, independent and Christian schools) that receives National School Chaplaincy Program funding.

**General school activities** support duties that could normally be expected of support personnel in schools (such as attendance at assemblies and school events, safety interventions, support to school management and staff).

**Minister** is the Northern Territory Minister for Education.

**Parent(s)** includes those with parental responsibility and caregivers.

**Pastoral care** is the practice of looking after the personal needs of students, not just their academic needs, through the provision of general spiritual and personal advice.

**Proselytise** is the attempt to convert someone to another opinion and/or belief, particularly a religion.

**Program** refers to the National School Chaplaincy Program.

**Opt-in** is a requirement to obtain parental permission for the student to access one-on-one and specialised programs or support services offered by the chaplain.

**Recognised religious institution** is as defined by the [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#).

**Remote schools** are determined, for the purposes of this program, by the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) classification system. Schools within the ARIA remoteness categories 4 or 5 are considered remote for the purposes of the additional 20 per cent funding. Further information regarding the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) is available at the [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#).

**School chaplain** 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
- is recognised through formal ordination, commissioning, recognised religious qualifications or endorsement by a [recognised or accepted religious institution](#)
- has a current NT Working with Children Clearance (Ochre card)
- meets the Program's minimum qualification requirements of:
  - 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 approved by the cross sector panel); and this Certificate or equivalent qualification must include competencies in "mental health" and "making appropriate referrals".

**School chaplaincy service** aims to assist schools through the provision of pastoral care, general spiritual advice and comfort to students, staff and members of the school community.

**School community** is for the purposes of this program, a school that is recognised by the Northern Territory Government as being a school, having permanently enrolled students and that has its own school community comprising parents, teachers, friends, former students, counsellors/social workers and other people who are connected with the school.

**Student welfare** encompasses all that a school community does to meet the social, personal, spiritual or emotional wellbeing of students.

## Attachments

- Attachment A - [Code of Conduct for school chaplains](#)
- Attachment B - [Cross sector panel terms of reference](#)
- Attachment C - [Program application form](#)
- Attachment D - [Application assessment criteria](#)
- Attachment E - [Deed of Agreement](#)
- Attachment F - [Progress report and financial acquittal](#)

## Acknowledgement

Some of the information in this document has been sourced from the [Australian Government National School Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program Guidelines](#) (July 2012).

## Review

This handbook and the referred attachments are currently being reviewed to align with the NSPC Project 2019-2022 and updated department policies and processes.