

# The Effectiveness of Christian Chaplaincy

In Government Schools in New South Wales

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# The Effectiveness of Christian Chaplaincy in Government Schools in New South Wales

## Executive Summary

### The Research

In 2009, a national study of the effectiveness of chaplaincy in government schools was undertaken for the National School Chaplaincy Association by Dr Philip Hughes of Edith Cowan University and Prof Margaret Sims of the University of New England. The study was of chaplains in schools that had been arranged by members of the National School Chaplaincy Association (NCSA). National surveys of principals and chaplains were undertaken, along with case studies of chaplaincy in 21 schools, selected to represent a wide range of urban and rural, primary and secondary schools across Australia.

Permission was not given by the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) to survey principals in regards to chaplaincy, so only chaplains were surveyed. No case studies were conducted in New South Wales. In New South Wales, at the time of the survey, there were 36 chaplains employed by GenR8, a member of the NCSA. Twenty four chaplains completed the survey. The average number of hours a chaplain is employed in a school is 19.75 hours. Two of the chaplains serve more than one school.

### The Chaplains and Their Work

In NSW, there is a high proportion of male chaplains (41%) compared with male teachers (26%) and male health and welfare support workers (29%). Fifty per cent of chaplains are aged between 40 to 59, and 29 per cent are 50 years of age or older. Many bring to the job experience in youth or children's work, teaching or church associated work.

The major part of the work of chaplains is pastoral care of students. Much of this takes place in personal interactions with students, sometimes in casual contexts such as in the playground, but sometimes in a more structured way in the chaplain's office or in small group activities.

In terms of the division of time, the average proportion of time for chaplains in NSW is as follows:

- 23% informal or structured pastoral care of students;
- 22% classroom activities and needs-based programs, such as behaviour management;
- 7% informal school activities, such as breakfast programs;
- 11% the pastoral care of families and staff;
- 10% school events, camps and crises;
- 8% with welfare staff and connecting with agencies in the referral of students;
- 6% networking and fund-raising; and,
- 13% assisting school leadership, administrative work and other activities.

In the past year,

- 80% had run needs-based programs such as handling grief or behaviour management;
- 75% of chaplains said they had done off-site visits to parents and care-givers;
- 71% had led in school events or special ceremonies; and
- 54% had participated in school camps.

Chaplains in NSW deal with a wide range of issues, but most frequently with behaviour management and social relationship issues such as anger, peer relationships, loneliness and bullying. Family relationship issues are also commonly discussed with chaplains. A second group of issues has to do with the development of the self: sense of purpose, self-esteem, and mental health. A third group of issues is the involvement of students in the community: issues of social inclusion and racism. In some places, chaplains work to integrate Aboriginal students or ethnic groups into the school community. Many chaplains are involved in the support

of students 'at risk', particularly those of lower than average ability and those differently abled. Chaplains also deal with 'big picture' and spiritual issues as students raise them.

### **The Effectiveness of Chaplains**

We asked a range of questions of NSW chaplains regarding the level of satisfaction of their own performance and whether they felt they were making major contributions to their schools. Contributing to school morale, providing an opportunity for students to talk through issues, and encouraging moral values and responsibility were seen as the most effective contributions they were making.

All chaplains face challenges and problems. We asked chaplains about various issues and to what extent they thought that those issues had been a problem for them in the previous 12 months. Overall, NSW chaplains did not see many of the issues as too problematic.

In NSW, all chaplains enjoy the work they do and most feel their expertise is recognised and their input taken seriously by their schools.

Of some concern is the level of support chaplains in NSW feel they receive from field support staff and from other chaplains. Between one-third and one-half of the chaplains said they did not feel supported. On the other hand, they feel they have a lot of support from their principals, other school staff and the students.

### **General Comments about Chaplaincy in New South Wales**

Chaplains in NSW are generally more confident in their work with students than chaplains in other States. This may be partly because many have a teaching background and most are well educated. They feel that they are well supported by their schools. They also have lower levels of concern than chaplains in other States about the variety of expectations on them and the tensions in accountability.

Chaplains in NSW see themselves as making major contributions to their schools by contributions to school morale, the encouragement of moral values and responsibility and the provision of opportunities for students to talk about issues that are on their minds.

# 1. The Chaplaincy Research

In 2006, the Australian Federal Government established the *National School Chaplaincy Program* (NSCP) to support the contribution of chaplaincy to the spiritual and emotional wellbeing of school communities. A statement on the website of the Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) explains the origins of the initiative.

As one of society's key institutions, schools are in a strong position to support the wellbeing, values and spirituality of young people. Chaplains already play a significant role in supporting many schools throughout Australia, including government schools, and there have been calls for their services to be more broadly available to school communities.

([www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSchoolChaplaincyProgram/](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSchoolChaplaincyProgram/)).

Under the NSCP, \$165 million over three years (July 2006 to October 2009) was made available for government and non-government schools to establish school chaplaincy services, or expand existing services. These schools and their communities were able to apply for up to \$20,000 per annum to a maximum of \$60,000 over the life of the NSCP.

Schools had six months to find a suitable chaplain after their funding was approved. A number of schools reported difficulties finding an appropriate chaplain. For this reason, the Government decided to allow these schools to use an alternative support worker to do the same job if they could not locate a chaplain by July 2008. The support workers could include non-denominational pastoral care workers, youth workers or other secular support staff.

The nature of chaplaincy services provided, including the religious affiliation of the school chaplain, was a matter to be decided by the local school and its community, following broad consultation. It was also made clear that students and their families had to be informed about the availability and voluntary nature of the chaplaincy services provided.

Successful schools in the first round of funding were announced on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2007, and for the second round of funding on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2007. In the two funding rounds, 2,630 schools were successful. The deadline for funding was July 2008. Among these schools were government, Catholic and other independent schools.

GenR8 is a provider of chaplains in government schools in New South Wales and a member of the National Schools Chaplaincy Association (NSCA). It is the largest chaplaincy provider in New South Wales, employing 36 chaplains serving in 38 chaplaincy positions. (There are 207 chaplaincies in total in government schools in New South Wales.) In 2008, the NSCA approached Dr Philip Hughes to lead a team in undertaking a review of the effectiveness of chaplaincy in those government schools where chaplains had been provided by members of the NSCA.

In order to get a full and detailed picture of what the chaplains were doing, the sorts of issues with which they were dealing, and their own evaluation of the contribution they were making, all chaplains were also asked to complete a survey. The invitation to complete this survey was sent out to chaplains in New South Wales in November 2009. At least two reminders were sent to chaplains to complete the survey. The response rate was 67 per cent: 24 chaplains (out of 36) completed surveys. These surveys were identical to those used in the other States. Hence, comparisons could be made between the chaplains in New South Wales and in the other States.

## 2. Chaplains and Their Roles

### ***The Background of the Chaplains***

Chaplains who have been placed by GenR8 come from a range of backgrounds and bring to the job a variety of skills.

Overall, the data from the survey of NSW chaplains showed that:

- 59% of chaplains were female, and
- 41% of chaplains were male.

The proportion of male chaplains is high compared with teachers and social workers. Only 26 per cent of teachers nationally are male, and the majority of these work in secondary schools. Just 29 per cent of health and welfare support workers are male (ABS, Table 20680-c83c-Australia.xls).

In terms of age,

- 8% of NSW chaplains were under 30 years of age,
- 25% were between 30 and 39,
- 33% were between 40 and 49,
- 17% were between 50 and 59, and
- 12% were 60 years of age or older.

The educational background required of chaplains varies to some extent across the providers in each State. The national survey of chaplains found that 34 per cent of chaplains have a university degree.

***Table 1. Areas of Education At Diploma Level or Above Which NSW Chaplains Have Completed***

<b>Areas of Education (At Diploma Level or Above)</b>	<b>Proportion of NSW Chaplains with This Level of Education</b>	<b>Proportion of Chaplains in Other States with This Level of Education</b>
Chaplaincy	13	12
Counselling	17	20
Psychology	9	6
Education	39	17
Pastoral Care	22	19
Theology	35	30
Youth or Children's Work	39	20
Community Development	4	8

*Source: Survey of Chaplains (2009)*

The formal training chaplains bring to the occupation varies considerably. As shown in the following table, some have had some theological training. Some have done training in counselling, pastoral care, and/ or working with children or young people. Some have a background in education

and others in psychology or community development. A much greater proportion of chaplains in NSW have professional experience in teaching or youth / children's work than chaplains in other parts of Australia.

***Table 2. The Professional Experience of NSW Chaplains***

<b>Professional Experience</b>	<b>Proportion of NSW Chaplains with This Experience</b>	<b>Proportion of Chaplains in Other States with This Experience</b>
Church associated work	43	40
Counselling	13	14
Psychology	4	1
Teaching	57	21
Youth or children's work	57	44

*Source: Survey of Chaplains (2009)*

## ***The Denominational Background of Chaplains***

The denominational profile of chaplains varies from one State to another. To some extent, it reflects the different denominational patterns around Australia. However, it may also reflect the sort of image that people have of chaplaincy in various places and the types of people who are attracted to it.

***Table 3. The Denominational Identification of NSW Chaplains Compared with the Identification and Attendance Patterns of the Australian Population***

<b>Denomination</b>	<b>Proportion of Chaplains in NSW (%)</b>	<b>Proportions Identifying Nationally (2006 Census) (%)</b>	<b>Proportions of Attenders Nationally (excluding Catholics) (%)</b>
Anglican	41.6	18.7	18.8
Assemblies of God	4.2	See Pentecostals	18.6
Apostolic Church	4.2	See Pentecostals	0.5
Baptist	4.2	1.6	13.0
Brethren	-	0.1	1.1
Catholic	4.2	25.8	-
Christian City Churches	4.2	See Pentecostals	1.0
Christian Outreach Centre	-	See Pentecostals	2.2
CRC Churches International	-	See Pentecostals	1.0
Churches of Christ	4.2	0.3	4.9
Lutheran	-	1.3	4.0
Orthodox	-	3.0	9.9
Pentecostal (apart from denominations named elsewhere)	-	1.1	1.3
Presbyterian	-	3.0	3.1
Reformed	4.2	See Presbyterian	0.7
Salvation Army	-	0.3	3.4
Seventh-day Adventist	-	0.3	4.0
Uniting Church	16.6	5.7	12.2
Wesleyan Methodist	-	-	0.3
Non-denominational / independent church	-	Not identified in Census	-
Other	4.2	0.5	-
No response	8.2	-	-

*Sources: Chaplains' identification is from the Chaplaincy Survey (2009), Population identification is from the Australian Census (2006), and Attendance Numbers are Estimated from Various Surveys including the National Church Life Surveys.*

## Training of Chaplains

The table below presents the proportion of chaplains saying that additional training is 'very important' in the areas identified.

**Table 4. The Importance of Various Areas of Training According to NSW Chaplains**

Area of Training	Percent of Chaplains Saying it is 'Very Important' (%)	Percent of Chaplains in Other States Saying it is 'very important' (%)
Communication skills	30	32
Youth work	30	24
Psychology/ counselling	27	23
Clinical pastoral education / pastoral care	33	28
Character formation	40	23
Ethics	32	17
Education	-	6
Social sciences	-	7
Theology / Bible Studies	14	16

Source: Chaplaincy Survey (2009)

Chaplains in NSW rate as very important character formation, ethics and clinical pastoral education / pastoral care. Training in communication skills, youth work and psychology / counselling is seen as slightly less important. Chaplains put very little emphasis on the study of the social sciences or education. However, as indicated in Table 2 above, this may be because many of the NSW chaplains already have experience in teaching.

**Table 5. How NSW Chaplains See Their Future**

How Chaplains See the Future	Percent of NSW Chaplains (%)	Percent of Chaplains in Other States (%)
Long-term role	61	64
Short-term	13	14
Looking for other work in near future	4	2
Engage in full-time study in near future	-	2
Retiring in the near future	-	1
Moving to home duties in near future	-	2
Don't know	17	13
Other	4	2

Source: Chaplaincy Survey (2009)

The proportion of chaplains in NSW who see chaplaincy as a long-term role (61%) is slightly lower to that in most other States (around 64%). About 17 per cent of NSW chaplains are unlikely to stay in the role long term, and a further 17 per cent are unsure.

## **Support for Chaplains**

**Table 6. Sources of Support and Extent of Affirmation of These by NSW Chaplains**

<b>Source of Support</b>	<b>Mean Score Of Support (1- 10 with 10 = high support)</b>	<b>Percent of NSW Chaplains Feeling They are Not Supported</b>	<b>Percent of Other Chaplains Feeling Not Supported</b>
Principal	8.4	4	3
Students	8.4	0	2
Other chaplains	5.4	39	6
Other school staff	8.7	0	4
Welfare staff at school	7.5	13	11
Parents	7.5	9	9
Local churches	7.3	22	12
Field support staff / regional advisers	4.2	33	21
Local school councils	5.9	33	23
Local professional care providers	5.5	32	32

*Source: Chaplaincy Survey (2009)*

Most chaplains in NSW feel well supported by their school staff, principals and by the students. The level of support for chaplains among welfare staff, parents and local churches was slightly lower. Chaplains feel least supported by field support staff/regional advisors and other chaplains and in these areas the levels of support are much lower than in other States.

Churches also vary in their level of support. Of the NSW chaplains surveyed, all of them indicated that they felt supported by the students to at least some degree, with 70 per cent scoring them 8 out of 10 or higher.

## **What Chaplains Are Doing**

The funding offered to schools for chaplaincy service support was \$20,000 per school to pay for a chaplain two days per week. Federal Government guidelines suggested that schools might complement this contribution so that a chaplain could work for more than two days a week. There are schools where chaplains work full-time. Many schools have a chaplain for just two days a week. In a few schools, the chaplain is present for less than two days per week.

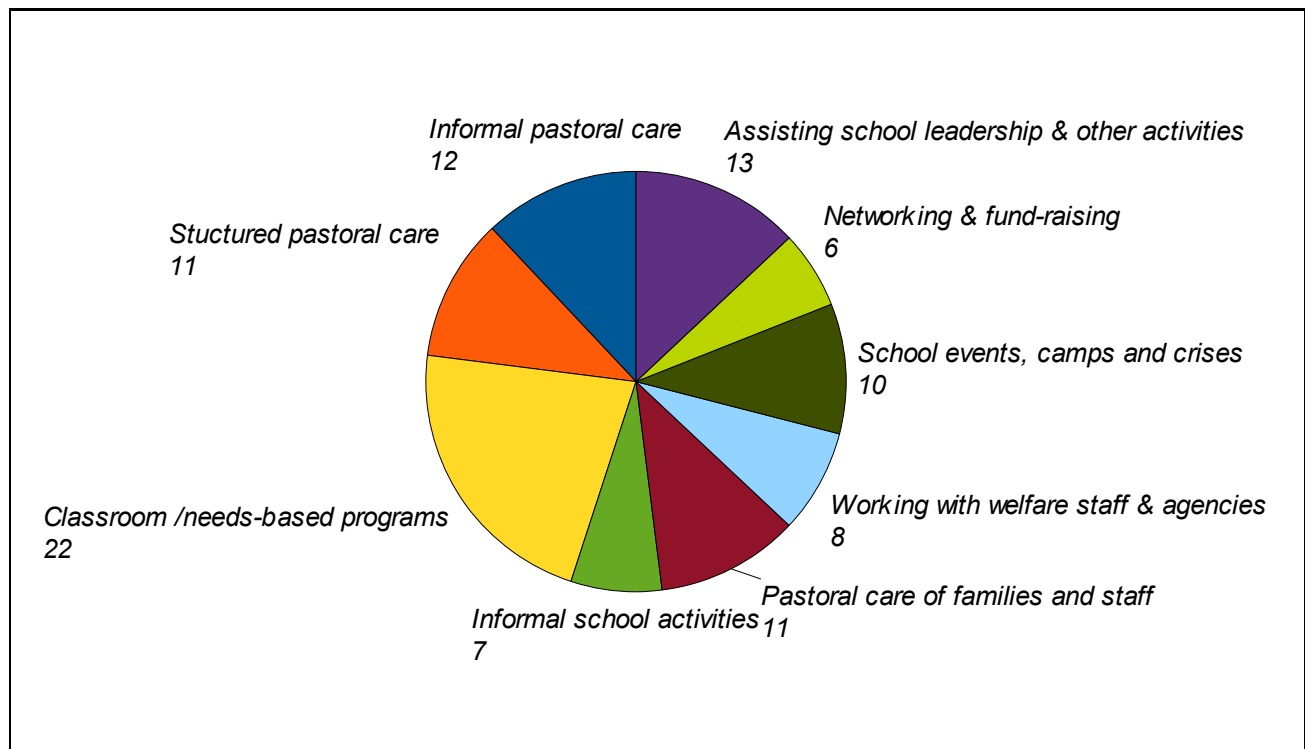
Of the NSW chaplains surveyed,

- 92% work in just one school, and
- 8% work in two or more schools.

Chaplains were asked to give some indication of the time they had spent in different areas of work in the two weeks prior to the completion of the survey. The following gives some sense of the various categories of their work and time spent in them. It should be noted that the proportion of time in different activities may vary from one part of the school year to another. Our data was collected during term 4, 2009.

The following figure illustrates the average percentage of time by all chaplains surveyed in a variety of activities.

**Figure 1. The Division of Time-Use Among NSW Chaplains (Averaged Percent of Total Time in Chaplaincy Related Activities)**



Source: Survey of Chaplains (2009)

The largest portion of chaplains' time (about 23%, compared with 30% among chaplains in other States) is spent in the pastoral care of individual students, much of it in an informal way, such as meeting and talking with students in the playground. Some of the time is more structured, such as talking with students one-on-one in an office at pre-arranged times.

Another 22 per cent of the time is spent in group, classroom and school activities, compared with an average of 19 per cent in other States. Most chaplains run programs or activities in which they work with small groups of students. These may include groups related to handling grief, or building the self-esteem of students. Many chaplains run breakfast programs where children can have a good breakfast prior to starting the school day, and where they may do some other activities, such as reading. Others run groups after school. In primary schools, this may be an after-school care activity. At high school, this may involve some assistance with homework.

Chaplains commonly assist teachers in classroom activities. Such assistance may take the form of sitting with students who are having difficulties with learning. Alternatively, it may take the form of having an input into the values or personal development classes at the school. Chaplains participate in all sorts of programs depending on their own abilities and capacities and on the needs at the

school. Some are involved in art, drama or music, for example.

There are many activities which do not take up a high proportion of chaplains' time but which school staff see as very significant when the need arises. Chaplains are often called on first when there is a critical incident, such as the death of a student or a relative of a student. In many instances, chaplains have provided care at such critical times.

Many chaplains also provide pastoral care for staff. Much of this occurs informally through casual interactions through the day. However, sometimes it involves structured time when teachers sit down with the chaplain to discuss school or personal issues.

The pastoral care also extends to the families of the students. Sometimes, this involves home visits. Sometimes, chaplains organise programs for parents. For example, one chaplain interviewed in case studies in another state ran a football clinic for both parents and students. This provided an opportunity to get to know parents of students from the school and for the parents to get to know the chaplain.

Some chaplains are involved in general fund-raising for chaplaincy.

The activities covered by the 'other activities' category in Figure 1 were many and varied. Some chaplains had undertaken professional development courses (i.e. training by e-conference). Administrative work is also necessary as the chaplains report to their schools and to the chaplaincy providers. A number of chaplains indicated that they had spent time in organising programs, preparing materials and 'computer work'. Other activities included coaching of sport, school excursions, breakfast or lunch-time clubs and garden clubs for students.

There are many activities which occur from time to time but which may not have occurred for the chaplain in the last two weeks. Camps, for example, often take place at the beginning or end of a term. Hence, the data above may underestimate the involvement of chaplains in camps. In order to cover such activities, we asked chaplains whether they had been involved in the following activities in the past year.

**Table 7: Activities Undertaken in the Past Year by NSW Chaplains**

Activity	Not at all (%)	Once or twice (%)	Several or many times (%)	Several or many times in other States (%)
Off-site visits to parents /care-givers	25	21	54	50
Provide needs-based groups	21	17	63	62
Led in school events or special ceremonies	29	29	42	39
Participated in school camps	46	33	21	15
Fund-raising activities	63	21	17	34
Representing chaplaincy or school in community events	33	42	25	46

Source: Survey of Chaplains (2009)

While classroom activities and needs-based groups, such as groups for dealing with grief or behaviour management, occupy 22 per cent of chaplains' time, almost 80 per cent of NSW chaplains are involved in running such groups. They provide a valuable addition to the pastoral care

programs of many schools.

Working with families occupies a relatively small proportion of most chaplains' time, however three-quarters of NSW chaplains do off-sites visits to parents and care-givers. This includes not just visiting the family home but also visits to hospitals when parents are ill.

Fifty-four per cent of NSW chaplains are involved in school camps. In the national surveys, schools reported that the chaplains had a special role at the camps in that they were not usually one of the teachers responsible for organising events, but had the opportunity to focus on the pastoral needs of the students and to be available to simply talk with them.

NSW chaplains are more involved in school camps than chaplains in other States, but less involved in fund-raising and representing chaplaincy in school or community events.

### ***Issues Chaplains Deal With***

Chaplains address many different problems and issues in delivering pastoral care. The following list presents the proportion of chaplains in NSW who said that issues had been raised by students themselves, by staff in referring students to them, or by themselves in advising students.

In the two weeks prior to the survey,

- 91% of chaplains reported dealing with behaviour management issues, such as anger;
- 91% with academic issues and personal achievement;
- 83% with bullying and harassment;
- 83% with student – family relationship issues;
- 83% with spirituality and 'big picture' issues of life;
- 83% with sense of purpose and self-esteem;
- 78% with community involvement and social inclusion;
- 78% with self concept and image;
- 77% with grief and loss;
- 73% with developmental issues;
- 70% with mental health and depression;
- 59% with physical and emotional abuse or neglect; and,
- 59% with violence.

Most frequently, NSW chaplains deal with behaviour management issues such as anger, and academic issues and personal development. Bullying, family relationship issues, spirituality and sense of purpose / self esteem are also frequent issues addressed by chaplains in their pastoral care. In other words, the most common issues revolve around peer, personal and family relationships. Many chaplains see one of their primary roles as that of helping students to develop relationship skills. One of the ways in which chaplains report that they do this is through helping students to think through the consequences of their actions, seeing how their behaviour impacts on the people around them.

A second group of issues has to do with the self: the sense of self-concept or image, and also developmental issues many students face. Less commonly, but not infrequently, this extends to issues of mental health, depression, alcohol and drug use and sometimes to self harm and suicide. While many chaplains talk with students about such issues, or run groups designed to assist them in relation to self-esteem, chaplains refer to other professionals those students who have severe mental

health problems or who are suicidal.

Another group of issues is the involvement of students in the wider community: issues of social inclusion and of racism. In some schools, where there is a distinct minority group or several such groups, this may take the form of assisting such groups to feel included.

Chaplains also deal with spiritual issues. Usually, this occurs when student raise such issues themselves. Sometimes chaplains encourage students to think about the 'big picture' issues of life. According to the survey results, chaplains in NSW more frequently discussed the big issues of life with students than did chaplains in other States. In NSW, however, the proportion of chaplains reporting dealing with bullying and harassment and with student – family issues was less than in other States.

### **'At Risk' Students**

From the case studies, the role of chaplains with regard to 'at risk' students was usually very clear, both to chaplains and principals. Where chaplains encountered 'at risk' situations, they brought the matter to the attention of the principal. However, often the chaplain's role was to then help support the student or family involved while they were receiving assistance from a professional agency.

**Table 8: Involvement of NSW Chaplains with 'At Risk' Students**

<b>Group of Students</b>	<b>Not Involved (%)</b>	<b>Once or Twice Involved (%)</b>	<b>Often Involved (%)</b>	<b>Chaplains in Other States Often Involved</b>
Students of lower than average ability	9	41	50	50
Students differently abled	41	18	41	28
Students facing mental health problems	32	50	18	28
Indigenous students	59	23	18	27
Students facing physical health problems	24	67	9	16
Refugees	82	14	4	9
Students involved with juvenile justice system	91	9	-	2

*Source: Survey of Chaplains (2009)*

The nature of chaplaincy varies considerably from one school to another in relation to the particular groups of students that need assistance. As is shown in the table above, there are many schools in NSW where there are no refugees, while in one school this group has become a major focus for chaplaincy. In some schools, there are no or few Indigenous students. Yet, in other schools, chaplains spend much of their time working with them.

The challenges facing students in a declining rural community and those facing students in a middle-class suburb in a capital city are, in some respects, very different. One of the challenges for chaplains is identifying the groups of students who are on the edge of the school community and of finding ways to get alongside those students and offer support.

### 3. The Effectiveness of Chaplains

#### **Level of Satisfaction with the Performance of Various Roles**

One way of looking at the effectiveness of the chaplains is to ask about the outcomes of their work. In what ways are the chaplains' activities making a difference to the students and the school?

We asked a range of questions of chaplains and, in other States, principals regarding these outcomes, asking them to assess how large the contribution the chaplains were making in a variety of areas. It should be noted that these outcomes are not of equal importance.

**Table 10. Comparing Assessment by Chaplains (NSW and Australia) and Principals (Australia only) of Chaplains' Effectiveness (average scores on a scale of 1 to 10 in which 10 represents making a major contribution)**

Chaplaincy roles	Chaplains' assessments (NSW)	Chaplains' assessments (Aust.)	Principals' assessments (Aust.)
Providing an opportunity for students to talk through issues	7.9	7.8	8.6
Encouraging moral values and responsibility	7.9	7.6	8.1
Contributing to the morale of the school community	8.1	7.5	8.0
Offering support to students with significant problems	7.4	7.3	8.6
Building social inclusion and community in the school	7.4	7.1	7.8
Improving peer relationships	7.0	6.8	7.9
Linking the school with the wider community	5.5	6.0	7.1
Helping students think about the 'big picture' issues of life	6.5	6.0	6.8
Changing behaviour in relation to bullying and harassment	5.8	5.9	7.3
Improving relationships between students and families	5.4	5.8	7.0
Offering support to students in special risk categories	5.3	5.4	8.5
Referring students to specialist assistance	5.4	4.6	6.5

Source: Surveys of chaplains and principals, 2009.

It is interesting to note that in the national surveys, the principals' evaluation of the outcome was higher than that of the chaplains in every area. This difference is likely related to expectations. While the expectations of principals in most areas are being fulfilled, chaplains do not feel they are performing quite as well in meeting their own expectations.

Chaplains in NSW saw their major contributions as:

- contributing to the morale of the school community,
- providing an opportunity for students to talk through issues, and
- encouraging moral values and responsibility.

In working with students, chaplains in NSW appeared a little more confident than chaplains in other States. This may be partly because of the high proportion of chaplains in NSW with experience in teaching. In linking the school with the wider community and in improving relationships between

students and their families, they were a little less confident.

The NSW chaplains were also not very confident that they were changing behaviour in relation to bullying, that they were giving appropriate support to students in special risk categories, or that they were referring students to specialist assistance when that was needed.

### **Challenges and Positive Experiences in Chaplaincy**

The survey asked chaplains a range of questions about challenges they might be experiencing. The following table shows mean scores for these challenges and the percentage of chaplains indicating that this was a significant problem for them.

**Table 11. Challenges Experienced by NSW Chaplains and The Extent to Which Chaplains Regard These as Problematic**

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Mean Score Out of 10 (Higher Score – Great the Problem)</b>	<b>Percent Finding It a Problem (Scoring More than 5 out of 10)</b>	<b>Percent of Chaplains in Other States Finding It a Problem</b>
Expected to do activities outside area of expertise	3.9	17	19
Knowing disciplinary procedures	3.6	17	20
Relating faith relevantly to students	3.5	22	21
Variety of expectations of role	3.4	17	28
Responding to range of student abilities	3.3	22	20
Discipline of students	3.0	17	26
Lack of information about students	3.0	13	22
Support in dealing with special behaviour problems	2.6	4	12
Working in government guidelines	2.6	5	10
Tensions in accountability	2.5	9	25
Local churches not valuing role	2.3	4	16
Support from other staff	2.1	5	12
Support from senior staff	2.1	5	14
Respect from students	2.0	0	4
Relating to students of other faiths and no faith	2.0	0	3

*Source: Chaplaincy Survey (2009)*

Overall, chaplains in NSW did not see the challenges they faced to be major problems. However, there were some chaplains (between 17 to 22 per cent) who indicated that some issues had been somewhat of a problem for them in the previous 12 months. They saw relating faith relevantly to students, responding to the range of student abilities, knowledge of disciplinary procedures and the disciplining of students to be the greatest problems. Expectations and variety in their role was also seen as a big challenge. Thirteen per cent of chaplains saw the lack of information about students as somewhat of a problem.

Very few chaplains in NSW saw support from various sources (i.e. staff, churches) as a problem, and none considered student respect or relating to students from other or no faiths as problematic.

The following table shows the extent to which each of the positive aspects of chaplaincy are true for chaplains in NSW, where a score of 1 is 'not at all true', and 10 is 'very much so'.

NSW chaplains did not feel the variety of expectations and tensions in accountability to be as problematic as reported by chaplains in other States. Nor did they report as frequently problems in the discipline of students, in having information about the students in support in dealing with special behaviour issues. In general, support levels from school staff were less problematic in NSW.

**Table 12. Positive Aspects of Chaplaincy and the Extent to Which These Were Affirmed by NSW Chaplains**

Positive Aspects	Mean Score Out of 10 (Higher Score More Positive)	Percent of Chaplains Not Positive about These Aspects (scoring less than 5 out of 10)	Percent of Chaplains in Other States Not Positive
Enjoy the work	9.3	0	1
Professional expertise recognised	8.2	9	14
Input taken seriously in school	8.1	9	12
Appropriate structures to resolve problems at school	8.0	9	8
Extra effort recognised by school	7.6	17	13
Administrative and technical support adequate	7.5	13	6
Administrative support of chaplaincy provider helpful	7.2	13	6
Opportunities to participate in decision-making	7.0	17	28
Local churches supportive	7.0	17	17
Job description adequate	5.9	22	19
Opportunities for in-service training	5.9	35	12

Source: Chaplaincy Survey (2009)

Overall, NSW chaplains really enjoy the work they do – all chaplains scored that aspect 7 out of 10 or higher, with 83 per cent giving it a score of 9 or 10. The chaplains also felt their expertise was recognised, that their input was taken seriously and that problem resolution structures in their schools were appropriate.

Chaplains were less positive about the adequacy of their job description and the opportunities for in-service training and in these areas, they were less positive than chaplains in other States. They were also less positive than chaplains in other States about administrative and technical support, both from the school and from the chaplaincy provider.

## **4. General Comments about Chaplaincy**

NSW chaplains are well educated in comparison to Australian chaplains overall, and a considerably higher proportion of them have experience in teaching or youth or children's work. Whilst the national survey of chaplains found that 34 per cent of chaplains have a university degree, almost half of the NSW chaplains (48%) have completed the same level of education. This may contribute to the respect that they have in the schools and their confidence in dealing with the students.

More than two-fifths of chaplains in NSW identify as Anglican, and a further 17 per cent identify as Uniting Church. This is quite different to the identification of chaplains overall, which showed no one denomination was dominant.

The largest portion of chaplains' time in NSW is spent in structured or informal pastoral care of individual students. A similar amount of time on average is spent in classroom and needs-based programs. There are many activities which do not take up a high proportion of chaplains' time but which are seen as very significant when the need arises, such as in times of grief or loss. Pastoral care also extends to families and staff, and many chaplains organise activities or programs which assist them in building relationships with families of students. More than half the chaplains are involved in school camps.

Chaplains address a range of different issues and problems in delivery of pastoral care. The vast majority of chaplains in NSW reported that dealing with the management of student behaviour and dealing with students with academic or personal achievement problems as the main issues they faced. Many chaplains had dealt regularly with bullying, harassment, family relationship problems, spirituality and students' sense of purpose and self-esteem. Most chaplains had had involvement with at risk students, such as those of lower than average ability or students differently abled.

Overall, NSW chaplains felt they were making major positive contributions to their schools in many ways. Contributing to school morale, providing an opportunity for students to talk through issues, and encouraging moral values and responsibility were seen as the most effective contributions they were making.

All chaplains face challenges and problems. However, NSW chaplains overall do not see their challenges as too problematic. The chaplains in NSW enjoy the work they do and most feel their expertise is recognised and their input taken seriously by their schools.

Of some concern in NSW is the level of support chaplains feel they receive from field support staff and from other chaplains. Between one-third and one-half of the chaplains said they did not feel supported. On the other hand, they feel they have a lot of support from their principals, other school staff and by the students.

NSW chaplains consider character formation, clinical pastoral educational / care and ethics are three very important areas in which they would like more formal training in. While GenR8 has provided inservice training more than one-third of chaplains said they were not positive about the opportunities they had for such professional development. A culture of professional development for chaplains is still developing. Around one-fifth were not positive that their job description was adequate.

Three-fifths of chaplains in NSW see their chaplaincy as a long term role, and another 17 per cent see it as a short term role only.

## Reference

DEEWR, (undated) National School Chaplaincy Program, accessed on the website:  
[\(/www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSchoolChaplaincyProgram/](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSchoolChaplaincyProgram/) accessed on 15 September  
[2009.](#)