



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Submission No. 22

(Youth Suicide)

Date: 22/03/2011

[Redacted]

Inquiry Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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9 March 2011

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Please find below the DEEWR response to Question on Notice at the Government Roundtable Forum on early intervention programs to prevent youth suicide on 11 February 2011.

The question was asked by Committee Member, Ms Deb O'Neill MP at HA13:

How central to schools' reporting is mental health and wellbeing? Or is it peripheral?

The Australian Government is committed to an education system that pursues excellence for all Australian schools and where every child benefits from a world class education.

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEECDYA 2008) articulates the concerns and commitments of all governments, represented by Ministers responsible for Education of all Australian State and Territory Governments. The Declaration recognises that:

"Schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians, and in ensuring the nation's ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion. Schools share this responsibility with students, parents, carers, families, the community, business and other education and training providers" (page 4).

The Declaration lists seven (7) interrelated dimensions to general student wellbeing, namely: intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic.

While the Australian Government does not have a direct role in the administration or operation of schools, it is leading the way in promoting dialogue and action towards positive change in children's and young people's wellbeing. The Australian Government continues to also collaborate with state and territory education authorities and other key stakeholders on a range of matters that affect the wellbeing of students.

The National Safe Schools Framework (the Framework) is a significant example of the Australian Government collaborating with state and territory authorities to develop a national approach to address student wellbeing priorities. In 2003, the Framework was developed to support schools to build safe school communities. The safety of students is essential for academic development and all students should be able to learn and develop in safe, supportive and respectful environments.

The Framework was revised recently to take more account of current student wellbeing and child protection and the role of parents and carers in creating a safe environment. It has relevant legislation and government policy, and highlights and responds to the emergence of technologies that have enabled new forms of bullying to develop.

The Minister for School Education, the Hon Peter Garrett AO MP will be launching the revised Framework on Friday 18 March 2011 to coincide with the official launch of Australia's Inaugural National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence.

The Department commissioned the *Scoping study into approaches to student wellbeing study* to build an evidence base to show the relationship between student wellbeing and student learning outcomes. The study investigated current national and international research, and state and territory government and non-government approaches to student wellbeing. The study also explored the value of developing an overarching national framework or policy statement that encompasses a more holistic and comprehensive approach to student wellbeing.

On 13 December 2010, the Department convened the student wellbeing roundtable as a means of facilitating conversations on student wellbeing. It was an avenue to share successful ideas and explore opportunities to provide better support for students, particularly those who are most vulnerable and to review the findings of the *Scoping study into approaches to student wellbeing study*.

Discussions during the roundtable canvassed a wide range of issues relating to the wellbeing of students including: what the current research and reviews are telling us, the gaps and opportunities, best practice, possible solutions and the best ways to share our ideas.

The Department is aware that a mapping exercise of services and best-practice may be of benefit for all school communities and would also be interested in mapping current approaches to the dimensions of wellbeing already outlined: intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic. This is just one idea generated as a result of this informal discussion with those like you working with the school communities.

Given the success of the roundtable, the Department envisages a series of discussions with key stakeholders hosted by the Department. It is proposed that the next discussions will be with wellbeing officers in education authorities of each state and territory.

The National School Chaplaincy Program is another national initiative that addresses student wellbeing which has the objective of assisting schools and their communities to provide greater pastoral care, personal advice and support to all students and staff, and positively contribute to their wellbeing.

The Australian Government recently announced that further funding would be provided to the National School Chaplaincy Program to extend the program to 2014, and to support up to an additional 1,000 schools under the program. The additional funding is targeted to schools in disadvantaged, rural and remote communities and is likely to be available from early 2012.

Student wellbeing is central to the aims of the broader national education agenda and substantial work is currently underway within our department.

Of the ten general capabilities to be addressed in the Australian Curriculum those that specifically relate to student wellbeing include personal and social competence, self management, ethical behaviour, intercultural understanding, thinking skills and creativity. In addition, the Health and Physical Education learning area of the K–10 Australian Curriculum has a strong connection with student wellbeing.

The Draft National Professional Standard for Principals states that part of the leadership roles and responsibilities of Principals is to nurture development and care in their students, their staff and themselves. Principals have shown interest in student wellbeing, with the professional arm of the four peak principal associations, Principals Australia, recently commissioning the development of a professional standard for principals relating to mental health and social and emotional wellbeing of school students.

The Draft National Professional Standards for Teachers will also reflect an emphasis on student safety and wellbeing. This is specifically articulated in Standard 4: Create and Maintain Supportive and Safe Learning Environments.

The Department manages intergovernmental funding arrangements under the National Education Agreement and is providing \$1.5 billion from 2008-09 to 2014-15 for the Smarter Schools National Partnership for Low Socio-economic Status School Communities. This National Partnership is supporting education reform activities in approximately 1700 low socio-economic status schools around the country.

Under the Smarter Schools National Partnership for Low Socio-economic Status School Communities, state and territory schools will report on student wellbeing performance indicators only if that have been identified in Bilateral Agreements or Final Implementation Plans. This reporting will feature in Annual Reports due in April 2011. The following table provides some idea of the relevant measures identified by some jurisdictions to date.

Jurisdiction	Relevant measure identified in Final Implementation Plan
NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student attendance • School satisfaction (parents, students) • Student and school community engagement (through surveys of parents and students).
ACT (referred to as 'outcomes' in the FIP):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved student attendance • Increased parent involvement with the school • Increased student engagement with learning • Better nutrition, health and social skills of students
QLD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of student wellbeing at the school using QLD's School Opinion Survey, in relation to the level of satisfaction with the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students: That teachers help you do your best? That you are treated fairly? That you are safe at school? That you are happy to go to school? ○ Parents: With the encouragement given to your child? Your

	child is treated fairly at this school? Your child is safe at this school? Your child is happy to go to school?
SA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2010 DECS will provide aggregated student engagement and wellbeing data based on the Where am I at ICAN Engagement and Wellbeing Tool which identifies and records student attitudes and behaviours. <p>Note: SA has advised their intention to review Performance Indicators for inclusion in Annual Reports.</p>
VIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student perceptions (survey) – factors include student morale and distress Student absence

The Australian Government will continue to promote dialogue and action towards addressing student wellbeing priorities. The Department will ensure student wellbeing remains central to the aims of the broader national education agenda and will continue to strengthen working relationships with state and territory education authorities and Governments and other key stakeholders which are essential to maximise the wellbeing of Australia's school students.