



The Value of Chaplains in Victorian Schools

Report Commissioned by ACCESS Ministries

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i. About Social Compass

www.socialcompass.com

Social Compass is a social research and evaluation company. Since its inception in 2004, Social Compass has developed a strong portfolio of clients across the corporate, government and community sectors to provide:

- Research, development, implementation and evaluation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) best practice models and partnership programs.
- Evaluation frameworks and tools for cross-sector collaboration.
- Social and cultural impact assessments.
- Community profiles and assessments.
- Indigenous program research and evaluation.
- Research and design of best practice Indigenous relations programs.
- Stakeholder identification and communication management plans.

Social Compass and its team would like to acknowledge all the chaplains, principals, students and parents who participated in this evaluation.

ii. Executive Summary

In May 2009, Social Compass was commissioned by ACCESS ministries to conduct an independent evaluation of the ACCESS ministries *Victorian Schools Chaplaincy Program*. The aim of the evaluation was to capture the value and impacts of the *Victorian Schools Chaplaincy Program*, specifically in relation to the following questions:

- What is the value of chaplains? Specifically, what is the value of chaplains as opposed to others that may be tasked with student 'welfare'?
- What are the social, spiritual and academic impacts of chaplains?
- What difference do chaplains make to student health, well being and quality of life?
- What contribution do chaplains make to stronger communities?

In conducting the evaluation, Social Compass used a mixed method approach that drew conclusions based on the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data. This included a document review, a literature review and data collection through focus groups, in-depth semi-structured interviews with chaplains and principals and a representative sample of student and parent surveys from primary and secondary schools across Victoria.

The findings highlighted in this report were those that were most salient and most representative. Overall, there was great consistency across the literature and the findings.

Finding 1 – What is chaplaincy and what is its importance?

The modern chaplain is increasingly from various religious affiliations and while he/she generally provides a professional, safe, confidential Christian presence for a school, they do not speak only one spiritual language. While chaplains come from diverse backgrounds, and their role varies depending on the school (from an educational role, to student wellbeing to community wellbeing), all saw their role as a vocation.

Chaplains are involved in a broad spectrum of activities, usually as the need arises, and play a critical role as an advisor on a wide range of issues. The majority of parents and students agreed or strongly agreed that chaplains play a very important role in their school and that their main role at school is concerned with student wellbeing.

Finding 2 – A trustworthy friend?

Chaplains are dealing with a significant number of serious and sometimes highly sensitive cases that demand trust and confidentiality. The majority of the students high levels of trust in the chaplain. According to students, this is because the chaplain is friendly, inclusive, approachable, caring and helpful. For some students, the chaplain is trustworthy simply because of their position as chaplain.

The majority of students had used the chaplaincy service and the majority indicated they would willingly talk to their school chaplain on a range of issues including personal, school-related and social problems. The majority of parents also believe that it is important for their child's school to have a chaplain and, despite having low levels of accessing the chaplain's services themselves, most indicated that they would encourage their children to use the chaplaincy service if necessary. A significant percentage of parents (35%) suggested that they would like their child's contact with the chaplain to continue beyond their schooling years!

While many secondary students and parents were 'neutral' about speaking to the chaplain about spiritual matters, the overwhelming majority in both cohorts felt that learning about morals and values in schools was important.

Finding 3 - The school chaplain versus the school counsellor: Is there a difference?

The majority of students and parents indicated that they were 'neutral' as to whether they felt the role of a chaplain was different to that of a counsellor. Responses to whether parents would like their children to consult counsellors or chaplains about school-related and personal problems were very similar. With regard to spiritual problems, there were slightly higher responses for a chaplain as the preferred person that parents would like their children to consult with.

However, student responses showed that for personal and school-related problems, students preferred to see a chaplain over a counsellor.

For many chaplains, matters of pastoral care and of spiritual support and growth are inseparably intertwined. While counselling is something they do, many argued that pastoral care is the primary thing they do. Furthermore, the findings suggest that chaplains are a 'value add' to school principals, staff and welfare teams. The life-on-life support role of school chaplaincy may also enhance educational outcomes, through enhancing student retention rates.

Parents indicated that they viewed chaplains as holistic and people-oriented, less constrained by time and case-by-case methods, with a focus on developing ongoing relationships with staff, students, their families and the wider community.

Finding 4 - The value of the Victorian Schools Chaplaincy Program: What would be lost?

The majority of parents, principals and chaplains believe that much would be lost if the chaplaincy service in their schools ceased. Elements that would be lost include a role model and a safe, neutral support to students, a vital cog in the welfare team and support to principals and staff as well as a mediating and bridging role for students, families and the community.

Analysis and Conclusion

The ACCESS ministries *Victorian Schools Chaplaincy Program* provides a unique service to Victorian schools. Some of its services are replicated by other providers, but many are not, particularly the spiritual element that is inherent within chaplaincy. The holistic nature of their work, their 24/7 availability and the extent to which chaplains serve, not just students, but the whole of the school and wider community from which they come makes them a unique asset within the education system. Further, chaplains have also been described as 'hubs', or 'conduits', playing a facilitating role vis-a-vis existing services so as to enable the greatest, most appropriate and most effective access.

This report concludes that there is an need and much support for chaplaincy services, and their contribution to education and to student, staff and community well-being cannot be underestimated. Without over-stating their contribution, should the *Victorian Schools Chaplaincy Program* not continue, it is important for stakeholders to consider who it is that would perform the life-changing and, in some cases, life-saving work chaplains undertake on behalf of their school communities.

1. Introduction

For over 40 years, ACCESS ministries has been part of a long tradition of providing Christian Education and chaplaincy services to Victorian primary and secondary schools. However, chaplaincy is a service for all people associated with the school community including parents, staff and students. The objective of the *Victorian Schools Chaplaincy Program* is to:

- provide a Christian educational and pastoral presence and service in state schools.

The desired outcome of the ACCESS ministries chaplaincy service is to “provide holistic support to young people in ways that empower them, strengthen their schools and the community in which the school exists”.

In 2006, the Federal Government announced the \$160 million *National School Chaplaincy Programme (NSCP Initiative)*. This national initiative provides up to \$20,000 a year for three years for a new or existing school chaplaincy service. The ACCESS ministries' *Victorian Schools Chaplaincy Program* is partly funded by the NSCP.

Since the introduction of the NSCP, 526 schools have successfully applied for funding and over 50% of these have nominated ACCESS ministries as their chaplaincy provider¹. Currently, ACCESS ministries is supporting over 200 chaplains across these Victorian schools.

Table 1: ACCESS ministries Chaplains in State Schools as at 30th June 2009

June 30	PRIMARY SCHOOL		SECONDARY SCHOOL		SPECIALIST SCHOOLS		PREP-YEAR 12	
	Chaplains	Schools	Chaplains	Schools	Chaplains	Schools	Chaplains	Schools
2009	100	162	88	91	6	6	10	15

TOTAL	
Chaplains	Schools
204	274

ACCESS ministries provides the administration for chaplain placements as well as some financial assistance, on-going training, supervision and support services to chaplains. This includes Field Support Managers that provide systematic care for the chaplains (through site-visits, email and telephone support) in their region, perform annual reviews and assist with the appointment of new chaplains. Additional support is provided for first year chaplains, including a comprehensive training program. Furthermore, each chaplain is required to participate in at least four sessions of Professional Supervision each year. This supervision is a requirement in counselling professions to provide objective, confidential and skilled reflection upon the practitioner's work. Chaplains are also required to participate in the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) training program. All ACCESS ministries chaplains are required to complete a minimum of one unit of CPE within the first three years of their chaplaincy or do an equivalent type unit to enhance and develop their pastoral care skills.

¹ Most of the other schools that have not nominated ACCESS ministries are independent religious schools that have specific religious criteria for their chaplains.

Finally, chaplaincy within the State is supported by sixty-four Chaplaincy Steering Committees. The \$20,000 received under the NCSP does not cover all the associated costs of employing, training and resourcing a 2-day a week chaplain. Consequently, there exists a \$7,000 funding gap for each chaplain which must be financed through donations and other means. The Chaplaincy Steering Committees exist to bridge this funding gap through community fundraising. These Committees also successfully provide a link between the chaplain, the school, local churches and the wider community.

This evaluation aims to capture the value and impacts of the ACCESS ministries *Victorian Schools Chaplaincy Program*. Specifically the evaluation focuses on the following questions:

- What is the value of chaplains? Specifically, what is the value of chaplains as opposed to others that may be tasked with student 'welfare'?
- What are the social, spiritual and academic impacts of chaplains?
- What difference do chaplains make to student health, well being and quality of life?
- What contribution do chaplains make to stronger communities?

The role that the Chaplaincy Steering Committees have in terms of community mobilisation (including enhancing civic participation, facilitating community partnerships and networks) should not be underestimated. Accordingly, this evaluation also presents case studies of two such Steering Committees and the valuable work they do.

The following sections outline the methodology used for this evaluation and the findings that have emerged from the analysis of the data collected. However, it should be noted that in undertaking this project the researchers have had the privilege of being exposed to stories shared by students, parents, chaplains and principals. Many of these stories have made it into this report but there are many more that did not due to the scope and limitations of such an evaluation. Collectively, these stories suggest that the *Victorian Schools Chaplaincy Program* has had life changing, and in some cases life saving impacts, and there are many people across the Victorian community who would support such a view. This report attempts to provide a more 'scientific' analysis of the program but these stories should not and must not be ignored in the pursuit of good scientific practice. The stories included are an indicative sample of those received during the course of this research.

2. Methodology

This evaluation was based on a mixed method approach that drew conclusions based on the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data. Research was divided into several phases:

- *Phase 1 – Document Review.*
An extensive review was carried out of all available (as at May 2009) Year One and Year Two Progress Reports submitted to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) by Victorian Principals on the *Victorian Schools Chaplaincy Program*, (dated 2008 and 2009). In total over 200 progress reports were reviewed.
- *Phase 2 – Literature review.*
A detailed review of academic and other publications was conducted and a literature review was written.
- *Phase 3 – Data collection.*
Surveys were sent to a representative sample of secondary students (only) and parents of primary and secondary students, using a combination of hard-copy mail-outs and online distribution through SurveyMonkey. Surveys were sent to 41 schools of whom 25 participated (61%). Responses received were: 231 secondary student surveys and 279 parent surveys. The surveys comprised of a combination of quantitative (closed) and more open-ended, qualitative questions.

In addition to surveys, one focus group with 8 principals from primary and secondary schools was conducted and one focus group with 8 chaplains from primary and secondary schools was conducted. In order to incorporate the views of chaplains and principals from regional Victorian schools, five additional individual interviews were also undertaken – 2 with chaplains and 3 with school principals.

It should also be noted that of the 10 chaplains interviewed (8 in the focus group and 2 individually), several provided services to more than one school, meaning that the chaplains involved in this research represented a total of 16 schools.

All focus groups / individual interviews were semi-structured, in that although they were based on the relevant interview guides, they used open-ended questions and space was also allowed for discussion to develop in other directions if need be.

- *Phase 4 – Data collation and production of final report.*
All quantitative results from surveys were tabulated for statistical analysis. This analysis was predominantly descriptive, although there was a significant inferential component whereby correlations were examined between fields / categories, to allow a deeper exploration of the data.

The qualitative elements of the survey data were combined with transcriptions of all interviews and focus groups, with data arranged under common themes so as to enable comparison. In the final stages of production, qualitative and quantitative findings were addressed together, and the strongest findings / themes / issues discussed in the document at hand.

3. The Findings

The value and impacts of a chaplain's role in a school are reflected in programs, counselling, relational interactions, lives enriched, and community members connected. Some of these outcomes are measurable, some are effective immediately, and some are invisible. This section draws on the previous research and literature on chaplaincy to present evidence-based answers from data collected from surveys, focus groups and interviews.

3.1. What is chaplaincy and what is its importance?

I'm a chef. I left home at 14, in a career as a chef, and salt to me is one of the most amazing things. It sits in the kitchen, it doesn't go look at me, look at me like extra virgin olive oil, or virgin olive oil. Salt is salt, it just does its job, and we misuse salt and we want to taste the salt which has probably got its place but it's there to enhance and to bring out what is already there. We're not there to go, 'we've got to drag this out of people'. We just go along and be salt and be light and people see it. And no subject is taboo with staff to talk about stuff. And you just, when kids come and say, 'we feel safe in your room'. Well how do you make a kid feel safe in a room? You don't go, 'ooh now, let's pray'. You're just there (chaplain).

Historically, a chaplain was a priest, minister, pastor, rabbi or other member of the clergy, appointed to a particular ministry or to service a group of people outside the church. The term was originally used in the Christian church. However, in modern times, it is being increasingly applied to those from various religious affiliations. Therefore, while

the modern chaplain generally provides a professional, safe, confidential Christian presence for a school, and may be personally committed to Christian values and beliefs, he/she is expected to be sensitive to those who hold other values and belief systems (McGie and Baskerville 2005). Indeed, the Australian Government Guidelines for the *National Schools Chaplaincy Programme* specify that school chaplains must respect the variety of religious views and cultural traditions in a school and its broader community, taking into account the religious views of students, parents/guardians and staff. They must further seek not to privilege or to impose any one set of religious beliefs upon others (DEST, 2007). The modern day chaplain, therefore, can no longer afford to speak only one spiritual language (Schaper 2004).

3.1.1 A calling, vocation or just a job?

The specific role of a chaplain in a designated school is reflected in a *School Specific Position Description*. This combines the expectations and needs of the school community, with the particular skills and expertise that the chaplain brings to the role. In some schools the chaplain's role is more educational; in others it is primarily focused around student wellbeing; and in others the chaplain's focus is on community building. Chaplains are usually part of the Student Welfare Team in a school, participating in team meetings and working with Year Level Coordinators. They are both proactive and reactive to the needs of students in the school community, initiating programs with groups of students and following through with individuals.

Chaplains come from a wide range of backgrounds, with diverse life experiences and "effective chaplains may come from any age group between 20 and 70!" (Hill and Hill 2005:55). The chaplains that participated in this research all came from diverse backgrounds. Some were ex-bankers, ex-teachers, ex-nurses, ex-youth workers, while others were pastors and homemakers. Some chaplains were new to their role with only a few months' experience. Others had been in the position for over 15 years. Many of the chaplains in this research saw their role as a vocation – all affirmed that their role was a calling. One chaplain expressed it the following way:

It's definitely a calling. For me it's just this is it! I feel as though, it's like putting on a comfy pair of slippers. You know, it just fits nice and it's comfortable (chaplain).

For other chaplain's, their current position was both a 'leading' and a 'calling':

I was always involved in children's ministry. Even before I was a pastor I was involved in children's work in the country and always saw the need to be involved in that way. And then when the funding came through it was just like, this is what I've been trained to do right through my life and this is a fantastic opportunity to go into primary schools and be a chaplain and be the person that you've always felt that you'd been prepared for (chaplain).

... probably an experience I had, my first year in the chaplaincy, set me on a path ...It was a leading and a calling but some of these things can only really be identified in hindsight when you look back. This experience I was talking about which I think has had an impact on, particularly my school community and possibly wider, is that I was called to support a mother whose son suicided because of school bullying and that sort of set me on a path of looking at school bullying and safety and I have led the school in reviews, bullying policy, redoing their policy (chaplain).

While chaplains feel that their role -- for them -- is a vocation, it did not preclude them from identifying specific skills that are required to be successful in the role. These included an empathetic nature, good rapport and communication with young people and children, the ability to mentor children and students as well as compassion.

You definitely have to feel called to do it. I think you have to have a great rapport to get involved with children and to have that relationship with a child and to have in your mind that these children are one day going to be the leaders of our country. They're going to be

children in our community. They're going to grow into adults. What do we want them to be like when they are adults? And we've already heard, there's so much need of just getting them through life, but we want to do more than that. We want to build them up as to be a great citizen in the community. So I always look for longevity in this job as being part of a child's life from prep to grade 6 or whatever it is, that you've got that time with them (chaplain).

Actually seeing each and every one of them as valuable ... And when you break through that and the whole time you just keeping reinforcing, 'hey you're valuable, you are important'. So there's got to be that calling and passion to just follow through (chaplain).

I think the kids react to having an adult that is willing to put them first rather than themselves first ... you need to be willing to make somebody else far more important than yourself (chaplain).

There are gifts I think required. ... There's a gift of compassion but I also think there's a gift of reading. To be able to read a situation particularly with young people who don't have the words or don't know how to say there's something wrong. To be able to pick ... you need people skills, you need empathy, you need compassion (chaplain).

Research confirms that, in recent times, chaplaincy in Australian state schools has been increasing at an extraordinary rate (Salecich and Watts, 2006). This is because the role(s) and activities of chaplains are seen as complimenting the school system while meeting some complex community needs, not least declining church attendance and the fragmentation of other, more traditional social structures. According to the literature, the chaplain's role is a flexible one and the emphasis on a chaplain's activities varies from state to state. Ultimately the time chaplains spend in classroom teaching, pastoral counselling and participating in co-curricular activities (for example, camping) varies widely.

3.1.2 What do Chaplains do?

This evaluation confirmed the wide-ranging activities that chaplains are engaged in. The table below lists the multitude of activities highlighted in the research analysis.

Table 1: Activities in which chaplains may participate

Activities			
1.	Accommodation support	22.	Mediation and conflict management (for students & between teachers / parents & students)
2.	Act as school representative on school council and other forums	23.	Memorial services and funerals
3.	Assemblies (leading / taking part in)	24.	Mentoring (students)
4.	Breakfast program (and food provision generally)	25.	Playing games with students
5.	Bushfire relief	26.	Prayer groups

6.	Camps / excursions / picnics / activities	27.	Principal (support for)
7.	Charity (organising and participating in)	28.	Programs / social activities (general)
8.	Complements welfare team	29.	Religious / spiritual / moral support
9.	Counselling for students	30.	Safety (a place to go)
10.	Develop and initiate new school programs (e.g. anti-bullying program, communication and life skills)	31.	School yard (time spent in)
11.	Extra-curricular activities (general)	32.	Sports (discussion of and participation in)
12.	Family / grief support (inc divorce / broken families)	33.	Staff (support for)
13.	Feedback to school on improvements to existing welfare processes and protocols	34.	Study / school (general)
14.	Fosters relationships within school community	35.	Support programs
15.	Friendship (with chaplain) / just to chat	36.	Support the values of the school
16.	Fundraising (general, for school, churches, wider community)	37.	Teaching (values etc)
17.	Homework assistance / remedial classes	38.	Weddings
18.	Human rights advocacy	39.	Welfare / referrals to other agencies
19.	Leadership programs	40.	Wider community (fostering links with / support, including with local churches)
20.	Listening ear	41.	Work with parents outside school times (home visits, hospital visits)
21.	Making contact with new school families		

Not all chaplains will necessarily participate in all the activities listed above, but Table 1 nonetheless indicates the broad spectrum of activities chaplains may be involved in. Typically, "Chaplains do a bit of everything, as the need arises". Furthermore, chaplains are called to advise on a range of issues including:

Table 2: Issues upon which chaplains may be called to advise / counsel

<i>[We talk about] anything that young people face. We really have an involvement with talking to them if that's what they want, if they need someone to talk to really.</i>			
1.	Abuse and violence (e.g. family violence)	14.	Philosophy, morals and values (discussion of and classes about)
2.	Anger management	15.	Racism

3.	Body image	16.	Religion / faith / spirituality
4.	Boredom with school	17.	School refusal
5.	Bullying / harassment	18.	Self-esteem
6.	Counselling (general)	19.	Self-exploration
7.	Depression / anxiety	20.	Separation and divorce
8.	Employment / career guidance	21.	Sex / health advice / personal issues
9.	Family support / problems at home	22.	Sexism
10.	Friendship issues / fitting in	23.	Social justice
11.	Girlfriend / boyfriend	24.	Social / peers / relationships
12.	Grief and loss	25.	Theft
13.	Life choices / aspirations / lifestyle		

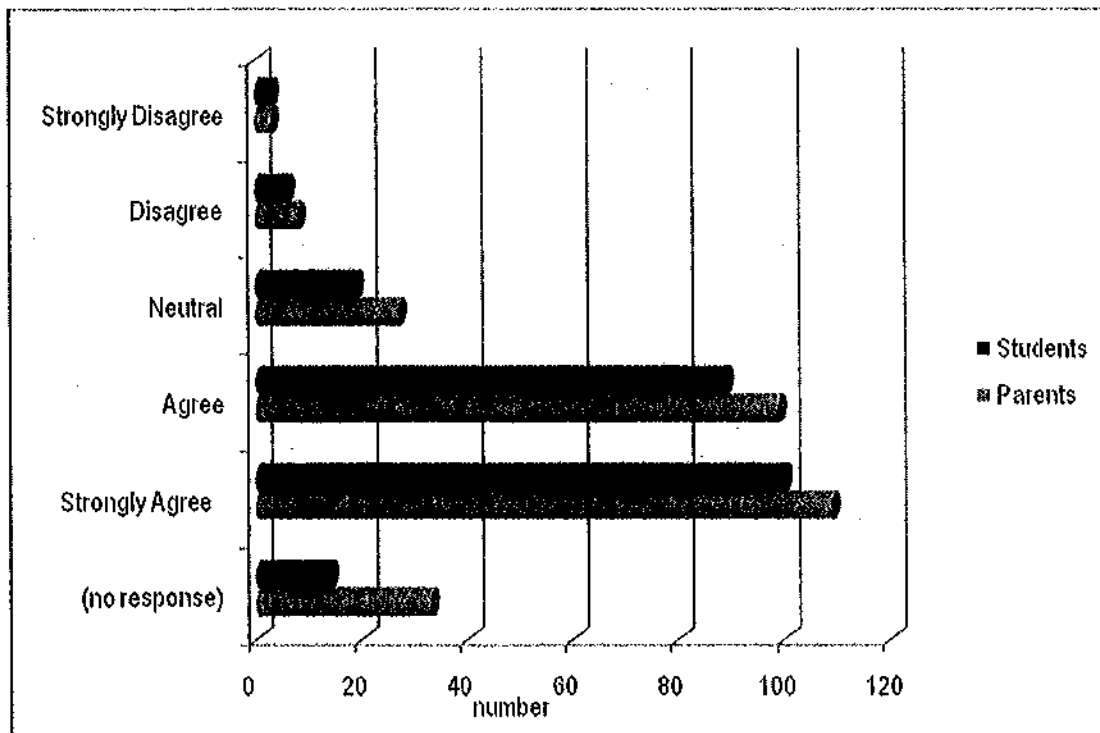
According to the chaplains themselves the most common issues dealt with involve general relationship matters and often, the more serious manifestations of peer-pressure, bullying, relationship break-ups, violence and abuse. These often lead to issues that include depression, suicide, parental health, drugs and alcohol and self-esteem. Indeed, as the following statement indicates, chaplains play a critical role in Victorian schools:

Well there's quite a variety of activities, some of it involves education programs around particularly values, life skills, things like spirituality. Where what I personally do is either I work with classroom teachers at their invitation to come in and run activities with students. Or I have the opportunity to organise small group, short term small group programs at the invitation of the year level coordinators. So there's that educational component. I do a lot of work in pastoral care, working with individual students who have issues that they would like to discuss or address with someone, someone who can listen and provide some support while they work out what needs to happen...I'm a secondary school chaplain so issues to do with peers and friendship, bullying, things to do with relationships, as the students get older. Sometimes to do with their personal relationships, ranging from those sorts of things to very serious things like mental health concerns, sexual assault, difficulty with family, family violence, abuse. You really never know what's going to come up when you first meet up with a student because often what happens is that the young person presents some difficulties at school, whether they're acting out or showing signs of you know, being really sad or teachers are worried about them. And then we're asked to talk to them and all sorts of issues come up when that situation occurs ... Anything that young people face, we really have an involvement with talking to them about if that's what they want, if they need someone to talk to really (chaplain).

3.1.3 What do the students and parents say?

The survey findings from secondary students found that the majority of students (80.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that the chaplain plays a very important role in their school. By contrast, only 3% of the total student cohort disagreed or disagreed strongly with this statement. 70.3% of parents believe that it is important for their child's school to have a chaplain and only 5.4% of parents did not believe that to have a school chaplain was important. 81.8% of all students believe that the chaplain's main role is concerned with their wellbeing. Similarly, the majority of parents (74.6%) either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

Graph 3: The chaplain's main role at school is concerned with student well-being

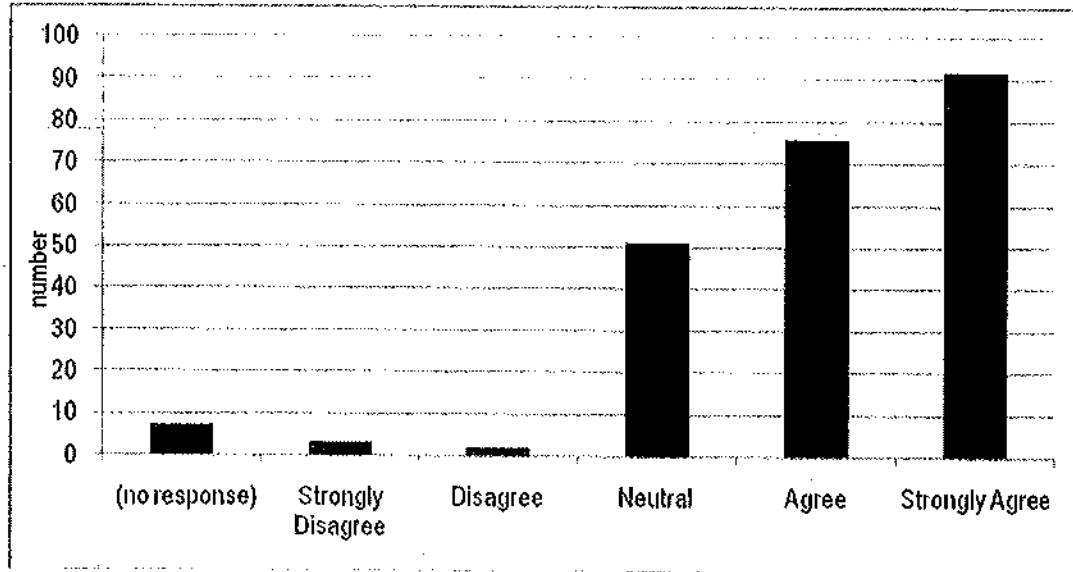


A strong majority of parents are aware of the chaplaincy service at their child's school (220 from 279 surveys, or 78.9%). The remaining parents were fairly evenly divided between the 'no' and 'no response', with 9.3% and 11.8% respectively.

Interestingly, 35.5% of parents would like their child's interaction with the chaplain to carry on beyond their schooling.

An overwhelming majority of students (82.3%) also know who the chaplain is and when asked to respond to the statement, 'I am very comfortable when speaking with the school chaplain' responses increased towards the positive end of the scale. 'Strongly agree' received the highest rate of replies with 39.8%, followed by 'agree' at 32.9%.

Graph 4: I am very comfortable when speaking with the school chaplain



3.2. A trustworthy friend

According to the literature, chaplains can meet many of the needs that cannot be met by others in the institution, because of the underlying spiritual dimension they can provide. They can be used in a formal or informal situation or setting, as teacher, counsellor, confidant, listening ear or friend. "Confidentiality, trustworthiness, and neutrality are important qualities offered" (Waller *et al* 2008:109). Both spiritual care and counselling are often required in a crisis situation or to enable and facilitate spiritual growth (Waller *et al* 2008).

3.2.1 A matter of trust

The findings of this study support the literature with 79.2% of secondary students either agreeing or strongly agreeing that their school chaplain was trustworthy. Students claimed that their chaplain was trustworthy because he/she is:

- Confidential - 'I can depend on her and go to her for support knowing she won't tell anyone'
- Listens - 'Because she will genuinely listen and try to help me overcome a problem'
- Friendly - 'I trust the chaplain because he is friendly to talk to'
- Understanding - 'Because I know I can say what I want about my personal life to her and she will provide clear answers and understands'
- Caring - 'I trust the chaplain because he is nice, caring and considerate'
- Approachable - 'Because he is very approachable person and nice'
- Inclusive - 'Also he's nice to the students and doesn't blank others out'
- Fun - 'Our chaplain is friendly, helpful and easy to communicate with, is fun and makes jokes with us'
- Safe - 'Because she makes me feel safe and confident / Because I feel safe with them'
- Non-judgemental - 'I trust our Chaplain because he won't judge you'
- Role model - 'I trust the chaplain because he is a school role model'
- Helpful - 'I trust the chaplain because I believe she is there to help'
- Familiarity - 'I've known my School Chaplain since Year 7 (Year 12 student). He has got me involved in many school activities which has opened up my confidence, and is always there to talk'

- Not the teacher -- 'Because they're just someone who's NOT the teacher'.

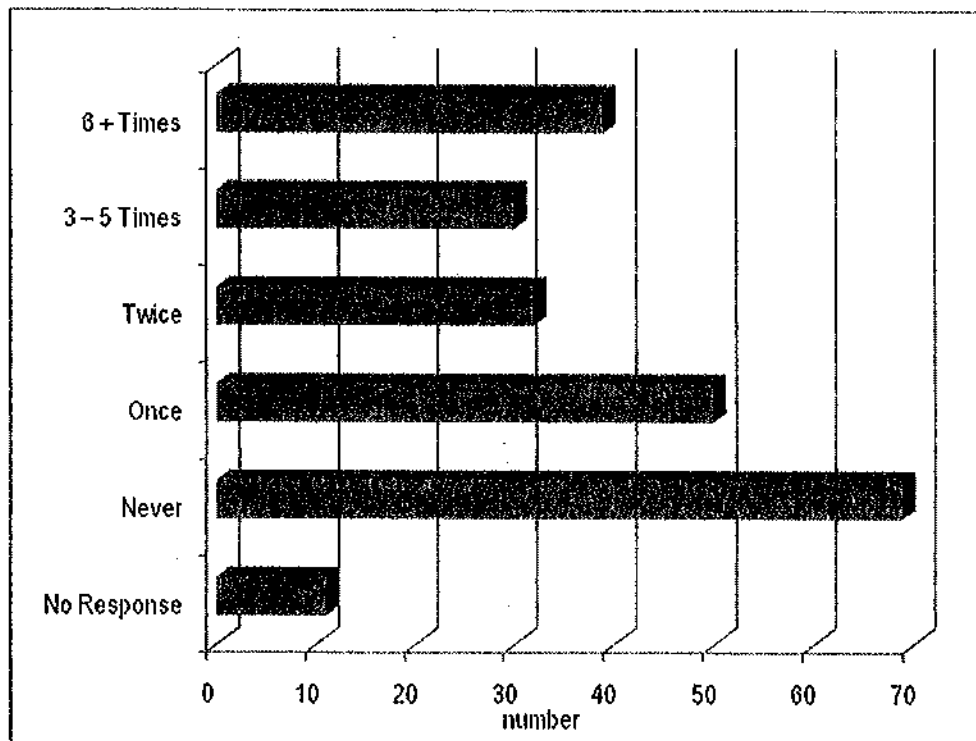
Finally, students claimed that they trusted their chaplain simply because of their position as chaplain!

I trust them because if they were not trustable people they would not be the chaplain (student)

I trust him because he's a chaplain (student)

The graph below demonstrates students' use of their school's chaplaincy service:

Graph 5: Since coming to this school I have used the chaplain's services



Graph 5 shows that 65.4% of respondents had consulted the chaplain at least once and 16.9% of students had reported using the chaplaincy services six or more times, demonstrating that the chaplain provides a critical service. It might be suggested that these are the students who find the chaplain most trustworthy. However, a close examination of the data found that 79% of students trust the chaplain, even though only 43.7% of students had seen the chaplain more than once. Indeed, the data demonstrates that 27.5% of students indicated they trust the chaplain despite having low levels or no usage of the service provided.

3.2.2 Issues of trust

Trust became an increasingly important component of the chaplaincy service as this evaluation progressed. While this research did not explore the percentage of more 'serious issues' chaplains are dealing with, the data provided enough evidence, through stories shared (in focus groups, interviews, email correspondence and surveys) to indicate that chaplains are dealing with a significant number of highly serious and often highly sensitive cases that demand trust and confidentiality. For example:

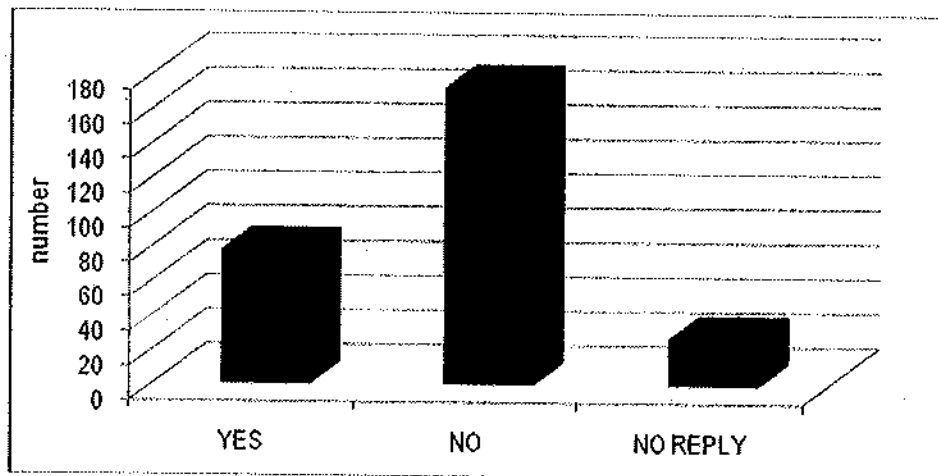
So many stories that we could all share. I'm thinking of one last year. There was a boy in grade 6, just near the end of the year he tried to harm himself and I had been working with him from the time that I started at the school and he eventually got referred onto a, I asked him to go and see his GP and have a chat with that person and then the GP referred him on to a psychiatrist. Now this boy was severely depressed and it had gotten missed at the school and just because there was someone there who was looking out for signs, he got into the best care that he could have. And his mother saw me just a couple of weeks ago and is still very thankful. And I think that's part of the thing that chaplains bring to school communities (chaplain).

Another area I think is in the whole area of stress management, again the senior students that are struggling with the demands of their VCE and being available to sit with them and talk about how they're feeling. And helping them with some relaxation activities, you know helping them to learn some strategies for how to improve their sleep and you know, concentration and yeah, really stress management ideas I suppose. I'm sure that would have an impact on their academic achievement (chaplain).

At the moment I've got, in the last week I've got two grade 5 kids on suicide watch (chaplain).

Importantly, this research found that 70.3% of parents believe that it is important for their child's school to have a chaplain and only 5.4% of parents did not believe that to have a school chaplain was important. Despite the strong response the graph below shows that only 28% of parents had accessed chaplaincy services themselves.

Graph 6: Has there been a time when, as a parent / guardian, you have been in contact with the school chaplain?



Those parents that had seen the school chaplain, had interacted with the chaplain on a variety of issues outlined in Table 1. In the words of the parents themselves:

I was having some troubles in my life and the chaplain was there for me and the kids to talk to (parent).

My child was having difficulty with another child. [The] chaplain advised strategies which have been very successful (parent).

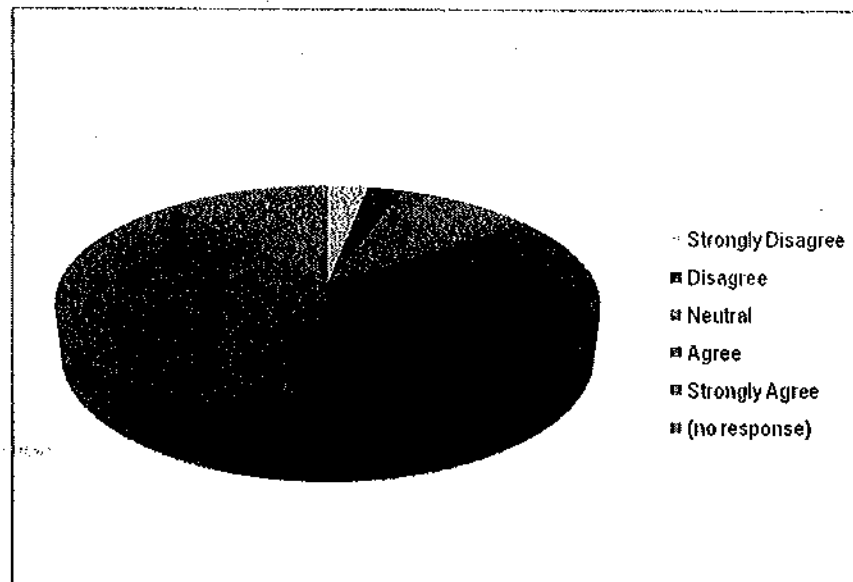
I asked the chaplain to "touch base" with my child to see how they are "travelling" socially, emotionally and academically (parent).

My son's father had a brain tumour removed. My son wasn't dealing with it. He was concerned about dying and losing his parent (parent).

My daughter was having issues at school and I wanted to chat with the chaplain about how I could be of help at home, so together we could help my daughter (parent).

While parents generally were unlikely themselves to use the chaplaincy service, they agreed that they would encourage their child to do so. The chart below demonstrates that 73.5% of parents either agreed or strongly agreed that they would encourage their children to use chaplaincy services if necessary. Interestingly, the categories of 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' showed almost identical percentages to those in the question: 'I think it is important that my child's school has a chaplain', and a closer look at the data reveals these are the same respondents that are opposed to chaplaincy in schools generally – small (15 responses or 5.4%) but strong opponents of the chaplaincy program. It was this same cohort who, in response to the question 'if your child's school did not have a chaplain, what do you think would be lost?', consistently returned responses along the lines of 'nothing', 'not much' and 'not a whole lot at our school'. Interestingly, however, none of this cohort claimed to have had any sort of contact with the chaplain at all, leading researchers to speculate over whether this minority were adequately positioned to respond to such a question.

Table 7: I would encourage my child to use the chaplain's service if needed



Parental awareness of what their children might talk to the chaplain about, however, was vague. That is, many parents did not actually know if there are specific issues their children might discuss at school and not share at home, though 18.6% of parents were convinced there were issues their child would rather talk about at school. Again, this suggests trust and confidentiality are important and secured.

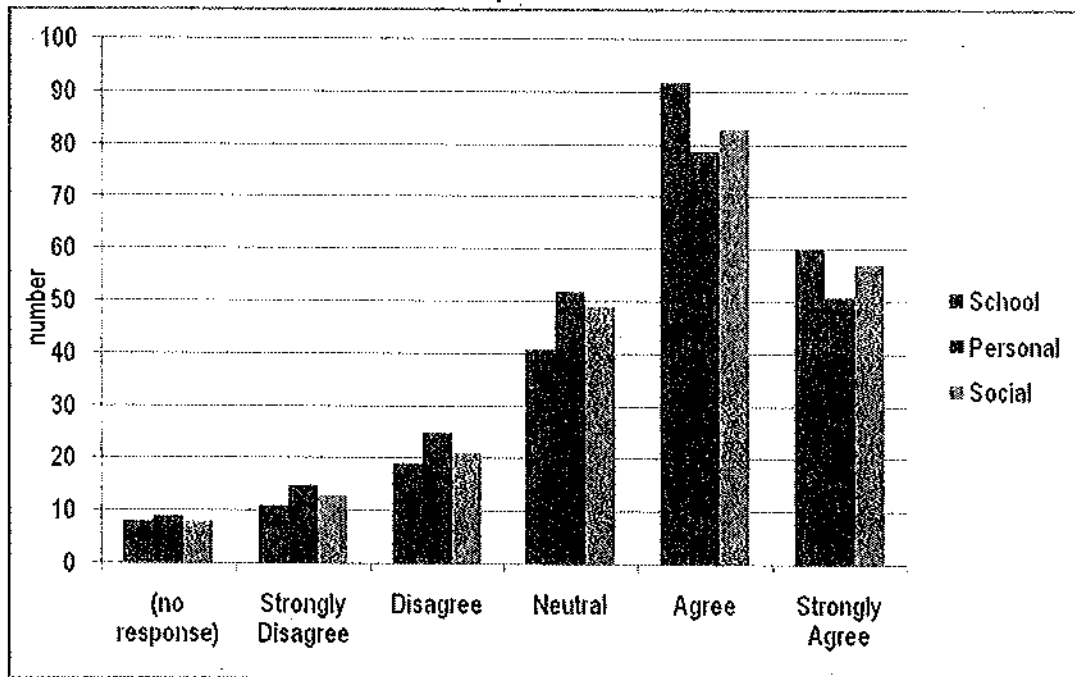
Notably, parents suggested that their child would be unlikely to discuss the following issues at home:

- Family issues and family separation
- Sex, drinking and drugs
- Issues with friends and teachers
- Death and grief

- Bullying problems
- General school matters
- Girls (parent of a male student)
- How they are feeling
- Fellow student and peer-related issues
- Issues that they feel will get them in trouble at home

Secondary students themselves claimed that they would willingly talk to the school chaplain on a range of issues including personal, school-related and social problems.

Graph 8: I would be likely to speak to the chaplain about social, personal and/or school-related problems



The graph above demonstrates that a total of 65.8% of students claimed that they would be likely to talk to the chaplain about 'school-related' problems (i.e. bullying), while 12.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

Similarly 56.3% of students either agreed or agreed strongly that they would talk to the chaplain about 'personal problems' (i.e. stress). By contrast, only 17.3% disagreed or disagreed strongly with this statement.

Finally, responses to whether a student would talk to the chaplain about 'social problems' (i.e. friendship and social inclusion) were also highest in the 'agree' and 'strongly agree' categories representing 60.6% of student responses, compared to 14.7% of students that disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. This finding suggests that, while students believe that the chaplain's role is important, they may be yet to have an encounter with the chaplain or utilise the chaplain's services as the following responses demonstrate:

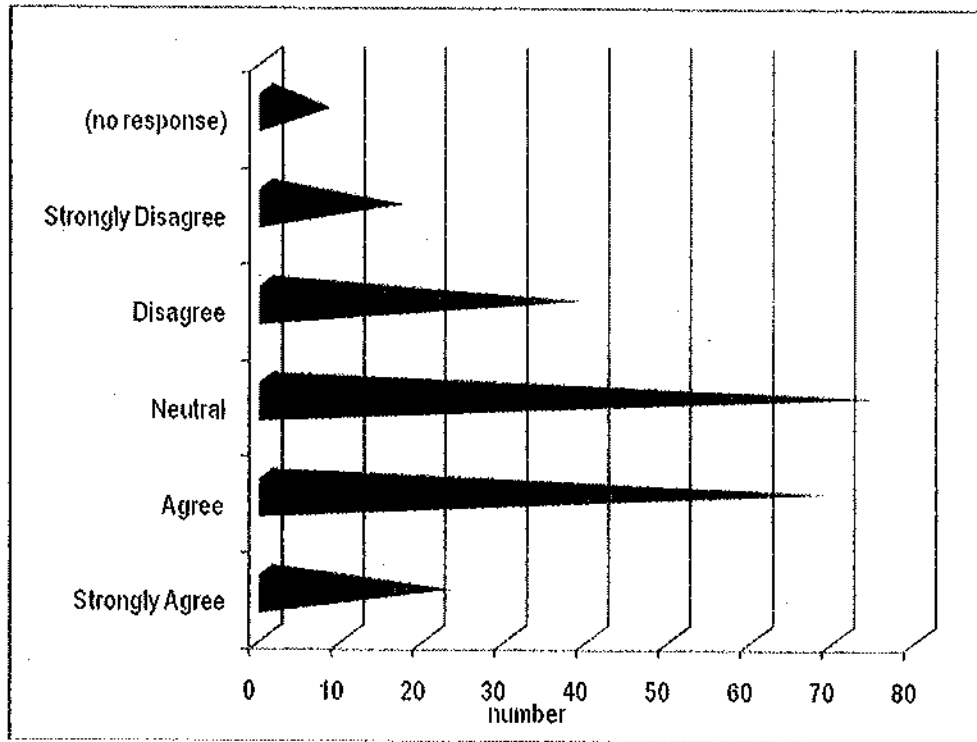
There can be many reasons why I would talk to the Chaplain but there's nothing troubling me at the moment (student)

I would talk just for a chat (student)

While students may not yet have accessed their chaplain, they know when they do they will encounter a trustworthy person with whom they can (mostly) share any issue.

Notably, students' responses to questions about discussing 'spiritual matters' (i.e. the meaning of life) with the chaplain gravitated towards the middle of the scale with 32.5% claiming they were neutral about this statement.

Graph 9: I would be likely to talk to the chaplain about spiritual matters



This finding suggests many students felt ambivalent or undecided about speaking to the chaplain about spiritual matters. Previous research suggests that chaplains generally focus much more on 'modelling' than 'teaching' the Christian faith (Salecich and Watts 2006:12) and in Victorian schools religious instruction and teaching are more widely held to be the responsibility of religious education teachers, rather than of chaplains (Rayner et al 2005).

Indeed, according to chaplain interviews, the spiritual aspect of their work is a relatively minor role. As one chaplain claimed:

the spiritual side of it, which is a minor role ...maybe three or four families, have discussed spiritual issues with me (chaplain).

And one student claimed:

I would most likely speak to the chaplain about anything, including school, social, personal, but besides religious, due to I rarely get religious problems nor the meaning of life [questions]. That may be because I am not the type that is interested (student).

Despite 'neutral' being the common response (32.5%), 39.8% of students either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement 'I would be likely to talk to the chaplain about spiritual matters' and only 24.2% 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed'. (Interestingly, 26.4% of students claimed to be regular churchgoers, compared with only 16.1% of their parents!).

According to the chaplains, students seek advise/counsel on spiritual matters such as:

I have kids normally come to see me after the RE (religious education) class. What was she talking about? ...

That year 11 boy I was talking about before, same sex attracted that hates Christians, our connection is spirituality. He is exceptionally spiritual. He's looked at every religious belief. He's researched it, he's trying to find peace but he hates Christians. And the reason he hates Christians is because he feels condemned because he's same sex attracted. But he comes every week (chaplain).

I've had kids come and ask me about the dark side. They're into the demonic and what do you [I] reckon...? [I respond] I believe in that because I believe in God. We go round that circle and the destructiveness of that and what they can get themselves into (chaplain).

A lot of the Goth type kids that are attracted to my office ... I even got invited to a 16 year old Goth party and I sort of thought will I or won't I? I said I'll go for one hour. I'll come for the first hour and then I'll let you do your thing. ... So yeah that was fun (chaplain).

Notably, 24.7% of parents either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that one of a chaplain's most important roles is to provide spiritual advice / guidance. Similarly, at the other end of the spectrum, 27.2% of parents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Responses to this question displayed a tendency toward the centre of the chart, with 35.1% replying in the 'neutral' category. These results are interesting when compared with the strong parental responses in favour of the chaplaincy program. It seems parents appear to promote the program itself, but are more ambivalent about its spiritual / religious component.

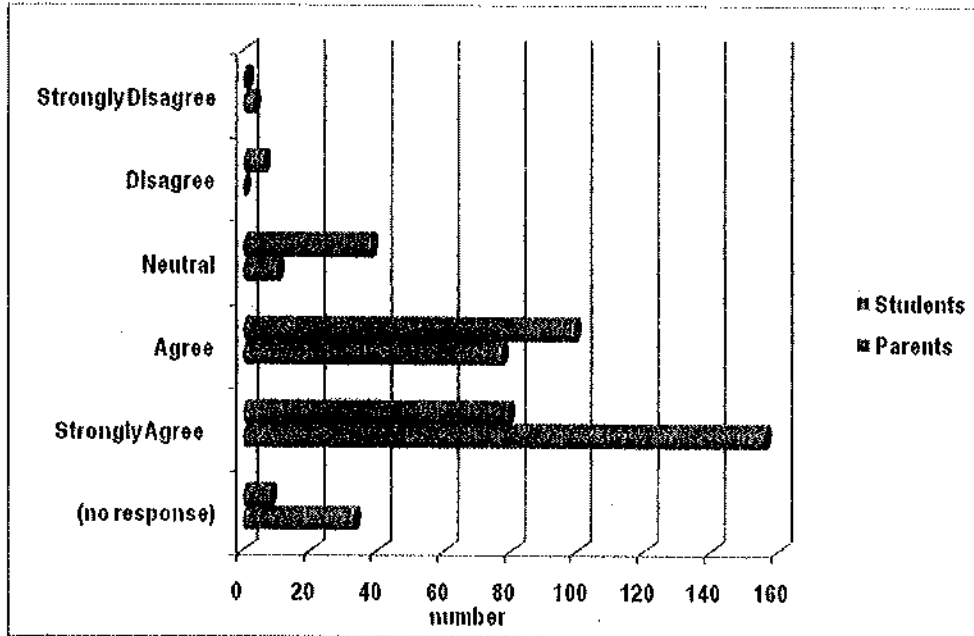
Interestingly, while many secondary students and parents were 'neutral' about speaking to the chaplain about spiritual matters, the overwhelming majority in both cohorts felt that learning about morals and values in schools was important.

From the Principal's Desk

Dear Dorothy,

Just writing to express my appreciation for the amazing work you do in your role of Chaplain at Marlborough Primary School. Some of the students have done their day's work emotionally before they even get to school and you give them time out for talking, listening and reflection, then send them back with a brand new attitude and strategies for coping. I don't know how you do it, but you have a rare and amazing gift. You set up a rapport so quickly and completely. Children open up and are so at ease with you. I've seen you achieve the most amazing turn arounds in children - from negative to positive, from frustrated and reactive to calm and resilient. Marlborough Primary is so lucky to have your services (students and staff!). You are a tremendous morale booster and role model! Deepest thanks and admiration. (Marlborough Primary School).

Graph 10: Learning about morals and values is important in schools



As the above graph shows, 77.1% of students either agreed or strongly agreed that learning about morals and values in school is important, with only 3% that disagreed or strongly disagreed. Responses by parents were also very positive, with 83.5% falling into either the 'agree' or 'strongly agree' categories. Only 3 respondents strongly disagreed (1.1%), and there were no replies in the 'disagree' category at all.

From the Principal's Desk

The chaplain worked to develop self esteem in students and assists students to explore the moral values and ethics that are essential to personal growth and are necessary for the well being of our society. The chaplain works to develop, in students, respect for the individual. Such respect is fundamental to the development of positive student relationships and therefore vital for students' personal growth (Beaufort Secondary College).

3.3 The school chaplain versus the school counsellor: Is there a difference?

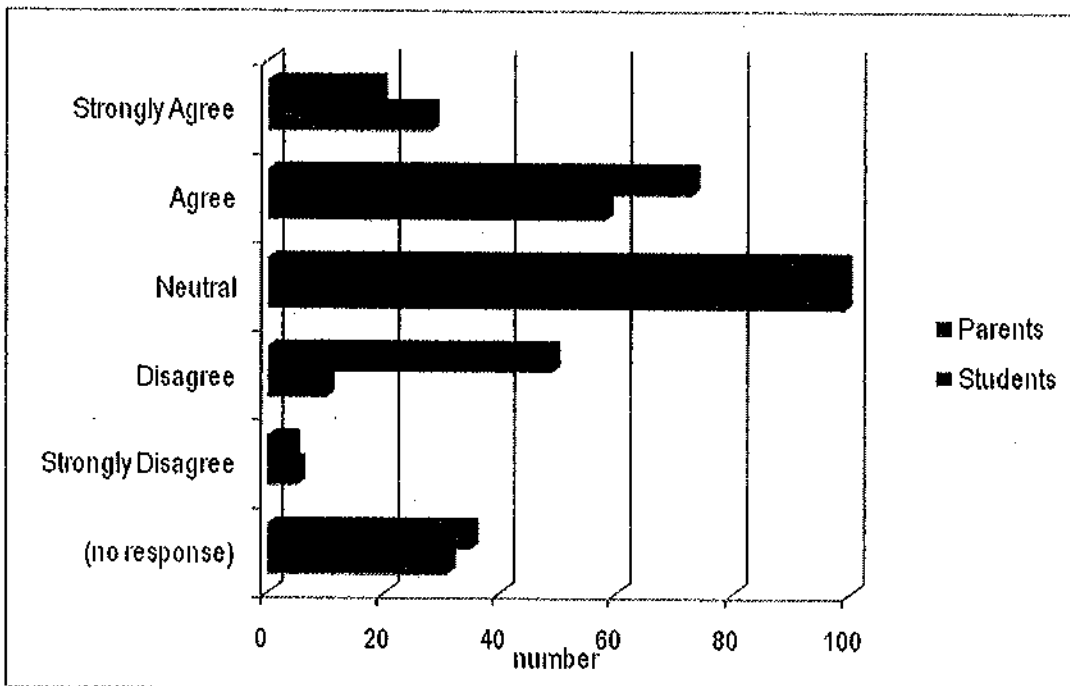
The literature highlights five distinguishing features of chaplains. Many of these features distinguish the chaplaincy role from other related roles such as youth-worker, counsellor, or welfare officer. These are chaplaincy as:

1. Christian ministry
2. Pastoral care
3. School support service
4. Relationship building and modelling
5. Community work.

3.3.1 "Different strokes for different folks"?

Parents and students were asked to respond against a set of statements designed to explore their perceptions of the differences between chaplains and others with a designated welfare/well-being role – school-counsellors. Secondary students and parents were asked to respond to the statement: 'The role of the chaplain is completely different from that of the school counsellor'.

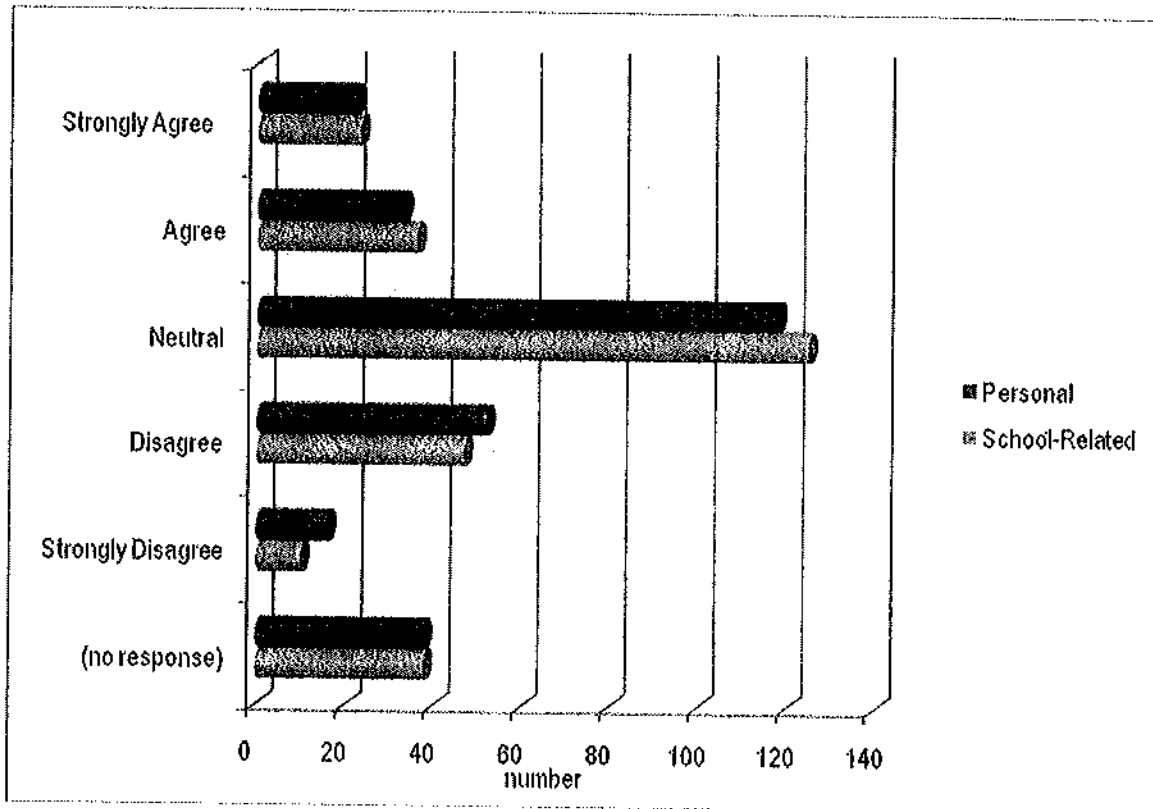
Graph 11: The role of the chaplain is completely different from that of the school counsellor



The graph above shows that the majority of students 42.9% responded with neutral. This is likely to be the result of students not understanding the differences between the school chaplain and the school counsellor. The next highest responses were positive, with 25.1% of students agreeing that the roles were different, and 12.1% agreeing strongly. Only 6.5% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Similarly, parents also displayed a certain ambivalence towards this statement, with replies tending toward the middle of the range (35.5% in the 'neutral' category). However, a large majority (32.3%) also either agreed or strongly agreed that a chaplain is completely different from a counsellor, while only 19% disagreed or strongly disagreed believing that the chaplain and counsellor fulfilled similar roles. Interestingly, the weakest responses to this question were at either end of the scale, with only 6.8% strongly agreeing and 1.4% strongly disagreeing. Such mid-range responses may indicate that parents, like students, are not entirely sure of what 'defines' the roles of chaplains and counsellors and, therefore, are unclear about the potential differences in the respective roles.

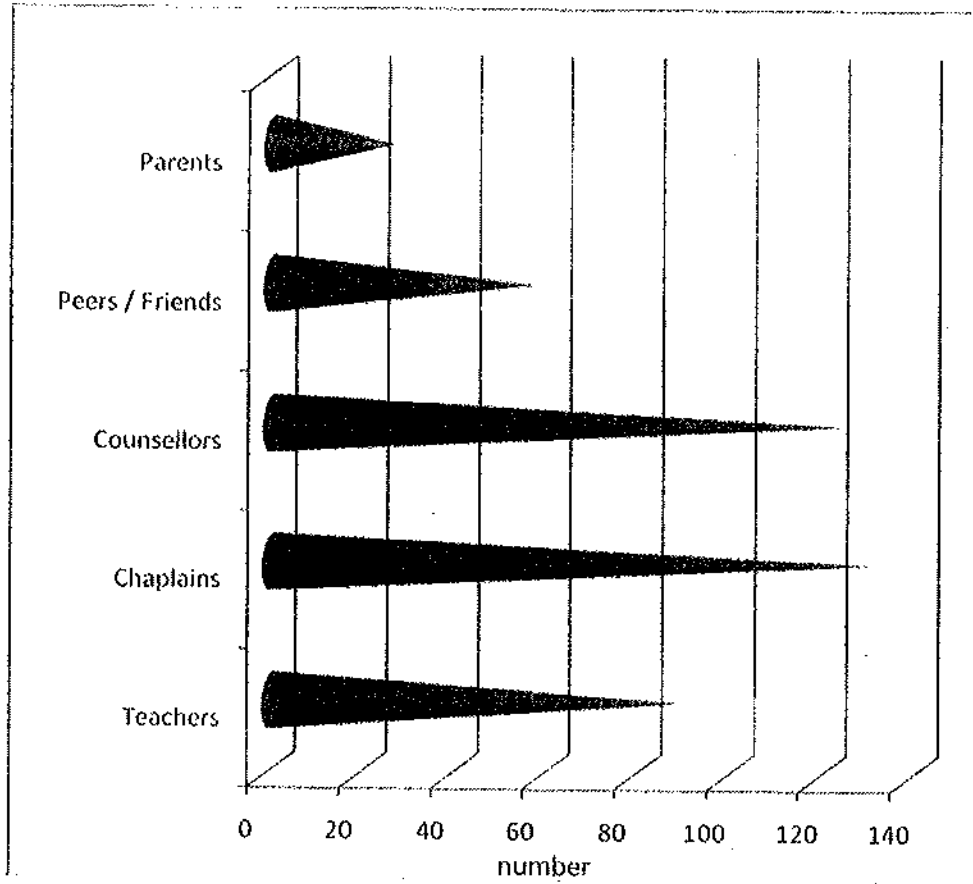
Graph 12: I would prefer my child visit the school counsellor rather than the chaplain



As the graph above demonstrates, responses to whether parents would like their children to consult counsellors or chaplains about school-related and personal problems were very similar. Responses tended strongly towards neutral (44.8%) for school-related problems, and (42.3%) for personal problems. The weakest responses were in the categories at either end of the scale – 'strongly agree' and 'strongly disagree'. Responses for 'strongly agree' were 8.2% for school-related problems and 7.9% for personal problems; responses for 'strongly disagree' were 3.6% for school-related problems, and 5.7% for personal problems.

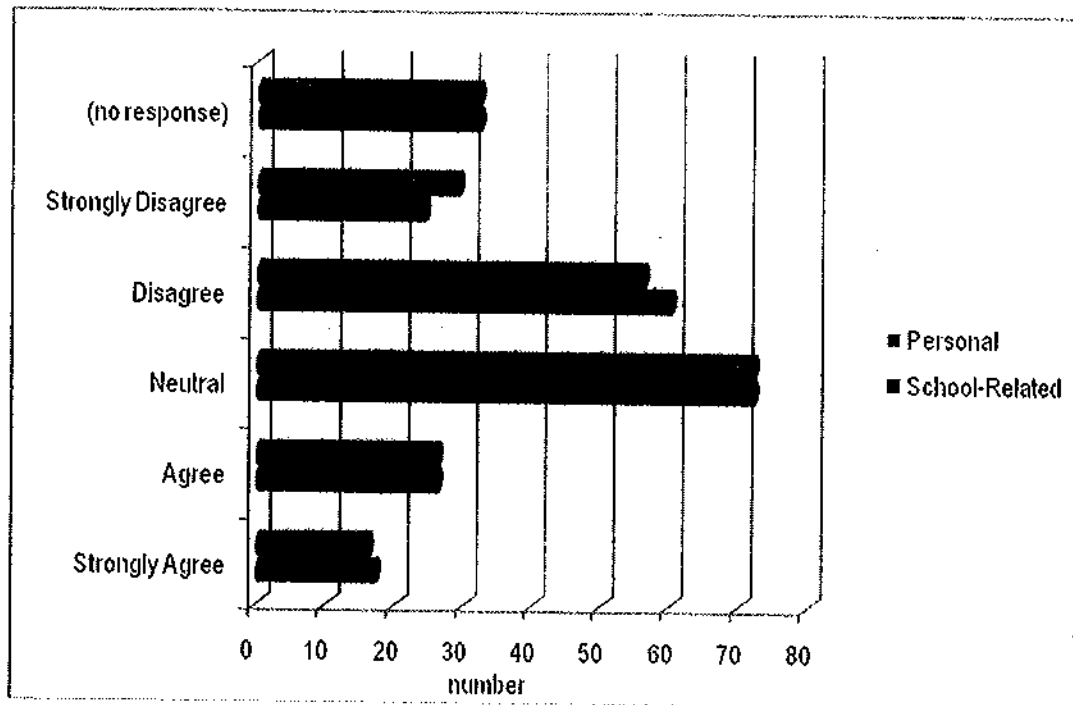
Researchers have speculated that ambivalent responses to questions such as those depicted in the above graph may be partially attributed to question construction; unlike the rest of the survey these questions were focussed on counsellors, rather than chaplains. It is possible that respondents may have found the incongruity off-putting. It is also likely that the responses indicate that parents and students alike are happy having either a chaplain or a counsellor at their school – as long as they have one!

Graph 13: Who do you think is the best person to deal with student's personal, social and spiritual issues?



Similarly, parent responses to this question 'who do you think is the best person to deal with student's personal, social and spiritual issues' showed a fairly even divide between chaplains and counsellors with regard to dealing with issues (131 and 125, respectively), with chaplains proving the most popular choice. Teachers ranked third with 90 responses. 'Parents' was not a category included on the original questionnaire, since the question technically related to issues that students would NOT talk to their parents about. Regardless of this, 'parents' appeared with considerable frequency in the 'other' category (27 instances) and has, therefore, been included here as a separate category. Percentages have not been included with this question, since respondents were allowed to select more than one option (meaning that total responses outnumber the number of people surveyed).

Graph 14: For school-related and/or for personal problems I would prefer to visit the school counsellor than the chaplain



The graph demonstrates that for personal problems, 36.8% of students would prefer to see a school chaplain rather than a school-counsellor while for school-related problems, 36.4% of students responded in this way – noting the highest single response rate was in the 'neutral' category (31.2% each). By contrast, only 18.6% actively preferred the school counsellor for school-related problems, while for personal problems only 8.2% of students responded in this manner. The similarities in responses to these two statements may of course be because, for students, there is little difference between the categories, given the percentage of their waking lives that is spent at school. For personal problems 36.8% of students preferred to see a chaplain, whereas only 18.2% did not.

In summary the above set of graphs indicate that the students and/or parents:

- do not clearly understand the differences between the school chaplain and a school counsellor or
- do not care what the differences are so long as there is someone present at the school for the student to access.

From the Principal's Desk

The chaplain allowed the school to support the community at large. Staff, students and parents access, value and support all programs implemented by the chaplain. The school soccer team achieved great success at the state carnival. At the school sports, the school achieved 3 age group champs. At the swimming sports, for the first time, the school achieved 100% participation, which were firsts for the school. The Choir sang at the Town Christmas celebrations, another first! The chaplain was involved in setting up a garden and cooking classroom which was another teaching/learning tool for the school. The greater community helped water the garden over the summer holidays. In 2006, the school's maintenance bill was \$30,000. In 2008 it was reduced to \$28,000. The community is starting to feel ownership of the school and vandalism has dropped (Ararat Primary School).

These questions merit further investigation. However, an analysis of the qualitative data in the surveys, focus groups/interviews and school progress reports does illustrate some distinguishing features between a school chaplain and a school counsellor. These differences are discussed below but were summarised best by the following parent:

Counsellors are trained professionals there to support students, listen to them, discuss issues, concerns and mediate between school & home and to guide students to the appropriate organisations if required. A Chaplain is similar but has spiritual knowledge/training which may help with religious, moral issues. A chaplain also acts as a role model in the wider community and involves students in well-being [and] community concerns. The chaplain is seen as a middle person, impartial, non-threatening so students may respond positively (parent).

3.3.2 Chaplaincy as Christian ministry

The literature asserts that chaplains are unique insofar as they provide a spiritual dimension to their core activities. The importance of this spiritual / religious aspect cannot be understated. It has been argued that this is perhaps the greatest differentiating factor between a chaplain's role and the roles of those in related fields. This aspect of chaplaincy may also incorporate leading the school community in ceremonies and provision of rites of passage for students and members of their families, including conducting funerals and weddings (Hughes, 2005).

Research demonstrates that, for many chaplains, matters of pastoral care and of spiritual support and growth are inseparably intertwined, emphasising the extent to which the spiritual / religious aspect is perceived as central to the chaplaincy role (Salecich and Watts, 2006; Pohlmann and Russell, 2005).

Certainly, a significant proportion of the qualitative responses supported this with statements made such as;

A chaplain's work is underpinned by a core belief in Christianity and associated teachings (chaplain).

The counsellor would touch the solution of the child's problems from the psychological point of view while the chaplain will refer to it from a religious perspective (parent).

3.3.3 Chaplaincy as pastoral care

Chaplains also provide pastoral care and support to individuals and groups in the school community. Pastoral care comprises the two tasks of nurture and guardianship but it should not be confused with professional pastoral counselling. Pastoral care has been defined as "...the offer of a loving relationship by a Christian caregiver to a person whom he or she seeks to help" (Salecich and Watts, 2006:13; Pohlmann and Russell 2005).

This reference to "loving relationships by a Christian caregiver" again makes reference to the spiritual / religious aspect of Chaplaincy, though it takes care not to overplay it. That is, while this dimension is an integral element of Chaplaincy, there is recognition that the current school environment is largely secular, and incorporates students from a variety of different religious backgrounds. Unlike counsellors (though much of their work focuses on counselling), chaplains are also versed in the difference between the spiritual and the psychological. They address questions of meaning and morality.

In a chaplain's own words:

I like to think about chaplaincy in terms of what we offer which is unique as a chaplain, to a school environment that you know, a social worker or a psychologist other health professionals ... can't offer... I think one of the really important things that I try to do is to see my role as being a ministry to all of the students. So certainly we're there to support young people who have difficulties and pastoral needs. But I think it's the role of the chaplain to really be out there with the broad range of kids celebrating the good things that they do and mixing with them. And kind of encouraging them and keeping them healthy so it's okay to kind of pick up the pieces when things go wrong but I really see it's an important role for a chaplain to be doing a lot of encouraging and celebrating with kids that are going well. That's one area, and I think the other unique area is the area of spirituality and wellbeing and meaning making and just I guess from a Christian perspective to bring that sort of grace and love and peace into the school environment not only with young people but the teaching staff and the families. So that you know, whatever situation that we're involved in to really keep in mind that sort of message that you know, there's always a way to work things out and to bring that hope, I think it's really important (chaplain).

For chaplains in this research, therefore, counselling is a part of what they do but pastoral care is the primary thing they do!

I often ask the question, because we've got some youth workers. 'What's the difference in my role and the youth worker?' What do I bring that they don't? A few little things. Like I have never known a youth worker ... to go into the hospital to visit kids, to take a boy on the anniversary of a boy's father, 12 months after, to the cemetery and take him out for lunch. Pastoral stuff ... We do counselling. But I'm a pastoral carer, chaplain, who occasionally does counselling (chaplain).

3.3.4 Chaplaincy as a school support service

Though under-researched there is evidence that in recent times, there have been increasing and complex demands being made on schools and teachers alike. School administrators and staff view chaplaincy services as an important additional support service (Salecich and Watts, 2006). That is, chaplains are increasingly being seen as a useful sounding board and a useful support to staff members about a range of issues and activities. This research supports this preliminary finding with many principals and chaplains themselves highlighting the school support services they provide:

For me I'm a sounding board too, very much for the Principal and someone who will hold what they say because they get stressed and they get upset with some of the situations that the kids are in. So I know mine don't feel quite so lonely because there's someone who isn't above them but someone who's there that can actually hold it and if there's tears, well there's tears you know. There's no judgment about it (chaplain).

Chaplains are part of the school but they're not part of the establishment ... I think principals value having someone in the school to support them through those crisis times in terms of what happens in schools sometimes with critical incidents, grief and loss that kind of thing. I think principals value that community school role that I think many chaplains have in that liaison between the community and promoting the school in the community and being able to offer to the community that we have a chaplain at our school. And that person's available to the school community as well as being able to you know, refer individual students that they're concerned about (chaplain).

In essence, therefore, through their support, chaplains help school staff better focus on their core tasks and objectives. That is, chaplains are a 'value add' to staff – often helping out in the classroom, taking on teaching roles (e.g. morals and values education) and, at times, undertaking administrative tasks such as photocopying. Chaplains are also a 'value add' to the school's welfare team. As one example:

When I talk about it, it seems such a lot that's being done by one person. And you think well how thinly can you spread yourself but I think it's that having someone who's available to just add that, it's almost like a value added type thing you know, the difference [in the way] the school would function if we didn't have a chaplain. But I think the chaplain just value adds in those areas of you know, meaning making and spirituality and having, you know someone else on the wellbeing team (chaplain)

The findings in this evaluation also indicate that the life-on-life support role of school chaplaincy may enhance educational outcomes, though further research into this area is required. There were several anecdotal stories shared by chaplains and principals that suggest that through their role chaplains enhance school retention rates – particularly of those students at high-risk of truancy:

Other feedback I've got which surprised me [relates to] children who have been absent from school for lengthy periods of time. I've had a number of teachers tell me after I've started seeing those students that those children aren't absent nearly as often and I'm not seeing them every week. I'm seeing them maybe every second or third week. But just knowing that I'm there has changed their behaviour (chaplain).

A single child family, mother was a chronic alcoholic. I found her [the student] in the yard one day after school. I met her for the first time, just said hi as I was walking past as chaplains do. She just said, 'I'm not going home'. I stopped for a second. I was on my way to a meeting with somebody and didn't know what to do. I didn't know who this girl was. ... Now that girl was in year 9. We got her through. We did her homework after school with her ... we got her through to year 12. She got her year 12, she got into horticulture and ... I still see her.... She's 28 years of age, I'm visiting her still (chaplain).

I'm currently working with a boy who's been hospitalised for depression. His support workers from the Austin Hospital believe that I'm the main thing that keeps him at school. I'm his time out sort of person so when he's feeling things are too hard he can come to me. We got him back in class again... He's only in year 9 now. This has been going on since the middle of last year (chaplain)...

3.3.5 Chaplaincy as relationship building and modelling

In Australian schools, chaplains occupy a unique position. In many ways, a chaplain's role is similar to a welfare officer, youth worker or counsellor, encompassing functions such as crisis management and confidante, and engaging in a wide range of activities designed to ensure student wellbeing. However, unlike the youth worker or counsellor, the chaplain's role frequently extends beyond these tasks and involves a more holistic understanding and approach to developing ongoing relationships with staff, students, their families and the wider community. Generally speaking, chaplains are more people-oriented than school focused. Their ministry is directed towards individuals and groups, rather than the school as an organisation (Salecich and Watts, 2006). Emphasising this point, Salecich and Watts further argue that "...chaplaincy services [seek to foster] positive relationships among all members of the school community. Consequently ... chaplains focused much more on people than programs" (2006:12). Salecich and Watts's repetition of the notion, of chaplaincy as both holistic and people-oriented, is a strong indicator of its importance, and the idea is a defining characteristic of what differentiates chaplains from, say, school counsellors, who are more

traditionally limited to consultation hours within tightly defined parameters, and to dealing with students' issues on a case-by-case basis, rather than being concerned with their ongoing, overall development.

I'm dealing with a few children who have some really complicated custody issues that they're dealing with and I'm just thinking of one child where the principal's told me that I'm the only consistent person in that child's life (chaplain).

Parents also highlighted the holistic care and relationship building role of a chaplain, rather than limited counselling provided on a case-by-case basis.

A counsellor is someone a student is sent to and who only comes to the school once or twice a week (parent).

The chaplain would focus on the child as a whole rather than a specific problem that a counsellor may have to deal with (parent)

I see the chaplain's role as far broader providing positive support to the whole community at school through the newsletter, courses offered as well as providing spiritual guidance and individual support for personal problems, the greater availability of the chaplain (parent).

[I] would presume that the counsellor provides assistance for a specific problem and the chaplain provides a more casual approach for general problems and situations (parent).

A significant finding in this research is the modelling role often associated with chaplains; though little has been written on this aspect. When asked to tick multiple boxes on who constituted the most important role model in the school, more students and parents ticked that the main role model should be teachers (n = 102 or 44.2% and 219 or 78.5% respectively), then chaplains (n = 73 or 31.6% and 119 or 42.7%). However, while the data suggests that both teachers and chaplains are role models (with a skew in favour of teachers), the findings in this research demonstrate that chaplains, particularly male chaplains, play an important part in terms of offering male role modelling to young men. Chaplains and principals commented on this:

Until this year I was the only male in both schools ... So I've tried to exhibit a reliable man. [Being a male role model is] a good way of putting it; particularly with kids who are really struggling [they] often haven't got good male role models (chaplain)

And from a parent:

My children respect our chaplain and tend to learn from him through example...They look up to him (parent).

From the Principal's Desk

The strongest evidence of support for the program is in the positive relationship Joe has developed with the students, particularly the boys in Year 7 and 8. He engages boys in school and their education. Joe is a positive male role model for our students, many of whom come from single parent families, in particular single mothers. Joe also relates well to students "at their level" (Ashwood College)

3.3.6 Chaplaincy as community work

From the Principal's Desk

Helping families connect to service providers and advocating for families with disabilities in all areas of life (doctors, solicitors, centrelink etc). Other agencies have begun requesting her services to support carers and transitions into out of home placements for students. Productive networks are becoming more evident through positive outcomes for families. Welfare issues at school are better managed through stronger connections with families. Productive relationships with parents are being developed where parents have support for the challenges they face (Baringa Special School).

Schnaper (2004) argues that chaplains are unique for two main reasons: their focus is wide in reach, and the range of who they help is likewise wide. A chaplain's work extends beyond students, working also with staff and families on a range of issues, including (for example) bereavement (Hughes 2005). Hughes argues that needs-based programs are another area of growth in the community work of chaplaincy. That is, dealing with issues such as grief, anger management and values clarification; recognising that some chaplains need further training in education and psychology to develop these programs fully. As one example:

I having been in chaplaincy now for eight years. You have those times in every school community's life which are either, well particularly in sadness where you know, there's been, I've been involved a couple of times where there's been a fatality or a death in the school community. And again I think that's a very unique ministry that chaplains have to be available to support communities at that time especially. You know, so many people just don't know where to go for support and if they have a school chaplain if they're not connected to the church community, they're able to seek some support at that time. The other thing I've been involved in is weddings which again is quite unique for chaplains to be involved in. And you're invited to a, to conduct a ceremony, it's really lovely (chaplain).

A chaplain's role also extends across and beyond the school community; connecting the school with the community, engagement in extra-curricular activities at school and engagement in social justice issues, as well as a broad range of others services. This view is gaining prominence as one of the central features distinguishing chaplaincy from other school-related services such as youth workers, counsellors and so on (Hughes, 2005; Pohlmann and Russell 2005). That is, there is an understated emergence in the literature, that through this work, chaplains facilitate social capital (social networks and links) and social connections and trust.

A young man, he's in year 8 and wants to get off marijuana so I ended up taking him to a clinic with his mum and then I found out they needed food so we organised food. Then we found out that the older daughter is addicted so we got her involved. There's no-one in the school that actually is able to do a lot of those home visits to provide a lot of that caring that stops at 4:30-5:00pm. People ring me at night and sometimes I can only ring certain families at night because if they see the school number on their phone they won't pick up. So I go home and ring on my phone at night and sort of catch up with them during the holidays. I make sure I catch up with those really severely at risk kids. So I take them out for coffee and

that during holiday times and some weekends. If they'd told me on the Friday that they're feeling suicidal then I'll ring them a couple of times. I'll catch up. So it's doing much more than what schools can do (chaplain).

Parents too were aware of the wide community reach of chaplains:

[The] chaplain is more specific to needs and can be more personally involved with help of church community and backing (parent).

I believe that the chaplain is more for family-self issues that affect how the child behaves at school where the counsellor is for issues at school (parent).

Because chaplains see their role as a calling, many argued that what makes them unique is that they are 'on call 24/7' – to the student, school or the wider community. According to one parent:

A school counsellor is engaged when children face difficulties at home or tragic circumstances. A chaplain is on standby to communicate on a 24 hour basis (parent).

From the chaplain's perspective:

We are on call 24/7. Whereas I know with some of the ones from the departments and things like that ... [they'll say] it's not my day ... It's 5:30pm and that phone goes off ... when you're dealing with a calling or you're fulfilling a calling, it's not timed out to nine to five is it? (chaplain).

It's not even in my mind that I have a start time and knock off time. I am a chaplain, that's my life's vocation and you get called into the hospital for a car accident at 10 o'clock on Saturday night, you go! And I don't think there'd be a chaplain around whether they're full time or part time that wouldn't go, I don't think anyone would say no, I just want time off (chaplain).

Finally, one of the most important aspects distinguishing chaplaincy is the relative longevity of their positions, when compared with other service providers such as school counsellors. A study of school chaplaincy services, for example, found that generally the role of chaplains was loosely defined and although their activities may differ in the detail, depending on the kinds of life experiences they bring to the task, "... unlike the typical youth worker ... they do not necessarily have a limited shelf-life" (Hill and Hill 2005:55).

From the Principal's Desk

The Chaplaincy Program has added value to our school. Individual students' welfare has been increased by the 1:1 sessions, dealing with grief, esteem and social conflict issues. In some instances this has actually led to an improvement in student academic outcomes. The small group work has enabled improved relations between students, particularly with a group of girls who have been problematic since Grade 2 for the school. Again, this has led to an improvement in working atmosphere in the classroom. Generally, it has been very positive in a small school to have another ear for staff and parents to share their concerns and problems. A couple of underlying issues have been brought to light (not necessarily solved), meaning we now have a more open community. Margaret has also added positively to the community through attending, participating or convening a variety of community activities that have led to community strengthening and a more positive view of the school being developed (Fish Creek 5 District Primary School).

3.4 The value of the Victorian Schools Chaplaincy Program: What would be lost?

The preceding sections have begun highlighting some of the value and impacts of a chaplain's role. In this section, the value elements and impacts of the chaplaincy program are further discussed in relation to the question what would be lost if there was no chaplain at my school?

There is no doubt from the data that the overwhelming majority of parents, principals and chaplains believe that much would be lost if the chaplaincy service in their schools ceased. According to parents many things would be lost if there was no chaplain at their child's school. The things that would be lost are summarised best by the following quotes:

- My son would have fewer safe places to go for guidance, support, mentoring and friendship
- The chaplain is a 'safe, neutral' person, who is less intimidating (usually) than teachers
- The teachers do not have time to perform this task as they have a heavy load teaching in the classroom
- Support and coordination of student welfare [and] an extra person to assist with welfare issues
- Christian values, humility and empathy
- Community spirit and growth
- A role model kids could look to; for advice and support; and someone that will not judge them or the choices they have made, and that the kids can trust.
- Someone that is looking out for them, and cares. Friendly support and encouragement. The parents would greatly miss the impartial support
- Someone the whole family could come to for help with a family crisis.

My child goes with her friends for a friendly chat - I am most comforted to know if pressures ever got too much, the chaplain would be another outlet that would listen. Often teachers, parents and counsellors are busy with their own daily pressures - do we truly pick up the problems around us - a chaplain's main role is to nurture this positive wellbeing/hope/faith without stating it in religious terms (parent)

I would have thought that it would be in the best interest of the school. I would think if the school did not have a chaplain, the help that underprivileged families receive would disappear (parent).

Principals argued that the support the chaplains give to their staff and students was invaluable and without which there would be a heavy burden on the school that others cannot carry. There were principals in their Progress Reports to Government that made statements such as "The chaplaincy has been very effective overall and I value the role of the chaplain in our school. I wonder how we did without this support in the past". Others elaborated on a sense of urgency for securing their chaplain long-term:

Mildura secondary College is a stand alone college in North West Victoria catering for almost 900 VCE and VCAL students. These students come to us from five main feeder schools and many from outside the public education system. Such a large group of 15-19 year olds provides significant challenges for Colin and our wellbeing team. This is particularly true in recent times when the drought has produced enormous challenges for a community dependant on irrigation. Colin makes a wonderful contribution to the life of our school where he delivers classes in Religion and Society, and Philosophy and undertakes the coordination of our five Annual

Debutante Balls and builds student connectedness to the school via the production of an outstanding annual DVD focussing on all students. Colin has been chaplain of our school since 1996 and while his ongoing work has been invaluable it was his efforts during and since the horrific accident at Cardross in 2006 that took the lives of six teenagers that have distinguished him as a leader in maintaining the wellbeing and success of our school community (principal - Mildura Secondary College).

The chaplain service is an excellent Government initiative which is funded over three years. The difficulty for towns like ours is what will happen at the end of the three years. Hopefully the funding commitment will continue. Whilst it is true that communities can often fundraise and find other financial means to support a chaplain, increasingly small communities are finding it more difficult to do this. With the number of students disengaged from regular schooling and finding it difficult to cope with a wide range of challenging circumstances in their lives, the need for a chaplain is significant (principal - St Arnaud Secondary College).

And many principals also echoed these sentiments in their focus group.

I can't begin to tell you what we'd do. I have no idea ... I don't know... I live in fear of that happening.

Principals claimed that the following would be lost with their chaplain were the program to discontinue:

- A vital cog in my student welfare community which then throws a lot of pressure back on the teacher community of the school
- Someone to talk to very quietly and the time that you have to do that. I know it's taken a lot of pressure off me
- Sometimes putting out fires with kids and things but just someone the children know and can relate to really easily
- We'd be losing a very good role model in terms of someone who's able to move between all sorts of young people, as well as staff
- That kind of bridging role would be lost
- More work coming back onto my AP and myself in terms of dealing with students
- The children would miss out and everybody's stress levels would go up

I think we would lose that opportunity to engage with our own sense of spirituality and what makes us human. And I mean, essentially what makes us the way in which we live in what we call a Christian based society. There's no getting away from it, we do live in a society which bases itself on Christian values but it's really about the values and I think what the Government was trying to do was actually to support us, to instil those values. And if you have a look at the way in which society has moved away from churches then schools have to become the churches if you like in many cases. I mean the student support services at our school do everything the churches used to do. You know provide uniforms, food, breakfast, all those sort of things for kids ... Connections to other agencies... A community to belong to (principal).

Finally, according to the chaplains whose position is a calling, the two quotes below express eloquently what would be lost if the program ceased:

I guess what comes to my mind is that the heart of the school would be lost. And it's not because our teachers aren't caring – because we work with the most wonderful teachers [but] they have 25-30 kids in the class and they cannot address those emotional issues. But just knowing there's a chaplain there who is coming in [and] we know Tommy can speak to the chaplain [then]. It's that heart (chaplain).

As I said before with that hub, our school is fairly isolated so you would lose that contact point. I have a very community orientated focus so we've started to draw on a lot of community into our school – we would lose that point of contact. The school would then become isolated again from the community (chaplain).

4. Analysis and Conclusion

This report has provided an evaluation of the value and impacts of the ACCESS ministries *Victorian Schools Chaplaincy Program*. The research makes it clear that chaplains offer a multi-faceted and, in many ways, immeasurable service, without which a great deal would be lost.

Chaplains make space on our campuses for all that we neglect, all that we can't put a price or an evaluation on. They offer a grace that is rare in a graded atmosphere. They save us from the intensity of campus life, when ... examinations weigh us down. In a world where function rules, chaplains help us be well, rather than just perform well ... We need to complement our stress on usefulness to complete ourselves. That's the usefulness of chaplains (Schaper, 2004).

The specific activities of a chaplain will, of course, vary from school to school, depending on individual school needs, but will almost always encompass such things as 'being a listening ear' and providing counselling services (both formal and informal), the formation and running of a range of school-based programs, as well as participation in school functions, assemblies, sporting events and so on. To expand, common activities might include camps, excursions, leadership programs, helping students with schoolwork or just providing somewhere safe to go. Chaplains are also often (if not generally) required to work collaboratively as a part of a school's welfare team. It is no exaggeration to say that, in the course of any given day, chaplains may be called upon to do 'a bit of everything'.

From the Principal's Desk

The chaplain is a key member of our Student Well Being team and serves our college community in endless ways, pastorally, educationally and spiritually. The chaplain has an important column in the fortnightly school newsletter and in the annual school magazine (Brighton Secondary College).

Clearly, in the absence of an ACCESS ministries chaplain, many of these activities would fall back upon other members of a school's teaching and support staff, but this in itself is one of the greatest benefits that a chaplain brings. A repeated accolade for chaplains during this research was that they 'added value', they were an extra avenue of support that could step in and fill gaps as required, and 'just be there' to provide for students who might otherwise slip through the cracks. Support for school principals and staff frequently takes a more tangible form as well, with many reporting that they valued the chaplain's role as confidante, particularly since chaplains, while located within the school, were not perceived as formal parts of its structure. Such informality, with both students and staff, frequently opened doors to communication; many students reported their willingness to talk to the chaplain simply on the grounds that they were 'not a teacher'.

Chaplaincy services have frequently been described as 'holistic', not only in terms of the range of services they offer, but also in their involvement both within schools and outside them. In fact many parents reported a hope that their children would maintain contact with their chaplain beyond their schooling, and chaplains perform many rites-of-passage ceremonies that extend well beyond their school-based responsibilities, including weddings, funerals, memorial services and so on. The most important aspect of the 'holistic' service provided by chaplains, though, concerns their general approach to students themselves. Rather than dealing with issues reactively, in a clinical case-by-case manner (an approach frequently associated with guidance counsellors), chaplains are more proactive, and tend to be concerned with the whole of students' wellbeing and development.

A focal point of this investigation was to establish fundamental differences between chaplains and other, related service providers such as school counsellors and youth workers. Five major distinguishing features were identified:

- Chaplaincy as Christian ministry. As might be expected, the available literature identifies this aspect of chaplaincy as its single most unique characteristic, the one service that no other provider can deliver. Nonetheless, while this is true, direct teaching or even discussion of Christianity has not been identified by chaplains as a major part of their roles (quite the opposite, in fact), but it is significant that chaplains are in place to discuss the spiritual aspects of students' lives should students wish to do so. This is important, particularly given that many students indicated that they would be likely to speak with their chaplain regarding spiritual matters, and 26.4% of students claimed to be regular churchgoers (compared with only 16.1% of their parents!). Further, many chaplains made the point that the spiritual aspect of their role could not be separated out from the rest of their activities, as their faith underpins or informs everything that they do. That is to say, chaplains often see their role as one of modelling their faith, rather than teaching it directly.
- Chaplaincy as pastoral care. On a day-to-day basis, chaplains generally identify this aspect of their work as making up the majority of their activities. In broad terms, pastoral care involves nurturing and guardianship, and it encompasses many of activities outlined above, as well being available to discuss a wide range of issues that may be of concern to students, including bullying, peer acceptance, drug and alcohol issues and family problems, to name a few. As noted in the body of this report, pastoral care has been defined as 'the offer of a loving relationship by a Christian caregiver', emphasising that the spiritual aspect of chaplaincy contributes positively to this category as well, giving chaplains a unique perspective / capacity beyond that which other caregivers can provide. It should be noted that the current separation of a chaplain's benefits into different categories is done only for the purpose of discussion – in reality they are indivisible.
- Chaplaincy as a school support service. The 'value-added' aspect of chaplaincy is again relevant here. In addition to their pastoral and spiritual roles, the simple fact of having someone extra on-hand to assist as required should not be underestimated. From tasks as important as crisis management to as menial as photocopying, the capacity of chaplains to help relieve pressure from principals and staff is an invaluable aspect of their role. As noted, support for the school also includes the provision of counselling / listening services to principals and staff, a function that is facilitated by their unique positioning in the school structure, and the extent to which they can draw on external agencies (welfare services, medical referrals and so on), a capability enhanced by

chaplains' links with the wider community. The latter is another unique aspect of a chaplain's role, about which more will be said shortly.

- Chaplaincy as relationship building and modelling. The findings of this report emphasise the holistic nature of chaplains' relationships with students, an approach that is precisely about building relationships, developing rapport, and fostering longevity in contacts with students and their families that will extend throughout students' schooling, and perhaps indefinitely. Such an approach is distinctly different from those provided by other providers, such as guidance counsellors which tend to respond to individual cases reactively. It is possible to interpret chaplains' approaches to relationship building as 'pre-emptive crisis management', insofar as they foster in students the ability to avoid crisis situations, or to deal with them appropriately as they arise. With regard to relationship modelling, it is again worth mentioning the drive of many chaplains to demonstrate Christian-based values and morals by example.
- Chaplaincy as community work. The final unique and distinguishing feature of chaplains concerns the extent to which their work extends beyond the school, fostering links and relationships with the wider community. This includes providing counselling services not only for students, but also for their parents (when called upon to do so), and for mediating between parents and students, and between parents and the school. Links with the wider community also include networking with welfare agencies including Centrelink, healthcare and housing services, as well as with local churches, another avenue of community connectedness that only a chaplain can fully provide.

The social impacts of chaplaincy are the concrete outcomes of their role(s), the tangible results of the wide range of activities described above. Not least of these is a general notion that chaplains provide a 'safety net'; they foster a sense of well-being for students, an understanding that there is always somewhere to go, someone to talk to, should the need arise. This was reflected in the findings of this research, in that 72.7% of students reported that they were very comfortable speaking with the chaplain, although only 43.7% claimed to have spoken with him/her more than once. The difference between these figures (29%) may be taken as a strong indicator of that general sense of safety, although the actual percentage of those who experience such a feeling would, of course, include those who consult the chaplain regularly, making the final statistic much higher.

Chaplains facilitate a range of school-based programs, further measurable outcomes of their social impact. These programs address such matters as life-skills, morals and values education, anti-bullying / anti-harassment courses, and a range of others. In more general terms, the social impacts of chaplaincy also include their availability as a friend and confidante, as an adult who can be trusted, and as a role model for students (particularly in the case of male chaplains). In many cases, the chaplain is the 'eyes and ears' of a school, a role made possible by their unique positioning, as well as by the fact that a chaplain's role tends to be 24/7 – there is never a time when they are not on call.

The impacts of the ACCESS ministries *Victorian Schools Chaplaincy Program* on students' academic outcomes are a little less tangible, yet nonetheless of vital importance. The notion of a 'safety net', along with a range of activities and support mechanisms that enhance students' overall experiences of education, have already been discussed. A link can be drawn here: happy students are more productive. It seems likely that students who are not stressed about their parents' divorce or schoolyard tormenting, or hungry or cold, depressed or anxious (and these are all areas that fall within the purview of a chaplain's abilities to give aid) will have more mental energy to dedicate to their studies. Further, this research has found that school avoidance / refusal / truancy are other areas upon which chaplains can be called to counsel. The anecdotes included on page 27 are strong evidence of chaplains' efficacy in this regard. Drawing a tentative link between student well-being and academic achievement, Bond et. al. (2007:357) note that having:

both good school connectedness and good social connectedness are associated with the best outcomes. The challenge is how to promote both school and social connectedness to best achieve these health and learning outcome.

It is clear that the *Victorian Schools Chaplaincy Program* is going a long way towards meeting this challenge.

The *Victorian Schools Chaplaincy Program* also has positive impacts upon student health and wellbeing. The function of chaplaincy services in developing referral networks with physical and mental health providers, as well as with welfare agencies, generally, stands as evidence of this. A very strong 81.8% of students expressed the opinion that a chaplain's main role at school is concerned with their well-being. Student health can also be affected in less direct ways: as a result of chaplains' location 'on the ground', as it were, they are well positioned to see when students are in need of clothing, food and other fundamentals. In a more organised fashion, school breakfast programs, another (relatively) common activity of chaplaincy services, also contribute to students' overall well-being and health.

Furthermore, several chaplains described themselves as 'the hub' – the focal point around which all student, staff, family and wider community services coalesce. Similarly, the idea of a chaplain as a 'conduit' was a recurrent theme in the data. In both cases, to have a central point from which action can unfold quickly and in the most effective directions, enhances the quality of service provision as a whole. That is to say, through the utilisation of chaplaincy as a hub / conduit, the range of available support becomes a complete entity that is greater than the sum of its individual parts.

The ACCESS ministries *Victorian Schools Chaplaincy Program* provides a unique service to Victorian schools. The activities of chaplains reach well beyond student counselling (although this is certainly an important component) to include holistic support for students, schools and the communities from which they come. Chaplains agree that their work is firmly underpinned by their spiritual convictions. The views expressed in this report are strongly reflected in all data collected for this project, whether through interviews, surveys, or the available literature. Rarely do all sources of data speak with such accord.

Currently, there is a need for chaplaincy services and this need is not addressed through any other channel. This begs the question: if chaplains were not there to serve the functions they do, who would perform the life-changing and, in some cases, life-saving work?

5. Case studies

The role that the Chaplaincy Steering Committees have in terms of community mobilisation (including enhancing civic participation, facilitating community partnerships and networks) should not be underestimated. Accordingly, this evaluation also presents case studies of two such Steering Committees and the valuable work they do.

5.1. The Geelong Steering Committee: A Case Study

The Geelong Steering Committee, also known as the Geelong Auxiliary, has been operating in the wider Geelong area for over 40 years. The function of the Geelong Steering Committee has been to support the ACCESS ministries *Victorian Schools Chaplaincy Program*, as well as independent initiatives concerning the placement of CRE (Christian Religious Education) teachers in local schools and other related activities.

The Steering Committee is made up of a number of Christian members, and seeks actively to be non-denominational by having all local churches represented. Since its inception, the Committee has been chaired by an ex-school principal, a Minister and a retired businessman. Some members of the Committee can claim longstanding tenure – having been involved almost from the beginning (the current makeup of the Committee includes participants who have been involved for between 3 and 35 years). Meetings are held on a monthly basis, and last for approximately two-and-a-half hours. In addition to this time commitment, it should also be emphasised that there is significant additional input required with regard to general administration and upkeep, and this is usually completed voluntarily on an as-needed basis. One of the Committee Members, in particular, was highly praised insofar as 'she was employed by us but she contributed at least as much again in time and energy into the role'. School chaplains are strongly encouraged to attend the monthly meetings, so that they can be fully informed and active participants in the Steering Committee's processes.

The Steering Committee supports 13 chaplains who work across 14 schools in Geelong and the surrounding region. Five of the chaplains work full-time, while the remainder work in various part-time capacities. In short, a certain amount of funding for chaplaincy is provided by the Federal Government's *National Schools Chaplaincy Program* (via Access Ministries), and varying amounts are also provided by the schools themselves. *'Some [schools] contribute a portion, some don't contribute anything. So it's a bit of a mixed bag.'* There is, however, a 'usual formula', whereby the school provides 45% of the funding for their chaplain (a figure that includes the Government contribution), and it becomes the responsibility of the Steering Committee to make up the 55% shortfall in their area. At present, for all of the schools under its care, the Geelong Steering Committee needs to raise a contribution of approximately \$200,000 per annum. This comes from a variety of sources / activities, which include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Approaching local businesses for sponsorship. The Geelong Steering Committee has a number of local contacts who contribute regularly, including: *'A multinational business based in Geelong'*, *'a franchisee in a large national chain'* and *'other general [small] businesses'*. The altruism of all these firms is to be applauded, since they 'don't seek publicity for what they do but they're committed to the work we're doing and they provide funding
- An annual fundraising appeal that targets a database of over 1000 regular donors, to whom brochures are sent requesting participation. There are also one or two foundation organisations who contribute regularly in this fashion

Taken together these last two activities account for between half and two-thirds of the total shortfall required by the Steering Committee each year.

- Chaplaincy lunches, which are supported by local church members, auxiliary members and affiliates, and other interested parties
- The sale of Christmas cards through churches and CRE teachers, as well as through a local charity card shop to the general public
- Chocolate drives
- One-off gifts, and bequests from deceased estates (received on an ad-hoc basis; sometimes such gifts are substantial, sometimes not)
- Direct donations from churches (which account for approximately 25% of the Steering Committee's annual needs).

In addition to the substantial financial support that the Geelong Steering Committee provides, there is also considerable 'emotional and prayer support' provided to chaplains. This takes place in numerous settings, not least at the regular Steering Committee meetings and (a little more formally) at annual general meetings. The Steering Committee members describe themselves as a 'group of like-minded people that can come together with [chaplains so that they can] ... receive support in that way'.

A third arm of the Steering Committee's activities (in addition to financial and spiritual / emotional support) is that it seeks to raise the profile of chaplaincy in the wider community. Broad agreement was received from the Committee to the suggestion that the 'general mainstream mostly would not even know what a chaplain is, let alone what a chaplain does'. The brochures and fundraising drives mentioned above go some way towards addressing this issue. These brochures are circulated to all the service organisations, the Rotary, the Lions, the Apex, and any other service clubs and groups. Additionally, 'chaplains are invited to visit and speak at church meetings [as well as at the clubs just mentioned] ... And that raises their profile'. Chaplaincy can also be promoted through features in local school newsletters, as well as by utilisation of the CRE network. Another interesting, and perhaps more unusual initiative, was a rock eisteddfod: A Rockfest co-ordinated by one of the chaplains in which school groups from around the area took part. This activity 'definitely got a lot of young people along and made them aware of chaplaincy and that sort of thing'. Teachers and other school staff also play an active part in 'keeping chaplains in front of the wider school community. One class teacher wrote a brief statement about the value of Christian education in primary school'.

The Geelong Steering Committee is well aware of the potential of the media, and school newsletters are by no means its only engagement in this area:

Our development officer is often talking to the Geelong Advertiser, the local newspaper, and from time to time will get an article in there on our group and the chaplains, [concerning] what it's all about and what chaplains are all about, and they're very interested in chaplains and what a chaplain does and the stories they can tell.

In a similar vein (and aptly demonstrating the longevity of the Steering Committee's media engagement), the book 'A history of the Work of Christian Education in the State Schools of the Geelong Region' was funded by the Committee and first published in 1990. The publication has become a part of Geelong's history, and the Steering Committee is currently in the process of producing an updated version:

We had a big launch [when the book was first released]. It was a 100 years celebration and we had a big dinner. John Smith from the God Squad came down and we had a big night. So we're hoping something similar might happen. That will hopefully raise the profile of chaplaincy.

At the monthly Steering Committee meetings, chaplains are invited to report on the happenings in their school and what they have been involved in as well as share and seek support for any challenges and issues they may be facing:

The problem's not that there's not a need, and I guess that's constantly reinforced to us with the reports from the chaplains and you just think well how cold would these schools be, how desolate would they be without the chaplains? And the work that they have to deal with [is] very sobering. And

they're marvellous people. I've got the greatest admiration for the chaplains and the work they do ... They're just the centrepiece of all of what ACCESS ministries does. They're just wonderful people, and that sort of stirs the rest of us [not least the Steering Committee] to support them in ways that we can, and we can't all be chaplains. We don't have those skills or gifts or abilities, but we try to support them as [best as] we can.

The Geelong Steering Committee's ongoing commitment to ACCESS ministries' chaplaincy program is nowhere more strongly demonstrated than in the assertion that whenever they're approached by a school to help provide a chaplain (and there have been several such requests) *'we make sure we leave no courses uninvestigated to placing a chaplain. Sometimes we're restricted by funding but if we can help and can do things we do'.*

The Geelong Steering Committee has been identified as a best practice example of the kind of work they undertake, an accolade they put down to the professionalism and overall calibre of the people involved. When asked of their greatest concern, the Steering Committee was in firm agreement:

The biggest challenge that I see is that it will be very difficult if they [the Government] don't continue the three year funding. There's quite a commitment there each year on a financial basis. Every year's a challenge and so you've just got to keep at it all the time because if you relax, you'll miss your mark. So that's a challenge that's ongoing, it's constantly there. It'd be a disaster for our schooling system if the chaplains were to be withdrawn. The students would be deprived of an avenue of dealing with some of the issues they have to confront and we're talking here about very serious issues.

5.2. The Bendigo Steering Committee: A Case Study

The Bendigo Steering Committee was established 40 years ago to oversee and provide additional financial support for ACCESS ministries' chaplaincy program in schools in the wider Bendigo area. It currently consists of 9 to 10 members from a variety of backgrounds, most of whom have served on the Committee for a number of years (ranging from 3 to 10).

The Committee meets 10 times a year. At present, all members are associated with local churches, although this is by no means a prerequisite for the position. The steering committee has some financial responsibility for the *Victorian Schools Chaplaincy Program* in four schools (Eaglehawk Secondary College, Crusoe Secondary College, Weeroona College and Maiden Gully Primary School), and it provides administrative and emotional support for chaplains in 9 other schools in the region (with responsibilities shared between 9 or 10 chaplains overall).

The importance of the steering committee to the chaplaincy program in Bendigo cannot be underestimated, as its primary role:

is to raise funds because chaplains couldn't exist as they do without sufficient funding. In other words we couldn't support three chaplains full-time [and one part-time] unless we had an inflow of money to cover what the federal funding doesn't cover. And the federal funding of course has only been very recent so [without it] we would maybe only be able to have three chaplains.

While Government funding has been of great benefit, the scope of chaplaincy services has also increased accordingly, to the extent that monetary pressure on the Steering Committee has remained constant: *'We are probably still raising the same amount of money'*. Before expenses, the Steering Committee's total revenue was a little over \$130,000 in the last financial year. This included \$50,000 through the running of a local Opportunity Shop, which in addition to being a significant revenue raiser has proved an innovative and supportive outreach into the wider community. Funding also comes from a range of other activities, including:

- Organising canteens and other catering programs (barbecues, sausage sizzles and private functions, although the committee noted that, *'with the food and handling restrictions now, that's really limited our catering'*)
- Debutante balls
- An AGM dinner
- Trivia nights
- *'Morning teas in restaurants and cafes'*
- Community and private donations.
- Various church groups within the region

Further, *'some of the chaplains will go out and speak at service clubs and groups like that'*.

In addition to financial aid, the Steering Committee support the chaplain *'in many different ways'*, including *'morally and spiritually'*. The Steering Committee's roles can be grouped into three main categories: 1. financial support, 2. emotional and spiritual support, and 3. raising the profile of school chaplains through interaction with the wider community. Such interaction includes some of the activities listed above, as well as involvement with events such as Rotary swap meets, which are very popular in the Bendigo area.

One of our aims is to try and get some more business people and people that are fairly high up in the community to give us some support financially and morally. And seeking those people out isn't always easy.

In terms of future growth, the Steering Committee is looking for *'an events organiser and somebody else to promote chaplaincy that can devote time to mailing people, going through a list and forming a database to follow up people and*

make contacts ... [The challenge is] really to get as many people as you can in the community interested and let them know what we do'. The most important thing is that 'all of the school community including the staff are involved and are always aware that the school chaplain is there'. The steering committee is also seeking to foster links with local government.

The difficulty, of course, is that all of these activities require more time and funding than is currently available. In the same vein, the Steering Committee is also currently in negotiations with the local Senior Secondary College to facilitate ACCESS ministries providing a chaplain, but that would require a further \$30,000 of additional funding.

Significant fundraising and partnership activities have included the Opportunity Shop mentioned above, as well as the running of a canteen at the Bendigo prison until its closure a few years ago. The Opportunity Shop led to the establishment of 'a very strong support base' in the community, and included novel fundraising events such as a second-hand clothes fashion parade. This event was well supported, and has been described as 'quite classy [and] ... a really good night. Some of the outfits were really quite surprising'.

On a more immediate level, the Steering Committee has also been active in the provision of funds for bushfire support, both within the Bendigo region (Maiden Gully) where some students have lost their homes, and through the occasional support of chaplains beyond their own region – a trivia night was held and proceeds were donated to support the (relatively young) chaplaincy program in Kinglake. Further interaction with other regions is also being fostered with regard to exchanges of information and ideas.

The Steering Committee stated 'the fact that we have been able to raise the money' as among their greatest achievements. 'We are probably one of the most financial committees in the State, I would think. I think that's a great success that we can support the number of chaplains that we do.' And yet their greatest achievement is also among their greatest challenges, since the Bendigo Steering Committee's central focus is to keep the ACCESS ministries chaplains firmly in place.

I think [our] biggest challenge is the uncertainty of the future and not knowing what is going to happen in the next year once the [National Schools Chaplaincy] program is finished.

The Bendigo Steering Committee has developed a reputation for being a best practice example, a title members attribute to 'continuity and perseverance over all the years', and this is connected with both their financial success and that they 'are supporting so many different schools'. The extent to which the Committee interacts directly with the chaplains it supports is also relevant in this context. 'We have a monthly gathering with our chaplains so we are showing them that we are interested in listening to them and hearing what is happening in their particular school and hearing what their needs are and then prayerfully and morally supporting them.' This gathering generally takes place during the last hour of the regular Steering Committee meetings, at which point chaplains are welcomed and invited to join in. 'They come at five o'clock and they will talk about their programs, so we [the Steering Committee] offer a conduit for them to get together and compare notes and sort of pick up ideas about what the others are doing ... And to encourage us and to inspire us to inspire the wider community.'

At the most recent Steering Committee meeting, chaplains were invited to reflect on their experiences of the previous week. Chaplains reported on a range of issues and activities including: organising family housing, lunches for students, bullying issues, working one-on-one with students to affect change, working with disaffected and disconnected parents and their children, drug issues and domestic violence. Chaplains were variously described as having 'a heart of gold' and as being those 'who look for gaps', because 'it's the little conversations that matter'.

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