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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

School social workers provide students and families with choice

The Victorian Branch of the AASW strongly urges the Federal Government to continue the National School Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program in its current form.

The program revised in 2011 gave school communities autonomy to opt for chaplains or other student welfare professionals. Schools will no longer have the opportunity to select these 'other professionals'. Mr David Maxwell, president of Victorian Branch, said "professional social workers and other disciplines have been successfully employed by schools under the 2011-2014 program, thereby providing school principles and most importantly students and their families with choice".

Mr Maxwell said that "school social workers provide not only broad ranging care and counselling for students and their families, but work closely with principals and teachers to build positive learning environments. They work at the interface of disadvantage, individual needs and learning, in order to remove barriers to greater equity and to achieve potential."

School social workers are also core team members in responding to critical incidents. They work with small groups and whole classes to build the social, emotional and problem-solving skills that underpin school engagement and the best learning outcomes. As qualified professional practitioners, with knowledge and skills in child development and child, adolescent and family mental health and wellbeing, they follow high standards as described in AASW Practice Standards for School Social Workers (AASW, 2011).

They work systemically to support the teaching and learning program of the school by managing wellbeing programs, providing direct service to students, and linking with community resources, mental health and family support agencies.

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