

AASW Victorian Branch - Submission to the Department of Education and Training (DET) consultation paper

Strengthening Victorian DET regional relationships and support: AASW response to consultation paper

The AASW recognises that for over 65 years the Department of Education and Training has employed school social workers to work in Victorian government schools. The AASW also acknowledges and supports the ongoing work of the Department of Education & Training to ensure provision of the best quality services through the employment of fully qualified social workers who are eligible for membership of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW). Social workers work alongside but have different professional and career development needs from teachers and other professional groups in the education sector.

School social workers work with students, families, the broader school community and community agencies to identify and work to address the barriers to school engagement and learning, to enable children and young people to achieve their potential in an environment that supports their rights to education, healthy development and protection. School social workers use multiple methods of practice at various levels including individual and family casework and counselling, group work and work within the school and broader community. They practice according to the professional and ethical requirements outlined in the AASW [Code of Ethics](#) and the AASW [Practice Standards for School Social Workers](#).

Irrespective of the organisational structure of the Department of Education & Training, the AASW urges the implementation of a lasting student support services structure that effectively supports the professional development and career progression of social workers who are instrumental in addressing the learning and wellbeing needs of all students.

The AASW recommends the employment of school social workers in every network or cluster of schools at the ratio 1:350 students, in order to adequately address increasingly complex learning, behavioural, mental health, family and social issues.

Organisational support should include:

1. Co-location of social workers within multi-disciplinary teams
2. Dedicated space, locations and resources (e.g. ICT) in schools to conduct their work
3. Administrative and technological resources and support
4. Funding for professional supervision and professional development activities

Where resources are available to individual schools, they should employ fully qualified professional wellbeing staff, including social workers.

Every Network Student Support Services team should include:

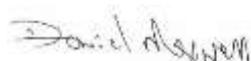
1. Professionally qualified school social workers
2. A lead/senior school social worker
3. A Network coordinator from the allied health stream

Regional or sub-regional staffing should include:

1. Professional stream leaders to oversee professional issues, professional development, policy development, responding to local emerging issues affecting students, collegiate meetings, communications, etc., and

2. Experienced senior school social work supervisors to provide confidential individual and group professional supervision regarding the practice of school social work, including counselling, casework, group work, school-community development, educative preventive programs, critical incident management and advocacy. Professional supervision is a requirement of allied health professional bodies, including the AASW as outlined in the AASW [Supervision Standards 2014](#).

Strategic planning and development teams in the central office of the Department of Education & Training should include recently experienced school social workers who contribute proactively to policy development and implementation.



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