

Framework for Student Support Services in Victorian Government Schools



EDUCATIONVICTORIA

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Introduction

The Victorian Government's response to the Suicide Prevention Task Force Report of July 1997 included a substantial allocation of \$12.08m in recurrent funds to the Department of Education and the Department of Human Services to enhance the provision of student services and welfare support to schools and their communities.

These additional resources have presented an opportunity to re-cast student support services in line with the devolution of authority and responsibility to schools.

The resources will enable the Department of Education to implement a comprehensive operational framework for the provision of student welfare that will support schools in responding to the wide variety of issues facing our young people today such as depression, self-harm, and drug misuse as well as suicide prevention. They will also enable the provision of a range of support services shaped to meet the unique needs of each school and its community. It is anticipated that this framework will be fully implemented by the end of Term 2, 1998.

Other important recommendations of the Suicide Prevention Task Force that were accepted by the Government included the establishment of minimum standards for the provision of student welfare in schools. A process will be established to formulate these standards and schools will receive further information regarding this in the near future.

This document explains the new framework for the delivery of high-quality student services to support the needs of all students in Victorian government schools, and the consultative arrangements to be put in place to ensure ongoing quality outcomes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Peter Allen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Peter" and last name "Allen" clearly distinguishable.

Peter Allen
Director of Schools

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Government response to the Suicide Prevention Task Force Report

On 18 November 1997 the Premier announced in response to the Suicide Prevention Task Force Report that more than \$23m in recurrent funds would be provided to strengthen existing counselling support and referral services. Of these funds:

- the Department of Education will receive an additional \$8.08m to enable the supplementation of the current services provided by guidance officers, educational psychologists, social workers and other agencies
- an additional \$4m will be allocated to the Department of Human Services to implement an integrated services model, in partnership with the Department of Education. This will be supplemented by an additional \$1.02m now in the Department of Education's Extra Edge Program.

The Premier further indicated that a number of the other recommendations would be addressed through review and reorganisation of existing services and that others would be considered further within the context of current activities and policies to determine how best their objectives can be met.

2 Overview of new arrangements for schools

These additional resources, which will be used to enhance welfare services for schools and their communities, present an opportunity to develop a comprehensive statewide framework for student welfare incorporating primary prevention, early intervention, intervention and postvention.

The focus for schools will be the development of individuals through:

- a range of broadly based programs focusing on primary prevention
- early intervention services for students at risk of depression, self-harm, substance abuse and suicide
- establishing integrated models of service delivery with the Department of Education working in collaboration with the Department of Human Services.

As a result of the above funding the student services budget will be strengthened and streamlined into two operational areas, both delivered through regions:

- student support services, which include student welfare, visiting teacher, curriculum and speech pathology services
- assessment services.

This framework will be supported by the integrated services initiative that will be implemented in partnership with the Department of Human Services (see 2.3), and a comprehensive professional development program for both existing and additional student services officers.

2.1 Student support services

Student welfare and support services are to be significantly strengthened to provide increased access to expertise in the area of student counselling and welfare support services. The services must provide a comprehensive and integrated framework for responding to the needs of students and their families. Increasingly the emphasis will be on preventive strategies and approaches.

Resources are to be deployed in consultation with schools to meet needs in the area of student welfare and support. It is recognised that existing guidance officers, psychologists and social workers support will remain a significant aspect of the service. However, the capacity to arrange other support services is provided under the new model.

The other school support services of visiting teachers, speech pathologists and curriculum consultants are to continue to be provided within the current resource allocations for these services.

Benefits for schools

- Student services will be reconfigured to provide greater access to services for schools.
- The major focus of student services will be primary prevention and early intervention.
- There will be enhanced access to counselling and intensive services.
- Clusters of schools and regional community agencies will work collaboratively to meet the needs of students in any way at risk by developing integrated service models that are effective, efficient and place emphasis on continuity of care.

Schools will have a critical role in this process:

- as providers of a welfare structure within their schools that aims to create a positive and supportive school environment and deliver coordinated and comprehensive services to students
- through involvement in the design and delivery of student services, within the context of a regional strategy for student welfare and support.

The initiative will be implemented through General Managers (Schools), in consultation with schools. The roles and responsibilities are set out below.

2.1.1 IMPLEMENTATION

General Managers (Schools) are responsible for ensuring the efficient and effective delivery of school support services within the allocated regional budget. They will allocate the available resources to structures established on the advice of principals. They will also monitor performance to ensure accountability and benchmarking of performance.

In partnership with principals they will establish:

- processes for identifying the appropriate distribution, location and level of student services
- an assessment service that will be delivered, either through an outsourced agency or insourced (using specifically identified guidance officers or psychologists)
- structures to ensure access to welfare services for **all** schools
- a comprehensive and consistent process for consideration and approval of new and current alternative programs
- professional networks and the appropriate spread of expertise to facilitate collegiate support
- processes to oversee performance monitoring within accountabilities
- evaluation procedures for the operation of the program in relation to implementation and maintenance.

General Managers (Schools) will be required to establish processes to oversee performance monitoring within the accountability framework in order to provide an annual report to the Director of Schools.

2.1.2 THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS

In line with recommendations 5.6 and 5.8 of the Suicide Prevention Task Force Report, appropriate measurable student welfare provision is required to be developed and monitored in schools.

This provision should be outlined in the school charter through the appropriate setting of goals, implementation strategies and achievement measures.

Schools will be responsible for the development of appropriate welfare structures to ensure the provision of a positive and supportive school environment and the delivery of coordinated and comprehensive services for students.

To facilitate this, schools will determine a structure, such as a school welfare committee, that will best deliver:

- a coordinated approach to student welfare within the school
- identification of student needs and development of appropriate welfare and curriculum policy

- the development of operational descriptions for the delivery of student welfare, incorporating referral protocols and the role of school staff
- the development of networks and protocols with community agencies and service providers to ensure the provision of a full range of services for young people at risk and continuity of care.

The additional resources available under this initiative are not be used to reduce or replace the current levels of resourcing for student welfare provided by schools.

2.1.3 STUDENT WELFARE COORDINATING COMMITTEES

A student welfare coordinating committee will play a pivotal role in the coordination of student services across member schools. In general, this committee will be cluster-based and should be configured to accommodate individual needs of specific geographic areas. Schools in the cluster should be represented on this committee. Cluster groupings will be determined by the General Manager (Schools) in consultation with principals.

The role of the student welfare coordinating committees, in consultation with the region, includes:

- developing a coordinated approach to the provision of student welfare across the school cluster that addresses the range of support needs of students and, where appropriate, their families or carers, in the areas of prevention, early intervention, intervention and postvention
- developing a memorandum of understanding (see Appendix 3.2), referral protocols and operational guidelines, including role and operational descriptions for cluster-based student services staff
- developing and coordinating a cluster-based student support structure to facilitate the development of supportive school environments for all students
- identifying student need across the cluster and developing appropriate recommendations in relation to student services, curriculum and policy for schools and school communities
- developing effective communication processes and networks across the school cluster
- developing appropriate service goals for cluster-based student services
- reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of student services across the cluster
- working collaboratively with community agencies to meet the needs of students in any way at risk, by developing integrated service models that are effective, efficient and place emphasis on continuity of care.

Memoranda of understanding and any other issues relating to the employment, role descriptions and location of student services staff require General Manager (Schools) approval.

2.1.4 REGIONAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES

Each region is expected to establish an appropriate consultative forum representing the views of schools to provide advice to the General Manager (Schools). In conjunction with the General Manager (Schools), this committee is responsible for monitoring the appropriate distribution and effective use of school support resources across the region. Depending on local circumstances, existing advisory committees could serve this purpose.

2.2 Assessment services

In 1998, each region will establish an assessment service for the Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments and for other mandatory assessments required by the Department of Education.

This service will provide psychological and speech pathology assessments for the Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments and any specific inquiry required by the Department of Education.

Each region will establish either a regional-operated agency or will contract an outsourced agency as identified by the Department of Education to provide this service.

The task of each agency will be to provide specific assessments of students in government schools for the purposes of meeting the eligibility requirements of the Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments and any other specific assessment required by the Department of Education. Each agency will have appropriately qualified personnel to undertake psychological assessments for intellectual disability and assessments for severe language disorder. They will also provide reports in these areas and advice to schools on the implications for programming.

All regional and outsourced agencies will be required to deliver assessments on the basis of predetermined criteria.

Referrals for assessment within these criteria will be made by principals directly to the agency. The School Operations Division, Department of Education, will monitor the responsiveness of the service to schools in conjunction with the relevant region.

Additional information will be provided to schools on the operational procedures for the assessment agencies early in 1998.

2.3 Integrated services model

This initiative establishes a jointly managed program between the Department of Education and the Department of Human Services. Funding will be provided to the Department of Human Services for administrative purposes. It involves the implementation of a model for integrated, collaborative welfare support that addresses the needs of students and their families.

The two core components of the service are:

- Establishment of linkages between services in schools and in the community that are available to respond to students' needs

This may include some redevelopment of the services available and their mode of delivery, mapping of community profiles and identification of service gaps. The provision of information about service availability and establishment of protocols will also be an important part of this initiative.

- Additional service provision

Includes the provision of some funding for current gaps in service availability as identified by schools and their community.

The program will be administered through the Department of Human Services in close consultation with the Department of Education. Resources will be allocated on a regional basis with outsourced services provided to at least thirty-seven identified school and community clusters.

3

Appendix

3.1 Guidelines for welfare structures in schools

Schools aim to provide a positive, safe and supportive school environment. The provision of flexible, relevant and appropriate curriculum, professional development to support staff and a range of appropriate early intervention services for students in need and at risk, provide the foundation for student welfare and support structures. To facilitate these goals, schools should aim to achieve the following outcomes.

3.1.1 ACCESS

Access relates to the availability of services and the efficiency of the response of student services.

Outcome

- All students should have access to high-quality welfare and support services.

3.1.2 PRIMARY PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Primary prevention describes population-based rather than individual strategies that may be universally or selectively targeted. Early intervention strategies are targeted at students displaying general disorganisation in coping skills, depressive symptoms and other personal and social vulnerabilities that place them at risk.

Outcomes

- A positive, safe and supportive school environment that facilitates students achieving their full potential.
- Procedures, processes and protocols for the identification, assessment and management of young people at risk.
- A range of curriculum and/or educational programs that focus on resiliency, reduction of risk behaviours and promotion of help-seeking skills.
- A range of curriculum programs that address prevention of and response to risk factors and other appropriate outcomes in the Curriculum and Standards Framework, particularly in the Health and Physical Education key learning area.
- Services that are available to assist young people to reduce the severity and duration of risk behaviours.
- An acknowledgment that student welfare is the responsibility of all staff.
- A recognition that leading teachers have a significant role in the provision of collegiate support.

3.1.3 CONTINUITY OF CARE

Continuity of care refers to the ongoing and coordinated management of a young person who is at risk and the services the young person is accessing.

Outcomes

- Ongoing management of young people at risk with a special focus on transition from primary to secondary school.
- Provision of case management and coordination, including liaison with other services that a student may be accessing.

3.1.4 PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOLS, SCHOOL CLUSTERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

Partnerships between schools, school clusters and service providers are a means of providing optimum service delivery for students at risk.

Outcomes

- Developed or enhanced cross sectoral approaches to primary prevention and early intervention.
- Written protocols in relation to collaborative working arrangements between schools, school clusters and service providers.
- Welfare provision that is addressed on a school, school cluster and community basis.

3.2 Memorandum of understanding

DEPARTMENT
of EDUCATION

THIS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING IS -

BETWEEN: **THE GENERAL MANAGER (SCHOOLS)** of the offices of the Department of Education of (insert address) (the General Manager)

AND **THE MEMBERS OF THE STUDENT WELFARE COORDINATING COMMITTEE** of the (insert name) Cluster comprising the following schools (the Committee)

1. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING SUMMARY

1.1 This Memorandum -

- (a) records the deployment of resources, funding and any other benefits referred to herein to be provided by the General Manager to the Committee for the provision of support to schools and their communities through the implementation of primary prevention, early intervention, intervention and postvention strategies,
- (b) has been entered by the General Manager for the purpose of supporting the implementation of a comprehensive operational framework for the provision of student support services in Victoria in Government schools.

1.2 The funding (and any other benefits or resources) referred to herein may only be used by the Committee for the purposes of 1.1 and 2.4.

2. FUNDING/RESOURCES and DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE

2.1. FUNDING (and any other benefits or resources as described)

The following funds, resource(s) or other benefits will be provided by the General Manager to the Committee:

A Guidance Officer, Social Worker or a Student Services Officer (herein called “the Officer”) who shall provide the programs and services in 2.4 herein to the schools in the Cluster.

2.2 During the period of this Memorandum, the Officer will provide the services and programs in 2.4 consistent with Department of Education policies and program directions.

2.3 All programs and services will be monitored, evaluated and documented by the Committee and the Officer.

2.4 The programs and services to be provided by the Officer under this Memorandum are -

- **Provision of high quality advice and support to schools**

The Officer shall provide high quality advice and support to schools in the Cluster in the development of programs, procedures and policies, with a broad focus on the well being of students, particularly those at risk.

- **Development and implementation of programs**

The Officer shall develop and implement a range of programs for students and the school community for schools in the Cluster that aim to foster resiliency and respond to identified social, emotional and educational needs.

- **Provision of professional development programs for schools**

The Officer shall provide professional development programs for schools in the Cluster with a focus on primary prevention strategies and skills in the identification, monitoring, management and referral of students at risk and the development of a positive and supportive school environment.

- **Provision of counselling and intensive support**

The Officer shall provide counselling and intensive support for students at risk and where appropriate their families and/or carers.

- **Establishment and maintenance of links with relevant community support agencies**

The Officer shall establish and maintain links with relevant community support agencies, the Committee and the schools in the Cluster with a view to optimising services available for students at risk that focus on primary prevention, early intervention and continuity of care.

- **Provision of advice to the General Manager**

The Officer shall provide advice to the General Manager on issues pertinent to student welfare as appropriate.

- **Other (Cluster specific)**

3. MONITORING—PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

3.1 (a) The Officer will provide reports to the Committee on a quarterly basis on the Performance Indicators herein.

(b) The Committee will provide reports to the General Manager on a quarterly basis on the Performance Indicators herein.

3.2 (a) The first report under 3.1(a) shall be forwarded within three months of the date of this Memorandum and the report shall detail the achievements as measured against the Performance Indicators in 3.4 herein, under this Memorandum.

(b) The first report under 3.1(b) shall be forwarded within three months of the date of this Memorandum and the report shall detail the achievements as measured against the Performance Indicators in 3.4 herein, under this Memorandum.

3.3 An annual report on the Performance Indicators as outlined below, is to be provided by the Committee to the General Manager by (insert date).

3.4 Performance Indicators:

The breakdown of the total programs and services provided by the Officer under this Memorandum should be-

Primary Prevention—55% of the total programs and services,

Early Intervention—43% of the total programs and services,

Intervention—2% of the total programs and services,

Postvention—as required.

For each component of the aforementioned programs and services, the performance indicators are set out in attachment A and include:

(a) **Responsiveness**

The time between when the initial request for service is received by the Officer and the provision of the service by that person.

(b) **School Community Satisfaction**

The Committee and the Officer shall ensure that surveys are conducted to gauge the satisfaction levels of key stakeholders (teachers, parents, principal, students) to determine whether the programs and services provided, meet expectations and requirements.

(c) **Cost of consultation per hour includes**

- Total cost related to the provision of the service,
- Plus on costs and overheads,
- Total figure divided by the number of hours of consultation to provide an hourly salary cost of providing the service

(d) **Professional Development Programs**

- Names of programs
- Number of participants
- Description of programs

4. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The Committee will comply with the financial accountability requirements of the Department of Education.

5. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

5.1 This Memorandum may be terminated at any time in writing signed by the General Manager and one or more members of the Committee.

5.2 The General Manager may at any time review, amend, suspend or terminate this Memorandum if -

- (i) the progress or other reports herein are not provided to the General Manager, or
- (ii) the Committee's performance is considered by the General Manager to be (or is likely to be) unsatisfactory, or
- (iii) for any reason whatsoever the General Manager no longer desires to provide the funding (or any of the other benefits or resources) referred to herein,
- (iv) in the opinion of the General Manager, any of the services or programs herein are not performed or are not properly performed or the Financial Accountability requirements are not satisfied.

5.3 The rights under clause 5.2 may be exercised by the General Manager by notice to the Committee stating that the General Manager is reviewing, amending, suspending or terminating this Memorandum from the date and time of delivery of any such notice or such later date and time as the said General Manager may specify. Where the General Manager delivers a notice terminating this Memorandum, the General Manager shall not be under any obligation to provide the funding otherwise due under this Memorandum.

6. PERIOD OF MEMORANDUM

This Memorandum will commence on the day it is signed by both parties and will terminate on

(Each Committee member must sign this Memorandum)

SIGNED by..... (print name)
of Committee member) for and on behalf of)
the Committee on the day of
1998)
in the presence of)

.....
.....

SIGNED by..... (print name)
of Committee member) for and on behalf of)
the Committee on the day of
1998)
in the presence of)

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SIGNED by..... (print name)
of Committee member) for and on behalf of)
the Committee on the day of
1998)
in the presence of)

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SIGNED by..... (print name)
of Committee member) for and on behalf of)
the Committee on the day of
1998)
in the presence of)

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SIGNED by..... (print name)
of Committee member) for and on behalf of)
the Committee on the day of
1998)
in the presence of)

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SIGNED by..... (print name)
of Committee member) for and on behalf of)
the Committee on the day of
1998)
in the presence of)

.....
.....

SIGNED by..... (print name)
on the day of 1998)
by the **GENERAL MANAGER**)
in the presence of)

.....
.....

3.3 Accountability measures

3.3.1 STATEWIDE MEASURES: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Output name: Student support services		
Description		
Provision of education services relating to student welfare		
Provision of specialist support services for students in the areas of speech therapy, visiting teacher services for hearing, visually, health and physically impaired students, and curriculum services		
	Performance measures	1998–99 targets
Quantity	Numbers of students accessing early intervention and intervention student services	115,000
Quality	Percentage of students able to access student support services	100
	School community satisfaction with level of student support services provided	70 per cent
Timeliness	Average time between the initial request for intervention service and the provision of that service	Four days
Cost	Average annual cost per student accessing prevention and early intervention services per student	

3.3.2 STATEWIDE MEASURES: SERVICES TO STUDENTS WITH OTHER SPECIAL LEARNING NEEDS

Output name: Services to students with other special learning needs		
Description		
Provision of additional services for students in alternative programs		
	Performance measures	1998–99 targets
Quantity	Numbers of students receiving educational services in alternative programs	700
Quality	School community satisfaction with programs provided	65 per cent
Cost	Average annual cost per student in alternative programs	\$6,500

3.3.3 LOCAL MEASURES: STUDENT SERVICES

Intention	How/approaches and strategies	Services necessary to do this	How much service	Performance measures
Provide a range of support services for the school community that will assist them to develop skills and strategies in fostering resilience to enable students to better deal with difficult issues, including depression, self-harm and substance abuse	Primary prevention	Professional development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing relevant and appropriate curriculum • pastoral care and other strategies that support students at risk • school student welfare provision • working with outside agencies • health promoting schools Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transition • coping skills and resiliency programs • communication • problem solving • social skills • accessing appropriate professional and medical services 	55 per cent of total service 523,943 students All staff	Responsiveness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time between initial request for service and the provision of that service School community satisfaction Surveys carried out to gauge the satisfaction levels of key stakeholders to determine whether the services provided met their expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher • parent • principal • student Cost of consultation per hour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • total costs related to the provision of the service • includes on costs and overheads • total figure divided by the number of hours of consultation to provide an hourly salary cost of providing the services
	Early intervention	Professional development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying students at risk • assessing students at risk • managing students at risk 		

Local measures: Student services (cont.)

Intention	How/approaches and strategies	Services necessary to do this	How much service	Performance measures
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> flexible and appropriate curriculum for students at risk constructive behaviour management linking with service providers, protocols etc <p>Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> more intensive educative programs that foster resiliency that meet the identified needs of students at risk, eg anger management <p>Direct support to students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> student counselling family support 	<p>43 per cent of total service</p> <p>20 per cent of population of 104,788 students</p> <p>All staff</p>	
	Intervention	<p>Professional development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> referring students—protocol and practice <p>Direct support to students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> linking students with appropriate services counselling 	<p>2 per cent of total service</p> <p>10,478 students</p>	
	Postvention	Direct support to students and their families	As required	

3.4 Minister's memorandum



Minister for Education

Hon. Phillip Gude, MP
Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Principals, Head Teachers, Teachers and School Council Presidents
FROM: Minister for Education
DATE: 18th November 1997
SUBJECT: Government Response to the Suicide Prevention Task Force Report

On Tuesday, 18 November, 1997 the Premier announced the Government's response to the recommendations of the Victorian Suicide Prevention Task Force Report.

The Task Force Report raised a number of issues of pertinence to school communities. In response, additional recurrent funding totalling \$12.08m will be allocated to enhance the provision of student services and welfare support for schools and their communities.

Of this, \$8.08m will be allocated to the Department of Education (DoE) to fund the equivalent of an additional 147 student services positions across the State supplementing the current support available through guidance officers and social workers.

This will facilitate the provision of a comprehensive and cohesive student services delivery system that not only addresses the recommended approaches to suicide prevention as outlined in the Report but also provides a strengthened welfare framework for schools and their communities.

This initiative represents a substantial increase in student welfare and support services available to Victorian schools. Schools and regions will manage the deployment of these resources to ensure equitable access for all primary and secondary schools. Increasingly the emphasis will be on preventative strategies and approaches in addition to enhanced access to counselling and intensive support.

These expanded services will also provide increased access for teachers to consultation, professional development and support in their work with students who are at risk and experiencing difficulties.

Mandatory and associated formal assessments for the disability and other programs will be outsourced to independent agencies or provided by specifically identified DoE guidance officers in each region.

The remaining \$4m will be provided for a joint project with the Department of Human Services (DHS) aimed at developing a new statewide framework of integrated family support. The \$1.02m currently supporting the DoE Extra Edge Program will supplement these funds.

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 **Victoria ON THE MOVE**



Minister for Education

Hon. Phillip Gude, MP
Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party

The DHS/DoE joint initiative will address the needs of students and families by coordinating at all levels the response of relevant departments and agencies in the local community. A model of integrated student welfare support will be established.

It will encompass the principles of the Extra Edge Program and extend its good practices to up to 37 projects across the state.

These initiatives will enable the DoE to build on and enhance current service provision and enable a student welfare framework to be established based on a continuum of service encompassing the school and the wider community.

As well as assisting schools to respond effectively in a coordinated way to welfare issues, it will ensure that they are provided with enhanced school-based student support with increased access to professional services for students, their families, and teachers in critical areas such as depression, self harm, drug misuse as well as suicide prevention.

Attached for your information is a summary of information made public today by the Premier associated with the release of the Government's response.

Further details surrounding the implementation of these arrangements will be provided by the Director of Schools in the near future.

Many school communities made submissions to the Task Force. The successful implementation of this response relies on a whole community effort and I appreciate and commend the genuine interest and commitment displayed by each of you to date.

HON. PHILLIP GUDE, MP

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East Melbourne
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Melbourne, Victoria 3001



The Victorian Government Response to the Suicide Prevention Task Force

The Victorian Government commends the work of the Suicide Prevention Task Force. The Task Force has successfully focused community attention on the issue of suicide and its Report provides a benchmark in the comprehensive examination of the incidence and causes of suicide and the presentation of integrated strategies to address it. The incidence of suicide and attempted suicide in the community is significant and tragic and must be addressed.

The Government response to the Suicide Prevention Task Force Report draws on the three underlying philosophies of the report's recommendations:

- that just as there is no one cause of suicide there is no one solution
- that the responsibility for finding solutions to suicide lies with the community, business and all levels of government working in partnership
- that there needs to be better integration, coordination and focusing of existing services.

In framing its response to the Suicide Prevention Task Force Report, the Government has been mindful of the benefits of integrating suicide prevention strategies with other major initiatives, particularly those targeted at young people.

The Government will:

- provide a total of \$23.91m recurrent and \$1.63m one-off funds to strengthen existing services such as appropriate counselling, support and referral services. This includes \$8.08m to support additional student services officers and \$4m to establish multidisciplinary student support teams
- contribute \$1m seed funding towards the establishment of the Suicide Prevention Foundation and seek corporate and community support for the Foundation's activities
- provide funds to address needs of specific groups that were identified by the Task Force as being potentially at particularly high risk
- strengthen the information collection and research capacity and enhance the counselling service of the Victorian Coroner's Officer
- remain mindful of the importance of creating positive attitudes to mental health issues. The Suicide Prevention Foundation will work with business and community groups, local government and the media in the promotion of this issue. In particular, use of the Internet will be investigated
- initiate discussions with media representatives on the development of a media code of practice for suicide reporting and an information campaign in rural media
- cooperate with other governments and organisations in seeking practical strategies in the implementation of its response to the Report.

A number of the recommendations of the Task Force can be met through the review and reorganisation of existing services. Others will be considered further within the context of current activities and policies to determine how best their objectives can be met.

Three of the recommendations of the Report will be referred for further consideration by relevant authorities.

The Government acknowledges that the success of the recommended strategies will be difficult to measure. Nevertheless, as a community we cannot afford not to try.

Both the Report and the subsequent submissions received by the Government have raised the issue of the need to evaluate properly suicide prevention programs. Detailed evaluation strategies will be developed for each of the initiatives arising from the Report.

Department of Education

