



The Hon Peter Garrett AM MP

Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth

MC11-005901

28 JUN 2011

The Hon John Murphy MP
Chair
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 23 May 2011, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, concerning a petition from a group of citizens regarding the National School Chaplaincy Program.

The Australian Government believes it is important that our schools provide a supportive environment for the wellbeing of students and their families. The National School Chaplaincy Program is one of many successful initiatives that have been effective in supporting schools in providing for the wellbeing of school students.

In response to the positive feedback received about the Program, the Australian Government confirmed in the recent 2011–2012 Federal Budget, further funding of \$222 million for the National School Chaplaincy Program. This will support up to an additional 1000 schools from the beginning of 2012 and enable all schools currently funded under the Program to be extended to 2014. The additional 1000 places include schools in disadvantaged, rural and remote communities.

In line with the above announcement, we are continuing with the Program review which commenced in 2010, considering how the Program can best support schools in the future. The public consultation phase of this review closed on 18 March 2011 with more than 7000 responses from schools, stakeholders and the broader community.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations staff are working to consolidate public input for consideration in future Program options. Issues such as strengthened Program Guidelines, qualifications for chaplains, appropriate standards for providers, and expansion of the Program to include secular support services are among the issues raised in the Public Discussion Paper. The outcome of the Program review will be released later in the year.

Further information and updates about the Program are available at www.deewr.gov.au/schoolchaplaincy. School Principals and funding recipients will receive further information regarding the extension when it is available.

Thank you ~~for~~ writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Peter Garrett