



# **Evaluation of MindMatters at Waterview High**

(Fictional Name)

## **Report on a study from 2002 to 2005**

**This school was one of fifteen schools that agreed to participate in a case study as part of the evaluation of MindMatters across Australia.**

**The evaluation was conducted for the Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council by the Hunter Institute of Mental Health**

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## Summary

**Waterview High** is a metropolitan government school (years 7 to 12) set in a low-income suburb with a very high enrolment of students from non-English speaking backgrounds. There is a high level of cultural diversity.

The school has a highly structured pastoral care approach, supporting students through grouping them into mini-schools, having four hours per week of home group time, and with students having the same home group teacher from year 7 to year 10.

Senior teachers from the school identified MindMatters in 2001 as a program that offered curriculum resources that would support the school's existing emphasis on the wellbeing of students. In particular the school planned to use the 'Bullying' and 'Resilience' curriculum resources in the home groups.

The 'Bullying' resources were used comprehensively in most home groups over an eight-week period in 2002, thus ensuring all students in years 7 to 10 were exposed to this teaching. In 2003, a similar coordinated approach was taken to using the 'Resilience' resources.

In 2004 and 2005, due to the vertical nature of the home groups (i.e. each group has students from years 7 to 10), teachers did not want to repeat the use of the 'Bullying' or 'Resilience' resources in such a comprehensive way as many of the students in their classes had already done these lessons.

While, planned and coordinated use of MindMatters has ceased at Waterview High, many teachers in 2005 were still using either whole lessons or lesson ideas as the need arose in their class. The fact that the resources were found to be very useful and user-friendly, together with the fact that every home group teacher was given their own kit has facilitated this ongoing informal use of MindMatters.

Teachers find MindMatters resources to be useful in helping them to discuss the issue of bullying with students and in encouraging them to support each other if bullying occurs. They also find that many of the curriculum ideas are useful in helping to create positive relationships between students within home groups.

*But on the other side of it I think that the kids saw that it was their right not to be bullied, that it was an inalienable right that they shouldn't be bullied and I think because we went through the types of bullying, it gave them a name for some of the things that were happening, like 'chucking greasies' or whatever, giving people dirty looks.*

*I really like using MindMatters ... I think, you know, it's in that sense that MindMatters has really got something quite unique. You can really build a classroom ethos; it really gives kids a great sense of belonging using that. I use them whenever I can, and adapt them and play with them.*

*I mean I certainly think it's raised awareness amongst staff... it got teachers to focus on those issues, to focus on the importance of those issues, start thinking about them and sort of look at the theoretical underpinnings for it.*



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## 1 This school's characteristics at the beginning of the study

### Overview

Waterview High was established in 1971 and is located in an industrial outer suburb of a capital city. There are approximately 600 students currently enrolled. A large proportion (75%) of the student population are from Macedonian and other Non English speaking backgrounds. There is only a small Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

### Administration and structure

The principal and assistant principal oversee the running of the whole school.

For years 7 to 10, the school is divided into three mini schools (called 'units'). Each unit administered by a unit leader. Each unit has between 10 and 12 teachers who between them cover all key learning areas.

*They're based around approximately 150 kids, so six classes, in lots of 25, with a unit leader, because we call them units rather than mini-schools but the word's interchangeable, and a group of staff who have a physically separate place in the school. So you've got a staffroom with five or six classrooms, general purpose classrooms around that staffroom and those students in that mini-school who are from year 7 to year 10, operate in that physical area. Staff, 2004*

Years 11 to 12 form a separate mini-school.

### Curriculum

Waterview High is a government school catering for students in years 7-10, as well as offering the VCE curriculum for years 11 and 12.

### Educational context

All classes are structured to have students from different years (eg years 7 and 8, or years 8 and 9), allowing students to work at a level appropriate to their capacity. This structure also allows younger or less capable students to learn from older or more advanced students in their class. In some units, classes are structured to include students from both years 7 and 8 and/or years 8 and 9. Home groups in the 7-10 units contain students from all years.

### Annual turnover

Staff reported minimal turnover with both students and staff members, and indicated that this is continually improving each year. Staff reported that the close bonds with students that are formed throughout home groups are an influencing factor in the low turnover. Attendance is also reported to be relatively high compared to other high schools in the local area.

*I can't imagine trying to teach the students in any other kind of system. I think that the relationship that we have with students and with our community, it's reflected in the statistics if you have a look at the statistics between our attendance rate - I mean to like schools in this area. So if you look at our attendance rate, if you look at our staff morale, if you look at our parents'*

*surveys, if you look at our students' surveys, if you look at even our students' attitude to schooling surveys, are far higher than anywhere else in this immediate area. Staff, 2004*

### **Pastoral care arrangements**

Waterview High was established to cater for the large and diverse needs of the students. As a foundation to pastoral care, students are organised into home groups in which mixes of students in years 7-10 participate in pastoral care. The home group is part of the curriculum and is given equal status with other subjects (English and Mathematics) and is allocated four hours per week. Staff indicate a variety of activities take place during the period but the underlying purpose is pastoral care.

*But then having said that, the idea is that you build a relationship between a teacher and a group of students. Within those four hours that they spend, in what we call a Home Group, they do a whole range of things, you know, they do literacy based things, they do numeracy based things, they do a leadership program, they do sport programs. It's not all about the meaning of life. It is, but not overtly. Staff, 2004*

Staff and students reported that this process enables the development of close, supportive relationships between both students in all year levels as well as the teaching staff.

From students:

*You all mix and you get to see everyone else from year. 7 to year. 10. You've got your own home group teacher, so if you've got a problem you just go to tell them.*

*Yes, especially if you are like in year. 10 cause you have been with them for four years you've had that teacher, so you obviously know them. And trust them in then end. Students 2002*

From staff:

*Because school for most of our kids is a pleasant place to be and I think that one of those reasons - it doesn't mean to say that it is always - it isn't for all kids, but I think one of the reasons is the relationship I think they have with one, not just one teacher. But if you were to ring me as an outsider and say, Look I need to know about this child, there's not one child in the school that I can't find a teacher that will have in-depth knowledge about them. They won't know everything, I mean some students tell you more than others, but there's not one that I can't go and find that information about, whereas there are people where I would make enquiries and they would say to me, well I don't know them so they must be okay. Staff 2004*

### **Behaviour management arrangements**

Staff reported that they aim to keep the pastoral care role and the discipline of students separate. So, while students have their home group teacher for pastoral care, responsibility for discipline ('consequences for actions') is a shared role between the home group teacher or classroom teacher and the unit leader, with the later becoming involved in more serious incidents.

### **Other welfare support structures**

Waterview offers a variety of welfare and student support services, which are facilitated through the student welfare coordinator. Some of these include peer counselling programs, The Forum, and a safe room.

The school also shares the services of a school counsellor / psychologist with other schools in the area. This position is available at the school once a week. There is also a school psychologist (two days per week) and a nurse (two days per week).

### **Links to the community**

Local community services are accessed as required, the need being identified by either the unit leader, the student welfare coordinator, the psychologist or the nurse.

*I think they've had people from the (community agency) doing stuff. They had people running anger management or such groups. There's been some work with the (local) Youth Services, running programs. So there's a sense of some connections to the community of services and that they've come and gone I suppose. Youth Worker 2003*

### **Parent involvement**

Whilst these facilities are made available for students, staff reported very limited parental and wider community interaction with the school. They attribute this in part to the challenges of communicating with such a diverse multicultural population, although it is acknowledged that all high schools experience similar difficulties.

*The parental support is another one because I think it would be fair to say, that we don't ... like a lot of schools, and particularly in areas of migrant background, the community's attitude is, you know, 'you have more of the expertise and why are you asking me?' You know, 'you're the teachers, why do you do that?' Staff 2002*

The phenomenon is also attributed in part to the working class nature of the target community.

*They all say 'I'm not sure how this all works' or 'I'm too busy working'. A lot of them are working night shift and day shift and any other shift and so they often become exhausted although I think the school would probably like to involve them a bit more but the reality is that they're just too busy making ends meet. Staff 2002*

### **Student views of the school**

The majority of students interviewed indicated that they enjoyed Waterview High. Students stated that the teachers provided a caring and supportive environment and that there are numerous opportunities for them to participate in. Some of these include: debating, and peer counselling programs.

*Everyone likes it and teachers actually care about you, they care about if you get into trouble and whatever - teachers are good. Students 2002*

*We get a chance to do so many things, I mean I've done lots of counselling like all this other optimistic thinking and all that, I mean, there's a lot of things that you can do if you want to. Student 2002.*

Some students indicated that at times they did experienced moments of feeling unsafe due to both physical and verbal bullying.

*No matter what you do, even if you told a teacher or something - you know you have to always watch your back. Cause like that's the way they are- if you have a conflict with someone, they don't fight alone or something, they get groups and boot. Student 2002*

### **Staff views of the school**

Staff indicated that Waterview High was a challenging, but rewarding school to teach at. Those teachers who are home group teachers seem to particularly value their role at the school.

*If you came to my school next year and said I want to be a home group teacher I'd say, your waiting period is probably 3 to 5 years. You can't, people won't move out of that. Even though it's the hardest job, it's harder than my job in many ways, it's the hardest job there is, people won't move away from it. Staff, 2004*

*Most of us who are home group teachers would die before we'd give it up. Not all of us, but most of us, and it's an intrinsic part of us. Staff, 2003*

### **Community views of the school**

Community members indicated that the school provided a supportive environment for students and that the Staff is very approachable.

*I think that in general my impression is that this is a school that has had a strong focus on student wellbeing. Community Health Worker 2002*

*It's a pretty positive staff, and a pretty student-focussed sort of a school. I'm sure that there are pockets of dissatisfaction and unrest as there are everywhere but my feeling about it is it's a pretty positive place and I've found that people are pretty committed to students here and if you ask them to do something extra which I often have to - often what I'm saying is this child has special needs and I need you to accommodate them in some way, and generally speaking they are willing to do that, and to me that's usually a sign of fairly high morale in the school if people are willing to put in extra. Community Health Worker 2002*

## 2 How the evaluation was undertaken at this school?

The first of four school visits was made in November 2001. The principal contact person for the evaluation attempted to ensure that the baseline data collection of questionnaires from students had been undertaken before the school commenced with its implementation plan. As it eventuated that the school encountered great difficulties in collecting parental consent forms, this caused considerable delays. It was eventually decided that the level of participation was to be too low to make the collection of student questionnaires a viable option. By this time, three terms of 2002 had already passed. Thus implementation actually commenced in the latter half of 2002. The follow-up visits were completed in April 2003, May 2004 and June 2005.

At these visits, the school arranged for various members of the school community to be interviewed, and these conversations were audio taped for later analysis.

The following interviews took place:

Interviewees	Number interviewed			
	1 <sup>st</sup> visit	2 <sup>nd</sup> visit	3 <sup>rd</sup> visit	4 <sup>th</sup> visit
Principal	1	1	1	1
Deputy or Assistant Principal	-	-	1	1
Senior teacher	2	5	4	4
Teacher or assistant teacher	12	6	3	3
Student	24	16	40	20
Counsellor, social worker etc	1	1	1	2
Parent	2	2	3	1
Community member	-	1	1	-
Other				

Over the three years of the evaluation, two telephone interviews were conducted with the school contact person and these were also taped for later analysis.

An attempt was made to collect parent consent forms for students to complete MindMatters surveys in this school but participation was so low it was decided that it would not be useful to implement the student questionnaires.



### 3 Why did this school decide to adopt MindMatters?

#### 3.1 Community context

Waterview High is located in a low socio-economic suburb, and a large proportion of the student population is from non-English speaking backgrounds. Apart from the language difficulties that exist, staff report a sense of tension between aspects of a traditional Anglo Celtic school culture and the different cultural expectations and understandings of the nature of school that students and their parents appear to hold.

Staff and students indicated that cultural aspects of the student's home life do not always support a positive learning environment. One point of tension is the difference between parents' knowledge sets, and those knowledge sets valued by the Australian school system in 2004. Parents can be disempowered by this difference and notions of authority undermined.

Waterview High is also surrounded by a community described as one of high social need. Key indicators of social unrest are the increase in population in the area and pressures on local services and resources. The community reported increases in crime rates and drug use at the time this study was commenced. They also indicated limited access to external support structures.

Staff reported that Waterview High was established with a mindfulness of its setting and with a clear goal to provide a significant degree of support structures for students.

*I think there's probably a lot of problems that are hidden in the community and unless they're picked up they can become greater than what they already are. And I believe you need professionals or somebody to be able to first sight them and then work them out. Parent 2002*

*With the community you do have a very large ethnic base. Whether that's positive or negative I don't know. Parent 2002*

*I mean part of the difference is the kids are coming from backgrounds where their parents are not educated. There's a whole sort of, I think, formal education is one thing but the education the kids receive at home, in terms of just being able to hold discussions and argue logically about things and expand the general knowledge through their contact with the parents and their friends. Staff 2002*

*Some parents are really - in their own language, they are very fluent in what they're saying and they will have opinions on everything but for some reason that (another teacher is) saying, they don't discuss it with their children or this is our business and it's not yours. Staff 2002*

#### 3.2 Student wellbeing issues

##### Mental health problems

Staff and students reported that the incidence of mental illness throughout the student population including depression, anxiety and attempted suicides was a concern.

*I just wanted to say that it is direct - the mental health issues in MindMatters are directly relevant not just in terms of 'in the class', but there are kids here*

*who would and do suffer from depression. A lot of the symptoms that we see, and I would say there would be significant groups of our students who would be at risk of self-harm and there would be suicides and kids would be having suicidal thoughts. Staff 2002*

Staff also reported the negative stigma and fear associated with mental health illness and discussing mental health, throughout the school and wider community. Staff indicated that this might lead to difficulties in implementing MindMatters

*I don't think you'd have a great deal of support (from parents) because whenever mental health is suggested, people tend to shy away from it. They don't understand it and they don't want to. That's the way I see it and also think with a very big ethnic population that will play against you as well. Maybe the kids might accept it easier but I doubt the parents will. Staff 2002*

At the first interview, the principal identified this area as one of the most important challenges for the school.

*I mean teachers sometimes do feel, not only overwhelmed but probably under-equipped to deal with those sorts of issues (drugs and alcohol) and even more so to deal with the issues of mental health and that's one of the things, I guess, sort of makes the undertaking of this evaluation with you, pretty important for us because most of us feel as though we're walking in uncharted territory sort of thing. It's not what we trained for when we went to university, more this subject based material. You come out of your teacher training into a much wider area. But when it comes to discussions and when kids raise issues and I mean you always can refer on to (name), the casual psychologist, and (name) can deal with that, but it's day to day issues. And probably related to that, and it's all tied together, is I guess, family issues and just the percentage of - and it's not a large percentage, any school community has its share of dysfunctional families and the amount of time and effort that takes tends to wear away heavily on the teacher, both their time and energy levels, and sometimes the feeling, 'oh we spend far too much time on the kids who cause the problems' and all the teachers are aware that there are reasons why the kids behave in that way and that feeling of frustration that we can't do enough. You know? Your average kid who just does their thing and gets on with their life, and we don't spend enough time on them. So that's always a big challenge, it'll always be a challenge in schools, where you have a complete range of the community in the school. Staff 2001*

From the point of view of one external staff member (shared position with other schools), there was a real need to increase the level of staff awareness of the importance of mental health issues.

*Well, I think in all schools certainly in our work, you see limitations in people's awareness of a lot of issues to do with mental health. Including - like staff and students. I think in schools it's very easy to be focussed on education and not see the connection between general mental wellbeing and how kids perform. So like from a staff point of view just raising their awareness. Like for example, kids can be very depressed and staff won't necessarily notice. They won't necessarily make the connection that having very little motivation, having very*

*little interest in the future, you know - those sort of things, people don't necessarily have that awareness, that that's connected. Staff, 2001*

Staff also noted the resistance of parents and some students to discuss mental health issues and to engage in help-seeking behaviours.

*No doubt (name) explained, it's one of those things in our community. As soon as you mention anything to do with mental health, and that occurs also within our, just dealing with those students, talking about an educational psychologist to help, you get a very much, 'nothing wrong with my kid', sort of attitude. And that's an education process I suppose that we have to continue with. Staff 2001*

### **Bullying and harassment**

Students, staff and others commented on the general problem of violence in the surrounding community and that students may not have a broad repertoire of behaviours when confronted with conflict.

*Violence is endemic in this area. The kids will tell you: 'I will have to punch him because of what he did.' I want them to realise there is another way. I'm not saying it's a matter of being passive or aggressive. I'm not saying ignore (it). I'm not saying forget it. There are other ways sometimes of handling conflict, and the kids just go 'What? There are?' Staff 2001*

It is acknowledged that bullying was a significant issue at the time of the first visit in 2001, and one that the school needed to do more about.

*I wouldn't say it's any worse than in any other school but I think it's endemic and I think that anyone who thinks that it isn't, is an absolute fool. The whole range of bullying - there's a degree of racism (probably less so than in some schools), I guess we're so multi-cultural. I'm making generalisations here. It's a very highly homophobic community, highly. I think that's one of the biggest battles. I have already stated that in (student) forums, that's something that we don't tackle. Staff 2001*

*We've tried to do something about it, but still to be honest, I still hear the kids saying that it's there, for a few, and although they don't like it, they feel that teachers are in effect shelving what it is that we're doing and you know, we're trying to tell them that it's through education and through your participation, and whatever it is that we're trying to do to help but I still feel that they, under the circumstances, are not really on top of it but that's just a feeling that I have. Staff 2001*

Students interviewed in 2001 agreed.

*(There's) a lot of that at our school. Name calling and stuff. Students 2001*

*Sometimes - like there's - I'd say sometimes there's like groups in the school, they just go looking for trouble. No matter what you do, even if you told a teacher or something - you know you have to always watch your back. Cause like*

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*that's the way they ... just say you have a conflict with someone, they don't fight alone or something, they get groups and 'boot'.*

*Yeah, they get groups. Nothing really ends up happening but it's that whole thing of being scared. Students 2001*

### **Drugs and alcohol**

Staff, parents and students all reported concerns about the perceived high incidence of alcohol and tobacco usage.

*There are a lot of people that smoke. Student 2001*

This may be a phenomenon across other local schools.

*They're all drinking. Some are using drugs. I know one of my girlfriends, her son is using marijuana and her school counsellor said, 'Well don't worry about it, he's only using marijuana, we do have people here using heroin.' Parent 2001*

Some staff suggested that the large amount of alcohol usage could be attributed to cultural factors.

*Drinking before eighteen, absolutely going on to the hilt ... Oh yeah. It's promoted actually by the parents, as part of the culture. Let's celebrate; you're a man - 14 years old. Yeah go out and live it up. Staff 2001*

For some teachers, MindMatters was seen as a program that would help the school to educate students in the skills they needed to handle situations where drugs were available:

*Well drugs and alcohol use certainly has to be issues that every school has to look at, I mean, if people deny that they have a problem like that then they really have a problem. That's certainly one of those things and it's really trying to equip kids with the skills to cope with the sorts of things that they might run into or already have run into. I know that most teachers here would have heard things at different times in their career that would have shocked them. And then the things that you hear are only a small percentage I suppose of things that actually go on. So I think the challenge is really to educate the child as a whole and that's why we're looking at a program like this so that they're able to deal with the issues that they come into contact with, both outside the school and inside the school. Staff, 2001*

### **Truancy, attendance**

Students indicated truancy as a significantly large problem throughout the student body, especially in years 9 and 10.

*It's a very big problem. About 10% of kids from different units will wag school.  
Student 2002*

Students reported limited teacher interaction and policy enforcement against students truanting.

In contrast to these views, teachers painted a quite positive view, indicating that attendance at Waterview was actually much higher than at comparable schools.

*An enormous amount of work goes in to preventing it (truancy) but the kids don't know that. Staff 2005*

### **Gender specific needs**

As indicated above, staff at the first visit indicated that a large proportion of students are homophobic, and this is often used as a target for bullying and harassment.

*You would probably find half a dozen kids in the school, who would say it's OK to be gay. None of them would actually say 'I am gay' - even though (there are) posters up saying 10% - 14% of you are same-sex attracted and then ... but we've got staff who would say the same. Fortunately they are a minority, but staff who come from other countries who say 'back in my country (I won't name the country) there are no homosexuals - they just don't exist'. So I think that's certainly a huge issue. Staff 2001*

### **Race specific needs**

Staff and students report the significantly large migrant population throughout the community and the fact that such diversity sometimes impacts on the school in terms of racial disharmony. Staff indicated that the majority of students come from non-English speaking and low socio-economic backgrounds.

*Because of the cultural diversity that we have here. I mean I don't know that I'm always very much in the know of how different cultures react to different things and we have to be really cautious about that and have to educate ourselves in the way that we can relate to them the same way rather than expect them to relate to us. Staff 2001*

In one group at the first visit, students reported that one of their teachers exhibits racial bias and this leads to an uncomfortable learning environment.

*Some are racist, some just, like, put you down. Student 2001*

Note: this teacher subsequently left the school.

### 3.3 Adequacy of student support approaches

Staff and students reported that whilst they had a very successful pastoral care system, access to a school counsellor, and other services were always crowded and not available. Students described welfare staff to be consistently run off their feet.

### 3.4 Consistency with school direction, ethos

As noted earlier Waterview was originally established as a school that, in addition to its academic purpose, was to explicitly provide social and emotional supports to a clearly high need population. With a mandate to creating a supportive and engaging environment, Waterview's adoption of MindMatters was essentially unquestioned. Indeed the resource was seen as one that could be easily incorporated and a useful tool to support the established principles of the school.

*Well I see a program like MindMatters, I haven't seen any other program that's quite as comprehensive as that. It really complements what we're doing in the pastoral care and student support programs and as you may well be aware - and I'm not sure whether it has anything to do with decisions why we're involved and not other schools, we have a very long history in the student support and student pastoral care and I think, that combined with issues that are not just localised here at (Waterview High School), but in society in general, concerns of depression, mental health issues, and other related, I guess family and relationship issues, this seems to be an ideal opportunity to expand the work we do or at least find out whether a program would reinforce and further develop what we're doing. Staff, 2001*

### 3.5 Impact of student wellbeing on academic outcomes

For the staff members that initially promoted the use of MindMatters in the school, there was a commitment to spreading a view among staff of the connection between the student's academic performance and their wellbeing.

*I'm incredibly committed to the view of trying to get everyone to understand that emotional health and wellbeing is not the add-on that you look at once you have looked at the academic side. And (I) tried to get people, and some people do understand but still not everyone, to see the unbelievable link - you really don't get one without the other. So that's been my focus ever since I've been in the job, looking at whole school approaches to prevention and trying to educate people, get people on board to understand that the vital connection between emotional and mental health and academic success. Staff 2001*

### 3.6 Characteristics of MindMatters itself

The staff who initially reviewed the MindMatters kit were very impressed with the issues it addressed, particularly resilience, and reported the easy-to-use nature of the resource. Staff also reported that they specifically liked the statements regarding the rationale, activities and materials needed as it allowed easy and flexible lesson preparation.

*I was doing my student welfare course and so the optimistic thinking was the basics. And so for that reason really when MindMatters came along and I*

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*looked and saw (at least two years ago) a copy of the draft and I just thought, yes, this is where I am coming from too. Staff 2001*

*One of the things that appeals to me, apart from the actual content and what it is that it is trying to teach, is quite frankly the layout. Staff 2002*

Staff indicated that MindMatters could easily be implemented into the schools home group structures and that the kit contained activities that could be used immediately in their lessons.

### **3.7 Early expectations of problems**

At the initial visit, staff did not anticipate any difficulties with the implementation of the program within the school.



## 4 What did this school do to introduce MindMatters into the school?

### 4.1 How MindMatters was identified

The Student Welfare Coordinator, who had seen a draft of the resources approximately two years prior to the school's formal adoption of the program in 2001, first identified MindMatters as a resource that could be useful in the school.

Upon reviewing the kit when it became available in 2001, school staff reported that they were impressed with the resources, and were hopeful that it would promote optimistic thinking and resilience among the students.

### 4.2 Process of deciding to use MindMatters

The Student Welfare Coordinator (SWC) took the resources to the then Learning Culture Coordinator (LCC) and persuaded him that MindMatters was relevant to the school's goals for academic achievement.

*MindMatters is directly relevant to our kids because it's in the optimistic thinking part, first of all as it applies generally across their lives, but in particular as it applies in relation to questions related to achievement and particularly relevant to our students because a lot of our kids don't persist with tasks and they give up, and a lot of that I think is related to motivational issues and related to what (name) is talking about - emotional well being. Staff, 2001*

Two years previously, the SWC encouraged the school to set up a "Healthy School Culture Committee" whose role was to consider issues relating to "academic achievement, as well as emotional and social achievements". Reform or renewal of the school's home group structure had been on the agenda of this committee and promoters of MindMatters saw the resource as something that would complement their vision for pastoral care through the home groups.

### 4.3 Attendance at professional development

At the time of the first visit the SWC and the LCC had attended one of the two-day professional development sessions run in their city. Their experience of the training was not (from their point of view) a positive one. Several factors including a misunderstanding about the venue (leading to a one-hour delay in the commencement of the training), together with activities that did not work because of the large audience size (over 100), contributed to these staff's frustration. While acknowledging some positive aspects of the training they decided not to attend the second day.

*I had a sense of frustration anyway, by the time it had even started. Certain aspects of the day were - OK, but by the afternoon when we spent an hour brainstorming the definition of bullying, I thought I'm not coming back. If you don't know what the definition is or if we don't understand what bullying means by now, we shouldn't be here. I mean I thought that was really basic. And I just felt - I thought brainstorming with 90 people, was perhaps a bit much. I thought that perhaps was a bit foolish anyway, so it was really - it was sort of issues like that, that I just had - if I had nothing better to do with my time I'd just would have thought, that wasn't perfect, but and so I just said - I'm not*

What did this school do to introduce MindMatters into the school?

*going back tomorrow. There's too much I should be doing at work I'd rather be doing it - something about bullying at work, than brainstorming it. Staff, 2001*

Fortunately this experience did not diminish the enthusiasm for MindMatters and soon after the LCC had organised an in service training for approximately sixteen staff on the MindMatters program and resources.

In 2002, the main promoters of the program ran half-day professional development sessions on MindMatters for the whole staff.

*On one of our curriculum days, we spent an afternoon and we put into unit groups, about 20 staff with two presenters out the front kind of thing and what they basically did was just run some of the initial activities with us and so it was really good. Staff 2003*

*We actually did them (the curriculum activities), we did like you're the class and a couple of us ran the PD and we PD'd everyone - whether they were home group teachers or not. And then we said, what we want is, this is not something that is done in isolation on our own, ... this is something we want introduced into the school and we want everyone to be aware and to be aware in every single class and the actual PD will be conducted through the home groups. So we gave this as high a priority - we haven't done that for any other program - as we've given anything. Staff, 2003*

The focus of this PD session was completely on the 'Bullying' resources from the MindMatters kit, as it had been decided that this was to be the main focus of MindMatters implementation in 2002.

#### **4.4 How school was informed or involved**

The teaching staff was informed through the professional development conducted on one of the school's curriculum days in 2002. The evaluator is unaware of any efforts to inform students or parents about the adoption of the MindMatters program, although once implementation commenced students became well aware of the program.

#### **4.5 Formation of a core group or other planning group**

From the outset it was the plan of the LCC and the SWC to plan and promote the program through the existing Healthy School Culture Committee. In 2003, responsibility for managing the implementation of MindMatters in the school had passed from the Healthy School Culture Committee to the Individual Learning Coordinator who is responsible for chairing the Middle Years Individual Learning Group.

#### **4.6 Early plans for change**

At the time of the first visit the Healthy School Culture Committee had decided that the curriculum components of MindMatters would be implemented by the Home Group teachers, as a part of the school's pastoral care program (four hours per week). There were no plans for implementing other aspects of the MindMatters approach; i.e. changes to policies, structures or partnerships with outside agencies.

What did this school do to introduce MindMatters into the school?

This was planned to commence in 2002 with the Understanding Mental Illness module in years 11 and 12. The home group teachers were to be trained before implementation across the school, in term three of 2002. Thus the school took some time, from the point of deciding to use the resources to the time they were first used in the school. This was due, in part, to delays in collecting baseline data from the students as explained in section 2 above.

#### **4.7 Views of PD**

As mentioned above, the two staff who participated in the MindMatters training only attended one day of the seminar, and reported that they thought the training the program needed to incorporate more practical information and less on activities.

It is interesting that other staff observed that the effect of the attendance at training had energised these two staff members.

*I see the staff coming back from the PD in-services and they're really quite inspired, quite happy to embark upon something new... Staff 2003*

#### **4.8 Review processes**

Staff planned to use the audit tools from the MindMatters kit to discover the needs of the school, and to review existing policies or develop additional ones. There is no evidence, however that these tools were actually used.



## 5 What changes were made during the first two years of the evaluation?

### 5.1 Changes in structures and processes

During 2002, the school went through a process of reviewing and rewriting its three-year charter. MindMatters was clearly identified in this charter as a resource for individual learning, thus embedding it within the formal planning documents of the school.

*What happened is that MindMatters is actually referred to in the Individual Learning Charter. Some of the things that were taken out of Global Learning which referred to MindMatters' influences were put into Individual Learnings. So it's actually put into one of the statements. So it is there. So it is important to the school. Staff, 2003*

### 5.2 Changes in curriculum

#### Changes in pastoral curriculum

Waterview High implemented MindMatters directly into the pastoral curriculum, throughout the year 7-10 home group lessons, which occur for one hour, four times per week. Coordination of MindMatters was done at the unit level with each unit taking a slightly different approach. It was intended that the year 11-12 unit would be looking at the "Loss and Grief" and the "Understanding Mental Illness" resources.

During the second visit staff reported that in late 2002, the Home Group teachers for the middle school units had comprehensively implemented the "Bullying and Harassment" units of the MindMatters curriculum resources.

The staff who were promoting MindMatters made up what they called "MindMatters bags" in which each individual home group teacher was given everything that they needed to implement the lessons on "Bullying and Harassment" including photocopies of lessons, resources, rewards etc. In each unit, the unit leader and one other teacher commenced the program to "trial" them and then passed on their learned wisdom to other home group teachers in the unit who commenced some two weeks later.

*We did MindMatters on the Tuesday...every Tuesday, like even no matter what. Staff 2003*

*I would walk in there with my MindMatters bag and say...we are doing the topic now. Staff 2003*

In 2003, responsibility for managing the implementation of MindMatters in the school had passed from the Healthy School Culture Committee to the Individual Learning Coordinator who is responsible for chairing the Middle Years Individual Learning Group. At the time of the second visit, the school had commenced a focus on the "Resilience" units. Due to the vertical nature of the home groups, it was perceived that the "Bullying" resources could not be used two years in a row as the majority of students in the groups would have already done those units.

*I think that four year cycle is also an issue for a program like MindMatters, that if you've done the issue of bullying and you did it last year, it's difficult to revisit it without three-quarters of the kids saying, hold on we've done this already. Staff, 2004*

What changes were made during the first two years of the evaluation?

At the time of the third visit to the school in 2004, no further formal adoption of MindMatters had been planned by the Middle Years Individual Learning group. The same kind of comprehensive coverage of the resources as had occurred in 2002 and 2003, had not been planned for the rest of 2004.

Nevertheless, certain home group teachers had continued their use of the resources as issues arose in their classroom, although there is no way of knowing what proportion of home group teachers adopted this practice.

*Well the first year I did bullying and harassment and I thought that was really good because I even use it now when I refer to kids who bully another kid and I actually can go back and say 'well, what have you done wrong? How is that bullying?' And all that actually refers back to what we did. So I think that's really good and even when there's an incident, you can always refer to it too and the kids actually know because you just have to say 'MindMatters - games, lollies', and they know exactly what you're talking about. Staff, 2004*

Overall, staff were still asserting that MindMatters had been an asset to their pastoral curriculum.

*The delivery of MindMatters I think has been a different experience to different teachers, depending on the mix of the students in the group, depending on how they're assessed, depending on their attitudes, depending on their needs... I think for the home groups it's been highly successful, it's been relevant for those students at that time... Staff 2004*

As far as could be determined, the year 11-12 unit did not use the MindMatters resources as originally planned.

## 6 Sustainability of changes at the fourth visit in 2005

### Changes in curriculum for home groups

In 2002 all home groups within each of the year 7-10 mini-schools (units) utilised the bullying and harassment curriculum resources over a six to eight week period. In 2003, a similar approach was taken to using the resilience resources although there is some evidence that not all home group teachers did this as comprehensively as planned.

In 2004 and 2005, there was no coordinated use of MindMatters in the years 7-10 home groups. Nevertheless, at the fourth visit to the school in 2005, it was clear that some (perhaps many) of the home group teachers were still occasionally using the MindMatters resources either in their home room period or in other teaching.

*There would be a minority of teachers who would still use it and still use bits of it and to be honest, I wouldn't know exactly how many because it's very hard to get an audit of what's done in the home groups without sounding as though you're checking up on people. There could be more of it than I think. I suspect not. I've asked around and without trying to sound critical and I suspect not. Occasionally I will see something in the photocopy room which lets me know that someone's using it. Staff 2005*

Interviews with students reinforced the suggestion that most home groups did at least part of the bullying units from MindMatters in 2004. The school nurse also reports ongoing use of bullying resources in her co-teaching with home group teachers.

*I suspect that the teachers aren't even calling it MindMatters, although the teachers that I was with the last session clearly identified it as something from the MindMatters resources but from what I gather, a lot of resources are used from the MindMatters but it's not identified as coming from that. Nurse 2005*

Interviews with individual teachers indicated that to some extent teachers, having utilised the resources comprehensively in 2002 and 2003, are now incorporating certain ideas and actual elements of the resources in their teaching as the need arises.

*With the MindMatters - I mean there are obviously a couple of excellent activities and you see people sort of replicating those in various aspects, I mean obviously the bully outline one or whatever; and I've seen that used in a number of sessions. The Dorothy Dix one where the kids put down whatever, I've seen people use that - a couple of weeks ago. Teacher 2005*

*I love the activities in MindMatters and I love the content in MindMatters, so I would tend to use that right across the curriculum. And actually I think we use it a lot with ... obviously it's a little bit hard in computer programming, so in History I use it. I would use that a lot, but I find with my senior students that here at (Waterview) they have such appalling social skills and they can't work in groups and it actually interferes with the academic; so I tend to use a lot of MindMatters strategies there. Teacher 2005*

For a small number of teachers, their use of the bullying units is more formal.

*I mean you can say with the junior classes, I mean ours is formal enough, I do half a dozen of the lessons that I feel are applicable or whatever with the bullying and the resilience. So that part's been certainly delivered and I think*

*(name) does so in (her unit) as well. I suppose we need to bring it all back together. Staff 2005*

#### **New changes in other curriculum areas**

Although not formal, one teacher reported that having used MindMatters in earlier years in her home group, she was now finding it more appropriate to use the curriculum resources in another subject period.

*And this year we've been running a Health and Human Relations as part of our junior program. We've got a year 7/8 class. Most of us have run in the first semester and 1 or 2 in the second semester but we've been running elements of the MindMatters. Well I'm doing the Health in Gold and that's how I've been delivering it because obviously this year none of the Home Group teachers - it doesn't really fit within their cycle. So I found that reasonably appropriate, especially pulling up bits of the bullying; bits of the resilience; and then helping the bullied with self-esteem and whatever. And it really works well. Staff 2005*

#### **Intentions for future use of MindMatters curriculum**

Unit leaders remained convinced of the value of MindMatters even though they saw definite disadvantages in repeating the mode of implementation that had been used in 2002 and 2003 in home groups. It seems that the school is aware of the need to refresh their view of the home group and the home group period and that such a review might be an opportunity to review how MindMatters is used in that period, as a way of ensuring that the school's comprehensive approach to bullying and harassment is reflected in the curriculum.

*We as unit leaders need to start looking at evaluating our home group program and more closely and saying, okay how do all these things fit in? Are we doing them because obviously even though it comes up, we're still saying we're hoping all home group teachers are doing bullying and harassment. Whereas when we had I suppose made the decision to implement MindMatters it was great; everyone did it. So you know that it's being done by every home group teacher within the school. And I think that's a really positive thing. The unfortunate part now is that because we haven't implemented that or because we haven't sat down and got our acts together that we are no longer saying, for sure, that every home group teacher has discussed bullying and harassment this year. But maybe they do need to be reminded about why home groups is important at this school and it's not so much the literacy or spelling and private study, there's a different rationale behind it and it's like everything isn't it, sometimes we've just got to be reminded and then we get back on track. Unit Leader 2005*

Further it is possible that one teacher's experience of incorporating MindMatters into the Human Relations course may result in a more formal adoption of this practice.

## 7 What issues did this school face during the implementation?

### 7.1 Issues that helped

#### Staged approach to implementation

One of the most interesting aspects of the implementation model adopted at Waterview was the way in which the school used the structure of its middle school units to implement a staged implementation of the MindMatters resources. In each unit, in 2002, the unit leader and/or one other home group teacher took responsibility for commencing the implementation. They were then able to discuss their experience with the other home group teachers in the unit. The story from two different units illustrates how this worked.

*Some teachers trialled it three or four weeks ahead of the rest of the school. There were 18 (kits) last year, years 7-10 and one (teacher) in each unit trialled it so they were always two to three weeks ahead of the rest of the unit. So they could say, 'Look that one actually only went for 40 minutes'; 'be aware of that: 'Oh hang on, you'll need two sessions for this section, because it was lesson 1, lesson 2 in the book but that didn't necessarily correlate'. And they were just able to feed back and prevent some people (from wasting time) and whatever. Staff, 2003*

*But we mainly went through it just to familiarise ourselves with it and to trial it, to see how it would go and make adjustments to the activities, what suited our students best. And we were always about two or three weeks ahead. Some of us it took longer to get through what was meant to be an hour sessions. Some of us it took much longer just because the kids became more engaged or we were slower at doing it but that was basically our brief to set it up so that it would be user friendly straight away, you know, photocopying masters and things like that. And make it attractive for people to use in units. And as Healthy School Coordinator, a couple of home group teachers had problems so that was part of my brief to go into their classes and help them do it too. Staff 2003*

This level of support for home group teachers ensured an extremely comprehensive coverage across all home groups and reaching all of the 450 (approximately) students in years 7 to 10.

#### Positive professional development

As previously mentioned, the two people who attended MindMatters training in 2001 were complementary of some aspects of the training but were frustrated by other aspects and did not return for the second day of training. Nevertheless, the experience of PD seems to have enhanced their commitment to the adoption of the resources as other staff noted their enthusiasm when they returned to the school.

The in-house professional development that focussed on the use of the "Bullying" resources seems to have been very positive and most staff interviewed spoke enthusiastically about that experience. There was clearly a considerable effort made to make this experience a successful one.

*Yes we spent hours and it went out through every forum possible that home groups would be doing MindMatters. We also - two or three of us - actually went out and set up kits for MindMatters so home group teachers had actually*

*no preparation before they were PD'd. Home group teachers are the ones who we're asking to do anything and everything to do with this in the school, so I wanted them not to be going (inaudible). So I actually went out and bought bags. We put in all the rewards and resources. We filled it. We had all the games organised, we had lists of games, we had anything they might need for a game, sets of textas, scissors, glue, paint, anything, so they literally didn't have to go and get anything before walking into the class. And once all that was done we then had a half-day curriculum day. Curriculum days are precious that we devoted a half-day curriculum day to going through it with the staff and we broke it and we didn't do it as a whole school. Staff 2003*

The other way in which the school provided positive training was their staged process of implementation (mentioned above) where one teacher trialled the resources and passed on their experience. In one unit the process involved an active learning process described as follows:

*Like I ran it in class first, and then I ran it with the teachers exactly the same way, so it was like the teachers were the students. We did it that way so they actually did that first activity and then we went through the second and then I think we got to the third and that was it. So I wasn't standing up the front and just explaining it. It was the teachers actually doing the activities and then the way I did it (for them) that's the way I did it in class, but then teachers would take on their own teaching style and varied it a little. Staff 2003*

#### **Positive staff attitudes or reactions**

All those interviewed commented on the positive and supportive nature of the staff members at Waterview High, and the emphasise that is placed on student wellbeing and pastoral care. Students and community members indicated that the majority of staff strives to establish a positive and supportive role among students and seeks to help foster development

*They are helpful, they are friendly, they helped you through things. Helped you meet other people. Student 2003*

In particular, (as has been previously mentioned), those teachers who are home group teachers are committed to and receive positive endorsement for their role in pastoral care and this is clearly seen as having facilitated the adoption of MindMatters.

*The relationship with the kids you know and the relationship with the parents. And you have these kids from year 7 to year 10 and you see mostly, not always, but mostly, an emergence of a little kid into a fairly worthwhile adult, you know, a worthwhile adult. And you feel that you've had some input but it's what you get back. They generally respect you, talk to you, share things with you - good things and bad. Generally respect us, do you think? You know home group teachers usually respected by your own and other home groups? And it gives you a sense of real legitimacy in our school I think. Staff 2003*

These group of staff were able to recognise the obvious value of the MindMatters resources for their roles as pastoral care teachers.

### **Helpful leadership**

The examples given above indicate that, at least in the first 18 months of implementation, many very helpful examples of leadership for MindMatters were demonstrated at Waterview High.

In addition to the support of the principal and deputy principal, staff reported excellent leadership from the Healthy School Culture Committee and the unit leaders. Following the restructuring that occurred in 2002-2003, and the cessation of this committee, leadership for MindMatters seems to have passed to individual unit leaders and home group teachers.

### **Availability of resources**

In late 2002, Waterview High purchased 18 MindMatters kits (one for each home group teacher in the middle-school units of the school) to ensure that the uptake of MindMatters was effectively supported.

### **Usefulness or suitability of MindMatters**

The curriculum units that comprise a large portion of the MindMatters resources seem to be extremely suited to Waterview High because of the schools foundation of pastoral care and the emphasis placed on mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Staff reported that MindMatters was also extremely suited to the ethos of Waterview High. In determining pastoral structure and staffing Waterview High has based its schooling ethos of the well being of students, and hence the implementation of the MindMatters program was furthered by the schooling ethos

*I think it is a very important program and I am absolutely committed to it and Waterview has got a pastoral care structure where they have chosen to put MindMatters. They've got a structure or a belief in having pastoral care ...  
Staff 2003*

The structural support for this ethos is embedded in the vertical home group system. The concept of combining students across a range of year levels is specifically aimed at supporting peer relationship across the entire school community. The commitment of four hours per-week to this pastoral structure is indicative of the degree of support and value placed on pastoral care and time to address MindMatters was not seen as big an issue here as it has been observed in other schools.

*My overall impression ... is that the work done with MindMatters, combined with the work that we do independently ... helps reinforce that. Staff 2003*

*The structure has been designed with the wellbeing of students in mind. MindMatters is complementary to the stuff that we do and obviously (has) been taken up with the various levels of enthusiasm by home group teachers in different units. Staff 2004*

From another point of view, there was a clear recognition that the particular focus of MindMatters on the issue of bullying was an attraction to this school due to this issue being such an important one on its own agenda.

*And you know the various initiatives that the Department insists we cover, so anything that is covered has to be pretty important. Therefore the issue of bullying and how to address it must be fairly important for us to have done that.*

What issues did this school face during the implementation?

*The fact that it was done right across the school, I think certainly - it wouldn't have been done if we hadn't had the kits, if we'd had to start from scratch no. All we had to do was make minor modifications, changes to the kit and actually collate resources. It was more about collating resources and doing it before we handed it to people and as a school we had to go through it. The fact that it was then implemented across the 7 to 10's and some VCE classes meant that the kits was the whole issue was certainly put out there. Staff 2004*

### **Extra-curricular opportunities**

Students reported that they have opportunities to participate in a large variety of extracurricular activities. Many of these seem to support the type of social and emotional learning that is encouraged by the MindMatters resources.

*We get a chance to do so many things, I mean I've done lots of counselling like all this and other optimistic thinking and all that, I mean, there are a lot of things you can do if you want to. Student 2003*

*They have debating - school debating, and they have a writers competition, people entering essays and stories and stuff, and its all about activities ... they have maths competitions as well, that encourages you to work ... and we get student awards as well ... recognition and achievement awards and stuff. Students 2003*

*We have had multicultural days where we have had kids out in the courtyard dancing to all sorts of music, which is nice to see. They love it. Parent 2003*

### **Good staff communication**

All staff interviewed commented on the good communication between staff members at Waterview High.

*We are a very supportive ... we get to interact with other staff and they find equally that they could go into the other staffrooms and feel the same because there will always be someone who says 'Hi hows it going?' Staff 2002*

### **Participation in MindMatters evaluation**

Despite some concerns on behalf of the evaluator in 2003 that the school may have felt compelled to increase its efforts in relation to MindMatters because of its role in the evaluation, this does not seem to have been the case. Indeed, between the second and third visit there does not seem to have been any additional formal planning for implementation and it is possible that none has occurred since.

## **7.2 Issues that hindered**

### **Vertical home group structure**

Staff members reported the nature of the home-group use of MindMatters at Waterview might have hindered its broader uptake across the whole school. Because the home groups are

vertically structured, comprising students from years 7 to 10, the younger students who were taught the bullying curriculum unit in 2002, were resistant to the home group repeating these lessons in 2004 because they felt that it was repetitive to do so. To avoid this complaint some home group teachers concluded that they could only use the MindMatters resources every four years. This would mean that each year, the new year 7 intake might not be exposed to MindMatters.

Staff suggested that whilst they used the kit in the home group lessons, it may have been more beneficial to use the kit across the curriculum. While some individual home group teachers may generalise what they had learned and used the approaches or resources in other lessons, there was no formal planning to do so.

*In terms of the model, a big area where we will have struggled is an extension of the MindMatters activities into normal curriculum. Like there's a lot of those group-building activities that are designed to not just be in home groups, they're designed to be important across the curriculum and that's part of building that environment you're talking about. I think in that area, in terms of extending that approach into all areas of the curriculum, I'm saying, I might be wrong, but I reckon that that's one component that ... say for instance, in my English class, when I was teaching English and home group, I might use some of the games or some ... But it wasn't yet formalised, it was only because I'd seen the teaching resource ... but we never actually got the formal structuring of it within the curriculum ... we never really looked at that as an issue, how it might be done. Probably that's because we were told we're going to trial this and we're going to trial it through the home groups so let's do it there. Staff 2004*

#### **Negative staff attitudes or reactions**

Again the close nature of the relationship between students and their home group teachers means that teachers are more likely to use the home group period to respond to the current issues of students rather than impose a set curriculum during this time. While this is not a 'negative' attitude as such, it does mitigate against the imposition of a comprehensive curriculum unit on issues such as bullying in the way this school attempted.

*I mean the whole idea about pastoral groups, I believe, I mean they stay with the same teachers for four years and they have at least four hours a week. So my view is that you are - I mean I was a home group teacher for many years here - you're supposedly tuned in to the needs of the students at any one time and my argument would be, you know, I don't go home and decided that I'm going to do violence next week, and bullying next week, or sexual abuse the next week. I tune into the needs of my own children and I think home groups should be the same because I believe we should have all this material here, we should be in-serviced on it. but we should be able to have the freedom of the home group teacher to decide when we actually address an issue. Staff, 2004*

Some staff reported that teachers feel overwhelmed with the combination of curricular and extracurricular duties, and are not always comfortable teaching content that they are not familiar with.

*Teachers sometimes do feel, not only overwhelmed but probably under equipped to deal with those sorts of issues and even more so to deal with the issues of mental health ... most of us feel as though we're walking in uncharted territory sort of thing. It's not what we trained for when we went to university,*

*more this subject based material, you come out of your teacher training into a much wider area." Staff 2002*

### **Negative leadership issues**

It is apparent that the school's planning takes place on a three-year cycle and that a new cycle commenced half way during the current evaluation period. As a result of this there were changes in the personnel in leadership positions and a restructuring of the school's committee system

During the second visit staff reported changes of positions within the school's leadership and the roles of individual staff members. Staff indicated that this has had a profound influence on the implementation of MindMatters, as responsibility for MindMatters passed from the Healthy School Culture Committee to the Middle School Individual Learning Committee. There is little doubt that once this occurred, the momentum for implementation seems to have diminished due to the considerably large scope of that committee's area of concern. From then on concern for MindMatters seems to have passed to individual unit leaders and home group teachers.

*There was a huge shake-up of staff for reasons known best to the administration. This year's the first time ever in the history of the school, people were just moved from unit to unit. It's never ever happened before. So it was quite a shock and the whole leading teacher team changed as well and the person who had run Healthy School Culture is a leading teacher in a library position. It's quite different and there was no-one to do Healthy School Culture. So what's happening now is that they're trying to find someone to run Healthy School Culture without actually giving them any time allowance or any money or anything. Staff 2003*

By 2004, staff indicated a diminishment in commitment by the leadership to the MindMatters program.

*We haven't planned to do it ... I think part of the problem has been that the push has to come from somewhere to do anything. Part of the problem has been this transition of not having Healthy School Culture Committee. MindMatters per se probably has fallen off the agenda a bit. Staff 2004*

### **Crowded curriculum**

Given that this school focussed its use of MindMatters within the curriculum of the home group, it is apparent that, by 2004, the pressure on that curriculum may have contributed to a lessening of commitment to the use of these resources.

*Unfortunately in home groups is where we try to pick up all of these things and there's such a lot of other things in our path. And we've got four hours a week but there's a lot of other things that come up so you're trying to fit everything in. Staff 2004*

### **Unplanned duplication**

Some staff reported that some teachers in the different units saw some of the content within the MindMatters program as repetitive.

*I mean we were doing bullying last year, this year its called 'Resilience' ... I found some parts can get repetitive. Staff 2003*

### **Industrial issues**

With the restructuring of leading teacher positions at the end of 2002, it is possible that some staff who were formerly committed to the promotion of MindMatters, and who were not appointed as leading teachers may have found that, with less time available to them (due to not being given an allowance of time for planning etc), they had less time available for undertaking the detailed planning that they had previously been able to do.

### **Age inappropriate material**

Some staff reported that some of the activities and content within the MindMatters program was aimed at a much younger audience than that to which they were delivering the material. Staff suggested that because of this, aspects of the program were found to be repetitive and boring by some of their students.

This perception may relate to the nature of the home groups, within which MindMatters was implemented, as these groups comprised students of mixed age (from year 7 through to 10). It would be quite understandable that some activities would come across to older students as childish.

*I found it a bit primary and repetitive after a while. Even though we varied the activities. Primary school level, you know. They felt it's the sort of thing we do with primary kids. Even though we did the activity, we went through quite deliberately and varied at the beginning the activities so it wouldn't happen... after about five or six (activities) the kids began to really object and so I'd leave it for a week and come back to it ... I found it a bit repetitive after a while too. Staff 2003*

*I tended to come against a bit of a wall, 'oh not this again' and there was that sort of sense, initially enthusiasm, tended to fall away and perhaps I'd see it more aimed at a younger group of students. Staff 2004*

*It is a mismatch in its appropriateness, that we're forcing our older kids to do stuff they perceive as childish. Staff 2004*



## 8 Issues Identified at the fourth visit

### The usefulness of the MindMatters resources

Despite a cessation of formal implementation plans beyond 2003, the MindMatters curriculum resources continued to be used in an informal and sometimes ad hoc way by many of the teachers who had used them more formally in 2002 and 2003. Teachers reported that this was because the teachers' experience of using MindMatters had resulted in them forming a very positive view of the usefulness of the resources. Their experience seems to reflect that many of the curriculum ideas can easily be incorporated into flexible teaching approaches.

*I think it's wonderful and even if home group teachers want to modify it and modify it and modify it; it doesn't matter; you've got something to work from rather than reinventing the wheel and that's when teachers' time is at a premium. It's great to have those resources; wonderful to be able to go to something, look at it and say can I use this in its present form or can I modify it? Oh yes I can just with this, this and this; and that's great. Teachers want that. Teachers I believe anyway, I could be wrong, but they want to be able to go to something, pull it out, you know, that's user friendly and that you're not reading 10 pages before you actually get to something, that type of thing. Executive 2005*

### Availability of the kits

This school invested in purchasing a MindMatters kit for every home room in the year 7-10 mini-schools, thus making the resources very accessible to home group teachers. This no doubt facilitated their use as required by those home group teachers who formed a positive view of the resources during the school's more formal approaches in 2002 and 2003.

*They're sitting on each of the home group teachers' desks. Executive 2005*

### Early training won support from home group teachers

As mentioned in reporting on earlier visits, the staff continued to identify the positive value of the in-house training that was provided to them.

*I think there are two things to that; first of all I think the modelling strategy where we concentrated on a few groups of staff, but we also ran workshops for the whole staff where (name) and I and (name) and (name), we went out and we took on the role of MindMatters trainers and we had 55 year-old teachers doing the shuffles. Teacher 2005*

*Absolutely. Yeah I remember we spent an afternoon on a curriculum day and the staff that had actually trialled it - mainly to get together and discuss - I tried this, I tried this; that one didn't work for me until I tried it this way; so they did that amongst themselves and there were about six or eight of them doing that and then they came to us and ran the first couple of activities with us and I thought it was great. Teachers 2005*

### **Open communication among teaching staff**

The organisation of this school within mini-schools allows teams of up to twelve teachers to work closely together and to assist each other with curriculum ideas and with problem-solving. This meant that if certain teachers had difficulties with using particular lessons from the MindMatters resources, they could discuss these openly with other teachers and get ideas of how to address the issues more constructively.

*Of course schools always have that model where teachers who are teaching the same group of students work together in their unit well a lot of that transfer and a lot of the shared knowledge is done over their morning coffee; you don't have to call a meeting so I think that's one of the major strengths of our system, is that knowledge transfer you're talking about, and it can happen without teachers having to find another time in which to meet. Executive 2005*

*Yes so that did work well. And then you always knew that if you got to something and you were reading in the book . Not quite sure if this is going to work with my group and you'd sort of say 'did you do it that way' and you had some ideas about ... and you walk into the staffroom and the nature of our staff around here, having that unit-based staff, you just walk in and go that was a disaster or someone might be talking about it and going, 'I tried this and it was brilliant'. You'd go 'what did you try?' and you know, there it's around you the whole time because we're all kind of going through it at the same time and that was excellent. Teacher 2005*

### **Effect of new state curriculum frameworks**

As mentioned, the formal implementation of MindMatters at Waterview High ceased after 2003. School leaders were nevertheless keen to review how MindMatters could be better integrated in the future and saw their state's move towards new curriculum frameworks as a process that would underline the need for social competencies to be developed, and hence renew the school's focus on MindMatters.

### **Comprehensive approach to addressing bullying**

As mentioned above, many of the teachers continue to use elements of the bullying resources in their home groups as required. This reflects that teachers are reinforcing a whole-school approach to bullying at Waterview that includes posters around the school, frequent reminders and inclusion in the school's induction program.

*At the start of every year, when you have the year 7s come in, one of the first things that they're spoken to about is the bullying process here at school; we have the bullying register and bullying kids - one of the very first things that the kids are told about that it is a zero tolerance here. I mean you still get those that are going to do it because kids will be kids but it is frowned upon and there is action taken straight away. Teacher 2005*

### **Recognition of the link to academic achievement**

The advocates for MindMatters within this school report that they attempt to sell the need for the program in terms of it being in line with current theories of success in academic achievement.

*Yeah they will, but however, what I do hope is because one of the arguments with MindMatters is that I've also - if you look at the research on self-efficacy, then optimistic thinking and all that sort of stuff, and a lot of the things like getting on with others and self-management - all those sorts of things are actually stable characteristics of successful self-regulated learners, therefore MindMatters is not just relevant to the school from the point of view of being something you should do for students for their own sake, it's also relevant to the school because it's one of the essential foundations of underpinning good learning. Staff (2005)*

Despite this, however, there was recognition that not everyone accepted this argument.

### **Home group teacher's resistance to imposed curriculum programs**

Home Group teachers at Waterview value highly the close relationship that they develop with students in their home room. They feel that they know the students very well and therefore are in the best position to decide what the focus of the four hours of home group should be. Given the number of issues that the school wants to address through home groups, some home group teachers become resistant to the imposition of programs that they themselves have not identified the need for. They need to be convinced of the importance of the issue and the usefulness of the program.

*We have this notion that it's our home group and at various times over the years we have had things imposed upon us that we really must do kind of thing; and some of those have not been much fun. Basically they've been a chore. And so when you get something like this, even though it is valuable, there is still this underlying notion; it's just something I've been told I have to do and you get some resistance there as well. Because staff are like, no I want my home group to go this way at the moment; I don't necessarily want to do this. And even though it's a valuable package and I don't think you'll find anyone who says that it wasn't, they still have this notion of I'm being told what to do with it. And yet it's kind of bizarre, because there are times when we want to be told what to do but the minute you are there's the resistance there. So it's a no-win situation sometimes. And that's where a little bit of negativity comes from and it really has nothing to do with the program. Staff (2005)*

### **Dissonance with certain teaching styles**

It was reported that certain teachers had expressed discomfort using the MindMatters resources because they were not used to encouraging open discussion among students as a whole group.

*But despite all that, there were still people that felt uncomfortable because it's not natural for them to get up there and have a discussion with their kids and run something that's informal and have to bounce off the kids' ideas. Some people do that far more comfortably than others. Or you just have to learn; I*

*learnt. I don't know whether that's just through trial or people being more receptive to it than others, but some people just went, oh I don't think I can do this and it was a real chore for them to even get through and they probably structured it very differently and put more emphasis on the small groups.; and the writing aspect, (rather than) the whole, open discussion style of things. Staff 2005*

### **Vertical structure of home groups**

The disadvantage of using MindMatters curriculum resources in a vertically structured home group was identified at the third visit and repeated again at the fourth visit in 2005. If use of MindMatters is repeated each year, some of the students complain about repetition and express that they are fatigued with the issues (such as bullying).

*Part of the issue is simply the fact that we have years 7 to 10 in the home groups so that's a bit tricky if you do it one year. Three levels, you know, the 10s have gone and moved on and you've got your year 7s - the 8s, 9s are currently ... the same. Part of it is the kids get sick of it. Staff 2005*

Some teachers however had develop creative approaches to overcoming the problem that in 2005 their year 10 students might complain about over-exposure to the bullying curriculum resources; they enlisted them to help teach the units to the younger students.

*Of course experiences will differ. I know (name), say, he's used elements of it; he's gone back to the bullying and some of the resilience. He was using that last year because he's got a wonderful group of year 10 group leaders with whom he can take off and the kids - I mean they sit down here, they sort of modify it with kids that have ran up I think it was about a two or three week session, but for somebody else who hasn't got those strong group leaders, it's nigh impossible. Staff 2005*

### **Disadvantage of a focussed use of MindMatters in the home groups**

Further, when the school did make a unified effort to use the bullying resources in 2002, they did so in such a comprehensive way (eight weeks of four hours per week) that the students felt that they had had enough.

*I think that kids got sick of when they thought the teachers were ... 'oh MindMatters, oh no, we're not doing that again'; so it probably means that rather than having a really concerted attempt at it, maybe spreading it out, like the bullying and harassment, don't do it as a module, but fitting it in maybe once a term and in small doses and I think that then that way kids are not turned off, thinking oh' we're going to have a huge module on this, I've been through it before. Oh I just did it last year'. And I think they'd probably be reluctant maybe, some of the home group teachers, to go full blast again. Staff 2005*

These perceptions were reinforced by comments from students and also from the school nurse who observed:

*From what I gather, I think it has been in the past, used extensively, but possibly becoming a little tired and the kids are perhaps at the grassroots*

*getting a bit tired of the word bullying in a sense. In fact the last lesson we just did, which was a sex education thing, we took a thing from MindMatters regarding bullying, which leads up to relationships and how to deal with those but you could see that they were a bit tired of that type of approach. Nurse 2005*

### **Limitations of teachers' induction to MindMatters**

While the in-house training conducted at Waterview was successful in facilitating the implementation of the bullying and resilience resources, the teachers were not introduced to the whole-school model of MindMatters and many may remain ignorant of the overall MindMatters approach. One of the senior teachers who advocated for the introduction of MindMatters recognised that it was the curriculum ideas within MindMatters that held most value for this school, given the pre-existing positive school ethos of the school and its extensive connections with outside support agencies. Consequently, in preparing the in-service training, the whole-school elements of the resources were not used, because they were not related to the curriculum focus of this schools adoption of the program.

*Yeah the year we did it we went through and eliminated - there's way too much material at the beginning (of each book), you know, the rationale and it's really off-putting to the classroom teacher. It's hard to say this is a resource that you can just follow, you don't have to think for yourself, when in fact they've got to get through all these pages. That's enough to put a teacher off at the beginning. I don't think it was necessary in every single book. One of the things I did like about it when you got down to it was that it says, 'you'll need a pack of Textas, you'll need ...' And I thought, 'this is good' because you know at one glance, yes I can do that today or no I can't, I'll have to do it next week. Staff 2005*

### **Lack of training**

It is possible that because the advocates of MindMatters attended only one day of training (having chosen not to go back for the second day), they themselves may not have been exposed to the key messages about whole-school models of implementation.

*I mean there was arrogance in it on my part as well, probably thinking, I don't need another day's training but I probably don't even need it. We can do this without the training. And we did put a lot of time into going through it and culling and seeing if this works for us or won't it. I do feel fairly strongly that part of the reason it is not ongoing, certainly not in the whole school, is not the fault of the resource. Staff (2005)*

Nevertheless, the value of further MindMatters training is recognised and the part-time nurse was planning to do the training later in 2005.



## 9 What impact did the changes arising from MindMatters have?

The characteristics of the implementation of MindMatters at Waterview High were: use of curriculum resources only; focus on bullying across years 7 to 10 in 2002; focus on resilience in same years in 2003; use in home groups but not across the curriculum. The school saw MindMatters as offering useful curriculum that complemented the school's pastoral care structure and which addressed issues already identified as important.

Given the highly personal nature of the relationship that exists in this school (especially in years 7-10) between students and their home group teacher, it is not really to be expected that such use of MindMatters would impact greatly on many of the dimensions of wellbeing and resilience that this report examines. To illustrate this, the following exchange between two students indicates the strength of this relationship and its focus on building resilience.

*In home groups we don't do 'work' work, we do fun things. Make puzzles and challenges. We're in there for four years. The people that are in there you know them really well. But in other subjects you've got different people from different classes and different units. But home groups, like, the people are the same. We know them from the year before. They just make you feel comfortable and you've known them for a long time. You just know them and we're all friendly.*

*Yeah. If you get in trouble with other teachers, I'll admit that I have got in trouble, and the (home group) teacher will come and talk to me and say how can you resolve this problem with them. They'll make you feel comfortable around him or her. They won't bite your head off and say you don't do your work you're going to get suspended or something. Students 2004*

Staff of the school found it very difficult to identify any impacts that they felt they could attribute to the school's adoption of MindMatters.

*In terms of actually having that discussion (about bullying) with every kid at 7 to 10, making a statement about how we felt about that, I mean all of those things are positive. The fact that all kids have accessed that information, been involved in some of those activities. The fact that as a staff, we've said, 'clearly this is something that we feel should be addressed' and that we don't accept and all those things. I think all those things are positive. But if you want to measure, if you ask me to try and measure, I can't do that. Staff 2004*

### 9.1 Impacts and outcomes for students

#### Bullying and harassment

The school addressed the issue of bullying in 2002 by a comprehensive use of the "Bullying and Harassment" resources across all home groups in the junior units. Staff reported an improvement in student's ability to identify and deal with issues of bullying and harassment. In this exchange, teachers debate the value that doing the bullying units has had in terms of their capacity to manage the issue and also on the student's capacity to assert that they should not be bullied.

*T1 It certainly raised their awareness, again, which we needed to do. The reality is that kids will always bully in some way, shape or form but what I found*

*now as a unit leader, the kids can explain to me what was wrong with their behaviour whereas before that wasn't always the case. 'Why, what did I do wrong?' He said... 'you know, this kind of business.' But because that awareness is back there, if I say to a kid, 'why do you think I've got a problem?' (the student says) 'because I did this', and they are aware and they can articulate it. That cut down that barrier because we spend so much time, trying to work out, like get the story straight, get the kid to acknowledge what it is that they've done, that we don't appreciate it and why we don't appreciate it and we've certainly cut down some of those barriers.*

*T2 But on the other side of it I think that the kids saw that it was their right not to be bullied, that it was an inalienable right that they shouldn't be bullied and I think because we went through the types of bullying, it gave them a name for some of the things that were happening, like 'chucking greasies' or whatever, giving people dirty looks.*

*T1 I've come at as being a unit leader. I am sort of a disciplinarian so I come at it from another angle. But that is definitely going on because more kids would come up to you and say, 'so and so's done this to me, it made me feel like crap'. Whereas before they knew that they didn't like what was going on but they weren't quite sure what it was that was going on. Staff 2003*

In a separate interview another staff member reported:

*I think kids are aware of it now ... I still see bullying, but I think our kids know what bullying is, the people who suffer or are victims of bullying and harassment are now aware that this is the procedure that they can follow. Staff 2003*

Two other teachers reported similar observations.

*I think being familiar with the term and people's behaviour and expectations particularly with relation to the social outcome, I remember that was really an interesting discussion in my home group and as (name) said, the really good kids get even better at it but those socially kind of outcast kids suddenly discovered a voice in there. That was really good, but you had that in the middle - the bully who now is educated in a sense of why his behaviour's unacceptable but you won't change him anyway and when you do talk to him in the form of punishment, he knows he's doing wrong but that's what he's like but the other side of the coin of course, is that the kids could now say, 'Look you're harassing, you're a bully, I don't like what you're doing.'*

*You have the power, you've empowered them all in the sense that they're familiar, everyone has a language and everyone was exposed to the same terminology, the same experiences, certainly the same discussions and they do have a better understanding of certain behaviours. Staff 2003*

Despite this empowering of students who are bullied, staff, students and community members all reported that they had not detected any change in the actual incidence of bullying (although there is disagreement about whether the problem of bullying is a large one).

What impact did the changes arising from MindMatters have?

*I'd have to say maybe the fundamentally good kids probably take this on board a bit more than others, but your real problem kids who are the bullies, or who misbehave, or get into strife, or get into harassment, or whatever, probably don't take it on board. They listen they go 'yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah', then they walk and off they go, they do it again. And they're the ones we really struggle with I suppose. Staff 2003*

Nevertheless, teachers recognise the value of the school continually addressing the issue with the students.

*And if I talk to my students of ... they would say to me, look 'bullying's not a major issue' but when I see certain episodes around the school, I would say that for some students bullying is a major issue. And I think when you talk to students about MindMatters or other programs, they would say, 'we know it all. We've heard that, we've been told that, we understand that'. If you could change the culture of the school, if there was a formula to do that, that wouldn't need to be. You need to have teachers in every place at every minute of the day, picking up on the behaviours that even indicate that kind of power of bullying and I believe that until you can do that, (and I've seen it done, it can happen but it's not easy) and I think you're going to make a huge impact. That's not to say it's not a program worth doing, even if it reaches only 10 per-cent. If it makes a difference to those 10 per-cent then I think it's great. Staff 2004*

### **Drugs and alcohol**

Students and staff reported no change in the use of drugs and alcohol. Students indicated that the staff had become stricter in enforcing smoking policies within the school. It is unlikely that this is attributable to MindMatters.

*When I first came to this school there were lots. But now, I don't see it a lot because they're more strict now. Student 2004*

### **Attachment to school**

Home Group teachers reported that MindMatters has enabled them to develop a close classroom ethos and has led to a deep sense of student belonging and attachment to the school.

*MindMatters has been very, very ... I really like using MindMatters ... I think, you know, it's in that sense that MindMatters has really got something quite unique. You can really build a classroom ethos, it really gives kids a great sense of belonging using that. I use them whenever I can, and adapt them and play with them. Staff 2004*

### **Self-esteem**

Staff reported an increase in self-esteem among students who participated in the MindMatters program.

*But I actually found - one of the things that still stands out in my mind - and this student will come to my interview tomorrow. One is in my home group, she was the sort of girl who's very, very quiet. Like she had friends, which wasn't a problem or anything. She was just shy, a quiet kid. The amazing part was, when we started the MindMatters program, she just - I was shocked. I mean she just came out. She blossomed basically. Whether she was intrigued by the topic or the discussions that we had, you know, something that her hand's going up but she's asking the questions, and she's putting forward her opinions on certain things, and since then she's really a lot more talkative. So whether it was just a timing thing, maybe it would have happened anyway, I don't know, because when she was in year 8 last year. But it was just so nice because she was really into it, like any lesson we did, the discussions she shot away, the written part, she just really got into it. Staff 2003*

### **Opportunities for leadership**

Staff indicated that the MindMatters program provided opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills. This teacher describes that one of the activities from the "Resilience" booklets initially left students confused and floundering until natural leaders emerged.

*You see the people that came in - and mostly it was girls - took on leadership roles. Suddenly they had the voice, we have to do this, and gradually they did it and after that we had a great discussion about what actually happened you know. Staff 2003*

### **Communication and cooperation**

Staff and students reported that the MindMatters program has allowed them to develop and enhance their communication skills, and enabled them to cooperate with each other, as well as staff members. The following teacher describes how the discussion on bullying led to very open communication from students across the years within their home group.

*We laid those ground rules, no judgement, no this, that and the other. Everyone is equal and everyone has an opinion and there's no right or wrong in an opinion, it's a belief and we have to respect each other, that was the other big deal, respect each other, listen to each other. It kind of neutralised the level a little bit. And I think the year levels were definitely eliminated in that respect because some of the junior kids had a lot to say, compared to the older kids (who) probably learnt a lot from the junior kids because on occasions you'd get the 'Whoa where did that come from?' So the potentially brighter kids were actually able to articulate answers more thoughtfully and the others who were not articulate, because they had that kind of weird experience sometimes, I mean they were able to have a say in whether they'd been a witness or they'd seen or they'd been bullied and it was amazing how you know, they did articulate when someone picked on them. This is what I felt. Staff 2003*

A similar description of how the MindMatters activities facilitated communication and cooperation was related a year later. On this occasion the students were undertaking an exercise from the "Resilience" resources.

*Absolutely. There's no - as I said I've always found that with the number of kids who really like enjoyed (it), you know. And it's not to say others don't but my experience has been that the kids who in the past have been really quiet, just last time, very quiet and suddenly just coming out of their shell. Because there's room for discussions, things they want to talk about, you know? Even from things like, a game I remember, the hoop game, there were kids - I kind of varied it a bit and made it like a competition, passing the hoop between people, it was a bit again, a cooperation and strategy (game) and it was fantastic. You know, we went into the theatre where we had a lot of room there, no-one could really watch them, there was just us, and it was great, a really positive experience and they really enjoyed it. Staff 2004*

### **Assertive behaviour**

Staff reported that when dealing with the bullying issue in class, some students, building on a greater understanding of bullying behaviours were able to demonstrate a capacity to assertively name those behaviours.

*They do have a better understanding of certain behaviours but they also see the bully now and they can actually understand why he is like that and he's not necessarily the popular guy. You don't have to like him. You can put up with him and not like what he's doing. We might get battered by him but I think the notion that it's not your fault. His behaviour is his problem and that's where I was coming from an awful lot. And that was very, very good to be able to articulate that in the form of a lesson and having it in a vertically structured situation. It's transient across the board and you've got the older kids sitting there listening to it, and being criticised by the younger kids doesn't always sit well with them and yet they were, in the end, my kids were not ashamed to say, 'Look Joe's like that, his behaviour's like that' and I thought that was really brave. Staff 2003*

### **Empathy**

One teacher who was particularly committed to a comprehensive use of the "Resilience" resources reported the impact that the experience had on her class in terms of a greater insight into and sensitivity towards the feelings of others.

*The Resilience that we did at the end of last year I actually really liked especially the Creating Connections and the not leaving people out and how people are feeling and how people deal with their problems. I thought that was really, really good because kids can actually sort of step back and think, 'so my actions actually result in someone feeling like this or feeling like that'. And I took it a step further and said what could possibly happen to these kids? Like they don't like coming to school (and the extreme situation is suicide ), but you know, how would you feel if the things that you're saying to someone everyday, resulted in something dreadful happening or whatever. And looking at it like that, they actually said, 'yeah, you know it is true, it does happen'. But also just the being nice, the values of being nice to people, including people and that sort of stuff so I think those two sections, and there's only ones that I've done so far worked quite well and I could actually relate it back to students. Just when*

What impact did the changes arising from MindMatters have?

*new kids come in and I think that's important, including them, giving them a chance, introducing them, so I think my home group's really good at that. I've got a good bunch of kids who can actually put it to work. Staff 2004*

### **Help-seeking behaviour**

As reported above, the comprehensive focus on bullying in 2002 was seen to have resulted in an increased reporting behaviour in relation to his particular issue.

### **Awareness of MindMatters**

When Home Groups were using resources from the MindMatters kit, the home group teachers specifically referred to them as "MindMatters" activities and consequently students and staff all reported an awareness of MindMatters.

*I remember when I was in year 7 we did it and there were some activities of going outside the room and .... It was fun but we haven't done that for a while. It's more fun if we're up and doing stuff, you know, being active. Student 2004*

*You can always refer to it and the kids actually know because you just have to say MindMatters - and they know exactly what you're talking about. And that was good. Staff 2004*

### **Taking responsibility for others**

One teacher reported the impact of implementing the 'Resilience' materials in her class was that older students developed caring and responsible attitudes towards the younger students in the home group.

*And I can actually see the relationship - like I've got year 10 girls who (will) give year 7 boys the time of day. Do you know what I mean? So they're not snobbish or anything. They actually .. Like we play sport and a little year 7 kicks a goal and my year 10 picks him up literally and swings him around and you know, he'd feel good and they do that, they encourage (each other). And it does happen in the yard. I've got kids with other issues who might be laughed at or whatever and the year 10's are like, oh he's not 100 per-cent is he? And I'm like well that's not the right terminology, but if you see people laughing at him or you can see him doing silly things, just sort of say, you know, 'not the right way to behave', and people are laughing at you, and they actually do it. I've seen it happen and so I think that's a positive thing with - this boy's in year 8 now, so they do look after him and they know not to laugh at him and things like that. Staff 2004*

## 9.2 Positive impacts on staff

### Increased knowledge and skill

*I was going to say that MindMatters was good for us here at Waterview. There's a lot of growth work that goes on in home groups, so I'm not criticising it. It's the high baseline of people you were talking about. But we really need to look at things like self-efficacy and teachers need to realise that there's a very strong scientific foundation for it (MindMatters). It's not just all up in the air. So MindMatters is very helpful and beneficial to the school in that respect. I mean in the sense that it may not make a big difference to how the school operates at home group, please remember even for people to understand what optimistic thinking is all about, is a big ask. There's a complex set of issues there and teachers are not trained to deal with it. MindMatters was good for us in that context.*

*I: How?*

*Because it got teachers to focus on those issues, to focus on the importance of those issues, to start thinking about them and sort of look at the theoretical underpinnings for it and it's beneficial in the sense that it's then on the agenda. Staff 2004*

Staff reported an increase in both student and staff knowledge concerning mental health and wellbeing.

*I mean I certainly think it's raised awareness amongst staff ... it got teachers to focus on those issues, to focus on the importance of those issues, start thinking about them and sort of look at the theoretical underpinnings for it. Staff 2004*

### Positive changes in approach to teaching

In the opinion of one informant, for at least some of the home group teachers the skills learned and approaches used in the MindMatters periods have had some impact on the way they approach their teaching of other subjects.

*Yeah and I certainly see the value of being there. I would like to think - and I know, although I don't have quantitative research for this, I would like to, I know that some of the philosophy of MindMatters, let alone some of the activities, have been transferred to other classes. Staff 2004*

This was in fact demonstrated by one of the teachers interviewed.

*I find that the MindMatters just sort of ... it was a program and you could relate it back and it sort of reminded kids. But you don't have to be just teachers, it doesn't have to just come through the MindMatters program. You still need to do it on your own as well and sort of refer back to it. So teachers who probably don't focus on how kids should behave and being the best possible*

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*person that they could be and all that stuff, if they had MindMatters there, they could use it that way. Staff 2004*

### **Creating stronger links with the community**

Community members reported an improvement in the relationship between the school and the wider community. It is doubtful that this is directly or indirectly related to the use of MindMatters.

*The school does seem to have a commitment to relationships, or that essential idea about teacher/student relationships are important and definitely a commitment from the welfare staff and the hierarchy of staff. There is a real sense of relationships forming ... I also see the school as being very open to trying to develop partnerships, say they bring youth workers in, they do training for young people and placement. Recently outreach to the school, the youth team. The kids Helpline training, those additional sort of ideas of providing coping skills is there, for young people as well as (inaudible) ... the promotion of help seeking behaviour within the school. And they do seek, I suppose, strategic partnerships or all partnerships outside the school or try to break down the walls. Community Worker 2004*

### **9.3 Plans for future use**

Staff reported the possibility of incorporating MindMatters into the health curriculum. However there are no formal plans to continue the implementation of the program.

*I don't know, if I'd have to predict how much would be used say a good five years down the track, I'd probably say not a great deal Staff 2004*

*If you get the mix right and the health education aspect right, you could do much more than specific like, you know, drug ed or sex ed programs because it's that decision making ability that's really important. It's that decision making of feeling you're in control of your life. Staff 2004*

## 10 Further views on Impacts at fourth visit

### 10.1 Impacts on students

#### Bullying and harassment

Students interviewed in 2005 reported that, in their view, the incidence of bullying is very low.

*Well we can't really say that because we don't know everyone in the school; we don't have every single person's view about it, but I've been here for only two years and I haven't heard of any bullying. I'm just talking personally. Student 2005*

This perception is reinforced by one parent who is also employed as an assistant teacher at Waterview High, and that when it is detected it is comprehensively dealt with.

*We always make sure that the girls don't get bullied; the boys that get bullied don't get bullied and if they do that they get the chance to speak up and tell us and not be afraid to do that. You still get your occasional kid that doesn't, but eventually they see the pattern happening and then they'll go well you're safe because you have our programs that introduce you to the fact that if you're being bullied you speak up and see how the procedure is. So then they get an understanding that it's okay to do that. So I think we're pretty much a solid and safe school and a tolerant one, of each other's cultures. Parent 2005*

Students expressed very intolerant attitudes towards bullies and very supportive attitudes towards those of their peers who are occasionally victims of bullying. The following reveals a high degree of willingness among some students to directly intervene to support other students.

*Just in everything. If you see someone being picked on from outside you'd go up and say 'are you alright?' or 'what happened?' sort of thing. And there's peer counsellors as well, and that's why if you don't feel comfortable talking to a teacher you just go to a student if you don't want to tell the teacher. Yeah if someone does get picked on and you see them getting picked on, I would go up and say 'stop'. And they will, it's not as if they're going to start with you as well.*

*If someone is being picked on and they need any help, we don't just go to the teachers and tell them about it, we talk to the person and get to know them and talk about their problem. We're not doing anything but we're helping them to do something. It's not like we're doing anything. We just have to get them on their way. Students 2005*

Further, observations by a parent indicated that when a student with disabilities was bullied she was supported by her peers from her unit.

*She's a student that most of the time that ... the only way I found out that she's been bullied is when one of her friends will come and tell me; she doesn't like to get other people into trouble. Parent 2005*

Nevertheless leading teachers are aware that the issue is still one that needs to be addressed.

*Yeah I guess there is. There's no doubt from the school's point of view, that in terms of tackling the bullying problem, we're much better at it now than what we were compared to the MindMatters stuff, but from my point of view and from the school's point of view, it's also important to bear in mind that we've not entirely solved the issue. We think it's an issue and we actually at the moment think we need to revisit it. Staff 2005*

### **Greater cohesion in home groups**

One home group teacher reported that when she used the ideas she had learned from utilising the 'Resilience' resources, she had been effective in creating a greater level of cohesion among her home group, especially when new students were introduced into the group.

*I think they (the resources) just do that to be honest. I really do. I don't know that I'd want to do the whole thing, but I certainly think there were parts of it that were really good, and particularly when you try - and depending on the nature of your home group - I know that some of the icebreaker activities and those kind of communications stuff were terrific, particularly if you have a large influx of new students for whatever reason, which I have had this year, then I can see the value. Because I've had to work at trying to get some kind of bond forming within there and that whole we are a team kind of aspect, and I thought it had some fantastic stuff. Staff 2005*

## 11 Key Learnings from this school

*In schools that have well structured pastoral care systems in place, including a designated timetable for pastoral care periods, MindMatters curriculum resources can be easily adopted in a comprehensive way.*

*Thorough preparation of the resources that teachers need for using MindMatters curriculum units, enhances the teachers' (and students') experience of the MindMatters lessons.*

*Comprehensive use of the 'Bullying and Harassment' modules in integrated (year 7 to 10) home group periods, can lead to much increased awareness of bullying behaviour, increased awareness of appropriate personal responses, increased awareness of and use of school policies and procedures.*

*Changes in school planning and leadership structures can be disruptive to ongoing commitment to programs such as MindMatters.*

*Even without formal leadership and planning for continuous adoption of MindMatters, some teachers adopt a personal ownership of and commitment to MindMatters and continue to utilise curriculum resources in their teaching.*

*Use of MindMatters curriculum resources in a vertical Home group structure has the disadvantage that it cannot be easily repeated each year as older students complain of repetition. This can impede continuous uptake of MindMatters.*

*When teachers are organised into small teams, they can benefit from discussing with each other ways of utilising MindMatters curriculum resources.*

*Once teachers experience a well supported, structured use of MindMatters resources (in this case on 'Bullying' and 'Resilience'), many will continue to utilise these resources in an ongoing yet ad hoc way once formal leadership ceases.*

*Personal access to a complete MindMatters kit enables home group teachers to incorporate curriculum ideas opportunistically as the need within their home group.*