

**MindMatters National Survey of Health and Well-being Promotion Policies and Practices in Secondary Schools.**

**John Ainley, Graeme Withers, Catherine Underwood, Tracey Frigo. Australian Council for Educational Research**

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The report presents findings of the dissemination and use of Mind Matters and associated policies in schools across Australia. The study also produced information on school knowledge about and evidence of implementation of *MindMatters* as well as general information on the general area of health and well being.

The national survey determined that *MindMatters* is used in some way in two thirds of the secondary school. *MindMatters* was a key resource in one fifth of all the schools surveyed and in one half of schools it is used a resource amongst others. For approximately one in four secondary schools there is little or minimal use of *MindMatters*. However, *MindMatters* is a key resource for just under one secondary school in five, with some of these schools indicating that *MindMatters* has had an important positive impact on the way they work to enhance student mental health and well-being. Awareness of MindMatters is high with fewer than five per cent of schools are not aware of *MindMatters* at all. Wider implementation of MindMatters will depend on moving schools that are currently using it as an ancillary resource to using it more widely as a key resource. *MindMatters* is more extensively used in government schools than in independent schools, being a key resource in one quarter of the government secondary schools in Australia. *MindMatters* is more extensively used in South Australia and Victoria than in other States. The implementation of *MindMatters* is not associated with geographic location or the socioeconomic status of the school. Only a small number

of the schools surveyed had had contact or information on Families Matter at this stage of that project.

The evaluators highlighted the general commitment by schools to health and well being supported by a range of state health and well being policies. Health promotion is an accepted part of the way that schools perceive their role. Half of the secondary schools indicated that the promotion of student mental health and well-being has been and is an integral part of the school ethos and environment and a further third said that this was “usually” the case. *MindMatters* has had a significant impact on school ethos and culture. The view that mental health and well-being was an integral part of the school ethos and culture was greater in schools that used *MindMatters* as a key resource than in other schools. Two thirds of these schools indicated that student mental health and well-being was “always” an integral part of the school ethos and environment. The adoption of a whole-school approach was stronger in *MindMatters* schools than in other schools. Schools that used *MindMatters* as a key resource reported that it influenced the development of policies and programs and resulted in greater effectiveness of anti-bullying programmes and programmes that foster resilience. The script survey highlighted the success in health and well being approaches was related to the linkages between mainstream curriculum and the whole school. Rural and remote schools were more likely to report success and satisfaction. Schools commented that the general provision for health and well being has to compete against academic requirements and that there were tensions for schools in the use of resources across their social and their academic roles

The school based respondents saw the challenges for compulsory and post compulsory students as different – the challenges for compulsory students were related to family and parenting issues (59%) and bullying and harassment (25%) while the post compulsory student issues were perceived as more likely to be about life balance and drugs, alcohol and depression (26%).

Students were reported as having influenced school developments significantly in more than one third of the schools that had introduced changes in health and wellbeing and in a

further half of the schools, respondents reported students indirectly influenced the changes they had made.

Schools overall considered that they had effective approaches to health and well being, with 75% having made changes in their provision for students well being in the previous 18 months. There was evidence that mental health has been established as a key concern for secondary schools, but major barriers were still reported including the expectation that they fulfil both instructional and social development roles.

The surveys were intended to provide information that could be generalised to the population of Australian secondary schools. Two survey forms were used that covered the same content and which were conducted in parallel using structured samples. One provided for extended responses in a script format (70 respondents) and the other provided for online responses to pre-coded response categories with a few opportunities for comment (197 respondents). The use of the two surveys gained the required information from the required range of schools. The respondents were school based and both surveys provided consistent descriptions of the use of MindMatters in schools.