

National roll out of KidsMatter: A two-stage process

Stage 1

KidsMatter began in late 2006 with a national two year trial involving 101 primary schools. Participating schools come from all States and Territories, from Government, Catholic and Independent school sectors, and from both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. Project officers have been employed in each state and territory to assist schools design and implement their plans to improve student mental health and well-being. This trial will be comprehensively evaluated with parents, school staff and students asked to provide their views as to the success of the KidsMatter Initiative and how it can be improved or consolidated.

Stage 2

Following this initial trial, all primary schools in Australia will be offered the opportunity to access professional development as well as the resources and materials developed under the KidsMatter initiative to assist their efforts to improve student mental health and well-being.



To find out more

The KidsMatter website (kidsmatter.edu.au) will be established in 2007 to support those participating in the initial trial and to provide project updates for those wishing to find out more about the initiative. Additional information can also be obtained by contacting the following:

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KidsMatter is the Australian national primary school mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention initiative



Australian Government
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The Australian Psychological Society Ltd



Australian Rotary Health Research Fund



Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council

Schools recognise the importance of good mental health

Schools and teachers recognise the importance of good mental health for their students. Students who are mentally healthy learn better and have better relationships with their teachers, family members and peers. Good mental health makes it easier for students to negotiate the transition into adolescence and then adulthood, improving their chances of achieving long-term education and career goals as well as a better quality of life. The importance given by education to student mental health and well-being can be seen in the National Safe Schools Framework.

KidsMatter: A national mental health initiative for primary schools

KidsMatter is a national mental health initiative specifically developed for Australian primary schools by the Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council, the Australian Psychological Society, the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, and *beyondblue: the national depression initiative* and is supported by the Australian Rotary Health Research Fund.

The KidsMatter Initiative has three major aims:

- Improve the mental health and well-being of primary school students
- Reduce mental health problems among students (e.g., anxiety, depression and behavioural problems)
- Achieve greater support for those students at risk of or experiencing mental health problems.

With KidsMatter, schools develop and implement comprehensive plans for each of the four areas that protect students from developing mental health problems, which are:

1. A positive school community

Schools identify how they can enhance their school climate to support student mental health and well-being, giving particular emphasis to ensuring that students, staff and parents feel 'connected' to each other and the broader school community.

2. Social and emotional skills for students

Students receive social and emotional curriculum using evidence-based programs to improve their self-awareness, social-awareness, self-management, relationship skills and their capacity for responsible decision-making.

3. Parenting education and support

Parents and families receive opportunities to access information on child development and parenting as well as engage with other parents and families.

4. Early intervention for students at risk or experiencing mental health difficulties

School staff and parents receive information on strategies to support and assist children at risk of or experiencing mental health problems. This includes information on detecting signs of mental health difficulties in young children, information on local service providers, and how to access evidence-based programs and interventions.

