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Demand for chaplains remains high

Chaplaincy figures released today by the Minister for School Education, Peter Garrett, show while demand for both chaplaincy and student welfare services is high, most government schools continue to want Chaplains.

The figures show 89 per cent of schools requested to continue receiving Chaplaincy services, while eight per cent requested secular youth workers and three per cent were undecided.

Dr Evonne Paddison, ACCESS ministries chief executive officer, said only four out of 295 of the Victorian schools to which ACCESS ministries provided Chaplains last year had changed to a secular youth worker service.

"Chaplaincy is a great service to schools and is something Christians, with their belief in helping people in need, do very well," Dr Paddison said.

"Most schools would know that Christians providing Chaplaincy services is no different to Christians providing welfare services like the Brotherhood of St Laurence or the Salvation Army, or hospital services like the Order of the Sisters of Mercy who set up one of Australia's first hospitals."

ACCESS ministries said demand for new Chaplains from schools applying for the new funding was also extremely high, with more than 200 schools contacting ACCESS ministries after the federal government announced additional funding last year.

"First and foremost schools want a high quality service provider, which means experience, highly qualified people, and having sophisticated systems and processes in place to provide a highly professional service," Dr Paddison said.

"ACCESS ministries has been providing Chaplaincy since the 1950s, has a reputation for a high quality service, and schools continue to refer us to their peers. We expect the strong demand to continue in the future.

Chaplains serve the school community in a 'first-response capacity', by providing general support and care services, and by referring people in need to other support specialists.

They are an important part of a many-pronged approach to dealing with personal and community issues."

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