



**THE HON JULIA GILLARD MP
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER**

Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

24 MAR 2010

Mrs Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mrs Irwin

Thank you for your letter of 11 February 2010, concerning two recently submitted petitions about ongoing funding for the National School Chaplaincy Program. I apologise for the delay in responding.

As advised in my recent correspondence sent to you in your capacity as Chair of the Standing Committee on Petitions, I regularly receive positive feedback from schools, parents and students about the value of the National School Chaplaincy Program (NSCP). I also advised that 98 per cent of school principals recently surveyed by the National School Chaplaincy Association about the effectiveness of chaplaincy in government schools, support having a school chaplain.

As you are aware, an additional \$42.8 million was recently announced to extend the program for all participating schools until December 2011. The extension of the NSCP will ensure that those schools funded under the program will be able to continue to provide valuable support in the provision of student wellbeing services.

The consultation process with stakeholders, which I highlighted in my previous correspondence, is about to commence. These consultations will consider options for possible future pastoral care initiatives following the end of the program in December 2011. The process will involve a range of stakeholders including state education departments, major service providers, representatives of independent and faith-based school systems, peak representative bodies for parent and community organisations, principals and other relevant interest groups.

The Australian Government is determined to ensure schools are supported in providing for the wellbeing of their students and the NSCP has been effective in achieving this. This program demonstrates the Government's commitment to working with school communities, parents and other stakeholders to support wellbeing and positive development for all Australian school children.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Julia Gillard
Minister for Education