

## Executive summary

# Focus area 3: Education Settings



The Strategy emphasises the important role that educational settings play in promoting mental health and wellbeing in children, and discusses the additional supports that may be required for educators to continue to build positive wellbeing cultures.

### Objective 3.1 A wellbeing culture

- There is currently wide variation between schools and early childhood learning services in the culture around mental health.
- Some education settings have policies and procedures that contribute to stigma.
- Introducing dedicated wellbeing staff and proactively promoting resources and support in education settings will assist educators to build positive wellbeing cultures.
- Wellbeing programs should be included in early childhood curriculums and offered through after school and school holiday activities.

### Objective 3.2 Targeted responses

- All early childhood learning services and schools should have a wellbeing plan in place, tailored to meet the needs of their students.

### Priority actions

Ensure educators are well-equipped to support child mental health and wellbeing by:

- Requiring all early childhood learning services and primary schools to have a comprehensive wellbeing plan for their students (action 3.2.a)
- Providing funding to implement quality improvement activities and delivery of evidence-based programs targeting needs identified in wellbeing plans (action 3.2.b, 3.2.c)
- Having a designated wellbeing staff member in all early childhood learning services and primary schools who is responsible for planning and co-ordinating wellbeing activities, including the development of wellbeing plans (action 3.1.b, 3.1.c).

- Additional guidance is required to enable educators to discuss mental health concerns with parents and carers.
- Proactive outreach procedures should be developed to respond to student disengagement, using trauma informed approaches.

### Objective 3.3 Well-equipped educators

- Professional training and clear guidelines and processes should be developed for educators to follow when they believe a child or family is struggling.
- Dedicated wellbeing staff should establish and maintain strong relationships with local service providers such as paediatricians and psychologists, to promote collaborative care.
- Educators should be supported to undertake additional learning on mental health, including with paid protected time for participation.
- All educators should have access to avenues for support for their own mental health and wellbeing.



*One of the biggest challenges that schools are facing is the mental health of children... there is no national model of school counselling services... it's a murky water in terms of expectations, what really is the school's role in providing mental health support.*

Education representative

*[The school] does lots of discussion around mental health to the point where it's quite ok for the girls to talk about it amongst their friends... when we were at school it would have been the ultimate shame to say 'I'm seeing a counsellor.'*

Parent/carer of a child with mental illness

