

School, Student and Family Program Annual Review

2022





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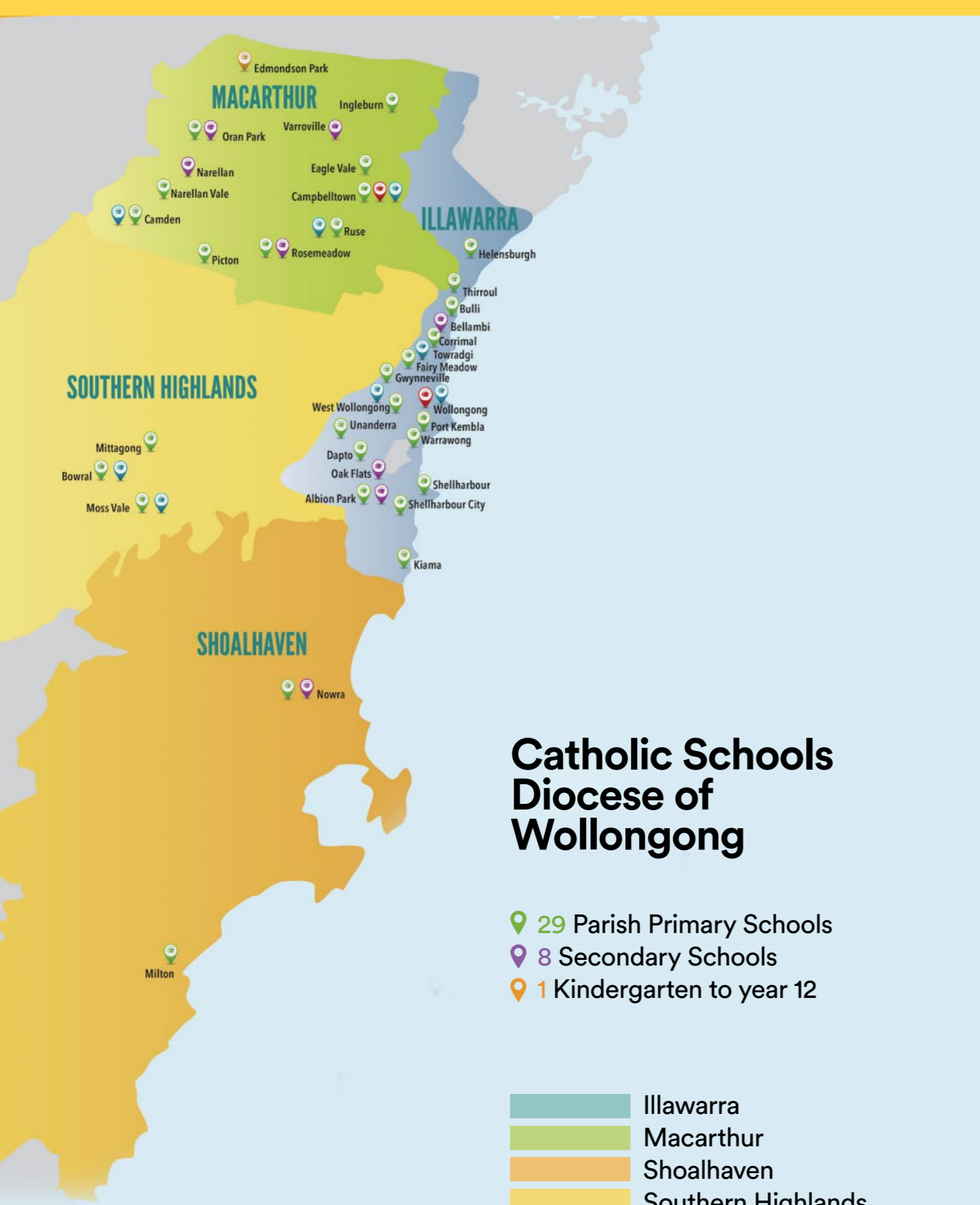
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20

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26

FEEDBACK



Catholic Schools Diocese of Wollongong

- 📍 29 Parish Primary Schools
- 📍 8 Secondary Schools
- 📍 1 Kindergarten to year 12



Mission

Inspired by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we seek to bring joy to those we serve by enabling growth, healing, and hope. By delivering effective and high quality social services, CatholicCare helps to build the social and emotional wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.

Vision

For inclusive, thriving communities where the human dignity of all is respected and valued.

Values

- **Dignity:** Everyone is worthy of respect
- **Integrity:** Always do the right thing
- **Compassion:** Be empathic and responsive
- **Equity:** Some people need extra support

Foreword.

The School, Student, and Family Program (SSFP) at CatholicCare is pleased to present our Annual Report for 2022 and funding submission for 2023. CatholicCare Wollongong welcomes the opportunity to continue to work in partnership with Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong (CEDoW) in the delivery of the highest standard of service to students and their families.

The interruptions of 2021, following significant periods of lockdown and remote learning, offered a timely opportunity for School, Student and Family Program (SSFP) to focus on refining and strengthening our service delivery in schools to meet the changing needs for students returning to school in 2022. Given all the challenges inflicted by the pandemic, SSFP remains committed to delivering high quality counselling, psychoeducation, behavioural, social, and emotional supports to students across the thirty-eight school communities.

During the past 12 months, our agenda for continual improvement has included:

- The development of a recruitment and retention plan to help build a stronger workforce.
- Strengthening and supporting the clinical practice of our staff with regular supervision, professional development, etc. Ensuring new and inexperienced staff receive a high-quality induction and intensive support as they become familiar with the role.

- Ensuring high levels of accountability through file audits, case reviews, regular supervision, monitoring of outputs and reporting.
- Improved client data collection on the presenting needs of students accessing school counselling service.
- Introduction of the Children & Youth Resilience Measure - Revised (CYRM-R), an outcome tool to appraise the impact and effectiveness of our interventions and services.
- Improved reporting capabilities to enable us to analyse and share valuable information about the mental health and wellbeing of students with internal and external stakeholders.
- Presenting our Resilience and Connection/Belonging Framework, along with our outcome data at Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) National Conference in Cairns.
- Development of an early intervention resilience program to promote community connectedness and wellbeing for students transitioning to kindergarten. The Kindy Kids Connect Program was presented at Family & Relationship Services (FRSA) National Conference in Adelaide.
- On-going collaboration with key stakeholders to support and promote the wellbeing and safety of high risk and/or vulnerable children. This has involved ongoing communication and consultation with the CEDoW Child Protection team, presentations to principals, regular meetings, and collaborations with the School Improvement team.

- Responding to critical incidents and requests for additional support in schools. In 2022, the program provided support to 52 students and ongoing follow up in schools in response to 8 separate critical incidents across the Diocese.

The wellbeing and mental health of all students is a shared responsibility, we endeavour to establish a strong collaborative relationship with Catholic Education Office staff, school communities, students and families has enabled us to work together to strengthen the support provided in schools.

On behalf of the School, Student and Family Program at CatholicCare, we would like to sincerely thank the Catholic Education Office for your continued support of the SSFP program in the Diocese of Wollongong.

SSFP LEADERSHIP TEAM

- Roseanne Plunkett (*Executive Manager Family Services*)
- Tina Acevska (*Manager*)
- Mathew Berry (*Team Leader*)
- Natalie Gill (*Team Leader*)
- Leah Varley (*Clinical Project Lead*)

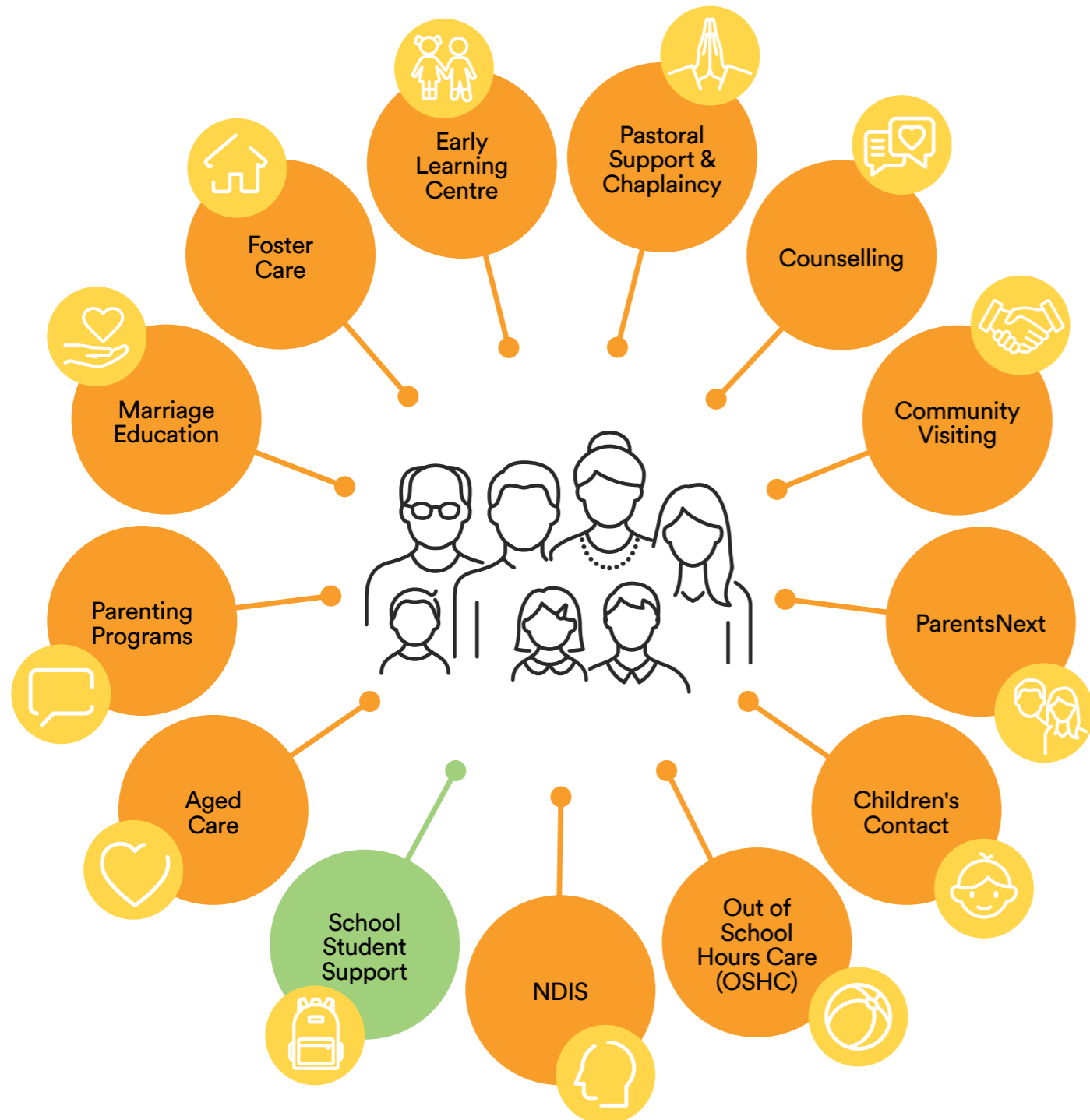


Our Services.

CatholicCare is the social services agency of the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong, covering the Illawarra, Shoalhaven, Macarthur and Southern Highlands Regions. We support people to establish and build positive

relationships and connected lives. Our aim is to help people through difficult times to help them achieve self-reliance and realise their full potential. We also advocate for social equality and prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable.

CatholicCare is a local not-for-profit organisation committed to helping those in need regardless of religious beliefs, background or circumstances.



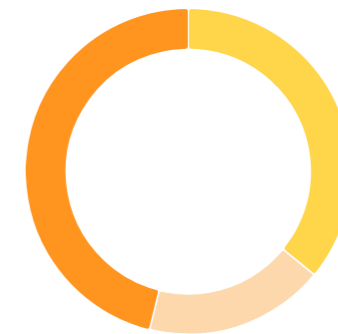
Our Program, Our People.

The School, Student and Family Program (SSFP) at CatholicCare work collaboratively alongside school staff and CEDoW to ensure students have access to a range of support systems and services, both internally and externally. SSFP provides a range of services across 38 schools in the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong:

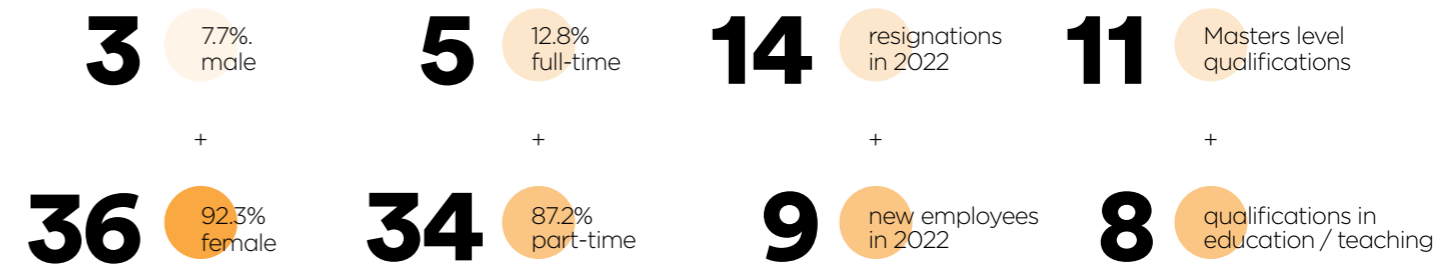
- Short term/ Brief Counselling
- Case Management
- Client Consultation
- Mental Health Risk Assessments
- Child protection /mandatory reporting
- Support and advocacy
- Critical Incident Response
- Psychoeducation for school staff and parents
- Wellbeing programs for students

Professional Qualifications of Current Staff

- 46.15% - Social Workers
- 35.89% - Psychotherapist and Counsellors
- 17.94% Psychologists/Provisional Psychologists



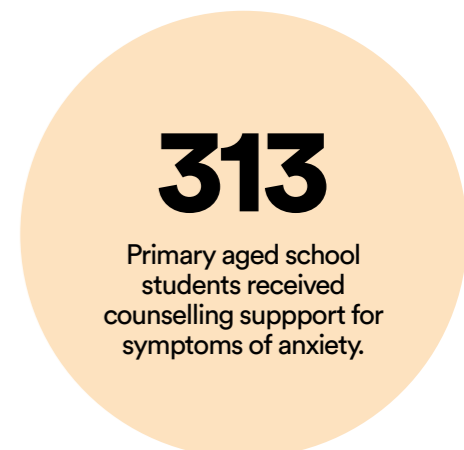
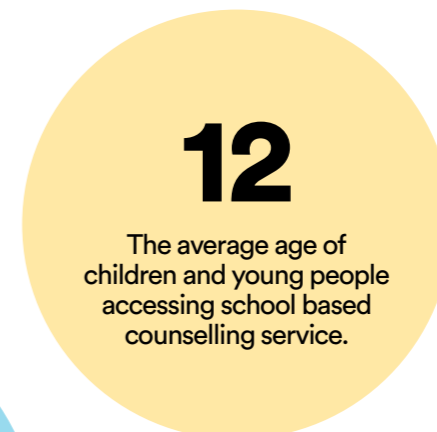
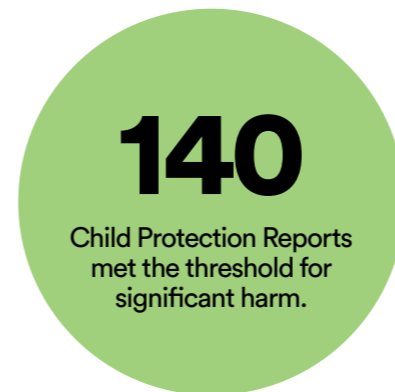
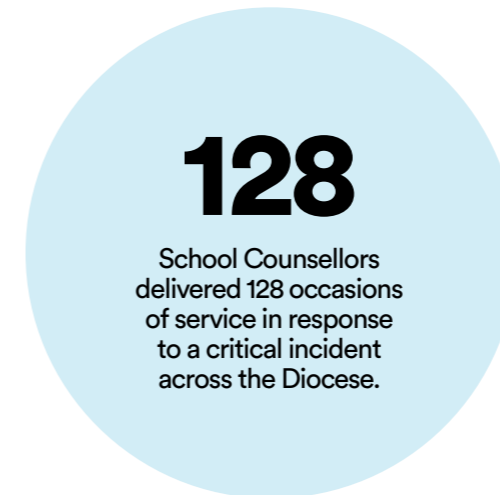
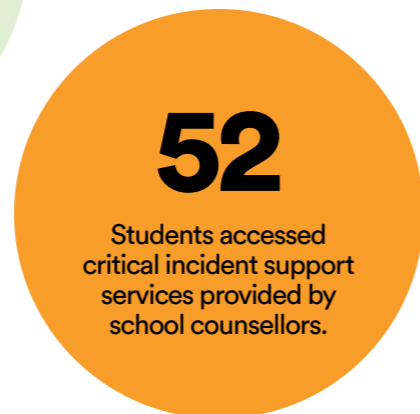
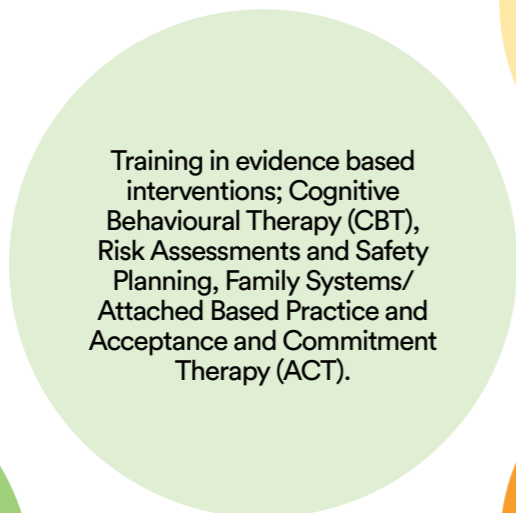
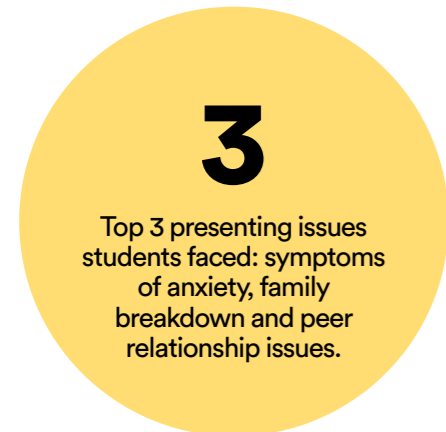
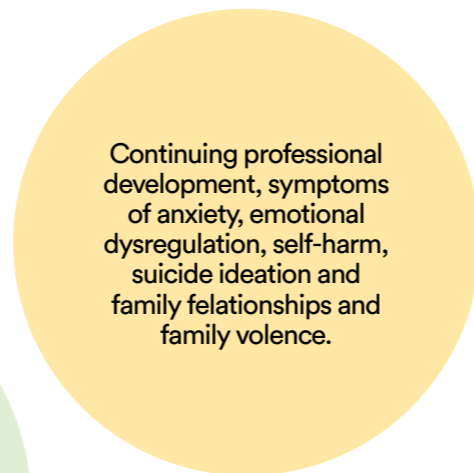
Our People as at October 2022



Our Impact.

SSFP is committed to providing and promoting wellbeing services to all students across the Diocese.

*All data is for the period Term 1 - 3 2022



Resilience Framework.

Childhood and adolescence are a crucial period of development. Some children and young people are vulnerable due to exposure to risk factors and/or a lack of protective factors. These vulnerable children and young people, if unsupported, are at risk of poorer outcomes in relation to their identity, social, emotional, or educational attainment, job prospects, mental health, and wellbeing.

SSFP has been collecting and reporting on the wellbeing and mental health of students for over a decade. The data captured has helped us to identify vulnerable/at risk students, track trends and provide insight into the issues affecting children and young people. The wellbeing of children and young people is complex. How a child or young person responds or recovers (resilience) from stressful experiences is an essential component of their ongoing mental health and wellbeing.

School counsellors as practitioners play an essential role in supporting and promoting the wellbeing of students, however, how do we know how much of a difference we are making? Are children and young people better off because of our efforts or the services we have delivered? Providing evidence on the impact on students accessing our services required that we had a clear framework for planning and evaluating our program, services, and interventions.

In 2021, the SSFP used a Program Logic Theory of Change Model to clearly articulate our program objective, goal, and desired outcomes.

In SSFP our objective is to deliver activities that cultivate resilience and a sense of belonging in children and young people.

- Good resilience skills are the ability to cope or 'bounce back' after encountering difficult situations, challenges, or adversity.
- A sense of belonging is where there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity and can function as a social resource of resilience.

Our goal is that through the service delivered by our school counsellors, students will have/feel:

- A positive sense of sense of belonging/connection with their families, communities, and culture.
- An increased resilience and sense of self-mastery to take care of personal needs for mental, physical, safety and wellbeing.
- Have personal resilience to cope with change and adversity.
- Students have a strong sense of identity and wellbeing (physical, social, emotional, spiritual, and cognitive) within the context of their families and communities.

Whilst the value of using outcome measures is well recognised, however, choosing an appropriate tool to measure change can be daunting. We started by defining our requirements and produced 7 core criteria. Some criteria were more flexible than others, and we found that these requirements assist us to cull our options significantly. A particular challenge early on was defining 'what' we

Good resilience skills are the ability to cope or 'bounce back' after encountering difficult situations, challenges, or adversity.

would be measuring. We wanted to be able to measure student wellbeing, and the variety of factors that contribute to wellbeing including individual skills, as well as environmental factors and overall sense of connection and belonging. In the end we settled on measuring students' resilience but using the more holistic understanding of resilience that exists in the literature today.

Child & Youth Resilience Measure – Revised (CYRM-R).

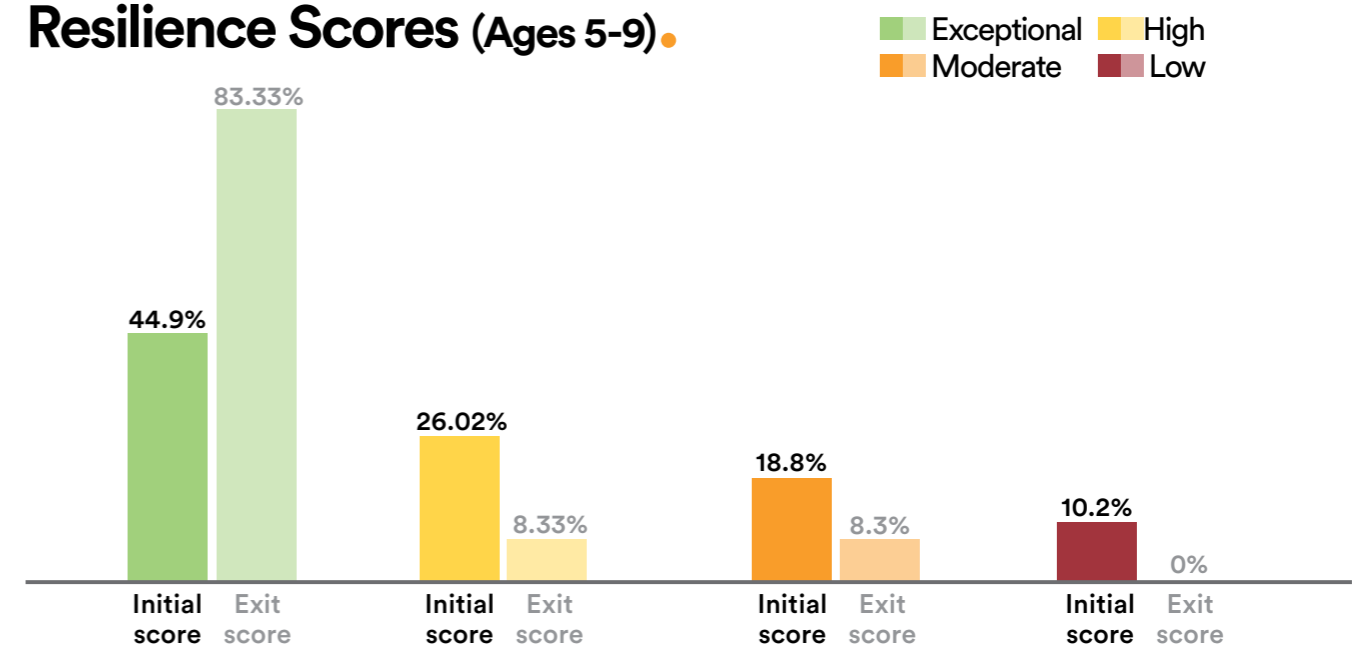
The Child & Youth Resilience Measure Revised (CYRM-R) is an evidence based self-reporting screening tool designed to measure the resources (individual, relational, communal, and cultural) available to individuals that may bolster their resilience. The tool was developed as part of the International Resilience Project in 14

communities around the world and caters to children and young people between the ages of 5 and 18 years old and for persons that know the targeted individual such as parents and teachers. The CYRM-R has been translated into different languages and best of all, it is proven to be culturally appropriate for use with First Nations people.

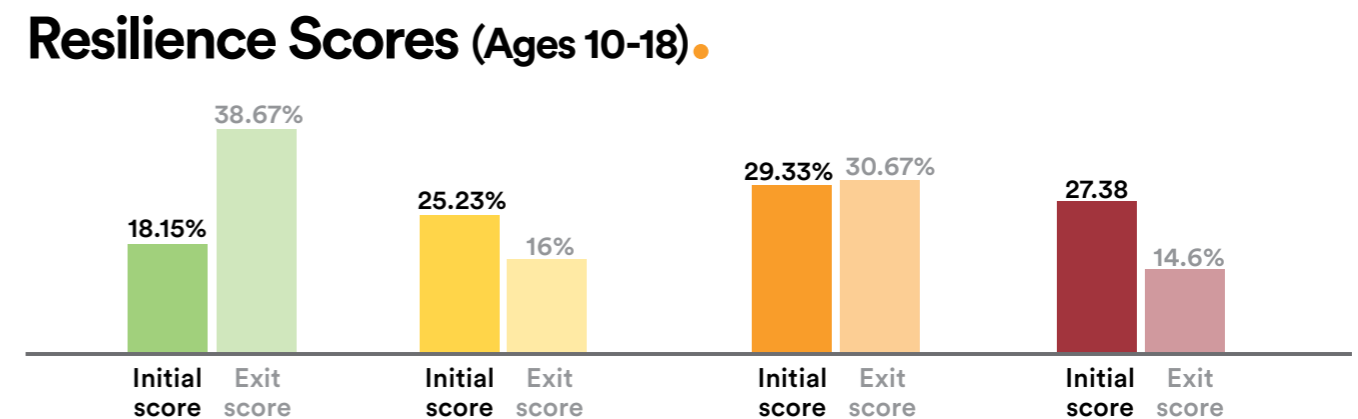
In addition to the overall score of resilience, the CYRM-R can be broken down into 2 subscales:

1. Personal resilience – intrapersonal & interpersonal skills
2. Relational resilience – contextual factors that facilitate a sense of belonging

Resilience Scores (Ages 5-9)



Resilience Scores (Ages 10-18)



Although the CYRM-R is approved for use with children as young as 5 years old, there is limited research in this area therefore data should be interpreted cautiously with younger age brackets. A total of 524 students

across 38 schools have completed the initial CYRM-R. The CYRM-R is most useful for flagging students in the 'Low' scoring range early as being particularly at risk. As you can see from this preliminary data, the number

of students scoring in that 'Low' range is reducing across both age groups post-counselling engagement. Students feel more connected and a greater sense of belonging after engaging with counselling.

SSFP Statistics - Diocese (Terms 1 to 3, 2022).



Female – 57.5%
Male – 40.5%
Other – 2%



12

average age



73

students who identify as **Aboriginal** or **Torres Strait Islander**

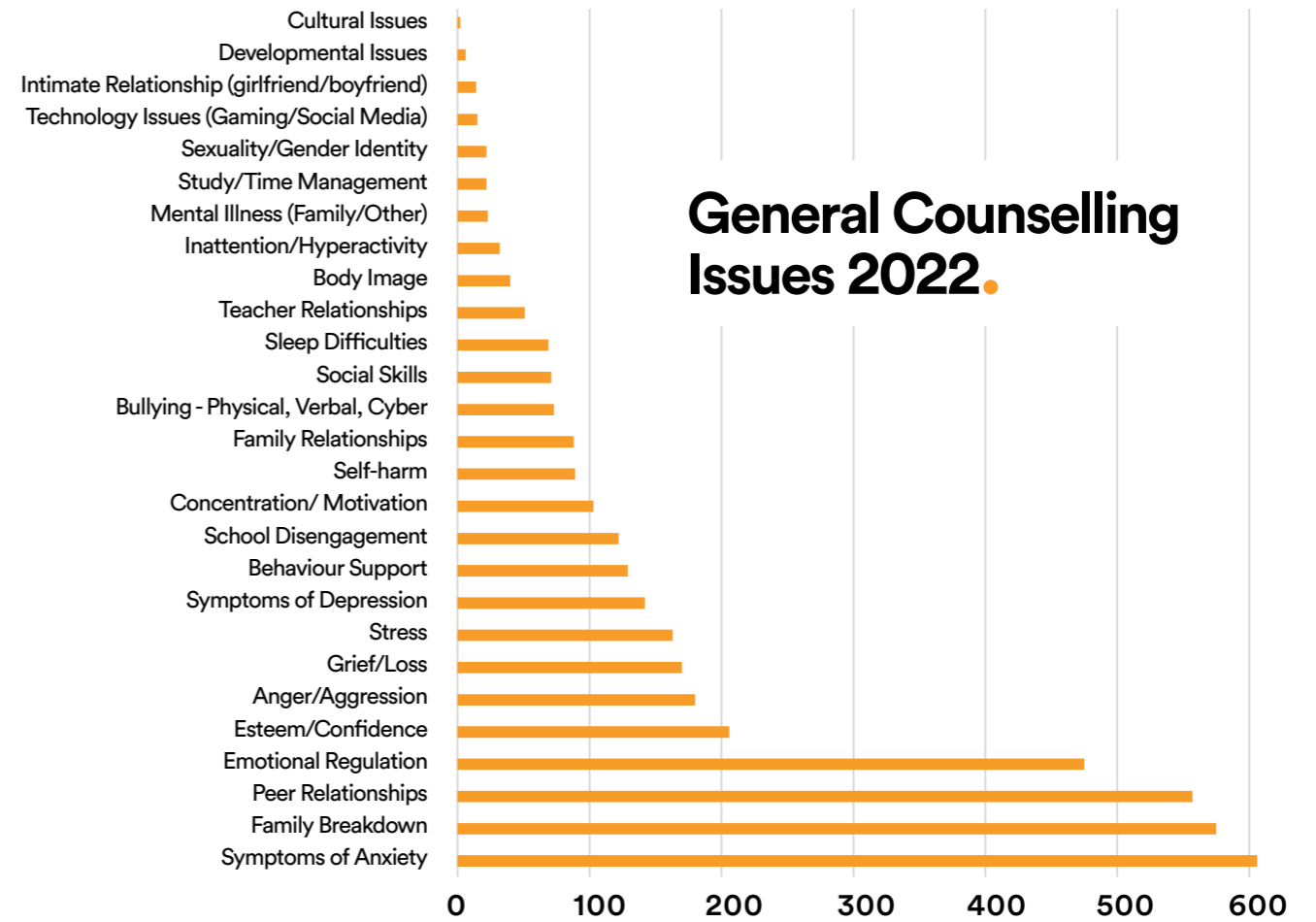


63

students with a **Culturally or Linguistically Diverse Background**



Diocese Student Data.

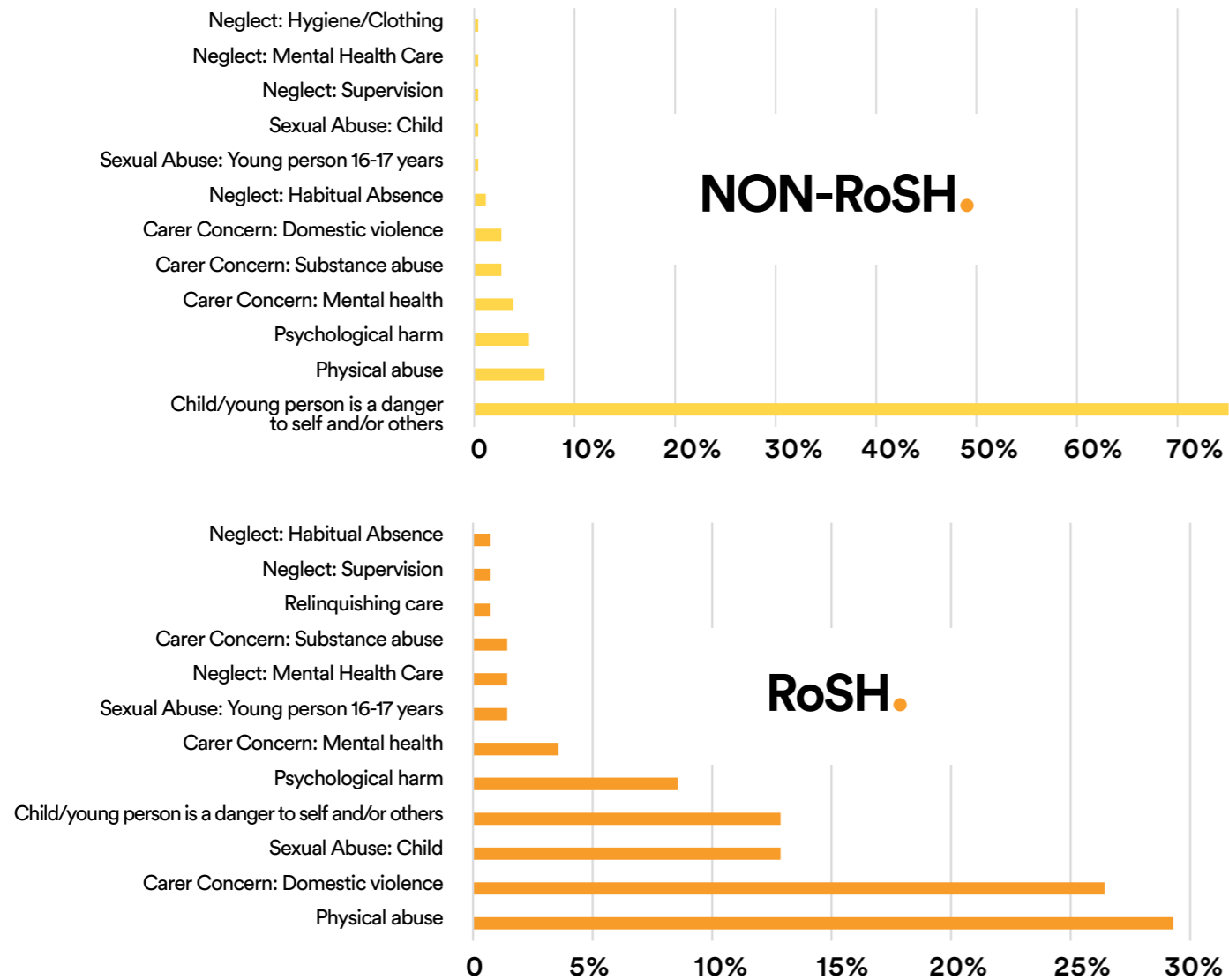


Risk of Significant Harm (RoSH) data.

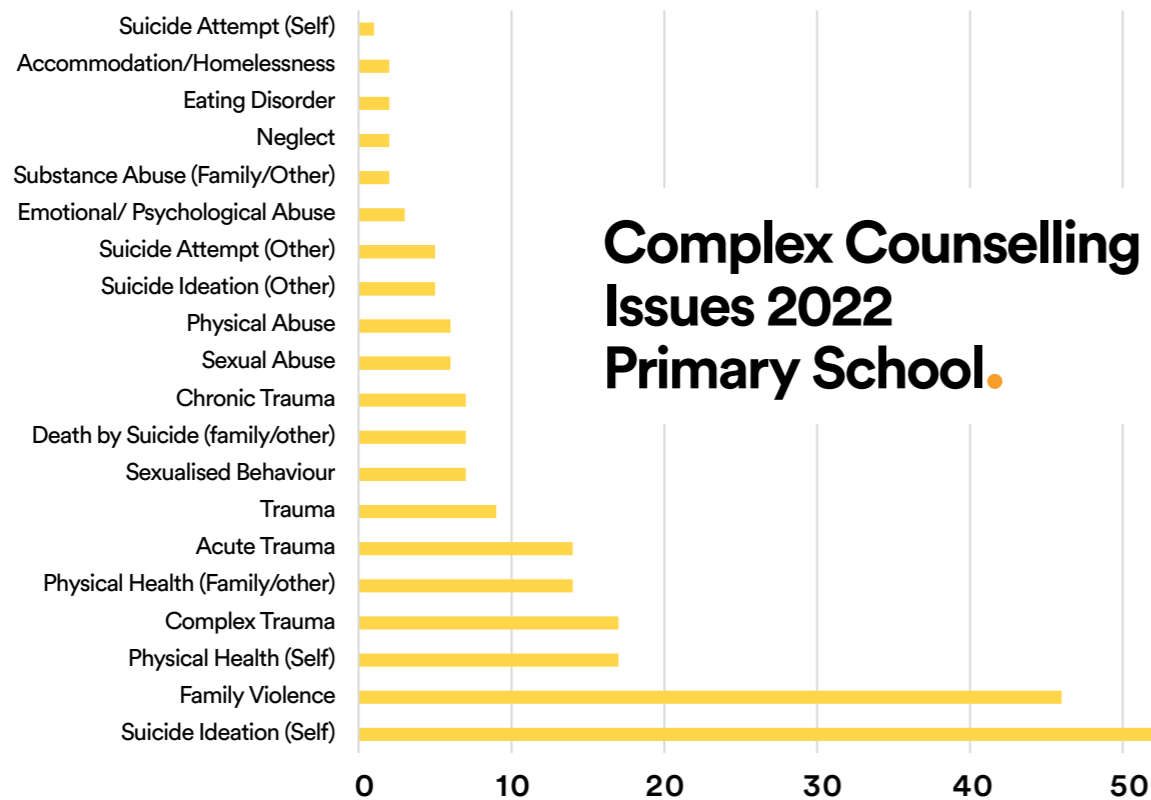
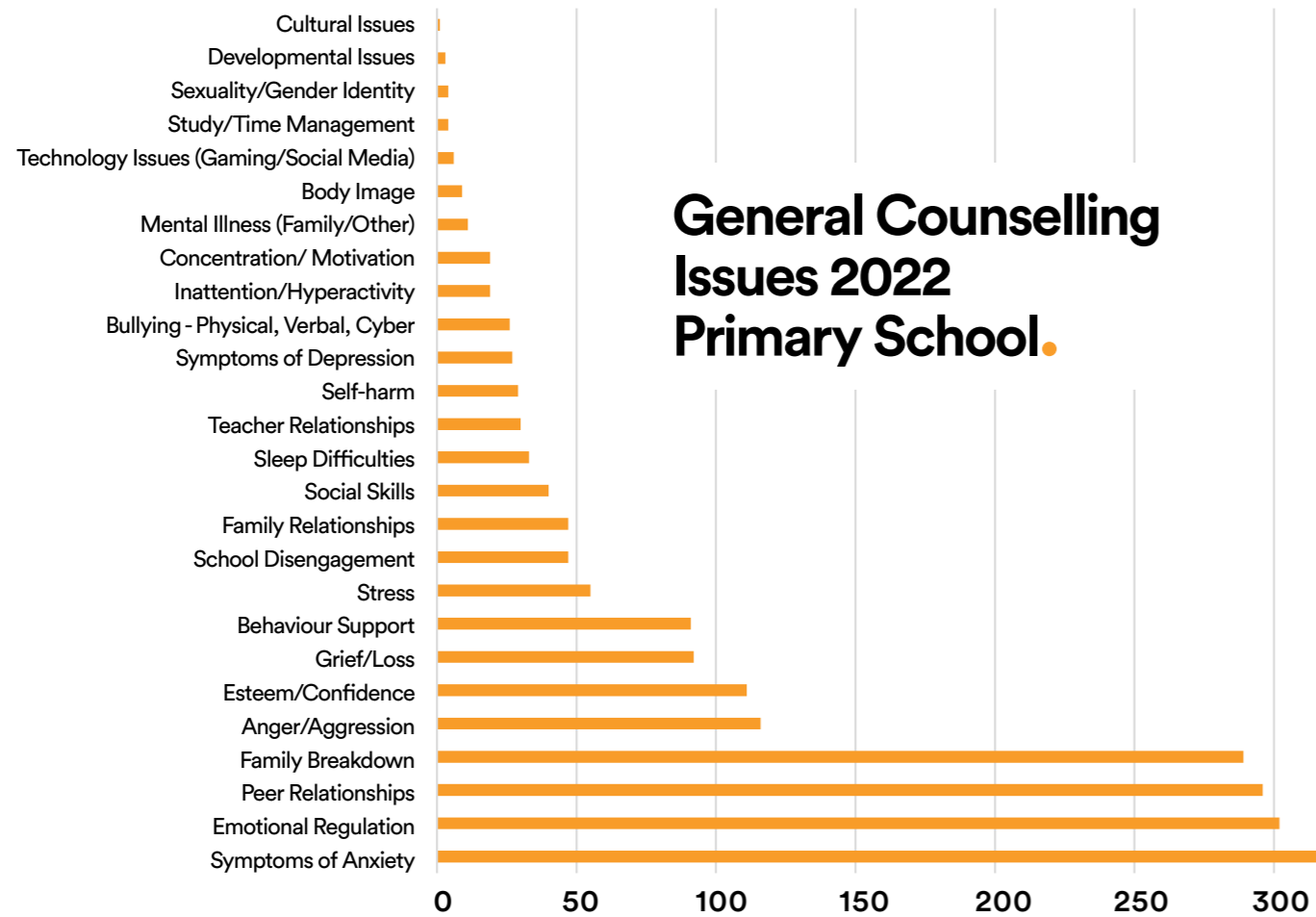
Mandatory Reporting Snapshot for 2022.



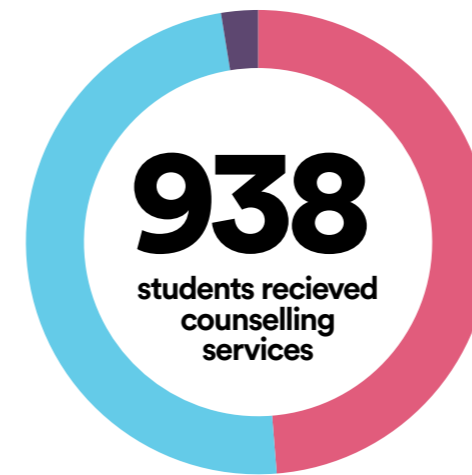
- 140 - Risk of Significant Harm Reports (RoSH)
- 257 - Reports that didn't meet significant harm threshold (NonRoSH)



Primary School Data.



SSFP Statistics - Primary Schools (Terms 1 to 3, 2022).



9.7
average age



38
students who identify as **Aboriginal** or **Torres Strait Islander**



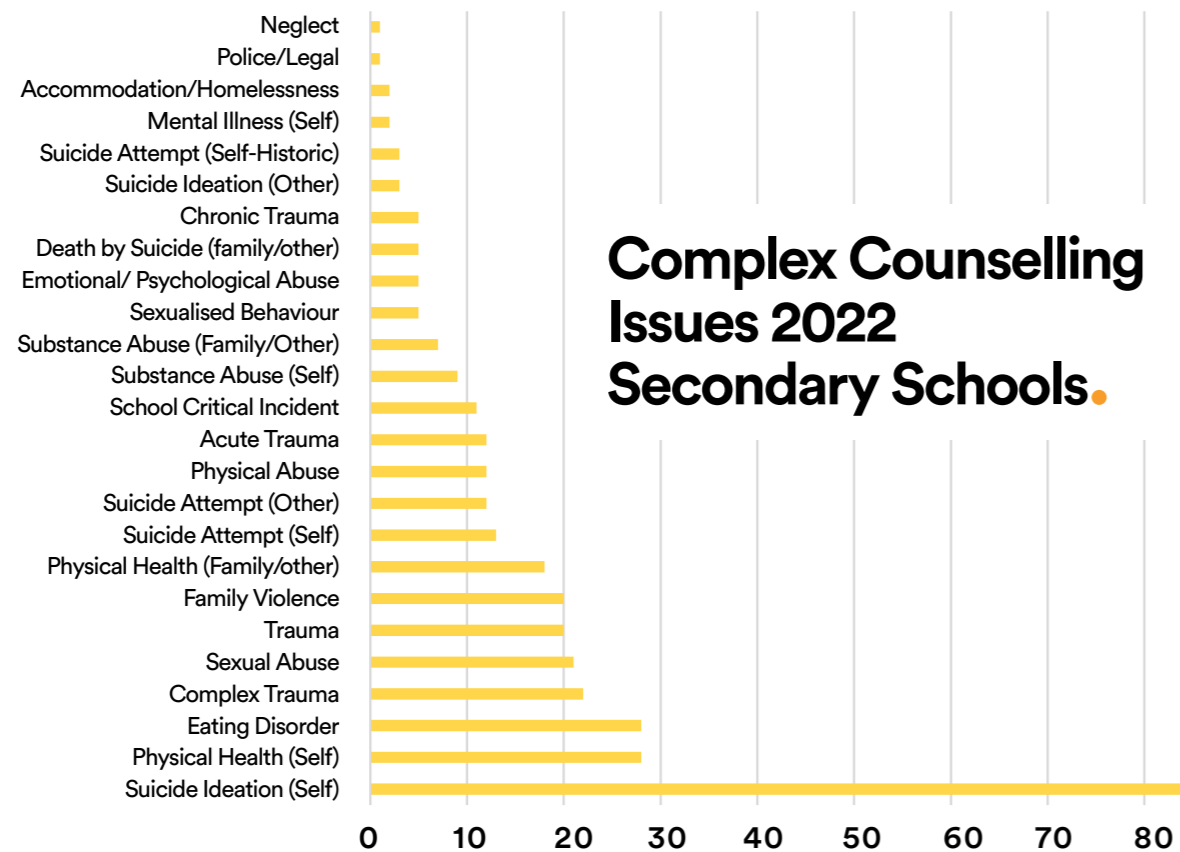
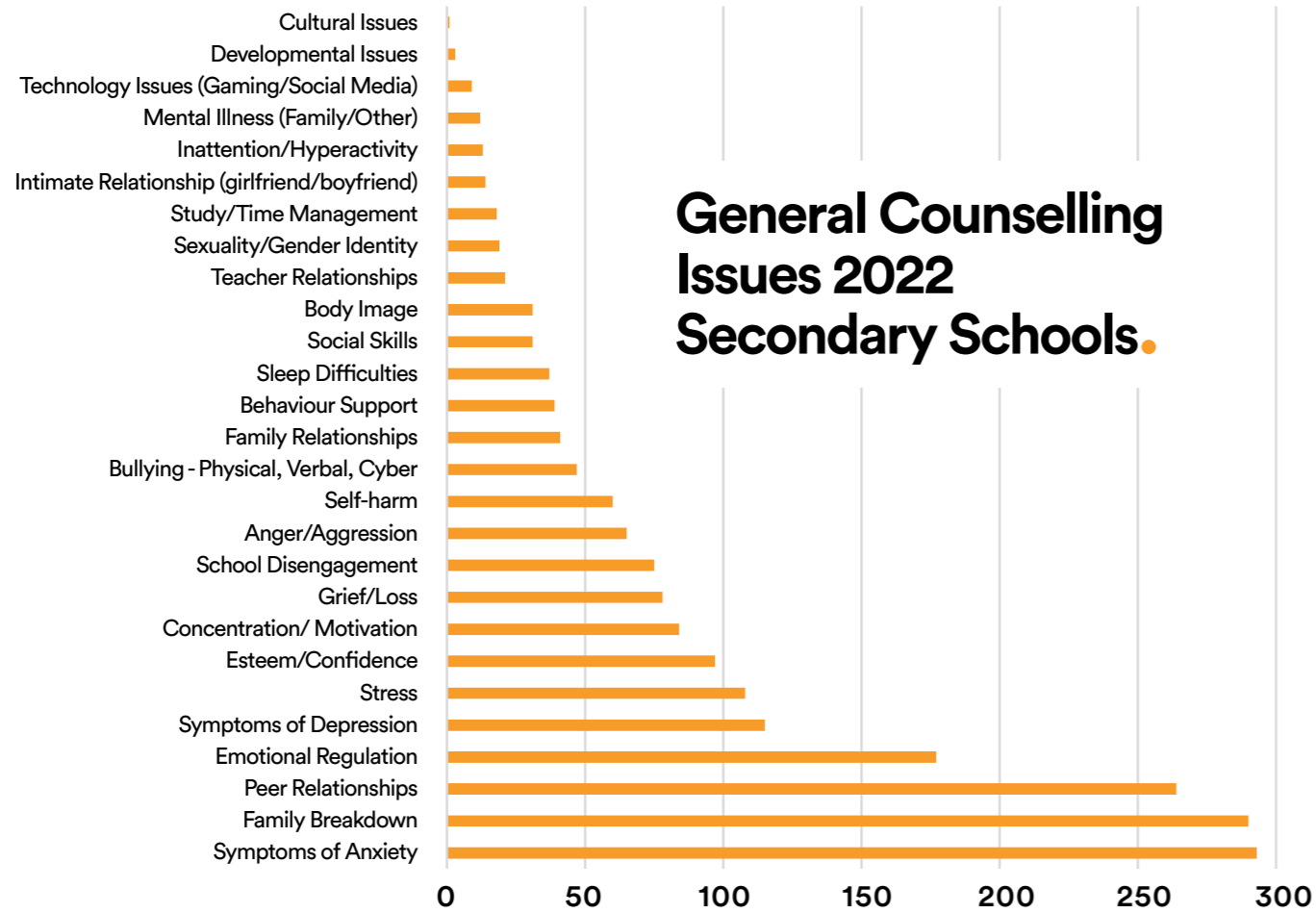
21
students with a **Culturally or Linguistically Diverse Background**

183
reports completed

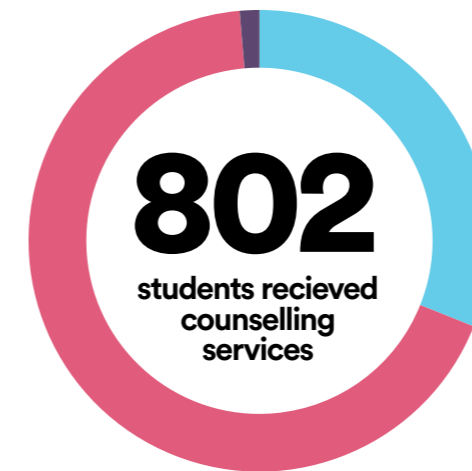
NON-RoSH 111
RoSH 72



Secondary School Data.



SSFP Statistics - Secondary Schools (Terms 1 to 3, 2022).



15.3
average age



35
students who identify as **Aboriginal** or **Torres Strait Islander**



42
students with a **Culturally or Linguistically Diverse Background**

183
reports completed

NON-RoSH 146
RoSH 68



Kindy Kids Connect.

Resilience & Connectedness in Children.

The mental health and wellbeing of children and young people is concerning, and more so than ever with the impact of COVID-19 disruptions. Unfortunately, in Australia, we continue to see an increase in the number of children and young people struggling with anxiety and other mental health and wellbeing concerns in adolescence and beyond.

The SSFP data collection, indicates an increase in students accessing counselling across schools in the Diocese. The most prevalent presenting issues in primary schools are symptoms of anxiety, family relationships, peer regulation, emotional regulation, and self-esteem. In recent years there has also been a significant increase in the number of children in primary school reporting suicide ideation.

In collaboration with CEDoW and school personnel, SSFP saw an opportunity to take a proactive, preventative opportunity to support the wellbeing of all students. Drawing upon our significant clinical experience in working with children, parents and schools and the vast research on resilience, SSFP designed a transition to kindergarten program called Kindy Kids Connect. The program takes a 'wrap around,' early intervention approach, engaging parents, teachers, and children. This initiative aligns with the SSFP Program Logic Theory of Change Framework.

We know that building resilience in early childhood helps children to develop skills to overcome obstacles and reduce anxiety or other stress-related disorders later in life and enables them to overcome

adversity. We also know that a sense of belonging is crucial to our life satisfaction, happiness, mental and physical health and is strongly linked to positive social and emotional outcomes. These are all important protective factors. In 2022, SSFP rolled out our wellbeing program Kindy Kids Connect.

The Kindy Kids Connect Program is a flexible, components-based framework that focuses on building and strengthening resilience and connectedness in children through early school-based intervention. Relying on evidence-based factors that promote resilience such as positive relationships, sense of belonging, social and emotional skills, and a sense of mastery. The program supports teachers and upskills parents to enable children to co-regulate, identify and understand their emotions and have open conversations about safety and help-seeking.

The program has two components (1) classroom modules for students and (2) a series of psychoeducational packs for parents/ carers, educators to reinforce the learning from the classroom modules the children have completed during the week. There are activities parents can do at home with their children to assist in reinforcing these learnings with their families.

The program was piloted across 15 primary schools in the Diocese in 2022. To appraise the impact and effectiveness of the program, we used CYRM-R, an evidence based self-report tool. The tool was selected because it links well to our resilience framework and is culturally appropriate for use with First Nations people and one of the

rare tools that is suitable to use with children 5 years old.

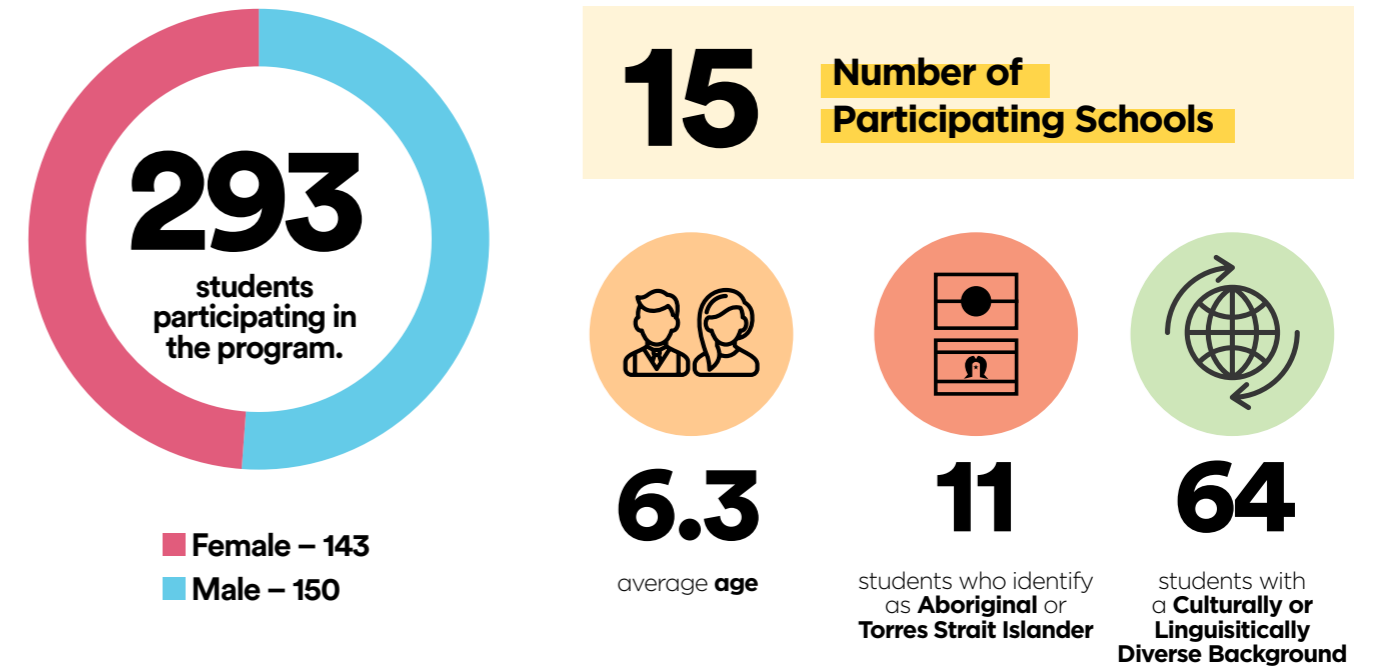
The initial data collected by the CYRM-R needs to be interpreted cautiously because it was our first trial using the CYRM-R with young students (children aged 5 years old and above). We found that young students had difficulty understanding the self-reported questions and would often want to give the 'right' answer rather than a correct account. School counsellors had to adapt by using real life examples to make the questions more child friendly so that young children could then provide a more accurate response to the questions. Since then, we have created a uniform set of examples that all counsellors can use to ensure consistency.

Although approved for use with young children (age 5 years old and above) the researchers for the CYRM-R have not done a lot of research with this young age bracket. The bulk of research is on teenagers. However, overall, the trend in the initial data indicates that there is an overall improvement in scores post-program.

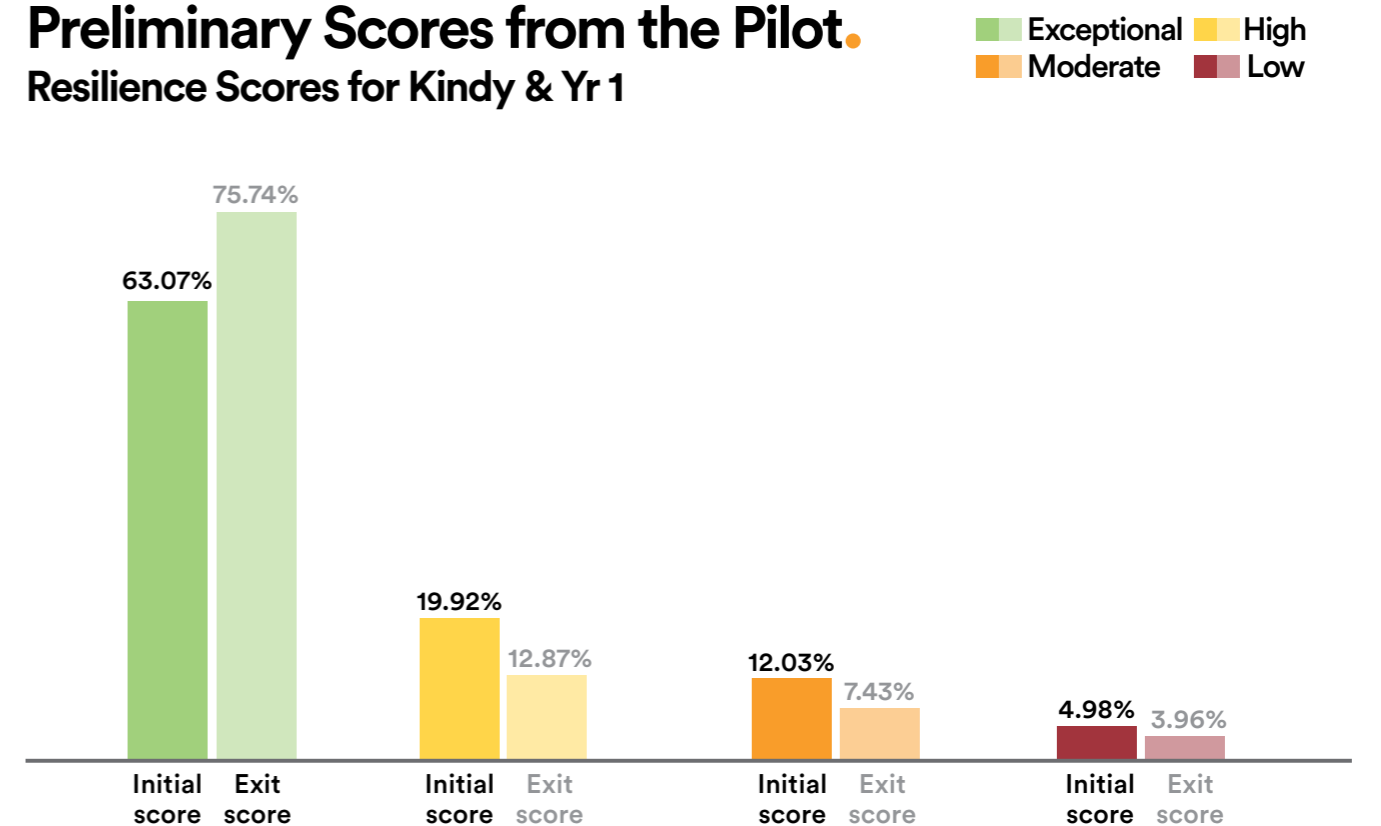
This Program was found to have an additional Early Intervention benefit: Completing the CYRM-R Measure with large groups of children in preparation for the Kindy Kids Connect Program meant that Counsellors were able to identify children that may need additional counselling support early on and refer them into the counselling service.

Kindy Kids Connect.

Demographics.



Preliminary Scores from the Pilot. Resilience Scores for Kindy & Yr 1



Wellbeing Programs.

Terms 1 to 3, 2022.

SSFP uses a range of evidence based strategies and interventions to support student wellbeing. In addition to social and emotional wellbeing programs for students, school counsellors also provide workshops on relevant mental health and wellbeing topics to parents/carers and school personnel. The wellbeing programs can be organised into the following categories:

80

Total number of groups delivered in 2022

Group categories.



Anxiety and Depression



Body Esteem/ Self Esteem



Mental Health Awareness



Social and Behavioural

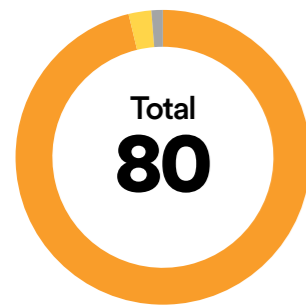


Stress Management



General Programs

Groups.



Total 80

- Students - 77
- Parents/Carers - 2
- Teachers /School Staff - 1

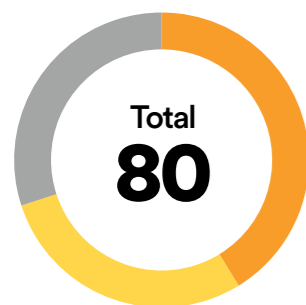
Participation.



Total 2680

- Students - 2617
- Parents/Carers - 33
- Teachers /School Staff - 30

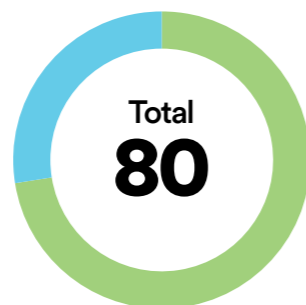
By term.



Total 80

- Term 1 - 33
- Term 2 - 23
- Term 3 - 24

By region.



Total 80

- Macarthur Region - 58
- Illawarra/Shellharbour /Shoalhaven - 22

Wellbeing Programs.

Key Snapshots.

120

year 6 students at St Justin's Catholic Primary School participated in a social skills building program.

90

year 4 students at St Francis Catholic College participated in Mindfulness program. (Over the course of 6 sessions).

30

teaching staff at St John the Evangelist Catholic Primary School upskilled in Zones of Regulation.

61

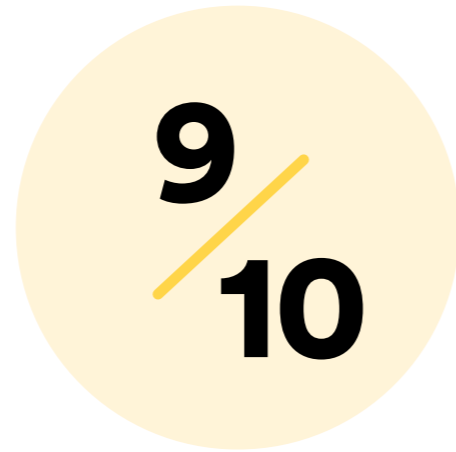
students at St Anthony's Catholic Primary School, participated in Friendship and Social Skills building programs.

614

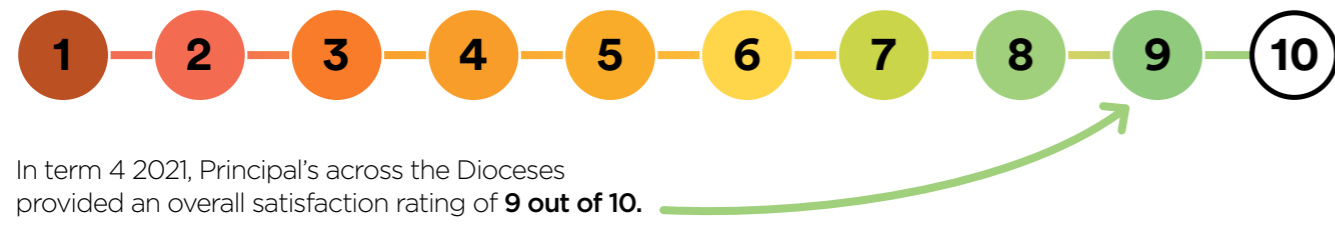
students at St John the Evangelist Catholic Primary school participated in 1 of 18 programs promoting resilience and social emotional development across different year groups.

Feedback.

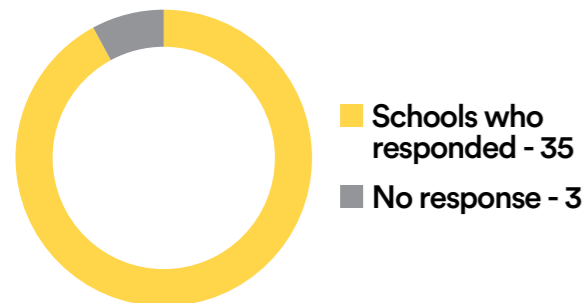
Each year, SSFP CatholicCare gathers feedback about the service we provide. The feedback from students, parents/carers, schools is used to make improvements at program level and to help guide the practice of counsellors in specific schools.



Principals evaluation of service



Response rate.



Who completed the survey.



Other feedback .

Some principals valued the delivery of wellbeing programs.

The service delivered by counsellors was vital in schools.

100% of school principals rated that they agree or strongly agree that the school counselling service was accessible, visible, communicated, collaborated and was effective.

Several principals commented that the demand for counselling services was higher than the resources and supports allocated.

Out of the 343 responses the average client satisfaction feedback score was 88.24.

Client Centred Feedback

"Don't ask if things are okay just let the student open up at their own pace. I like how they would let me have my opinion/say in everything and they'd give me time to speak, and they would actually listen and not just pretend they were :)"

"I pick 9 out of 10 because the counsellor can't bring back my dog who died or stop my dad's cancer, but it was good to talk to the counsellor."

"Enrolling in school counselling was the best choice that I have made in order to improve my mental health. Kristen has been my biggest support."

"I didn't need counselling as much this year because I had family friends supporting me, but it is nice to know I can return if I need help."

"The session helped me understand my dyslexia...I feel great after sessions, and I understand if I feel lot or need someone to talk to, I can come to my counsellor."

"Doreen helped in so many different ways. I am so happy with working with her. Not only did she help me with my relationships, I think we gained one with each other."

"Made me feel safe and respected."

Teacher Feedback

Children have benefited from the hands-on activities and varied learning styles.

"We have found the children to be very engaged with the program and in learning about emotions, calming tools and friendships. They have enjoyed the lesson on learning how the brain works with emotions. They loved the animals in the brain and learning what each animal in the brain did and how they worked well together, they also enjoyed the understanding emotions game with the balloons. Children have benefited from the hands-on activities and varied learning styles. The classroom teachers have been fantastic and supportive of the program and use the language delivered in the program to support further learning and teaching,"

"It was great that the students were able to learn a variety of practical breathing strategies which they still use within the classroom to help them regulate their emotions. The students looked forward to these hands-on lessons. In particular, the lesson which encouraged the students to identify how their body was feeling when experiencing different emotions. The students draw from the vocabulary to help express themselves more clearly and address their concerns in practical ways (asking for calming time, completing race car breathing or simply expressing that they are feeling something in their body which they do not understand- helping us as educators walk them through these emotions). It was inclusive and beneficial for all students within the room. " Kindy Kids Connect Feedback (Teacher feedback)

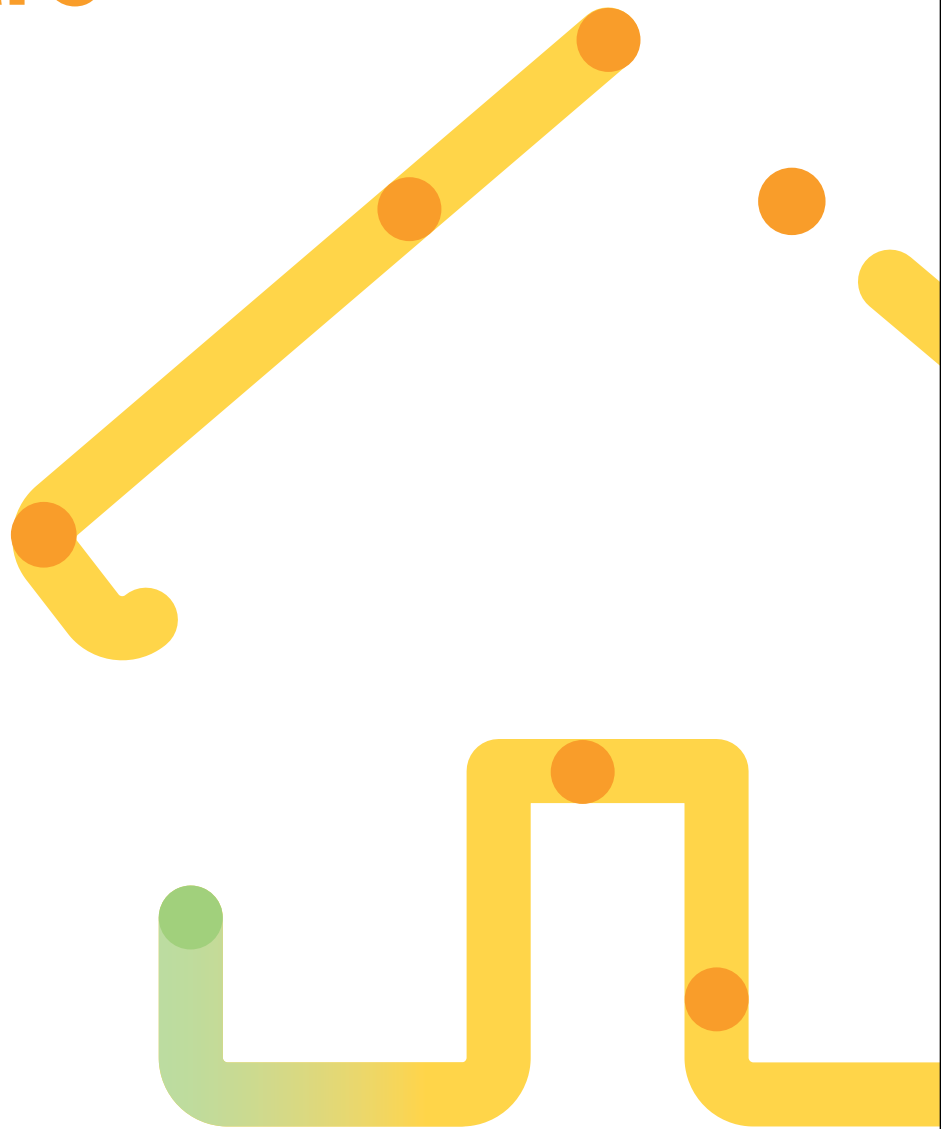
"It was great that the students were able to learn a variety of practical breathing strategies which they still use within the classroom to help them regulate their emotions."

Parent Feedback

"Rita was amazing with my daughter. She enjoyed her meetings with Rita. Thank you"

"Sarah was wonderful in helping my daughter with techniques for better sleep and to understand more about separated families and that it is okay. Thank you, Sarah."

"I felt like I had my son back!"



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