

MEDIA RELEASE



The Hon **David Hawker** MP
Federal Member for Wannon



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SHOW SUPPORT TO SAVE LOCAL SCHOOL CHAPLAINS

Federal Member for Wannon, David Hawker, is urging Western Victorians to show their support for local school chaplains by logging on to the National School Chaplaincy Association website <http://support.schoolchaplaincy.org.au/>.

"The Labor Government, despite praising at length the work that school chaplains do, is refusing to confirm that the popular schools chaplaincy program will continue past this year," Mr Hawker said.

"Like so many other issues, the Prime Minister is trying to walk on both sides of the street.

"On the one hand he takes great pains to talk about the valuable role of chaplains in our schools. On the other hand his Government is threatening to abolish the program that pays their wages."

Mr Hawker said the program, built on the excellent history of school chaplaincy in Australia, was introduced by the Coalition Government and enabled schools to employ a part-time school chaplain, with the purpose of providing pastoral care and non-denominational spiritual guidance in schools.

"An extraordinary 97% of participating school principals support its continuation," Mr Hawker said.

"It was even endorsed by the Prime Minister who said *"they (Chaplains) actually are providing the glue which keeps school communities rolling"*."

Mr Hawker said the program offers pastoral care and spiritual guidance to all.

"Of course, Chaplains necessarily have religious beliefs which underpin their work, and these beliefs are representative of the school communities the chaplains work in. They do not hinder Chaplains from working with those of other beliefs or none," Mr Hawker said.

"I urge all Western Victorians to log on to <http://support.schoolchaplaincy.org.au/> and send me a message that I can take to Canberra to keep this important program running into the future," Mr Hawker said.

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