Launchling KidsMatter Primary at St Cecilia’s, Wyong

On 15th March 2013, on the annual National Day of Action Against Bullying, KidsMatter Primary was launched at St Cecilia’s Catholic Primary School at Wyong, about 67 kms north of Sydney.

Workers in the area; and
- hosting a parent information session.

The local Catholic Diocesan schools Project Officer, Mental Health Initiatives, Liz Douglas, spoke to 60 parents about KidsMatter Primary and anti-bullying. Staff; parents and students at St Cecilia’s were engaged in the launch through activities and ideas about mental health and wellbeing.

What is the Broken Bay Diocese?

Broken Bay Diocese is one of three Catholic dioceses or administrative areas in the Sydney region. Within the three geographical clusters of the Diocese there are 37 Catholic primary schools.

From two pilot schools to 27 schools

In 2002, the Catholic Schools Office in Broken Bay Diocese employed Liz Douglas, as the first school counsellor to work across the 11 primary schools on the Central Coast. In 2006/2007 Liz was involved with two pilot schools implementing KidsMatter Primary.

The number of schools implementing KidsMatter has increased significantly over the past few years. In fact, over the last two years the numbers increased from eight to 27 schools at different stages of implementing the framework.

Liz reflects on why schools have engaged with KidsMatter Primary:

It’s a positive framework that assists staff to look at the wellbeing of their students and families. Staff like to work together on mental health for students. It is a different approach from the usual day-to-day reacting to issues. It is a positive proactive response.

Why schools like KidsMatter Primary

... I am absolutely delighted with the quality of the process and training for KidsMatter Primary. ... I know this framework will enable us to pull together our best practices in learning support and pastoral care and will engage in a more comprehensive manner our parents in our school partnership.

Phil Bretherton, Principal
Our Lady Star of the Sea - Terrigal
Processes to support schools
Liz keeps in contact with schools, attending meetings when she can and corresponding by email. She is developing a Weebly, a free web-hosting service that will link schools directly with each other. Liz explains:

“... Last year I ran a networking afternoon for 26 staff from eight schools who were up to, or beyond Component 2. This was very successful - it gave each school an opportunity to showcase what they were doing or planning. I found every school is different. The Diocese office has learnt more about KidsMatter through my involvement and is very supportive. I hope to continue to run these network days for each cluster.”
Liz Douglas, Project Officer, Mental Health Initiatives

Beyond the Component 2 plateau
Liz has identified that momentum may be lost after Component 2 because of the busy-ness and full agenda in schools. At this time, she makes contact with the Action Team and asks what they might need to extend the focus of KidsMatter. She hopes one day to build a network of coaches in each cluster to support schools to implement KidsMatter.

A mental health lens
KidsMatter Primary provides schools in the Broken Bay Diocese with a common focus in promoting mental health.

“... KidsMatter helps schools to see the mental health of students through another lens; a positive holistic lens. Often teachers and parents think of mental health as ‘illness’ but need to link it with physical health and social health. We are building resilience and confidence in children despite the strong messages of fear and negativity about the world. I believe especially in the important role that schools play in supporting the balance of protective factors for children.”
Liz Douglas, Project Officer, Mental Health Initiatives

Broken Bay Diocese
New South Wales

The Diocese:
- Is one of three Catholic Dioceses in the Sydney region
- Includes three clusters: Peninsula; North Shore; and Central Coast
- Covers 2,763 square kilometres
- Comprises 44 schools managed by the Catholic Schools Office
- Includes 37 primary schools
www.csodbb.catholic.edu.au