

MEDIA RELEASE



For immediate release

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School chaplaincy funding will benefit students

Australian Baptists have welcomed Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's decision to extend funding of the school chaplaincy program to December 2011.

Mr Rudd made the announcement today in an address to the Australian Christian Lobby national conference.

"This decision sends a strong signal that both sides of Australian politics recognise the value that chaplains bring to the whole school environment," Baptist Union of Australia National Director Revd Dr Brian Winslade said.

"The additional funding announced today will directly benefit students. The program helps to ensure that students receive essential support for their behavioural and spiritual wellbeing. It is an excellent initiative that deserves our full support," he said.

The program, introduced by the Howard Government in 2007, provides funding for pastoral care of students in state schools. Funding was due to expire in December 2010. The Rudd Government has now extended the program to December 2011, ensuring that school chaplaincy did not become an election issue.

Today's decision also provided greater job security to hundreds of chaplains who gave above and beyond the call of duty to serve Australian school students.

A recent survey found that 83 per cent of school principals were "very satisfied" with the chaplaincy program.

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