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Wellbeing in schools: research project: improving approaches to wellbeing in schools: what role does recognition play? Final report: volume one

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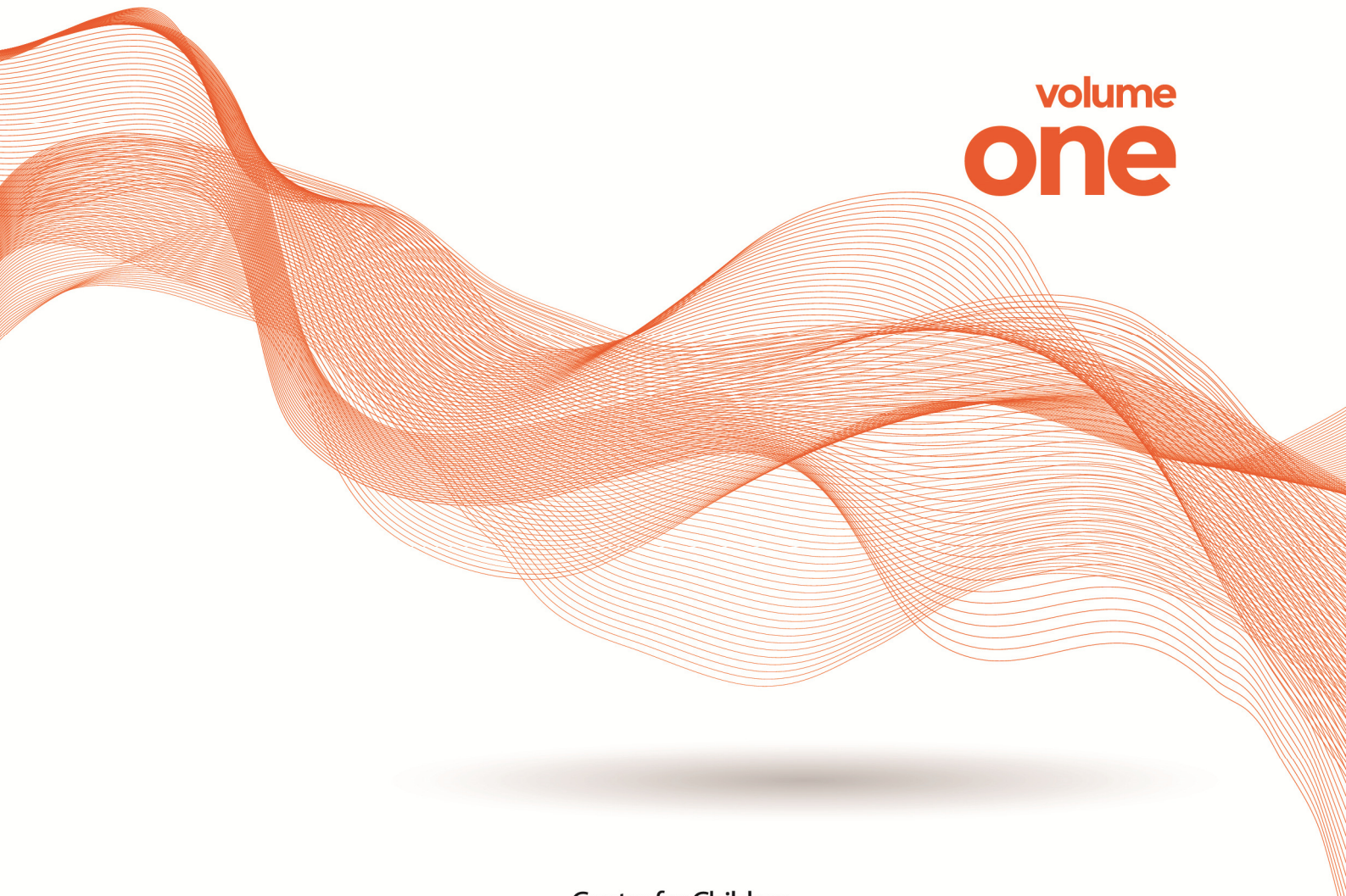


w e l l b e i n g
i n s c h o o l s

RESEARCH PROJECT

IMPROVING APPROACHES TO
WELLBEING IN SCHOOLS:
WHAT ROLE DOES RECOGNITION PLAY?

volume
one



Centre for Children
and Young People



research, education, advocacy

Centre for Children and Young People
Southern Cross University
August 2014



Wellbeing in Schools **FINAL REPORT: VOLUME ONE**

This report is Volume One of the Final Report for the Australian Research Council Linkage Project *'Improving approaches to wellbeing in schools: What role does recognition play?'* (LP110200656). This Volume is to be read in conjunction with Volumes Two, Three and Four of the Final Report. The four Volumes of the Final Report are:

[Final Report: Volume One](#) – Overview, Methodology, Research Design, Phase 1 Policy Analysis Results

[Final Report: Volume Two](#) – Phase 2 Qualitative Interviews and Focus Groups Results

[Final Report: Volume Three](#) – Phase 3 Quantitative Survey Results

[Final Report: Volume Four](#) – Discussion of Findings, Recommendations, References and Appendices

Additionally, the [Executive Summary Report](#) is available online.

Additional copies of all Volumes of the Final Report can be accessed at:

www.ccyp.scu.edu.au

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1 Introduction

This document is **Volume 1** of a major research report for an Australian Research Council (ARC) funded project titled, *Improving Approaches to Wellbeing in Schools: What Role Does Recognition Play?* It is recommended that Volume 1 be read in conjunction with Volumes 2, 3 and 4.

Volume 1 (the current volume) provides an overview of the research and details the background, significance, research design and methodology for each of the four phases of the study. This volume also includes the findings from Phase 1 of the research, which is an analysis of relevant national, state and system level policy pertaining to wellbeing in schools ($N=80$). **Volume 2** reports the findings from Phase 2 of the research, which is an analysis of qualitative data from in-depth semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers ($N=89$) and focus group interviews with students ($N=606$). **Volume 3** reports the findings from Phase 3 of the research, which is an analysis of the quantitative data from online surveys with principals and teachers ($N=707$), primary school students ($N=3906$) and secondary school students ($N=5362$). **Volume 4** provides a synthesised discussion of the findings across all four phases of the research and outlines a number of recommendations arising from these findings. Importantly, Volume 4 also includes a number of resources to assist schools and other project partners in providing professional development for staff in relation to the research findings. A separate **Executive Summary Report** is also available.

The following section provides an overview of the research before detailing the background, significance, research design and methodology for this 4-phase study. This will be followed by the results of the policy analysis that constituted Phase 1.

Project Overview

The wellbeing of children and young people is a core focus of social policy in Australia, with particular attention on children's material wellbeing, care and protection, health, education and participation. While schools have increasingly been identified as appropriate sites for supporting and promoting 'wellbeing', the term itself remains ambiguous and its implementation fragmented and ad hoc. Little is known in Australia about how wellbeing is understood and supported in schools, particularly from the perspective of students themselves.

This study is the largest in Australia to date to invite students' views about wellbeing in schools and, importantly, to identify similarities and differences between teacher and student views. Including student perspectives is especially significant given evidence that they are rarely consulted about their wellbeing or other key issues at school (Redmond, Skattebol, & Saunders, 2013). Accessing the views of teachers remains important because teachers are integral to children's lives (Bingham, 2001) and they often feel poorly equipped to engage in matters concerning student wellbeing, particularly social and emotional wellbeing (Graham, Phelps, Maddison, & Fitzgerald, 2010; Koller & Bertel, 2006; Walter, Gouze, & Lim, 2006; Williams, Horvath, Wei, Van Dorn, & Jonson-Reid, 2007). Incorporating an exhaustive review of current system, state and national policy linked with wellbeing in schools adds a further critically important perspective in the knowledge being generated through this research. Hence, underpinning the research outlined below, and in subsequent Volumes of this

research report¹, is the assumption that educational policy and practice around wellbeing in schools will be significantly more responsive if it reflects the views and perspectives of principals, teachers and students,² while taking account of the strengths and limitations of the current policy environment.

To help facilitate a deeper understanding of different stakeholder views about wellbeing in schools, this research integrates two distinctive theoretical interests. The first relates to the way in which children and childhood are theorised and draws on understandings from the field of Childhood Studies. The interdisciplinary approach of Childhood Studies (James & James, 2008) is important for this research because it provokes a conceptual shift from seeing children as the passive victims of harmful experiences to social actors with their own views and strategies for actively coping with challenges in their lives. The emphasis in Childhood Studies on notions of ‘child-centred’ scholarship accords well with research that locates children and young people’s agency, including the way this takes shape in and through their relationships, as central to their wellbeing.

A second distinctive element of this research is the use of recognition theory, as this potentially offers an alternative framework for conceptualising how wellbeing is understood and practiced in schools. Grounded in critical theory, the work of recognition scholars is largely interested in self-actualisation, social inequality and social justice. This research draws particularly on the work of Axel Honneth (Honneth, 1995, 2001, 2004) who focused especially on the role and importance of human interaction in the formation of individual and social identity. Honneth proposes three patterns of intersubjective recognition – *love*, which refers to the emotional concern for the wellbeing and needs of an actual person; *rights*, which refers to respect for the equal moral accountability of the legal person; and *solidarity*, which is the evaluation of particular traits and abilities against the background of ‘norms’ (Honneth, 1995). For this study, the language of the three dimensions has been adapted in ways that are consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of Honneth’s work but also intelligible in school settings (‘care for’; ‘respected’; ‘valued’).

To date there has been no research undertaken in Australia that empirically tests recognition theory nor that investigates its potential in the context of wellbeing. When combined with key understandings about children and childhood offered through Childhood Studies, the theoretical (as well as applied) contribution of this research is highly significant.

Project Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to generate new knowledge about ‘wellbeing’ in schools that will result in improved outcomes for children and young people. The project has produced systematic policy and practice-relevant evidence to advance the way children’s ‘wellbeing’ is understood and approached in schools.

Drawing upon insights from principals, teachers, students and existing policies, together with key ideas offered through recognition theory and Childhood Studies, the research:

¹ This Research Report is comprised of four Volumes. This document (Volume One) is to be read in conjunction with Volumes Two, Three and Four of the Final Report. An Executive Summary Report is also available.

² We acknowledge the key role that parents play in children’s wellbeing in the context of schools but project funding constraints precluded involving them in this research.

1. Develops a detailed understanding of how ‘wellbeing’ in schools is currently understood by students, teachers and educational policy makers;
2. Investigates the potential of recognition theory for advancing understanding and improvements in relation to student wellbeing;
3. Generates new knowledge about how educational policy, programs and practices in schools could more positively impact on student wellbeing.

Methodological Approach

A mixed methods approach has been utilised, generating important descriptive and thematically coded qualitative and quantitative data. The views and perspectives of students, principals and teachers, which are central to the research, have been sought through semi-structured interviews, focus groups and an online survey instrument. An extensive analysis of policy laid firm foundations for identifying current policy emphases related to wellbeing in schools. Key understandings from Childhood Studies and recognition theory guided the analysis of data.

The research was conducted in four phases – with each phase informed by findings from the previous:

Phase 1 – Policy Analysis: Analysis of key relevant local, state and Commonwealth policy regarding wellbeing ($N = 80$);

Phase 2 - Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers ($N = 89$); focus groups with primary and secondary groups ($N = 606$);

Phase 3 - Quantitative: Online survey with primary and secondary students and staff across three Catholic school regions ($N = 9975$);

Phase 4: Analysis and presentation of findings and professional development for schools.

The data collected in Phase 1 was analysed using critical discourse analysis (CDA). The interview and focus group discussion data collected in Phase 2 were transcribed, coded and analysed for re-occurring themes to look for patterns in the data using the NVivo software program. The students’ illustrations and/or lists of school improvements gathered in the Phase 2 focus groups were further analysed for repeated images/words and related transcript discussions that matched the drawings. The data collected in Phase 3 were cleaned and analysed using IBM-SPSS quantitative analysis software.

The research was conducted across three Catholic school regions, each within a different Australian state, selected on the basis that they offered contrasting approaches to the implementation of wellbeing policy and programs in schools. Participation of students and staff was voluntary and anonymous. Researchers have been assisted by an expert Wellbeing Advisory Group (WAG) to help guide each of the above phases. This group comprised members of the research team from the Centre for Children & Young People at Southern Cross University, primary and secondary school students, teachers, principals, staff from the Regional Education Office and ARC Linkage partners.

The results of the research are detailed across four Volumes of this Research Report, which can be accessed from ccyp.scu.edu.au. The recommendations emerging from the research appear below.

Recommendations

Recommendations for policy

1. That specific national, state and/or system-level policy guidance is developed in relation to wellbeing in schools and that this incorporates clear definitions, priorities for implementation and links to related policy imperatives. The policy guidance should emphasise a person-centred approach that underlines the central role of relationships in all aspects of school-life and the crucial importance of mutual recognition understood as caring, respecting and valuing each other's contribution.
2. That wellbeing is positioned as integral to the overall policy framework, structures and processes of schools and school systems. All key operating areas of education – administrative, educational and religious – need to clearly articulate and delineate roles and responsibilities in relation to wellbeing. This may necessitate a review of existing central arrangements, including wellbeing governance, coordination, communication and accountability with schools.
3. Appropriate resourcing should be allocated to coordinate and support the implementation of wellbeing policy and programs. Existing criteria for the funding of wellbeing initiatives, including counselling, should be reviewed to ensure these adequately address the findings of this research and the priorities identified.
4. That the philosophical and conceptual links between pastoral care and wellbeing be clarified given their distinctive character within the Catholic education context. Clarifying these links will be a critically important element in mobilising pastoral care initiatives to ensure these are effective in enhancing student wellbeing.
5. That consideration is given to developing a *Charter for Wellbeing in Schools*, to be advanced in conjunction with students, teachers, principals, other relevant staff and parents. This would be an aspirational statement that represents broad, collaborative agreement about the value of children and the collective commitment of schools and school systems to supporting them to realise their full potential as human persons of dignity and worth.

Recommendations for practice

6. That targeted intervention programs introduced into schools to specifically support wellbeing are adequately resourced, monitored and evaluated to ensure these deliver intended outcomes. Further consideration should be given to the potential of such programs for extending the knowledge, understandings and skills of teachers and parents, as well as students, around key issues that impact on the wellbeing of children and young people.
7. That teacher wellbeing, including its impact on student wellbeing, is explicitly acknowledged and that current approaches to addressing this (both formal and informal) are reviewed and further developed. Principals and teachers should be closely consulted to ensure a

comprehensive, respectful approach to supporting teacher wellbeing is planned, implemented and evaluated.

8. That close consideration be given to the cultures, processes and methods required for affording students more opportunity to 'have a say' in matters concerning them at school, including relationships, systems and structures, environment, and teaching and learning. Such opportunities to have a say should be meaningful, routine and available to all students using appropriate verbal, written and visual means. Consulting with students should include feedback and follow-up where relevant, enabling students to learn and develop through their participation, as well as to have their contributions appropriately acknowledged and affirmed.
9. That a flexible program of professional development is made available to schools to help enrich principals', teachers', students' and parents' understandings and practice around wellbeing. Drawing on recognition theory, childhood studies and the findings of this research, the professional development should include a core focus on the important role of relationships, and of being cared for, valued and respected, in facilitating wellbeing in schools. This professional development should also explicitly highlight the likely negative impact of misrecognition or non-recognition on student and teacher wellbeing.
10. That such professional development for teachers around wellbeing is explicitly aligned with all seven of the recently implemented National Professional Standards for Teachers. Particular emphasis should be placed on the ways in which these standards - *knowing students, knowing how to teach, effective teaching and learning, safe and supportive learning environments, providing feedback to students, professional learning and engaging professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community* - are intrinsically linked to the recognition of students and hence to their wellbeing. Pre-service teacher education should also ensure that the foundational elements of being a quality teacher are explicitly linked to understandings of children and childhood, particularly in relation to their need to be cared for, valued and respected in all aspects of their education.
11. That professional development for principals around wellbeing is explicitly aligned with the Australian Professional Standard for Principals in relation to leadership requirements: vision and values; knowledge and understanding; personal qualities and social and interpersonal skills.

Recommendations for research

12. That the concept of 'recognition', with its focus on the importance of being cared for, respected and valued, be further explored within the context of wellbeing in schools, and that a flexible and appropriate measurement tool be developed to assist schools in monitoring the ways in which these dimensions of recognition are routinely practised and experienced.

13. That further research be undertaken to extend understandings of parent and carer roles in supporting the wellbeing of their children at school, with a view to making further recommendations for more effective engagement with parents and for strengthening partnerships between family and school.

The above recommendations reflect the key findings of this research, including the 'recognition' interests that have been found to have particular salience in extending the existing knowledge base and potentially improving policy and practice concerning wellbeing in schools. Importantly, these recommendations also support the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008), which describes aspirations for all young Australians for the next decade. This commits state and federal Ministers to shared educational goals and to ensuring that schooling provides an environment in which all children and young people will not only become successful learners, but also confident, creative and contributing individuals.

1.1 Background and context

Children's wellbeing is an issue of immense social and political significance. Schools, in particular, have increasingly been identified as appropriate sites for supporting and promoting students' wellbeing. This is evident in recent policy initiatives such as the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008); the National Safe Schools Framework (DEEWR, 2010); the National Framework in Values Education and various National Mental Health initiatives such as *Mindmatters* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010b) and *Kidsmatter* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010a); as well as a myriad of smaller-scale programs aimed at improving classroom, school and system level responses to student wellbeing.

Locating wellbeing in schools makes sense since schools are one of the first places children learn about personal and social relationships outside of their family and local community (Aldgate, 2010; Masters, 2004; Munn, 2010; Wyn, 2007). In fact, schools are now widely considered to be the 'logical - if not the only – common, assured delivery point for wellbeing initiatives' (ASPA, 2008).

However, little is known in Australia about how to systematically define, plan, implement and evaluate sound, relevant, evidence-based wellbeing agendas in schools. Programs and services remain very fragmented - both between and within schools, and between school and system level requirements. Teachers report feeling ill-prepared and lacking in confidence, time or skills to engage effectively with this agenda (Graham et al., 2011; Kirchner, Yoder, Kramer, Lindsey, & Thrushs, 2000). While research points to the powerful influence teachers are in children's lives (Lynn, McKay, & Atkins, 2003), other evidence suggests a level of dissonance around increasing requirements and expectations to support student wellbeing (Berryhill, Linney, & Fromewick, 2009; Shucksmith, Philip, Spratt, & Watson, 2005; Thornton, 2004). Studies from the UK and Ireland have sought the views of teachers in combination with students to compare perceptions of wellbeing (Kidger, Donovan, Biddle, Campbell, & Gunnell, 2009; Sixsmith, Gabhainn, Fleming, & O'Higgins, 2007). Views were mixed among teachers, however overall it was found that teachers believed more could be done to help students within and outside the school. For example, there should be more physical spaces

within the school and more done to help students find external sources of help (Kidger et al., 2009). At the time of writing, there had been no research in Australia that examined closely the explicit and tacit ways that teachers navigate the complex landscape of child wellbeing within their classrooms and schools.

In recent years more attention has been given to children and young people's views about wellbeing. In Australia, studies are beginning to explore and affirm the central need to understand children and young people's views about wellbeing (Bourke & Geldens, 2007; Redmond et al., 2013), which may enable better monitoring of key issues impacting on their lives (ARACY, 2013; Hamilton & Redmond, 2010). For example, the Australian Child Wellbeing Project (Skattebol et al., 2013), discussed further below, seeks the views of young people aged 8 to 14 years across six groups to understand what contributes to wellbeing in their lives. 'School' was one of 12 domains explored in the interviews and focus groups, and was viewed in mixed terms by young people (p.73). The study draws attention to the gap in knowledge about what can be done to promote wellbeing in schools. Tomyrn and Cummins (2011) study, using the Personal Wellbeing Index – School Children (PWI-SC), found that school satisfaction among young people (aged 12 to 20 years) is critical to their wellbeing and, therefore, makes a case for including subjective views of students.

Such gaps in knowledge surrounding wellbeing in schools can also partly be attributed to the increasingly ubiquitous nature of the term wellbeing, itself (Ereaut & Whiting, 2008; Fattore, Mason, & Watson, 2007; Noble, McGrath, Wyatt, Carbines, & Robb, 2008; Rose & Rowlands, 2010). While the discourse of wellbeing is now widely appropriated as a way of capturing our aspirations for children and young people, and for school improvement, the term itself is poorly defined and under-theorised (Griffiths & Cooper, 2005; McAuley & Rose, 2010).

Literature and research on wellbeing, particularly in relation to children and young people, illustrate the complex and multidimensional nature of wellbeing and contend that any definition of wellbeing must capture the 'whole child' (Eckersley, Wierenga, & Wyn, 2006; White & Wyn, 2004). Wellbeing can be used to describe a state of physical or emotional wellbeing, however some authors contend wellbeing is a dynamic process that reflects a combination of subjective, material and relational dimensions (White, 2008). Studies and surveys based on objective health indicators do not capture the complex and holistic aspects of wellbeing, particularly the need for subjective and dynamic views of children and young people (Hamilton & Redmond, 2010). There is also debate in the literature about whether wellbeing should refer to negative or positive aspects of wellbeing – that is, should wellbeing measure 'happiness' as a positive indicator of wellbeing, or consider wellbeing in terms of the lack of negative indicators, such as depression and other mental health problems (ARACY, 2013). According to the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (2009), social and emotional wellbeing encompasses happiness, confidence and not feeling depressed; a feeling of autonomy and control over one's life; and the ability to have good relationships with others and to avoid disruptive behaviour, such as violence or bullying.

Despite the lack of a clear definition for wellbeing, there is now a quite substantial evidence base pointing to key determinants of children's wellbeing, which include positive adult-child relationships, a sense of belonging, positive self-esteem and opportunities for students to be given responsibility and be involved in decision-making (Bernard, Stephanou, & Urbach, 2007; Bernard, 2005; Eckersley,

2008). However, in Australia little is known about how children and young people's wellbeing might be supported and promoted in schools, nor about how their own accounts might contribute to debates and decision-making (Morrow, 2009).

Internationally, particularly in the UK and Scandinavia, the importance of student voice is increasingly being recognised in research on wellbeing and new studies have explored student views about social and emotional wellbeing, and programs in schools to support wellbeing (Coombes, Appleton, Allen, & Yerrell, 2013; Hall, 2010; Kidger et al., 2009; Kuurme & Carlsson, 2010; Lohre, Lydersen, & Vatten, 2010; Sixsmith et al., 2007). In Hall's (2010) study students were asked to explore features of their school that promoted and demoted mental health and wellbeing: environmental quality, self-esteem, emotional processing, self-management skills and social participation. Outside areas, clean eating areas, toilets close to classrooms and 'worry boxes' were identified as positive features of environmental quality. Teachers' classroom practices, such as 'Star of the Week', having time to choose activities and getting to help other children were identified as contributing to self-esteem. Teachers' role in talking through problems with students when they were upset was important for their emotional processing, especially among young children. Overall, relationships with teachers and other students were central to young people's views about their own mental health and wellbeing across all domains. An Irish study of wellbeing in schools by Kidger et al (2009) sought the views of teachers and students about what was being done in schools, and what could be done differently, to improve wellbeing for students. They found that many students viewed lessons on emotional health and wellbeing as inadequate, that teachers did not have the "desire or expertise" to lead the lessons, and hence students felt uncomfortable discussing sensitive issues with teachers (Kidger et al 2009, p. 9).

Building on such research, *whole school* approaches, where wellbeing is embedded in the culture as well as the curriculum of the school, have been identified as the most likely to be effective in realising these determinants (Noble et al., 2008; Rowe, Stewart, & Patterson, 2007; Wells, Barlow, & Stewart-Brown, 2003). In the UK and United States, a number of studies have reviewed and evaluated programs and interventions in schools that are designed to promote student wellbeing (Coleman, 2009; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; McLaughlin, 2008; Vostanis, Humphrey, Fitzgerald, Deighton, & Wolpert, 2013). These studies identify the kinds of intervention programs that have been implemented to promote wellbeing: classroom-based, whole school approach, specific groups, and universal (Coleman, 2009); individualistic programming versus "wider emphasis on relationships, pedagogy and community building" (McLaughlin, 2008, p. 353); reactive versus preventative, and targeted versus universal interventions (Vostanis et al., 2013).

Such work contributes important understandings about the range of programs and interventions that schools can implement to promote student and teacher wellbeing. Overall, the studies show that more holistic approaches are more effective. A review of 213 school-based, social and emotional learning (SEL) programs, found that the programs significantly improved students' skills, attitudes and behaviours, but stressed that whole-school approaches should aim to promote health rather than prevent emotional disorder (Durlak et al., 2011). Vostanis et al (2013) reviewed school-based targeted initiatives in 299 primary schools and 137 secondary schools in the UK, and found that universal approaches were more effective than targeted approaches. While most schools did take a universal approach to their programs, Vostanis et al (2013) suggest there needs to be a shift

from reactive to preventative approaches to promoting wellbeing in schools. Coleman (2009) and McLaughlin (2008) point to the lack of empirical evidence for the promotion of wellbeing, the limited research that accounts for the views of young people, and the need to address teacher wellbeing in combination with student wellbeing (Coleman, 2009), as well as the dangers in “solely adopting an individualistic programmatic approach” (McLaughlin, 2008, p. 353). Furthermore, while schooling can act as a protective mechanism for children, it is the daily experiences of children and young people that seem to matter, not any particular program (McLaughlin, 2008). McLaughlin, therefore, points to the importance of efforts in building quality relationships between teachers and pupils and pupils and pupils. The findings from these studies are useful for informing evaluation and further development of recent Australian programs, such as KidsMatter, which is outlined later in this chapter in the ‘Policy landscape’ section.

Recent further work on child wellbeing has been undertaken by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) who published a Report Card on the wellbeing of young Australians in 2013. This initiative brought together researchers, policy makers, service providers, business and community organisations with the aim of developing a National Action Plan for Child and Youth Health and Wellbeing. The Report Card incorporated data collected through a national consultation with 3700 children and young people on their hopes, needs and desires. The consultation found that the key areas of importance for young people were: to feel loved and safe; access to material basics; personal health; learning; and participation. The findings from the Report Card provide a framework for approaching the health and wellbeing of young people, but gaps remain in the existing evidence about what works and why (ARACY, 2013).

In terms of other recent work relevant to understanding child wellbeing, the Australian Child Wellbeing Project commenced in 2012. This study aims to draw on *children’s own perspectives* to design, conduct and interpret findings from Australia’s first major nationally representative and internationally comparable survey of wellbeing among children aged 8-14 years. Further, in the second half of 2013, more than 6000 Australian families were selected randomly and interviewed as part of the Young Minds Matter survey, looking at the emotional and behavioural development of children and young people aged between 4 and 17 years. Additionally, a recent Australian longitudinal study examined the ‘little things’ teachers do to promote students’ resilience at schools, and the findings draw a clear link between teacher-student relationships in schools, resilience and wellbeing (Johnson, 2008). It was found that “small and repeated actions to connect with and relate to students by teachers at the micro-level can disrupt seemingly hegemonic school processes that threaten the wellbeing of students” (Johnson, 2008, p. 396).

While such evidence on wellbeing in schools signals the central importance of *relationships*, this focus is often sidelined in policy discussions dominated by concerns about *course content*, *teaching methods* and *compliance*. One potential implication is that important aspects of wellbeing that are largely developed through relationships, such as acknowledgment, identity, purpose and belonging, become secondary priorities for education (Fraser, 2008; Honneth, 1995; Taylor, 1995). In the process, the potential of *intersubjective* engagement for identity formation is diminished (Anderson, 1995; Bingham, 2001; Taylor, 1995). By ‘intersubjective’ we mean the ways in which people (for example, teachers and students) jointly construct their social lives through interactions with others and their rules for doing so. Such interactions are central to existing evidence concerning children’s

social and emotional wellbeing, and therefore also relevant for findings from recent reports on the current state of wellbeing of young Australians, as well as for the focus of the current study outlined later in this report.

An overview of the policy landscape for wellbeing in schools is provided in the following section.

Policy landscape

Promoting the wellbeing of children is important because it lays the foundations for adult functioning as well as for promoting the status and the overall quality of life for children and young people (Aldgate, 2010; Ben-Arieh, 2006; Eckersley et al., 2006). Schools are often identified in policy and practice discussions as loci for promoting the wellbeing of children and young people (Masters, 2004; Wyn, 2007). This is because schools are places where the majority of children spend a significant part of their lives. Schools are one of the first places children learn about personal and social relationships outside the family and local community (Munn, 2010), and are therefore integral in identifying when a young person's wellbeing may be at risk.

In Australia, the importance of children and young people's wellbeing has been recognised in Government policies and strategic documents (Hamilton & Redmond, 2010), with various educational policy documents centrally positioning wellbeing. Most prominent is the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* developed by the Australian Education Ministers in 2008. Child wellbeing sits at the heart of the *Declaration*: "Schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians, and in ensuring the nation's ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion" (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4). Another national example is the *National Safe Schools Framework*, developed by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), which states as its vision that "All Australian schools are safe, supportive and respectful teaching and learning communities that promote student wellbeing" (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011, p. 3). Concern for the wellbeing of children and young people in educational settings is also embedded in the educational policies of the states and territories. Concepts of social and emotional wellbeing are reflected to varying degrees in over 100 state and territory education policies and initiatives available online, in relation to promoting wellbeing and linking it to other core educational policy outcomes (Griffiths & Cooper, 2005).

The picture above indicates that child wellbeing in Australia is considered the 'core business' of schools and that it is embedded in a range of educational initiatives and policies in all states and territories. However, there is currently no overarching approved policy framework for promoting the wellbeing of Australian children. This situation can be contrasted directly with the UK, where the Unit for Children and Young People, established in 2000, has driven the development of a national policy on child wellbeing and implementation into legislation of the wellbeing agenda, as evident by the concept of 'child well-being' being enshrined in legislation in the *Children Act 2004* (Rose & Rowlands, 2010).

Moreover, close examination of state and federal policies reveals that there is a lack of clarity about how student wellbeing is defined and conceptualised. Child wellbeing is increasingly becoming a ubiquitous term – occurring frequently and widely – but, as mentioned earlier, lacking definition and

clarity (Ereaut & Whiting, 2008). While some policies do not define wellbeing at all, others espouse differing understandings of wellbeing. Consequently, as the literature confirms, current school and system practices vary widely across Australia. As Noble et al (2008) have observed:

“Although some jurisdictions have developed a cohesive, pro-active, universal approach to student wellbeing with an overarching framework or policy, many continue to have a reactive ‘welfare’ focus for targeted and vulnerable populations” (p.125).

This inconsistent and fragmented policy landscape for wellbeing in schools provides the basis and argument for further exploration of contemporary Australian wellbeing policy pertaining to children and young people.

1.2 Significance of the research

The need for this research on wellbeing in schools has emerged in response to a close analysis of current scholarship and evidence. In particular, a gap emerges in relation to how children and young people are constructed in wellbeing policy and practice and the evident need to explore in more depth the emerging evidence that relationships play a central role in wellbeing in schools. The interdisciplinary approach of Childhood Studies (James & James, 2008) is important for this research because it provokes a conceptual shift from seeing children as the passive victims of harmful experiences to social actors with their own views and strategies for actively coping with challenges in their lives. Likewise, the use of recognition theory offers a distinctive contribution in this research as it potentially offers an alternative framework for conceptualising how wellbeing is understood and practiced in schools. Grounded in critical theory, the work of recognition scholars (Bingham, 2001; Fitzgerald, Graham, Smith, & Taylor, 2010; Honneth, 1995, 2001, 2004; Thomas, 2012; Thompson, 2006) is largely interested in self-actualisation, social inequality and social justice. These theoretical interests are detailed in Chapter 2.

Central to this research endeavour is the need for more nuanced accounts of how wellbeing is understood and practiced in schools. To date, the growing policy imperative to locate children’s social and emotional wellbeing within the sphere of education (DEEWR, 2010; MCEETYA, 2008; Wyn, 2007), coupled with a considerable lack of clarity concerning the meaning of wellbeing itself (Ereaut & Whiting, 2008; Noble et al., 2008; Rose & Rowlands, 2010), has resulted in a fragmented, ad hoc approach within and across schools and school systems (ASPA, 2008; Victorian Auditor-General, 2010) that consequently runs the risk of being confusing and ineffective. Consequently, progress has been ‘painfully slow’ in changing the structures and cultures of schools in relation to children’s wellbeing (Adelman & Taylor, 2002).

This is despite growing concerns regarding the numbers of children and young people presenting with psychological and/or behavioural difficulties (Access Economics Pty Ltd, 2009; Bernard et al., 2007; Eckersley, 2008), which heighten the urgency for new knowledge to inform educational policy and guide the development of child wellbeing in schools. The Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing reports that about 10% of young people have long-term mental or behavioural problems and 16% report high or very high levels of psychological distress (AIHW, 2007, p. 281). Furthermore, an estimated 25% of young people experience at least one mental disorder (AIHW, 2011, p. 25). The most commonly reported disorders are anxiety (15%), substance use (13%) and affective disorder

(6%). In 2007, a study of the wellbeing of more than 10,000 Australian school students from prep school (age 4-6) to Year 12 (age 17-18) found large percentages of students experience different social and emotional difficulties, including reporting they were lonely (18%), had recently felt hopeless and depressed for a week and had stopped regular activities (20%); were very stressed (31%); had difficulty controlling how depressed they got (32%); lost their temper a lot (35%); worried too much (42%) and had difficulty calming down when upset (48%) (Bernard et al., 2007). Poor mental health outcomes for children and young people are costly. For example, Access Economics (Access Economics Pty Ltd, 2009) report that just over 1 million people aged 12-25 years have anxiety, affective or substance use disorders, and a variety of other mental illnesses, the financial cost of which was \$10.6 billion in 2009.

The most recent study by the AIHW (2011), included a new section on relationships and bullying in schools. Bullying is increasingly regarded as an issue affecting wellbeing in schools (Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008 as cited in AIHW, 2011; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009). The AIHW report pointed to a study based in three states (Victoria, Western Australia and Queensland) to show the increased prevalence of bullying in schools in Australia. Over one-third of young people experienced bullying in the previous 12 months, and one in five people said that had bullied others (Williams, 2007 as cited in AIHW, 2011). Ensuring responsive, evidence-based policy in this area of children's lives is particularly critical given many teachers do not perceive that externally driven policies have immediate relevance or influence on the problems they are trying to solve in their classrooms (Scribner, 2005, p. 308).

Additionally, this research is significant in that it brings the views, beliefs, values and assumptions of children and young people *into dialogue* with those of teachers and policymakers. The increasing policy imperative that teachers now actively engage with the wellbeing agenda means that it is critically important *their* voices inform related research, reform and curriculum innovation (Ohi, 2008; Whitby, 2009). Teachers' views and perspectives on child wellbeing are not well known, and indeed have been largely silenced or marginalised in the past (Goodson, 2003). Likewise the views of *children and young people* are central to the interests of this research. Such a perspective stands in stark contrast to many education policy initiatives, including those on wellbeing in schools, which are predominantly driven by adults. Without research that brings the different stakeholder perspectives into dialogue, policy and practice will remain partial and effectiveness will be limited. As De Winter et al (1997) point out, "a serious dialogue with children in matters concerning their own quality of life, in other words, encouraging children's participation, should both be considered as a basic right, and as a precondition for the promotion of health and wellbeing" (p.16).

Critically, this research constitutes the first examination in Australia of the links between teacher conceptualisations of wellbeing and the tacit and explicit pedagogical means they use to improve it. This is important given evidence of considerable tension for teachers, many of whom report feeling poorly equipped or reluctant to engage in the area of student social and emotional wellbeing (Graham et al., 2010; Koller & Bertel, 2006; Walter et al., 2006; Williams et al., 2007). Since teachers are integral to children's lives (Bingham, 2001), it is critical to understand whether and how they perceive their everyday pedagogical practices influence children's wellbeing.

1.3 Project aim and objectives

The aim of this research is to generate new knowledge about ‘wellbeing’ in schools that will result in improved outcomes for children and young people. The project has produced systematic policy and practice-relevant evidence to advance the way children’s social and emotional ‘wellbeing’ is understood and approached in schools.

Drawing upon insights from teachers, students and existing policies, together with key ideas offered through recognition theory and Childhood Studies, the research:

1. Develops a detailed understanding of how ‘wellbeing’ in schools is currently understood by students, teachers and educational policy makers;
2. Investigates the potential of recognition theory for advancing understanding and improvements in relation to student wellbeing;
3. Generates new knowledge about how educational policy, programs and practices in schools could more positively impact on student wellbeing.

2 Theoretical Interests

There are two theoretical interests that are central to this research: recognition theory and Childhood Studies. These theoretical interests are explained in the following sections.

2.1 Recognition theory

“Intersubjective recognition depends on the highly relational nature of humans, who are located in local communities of culturally shared identities and interests” (Watson, Emery, & Bayliss, 2012, p. 94).

In this study, recognition theory is drawn upon to investigate the transformative potential of recognition for individual wellbeing (in this study, students and teachers³) and for social institutions (in this study, schools). In one form or another the concept of ‘recognition’ has always had a central place in practical philosophy (Honneth, 2007) but it has primarily been over the past 25 years that political debates and social movements have called for a greater consideration of the idea. Indeed, in the decades since Charles Taylor (1992) coined the phrase ‘the politics of recognition,’ some now argue that recognition is central to the dynamics of political struggles and possibly “to the constitution and dynamics of social reality more generally” (Ikäheimo & Laitinen, 2007, p. 33).

Defining Recognition

The concept of recognition itself is defined in the Concise Oxford Dictionary (1964, 2008) in terms of acknowledgement of someone or something’s existence, validity or legality; according notice or consideration to; discovering or realising the nature of; to treat as, acknowledge for, realise or admit that; and to know again or identify as known before. Bingham (2001, p. 3) further distils recognition as “the act of acknowledging others, and coming to be acknowledged by others.” Ikäheimo and Laitinen (2007) point to the importance of distinguishing between three ‘constellations’ of phenomena that might be called ‘recognition’ but have different intent. These are identification (of anything), acknowledgement (of ‘normative entities’) and recognition (of persons). The definitions

³ In referring to ‘teachers’ we include principals and other teaching and non-teaching staff who interact with students in the context of schools.

alone reveal the complexity of the question of how the concept of recognition is to be understood (much less applied), and a matter that continues to be the subject of extensive social and political debate.

Beyond these attempts at definition however, there is little agreement amongst recognition theorists as to the question of “what recognition means, what it does, and for what and for whom” (Kompridis, 2007, p.277). Further, the concept of recognition has not been defined in any conclusive way in philosophy nor is it easily incorporated in everyday language. Different meanings emerge as the concept of recognition is applied to different social, political or ethical demands, such as feminism, multiculturalism or communitarianism (Honneth, 2007). Such debates relate primarily to the interest various theorists hold in relation to recognition. Consequently, particular applications of recognition result in the moral content of the concept varying in accordance with whatever meaning is imputed to it. Hence, understandings of recognition are generally bound up with distinct moral perspectives (care and esteem versus moral autonomy, for example). Given the contested nature of the concept of recognition, it is instructive to return to its origins, the roots of which lie in German idealism and the work of Hegel in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (Canivez, 2011).

Origin of Recognition Theory

Hegel proposed that recognition is the cornerstone of ethics and he developed the idea that human self-consciousness is dependent upon the experience of social recognition (Honneth, 2007). Hegel emphasized that recognition develops dialogically through a process of reciprocity and that mutual recognition is a “prerequisite for human freedom and for the development of a positive self” (Turtiainen, 2012, p. 46). Hegel further posited that ethical progress unfolds in a series of 3 levels of increasingly demanding patterns of recognition and that an intersubjective struggle mediates between each of the levels, “a struggle that individuals conduct for the purpose of having their identity claims confirmed” (Honneth, 2007, p. 132). This struggle takes place within and between three spheres of recognition: love, rights and solidarity. Hegel was convinced that the transition from one sphere of recognition to another is always caused by a struggle to gain respect for a subject’s self-comprehension as it grows in stages, in other words, “a kind of intersubjective conflict whose resolution can only consist in the establishment of a further sphere of recognition” (Honneth, 2007, p. 133). Hence, Hegel’s approach has been influential in forming the idea of “struggle for recognition,” a concept of core interest to the current research but which is so complex and multi-layered that it has triggered numerous innovative approaches in moral philosophy and social theory (Honneth, 2007, p. 133).

Contemporary Theories of Recognition

The three prominent neo-Hegelian philosophers developing the theory of recognition are Charles Taylor (1992, 1994), Axel Honneth (1995, 2001, 2004) and Nancy Fraser (1995, 2003). Grounded in critical theory, their work is largely interested in self-actualisation, social inequality and social justice. Through their (and others’ continuing) contributions, it is now generally accepted that recognition theory offers a potentially powerful tool for generating insights that enable the normative evaluation of how a society should be organised so that everyone enjoys the recognition due to them (Anderson, 1995; Honneth, 1995; Thompson, 2006).

While all three philosophers take as a point of departure “the Hegelian idea that identity is constructed dialogically, through a process of mutual recognition” (Fraser, 2000, p.109), debate continues to flourish in relation to differences in the meaning of recognition. For example, for Taylor, as for Honneth, recognition is “not just a courtesy we owe people, it is a vital human need” (1995, p. 226). Such recognition is experienced in multiple forms – respect in the political sphere, esteem in the social sphere, and care in the intimate sphere of the family, without which we cannot achieve full self-realisation (Kompridis, 2007). Recognition thus confirms and affirms us as human beings in ways that enable us to develop ‘intact’ identities and so function as self-realising agents (Kompridis, 2007). The worst form of social and political injustice takes place when people are not afforded the recognition that is due to them. Taylor pursues this through demands for the recognition of ‘difference,’ while Honneth’s focus is on recognition as a key element in human interaction and individual and group identity (Thomas, 2012). According to Honneth, the conceptual framework of recognition is of central importance “because it has proven to be the appropriate tool for categorically unlocking social experience as a whole” (2003, p. 133). Fraser proposes a different lens to recognition. Rather than treating recognition as instrumental to self-realisation, she regards recognition as instrumental to acquiring full status as a human partner in social interactions (Kompridis, 2007). Thus, she argues that we should be attending to the patterns and structures that

constitute some individuals and groups as “inferior, excluded, wholly other, or simply invisible” (Fraser, 1995, p. 70). This alternative conceptualisation of recognition explains Fraser’s emphasis on fairness in the redistribution of resources.

Recognition, Non-recognition and Struggles over Recognition

Importantly though, as Thomas (2012) points out, all three scholars draw attention to the defining importance of ‘misrecognition’ and ‘non-recognition’, concepts that have particular saliency when considering children and young people’s social and emotional wellbeing. For example, Taylor (1995) argues misrecognition potentially imprisons individuals within a “false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (p. 225). In recognising another, we must also be known as a subject capable of giving recognition (Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2014), which underlines the idea that reciprocity or mutuality is a necessary condition of authentic recognition. Where recognition is denied or withheld, then, this results in social and political injustice. For Taylor, as well as Honneth, this injustice is experienced in damage to the identity of the individual and thus potentially to their wellbeing (Graham & Fitzgerald, 2010; Honneth, 1995; Taylor, 1995). Misrecognition, according to Fraser (2001), is a kind of social subordination that prevents individuals from “participating as a peer in social life” (p.24). The redress called for is the ‘deinstitutionalisation’ of patterns of cultural value, which foster misrecognition and subordination of the status of the individual (Kompridis, 2007). This dynamic of deinstitutionalisation requires close investigation if current wellbeing policy and programs are to realise their potential. Here the notion of the aforementioned ‘struggle for recognition’ also takes on particular saliency and provides further insight into the nature of recognition itself (Thompson, 2006). The idea that recognition is something that must be struggled for and over has a long history, dating back to Hegel’s ideas around a “struggle among subjects for the mutual recognition of their identity [that] generated inner-societal pressure toward the practical, political establishment of institutions that would generate freedom” (Honneth, 1995, p.5).

However, as with the word recognition, the idea of a struggle is also often used indiscriminately and without clear definition. For example, Thompson (2006) describes how the idea of a struggle, when detached from its Hegelian origins, is utilised in social and political theory to describe recognition as a one-off act directed towards one single object and which lacks mutuality. Yet, as Honneth identifies most clearly, recognition is resisted and so struggle is inevitable. Recognition is thus an “intersubjective, reciprocal, dynamic process” (Thompson, 2006, p. 160); *intersubjective*, in that it always involves more than one party and that the relationship that exists between these two parties must be taken into account to understand the nature of the struggle; *reciprocal* in that the meaning and worth of recognition depends on the value each party places on each other; and finally, *dynamic* in that recognition is constituted by a series of acts of recognition in which the character and significance of each particular act are partly determined by the act or acts that precede the act of recognition. Therefore, recognition also plays a central role in explaining conflict (Thompson, 2006).

According to Thompson (2006), it is Honneth who is most fully aware of the origin of the idea of struggle for recognition. Honneth grounds his account of struggle in ordinary human experience, through what he describes as “hurt feelings” which, in turn, constitute an “affective source of knowledge” (1995, p. 143), letting us know when the implicit rules of recognition by which we live have been violated. For a struggle to take place, however, there must be a bridge between an individual’s hurt feelings and the collective imperatives of a social movement:

Aware that my feelings of shame result from the unjust conditions in which not just I, but many others, find themselves, I have reason to join with these others in order to struggle with them against this injustice (Honneth, quoted in Thompson 2006, p. 163).

Such struggles move a society towards a fuller realisation of undistorted relations of recognition, thus ensuring moral development and progress (Honneth, 1995).

The theoretical insights of James Tully (2004) are also significant here. For Tully, while it is important to acknowledge the nature of the struggle, we must also direct our attention to the field of interaction in which conflicts and struggles over recognition arise and are resolved. Put simply, the field of interaction Tully draws our attention to, is dialogue and conversation. Claims for recognition are always put forward and negotiated through dialogue, regardless of whether they are advanced in terms of rights, identities and cultures – a list to which we would add ‘childhoods.’ It is therefore more correct, says Tully, to refer to struggles *over* (rather than *for*) recognition, a term which we adopt in this study. This view of the relational and dialogical nature of recognition is supported by Taylor, who proposes that if we are to better understand the close connection between identity and recognition, we must take into account the overwhelmingly monological bent of mainstream modern philosophy which has “rendered almost invisible” the dialogical character of human life:

We become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence defining our identity . . . always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things that our significant others want to see in us (Taylor, 1995, p. 230).

For the purposes of this study, it seems that while children’s identity is crucially dependent on their relationships with others, the ongoing tension that prevails in Western societies between monological and dialogical understandings are just as significant in limiting how we conceptualise them as partners in dialogue. Such tension, we suggest, goes to the heart of children’s struggle over recognition. It is at this point that the dynamic nature of recognition theory becomes evident in provoking further questions about the kind of change that is required in order for all members in a school community, in particular children and young people, to receive the recognition they deserve.

According to Tully (2004), the consequences of the dialogical nature of recognition will always coalesce around two central questions:

1. How to develop institutions that are open to calling into question and negotiating freely the less than perfect norms of mutual recognition to which they are subject; and
2. How to ensure participation of all partners in open practices of dialogue which help to generate a sense of mutual understanding and trust and an attachment to the system of governance under dispute, even among members who do not always achieve the recognition they seek.

These questions remind us that how we respond to new insights generated through dialogue and conversations in school settings will significantly influence the ways in which children are recognised and how their sense of themselves, and what matters to them, is shaped through the encounter.

Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition: Love, Rights and Solidarity

The concept of recognition “draws attention to the vital importance of our social interactions in formulating our sense of identity and self-worth as well as revealing the underlying motivations for, and justifications of, political action” (Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2014). While cognizant of the considerable strengths in Fraser and Taylor’s respective contributions, this research study draws primarily on the identity model/interests of Honneth who suggests recognition signals the need for “mutual respect for the particularity and the equality of all other persons” (2007, p.130). Honneth’s approach focuses on the importance of social relationships in developing and maintaining a person’s identity and in constructing normative criteria for a good society (Turtiainen, 2012).

Honneth (1995) proposes three patterns of intersubjective recognition – *love*, which refers to the emotional concern for the wellbeing and needs of an actual person; *rights*, which refers to respect for the equal moral accountability of the legal person; and *solidarity*, which is the evaluation of particular traits and abilities against the background of ‘norms’ of evaluation. This tripartite division of types of recognition is phenomenologically coupled with three different aspects of practical self-relation: *self-confidence*, *self-respect* and *self-esteem*. The following provides a brief overview of this threefold conceptualization of recognition, which Honneth drew from Hegel and found empirical support for in the work of Mead (Thomas, 2012)⁴.

Love

Love is the first and most important dimension of recognition. As Honneth says, without care and love, “children’s personalities cannot develop at all” (2003, p. 138). Love is to be understood in a number of ways. First, it is experienced as “affectionate attention of concrete others” (Honneth, 1995, p. 87). In this way, the role played by love in the recognition of others is affective and emotional. Honneth stresses that this is a positive affect: “it is a matter of love not hate; care not cruelty; friendship not enmity” (Thompson, 2006, p. 25). Second, love is necessarily restricted in its scope. Love consists of “strong emotional attachment among a small number of people” (1995, p. 95). Here, we see Honneth assumes that there is only enough space in a human’s life for relatively few people to have a significant impact on one’s life (Thompson, 2006, p. 25). This restricted nature of love further reveals an element of moral particularism, for as Honneth says: “positive feelings about other people are not matters of choice” (Honneth, 1995, p.107). Thirdly, the dimension of love is the site of the most complex emotional interactions, where many things can go wrong, but where the outcome when such interactions are successful, is a mutual recognition of independence and enjoyment of shared concern (Thomas, 2012).

⁴ While this research primarily utilizes an ‘identity model’ of recognition, such as that taken up by Taylor and Honneth, we are mindful that others such as Fraser point out that constructing recognition in terms of damaged identity places an emphasis on the importance of human agency over social institutions (Fraser, 1997, 2000). Instead, Fraser proposes a ‘status model’ under which recognition is not so much a question of identity, but rather of social status. This view suggests that what requires recognition is “not group specific identity but rather the status of group members as full partners in social interaction” (Fraser, 2000, p. 100). Accordingly, misrecognition refers not to the depreciation of identity, but to the social subordination that results when individuals or groups are prevented from participation as peers in social life. Fraser’s question: “who do we recognise and to whom are we prepared to redistribute?” (reproduced in Lister, 2007, p. 156) remains an important consideration in this research, even though we draw primarily on Honneth’s work.

When a person feels loved and cared for, they develop a sense that their needs and feelings are important and can be expressed without shame or embarrassment. According to Honneth, love is therefore evidenced empirically by *self-confidence* – not the contemporary understanding of confidence as a high estimation of one’s abilities - but rather an underlying capacity to express need and desire without fear of abandonment or punishment (Anderson, 1995; Honneth, 1995).

Rights

By rights, Honneth refers to respect for the rights of a person to shape one’s own life as implied in modern legal relations (Thomas, 2012). Unlike the first dimension, the notion of rights must be understood historically as it is grounded in social and political norms. It is therefore continually evolving and being extended. Honneth’s original contribution, according to Thomas (2012), is to link social respect with self-respect, which is dependent on one’s ability to claim one’s rights through legal process. A litmus test of this dimension is the capacity to raise and defend a legal claim. Importantly, however, such capacity to raise a claim is only the basis of self-respect *if* a person knows it can be exercised. This does not mean a person without rights cannot experience some form of self-respect, however only the fullest form of self respect is realised when an individual is recognised as having the capacity of a ‘legal person’, i.e as *being* a bearer of rights.

The affective dimension of rights, according to Honneth, is evidenced by how an individual experiences a sense of their dignity and rights as a person (Anderson, 1995). The consequence of this sense of identity is described as an experience of *self-respect*. Self-respect holds within it a sense of being able to participate in the lives of others and that a person’s rights will be respected as they participate in various activities and decision-making processes.

Importantly, Honneth contends that we can only see ourselves as rights bearers – that is as worthy of respect – once we have understood our obligations of respect towards others. In other words, respect in this context is understood as mutual. As Thompson puts it:

I can only respect myself if I see why I should respect others...rather than looking at the world from my own particular viewpoint, I must attempt to take up that of no particular persons in my society. From this perspective I see that there is no reason to treat me differently from anyone else in my society. The reason why I should be respected is a reason for everyone else to be respected as well (2006, p. 48).

Thus, at the heart of the dimension of respect is the idea of *reciprocity*, which, for Honneth (1995), provides a strong indication of the form in which respect is to be practiced.

Solidarity

Honneth links the notion of solidarity to the dimension of social esteem which, as Laitinen (2002) describes, is given to someone “*qua* a certain kind of person” (p. 463). Here, individuals are esteemed not because they are associated with a particular culture or because they have a particular social identity, but rather because they possess features which distinguish them as unique individuals (Thompson, 2006). A key characteristic of solidarity is that people symmetrically esteem each other’s contributions to a shared goal against a horizon of values, which make it possible to

experience each other's uniqueness as meaningful for shared praxis (van Leeuwen, 2007).⁵ The litmus test of society where people feel valued is one where people experience a sense of opportunity for self-realisation and where common values match the concerns of individuals. An important aspect of the dimension of solidarity is that it is heavily sensitive to, and dependent upon, social values. Consequently, the experience of those who feel undervalued will also highlight sites of struggle and contestation around what contribution a society considers valuable or not (van Leeuwen, 2007).

This third dimension of solidarity draws attention to the sense of what it is that makes an individual feel special and unique, an experience that is revealed as *self-esteem*. In contrast to self-respect, where one experiences recognition through a sense of feeling entitled to the same status and treatment as every other person, this dimension is distinguished by what it is that a person experiences as something of value to offer. Importantly, this must not be something trivial or negative (Honneth, 1995).

Taken together, these three dimensions, love, rights, and solidarity, form the theoretical starting point for this study, which we have summarised as follows: children do belong to the class of morally responsible persons, are therefore rights-bearers and entitled to respect; and that children are people with talents and capabilities, who contribute in a variety of ways to society and culture, and so are deserving of esteem (Thomas, 2012).

In summary, Honneth's theory of recognition is both a theory of social change in a historical context, and a theory of individual development in a social context (Thomas, 2012). Mutual recognition is seen as the key process in social development, and misrecognition is the occasion for struggle, which is the motor of change:

It is individuals' claim to the intersubjective recognition of their identity that is built into social life from the very beginning, as a moral tension, transcends the level of social progress institutionalised thus far, and so gradually leads – via the negative path of recurring stages of conflict – to a state of communicatively lived freedom (Honneth, 1995, p. 5).

Why Recognition Theory for a Study on Wellbeing in Schools?

The use of recognition theory in this study allows for a deeper examination of the conditions necessary for the formation of identity, including love and relationship (self-confidence), human dignity (self-respect) and individuals' capacities, achievements and potential contribution to social life (self-esteem) (Graham & Fitzgerald, 2010). Such characteristics align closely with key determinants of wellbeing for children and young people identified elsewhere and with the core tenets of resilience (Bernard et al., 2007; Bernard, 2005; Eckersley, 2008).

⁵ It is helpful to be reminded of the definition of symmetry here:

- i). Exact correspondence of form and constituent configuration on opposite sides of a dividing line or plane or about a center or an axis. See Synonyms at [proportion](#).
- ii). A relationship of characteristic correspondence, equivalence, or identity among constituents of an entity or between different entities: *the narrative symmetry of the novel*.
- iii). Beauty as a result of balance or harmonious arrangement. (Free dictionary online)

Recognition theory offers a potentially powerful tool for generating insights that enable the normative evaluation of how a society (in this case a school) should be organised so that everyone (including children and young people) enjoy the recognition which is due to them (Anderson, 1995; Honneth, 1995; Thompson, 2006). According to Kincheloe and McLaren (2005), such an approach is “not even on the radar” despite the fact “concerns with social change delineated [in] critical theoretical research have never been more important” (p. 332).

To date there has been no empirical research undertaken in Australia that seeks to analyse and understand wellbeing within such a recognition framework. More specifically, no empirical study in Australia has applied Honneth’s three intersubjective modes of recognition (Anderson, 1995; Honneth, 1995) in understanding the wellbeing of children and young people in schools: first, as love and relationship, the fulfillment of which provides the individual with the *self-confidence* to express personal needs and desires – without fear of abandonment or retribution; second, as the civil and juridical recognition of dignity so as to grant the *self-respect* required to view oneself as a competent, moral subject; and third, recognition of the individual’s capacities, achievements and potential contribution to social and political life, that is, *self-esteem*.

Underpinning such an approach are important questions such as:

- To what extent is a school a community of shared identities and interests?
- To what extent does a school promote love, rights and solidarity, from which self-confidence, self-esteem and self-respect emerge through collective intersubjectivities?
- If a school provides the opportunities (functions) to develop the human capabilities that underpin such a view of wellbeing, can it be called ‘inclusive’? (adapted from Watson et al., 2012).

While the human need for recognition is presumed in various models and approaches to education, the explicit link between recognition and schools is not widespread in educational discourses (Bingham, 2001) and recognition theory has not been applied to the issue of wellbeing in schools. Recognition theory holds potential to explore how wellbeing in schools could be improved through increased emphasis on the ways in which love, rights and solidarity are embedded within the culture and practices of schools.

How is Recognition Theory Applied in this Research?

For Honneth (2007), a central principle of critical theory is that it must be grounded not in abstract principles but must also have a social foundation. If a theory is to do more than merely appeal to the ethical standards upon which it bases its critique, then it must prove the existence of empirically effective forms of morality upon which it can legitimately build (Honneth, 2007). Challenged by Honneth himself to ensure theory is grounded in social practice we now describe how we have sought to apply recognition theory to this study in ways that ensure its foundations are built upon the lived everyday experience of those for whom recognition is such a vital concern, that is, the students, teachers, principals and others who make up school communities in Australia today.

In the early stages of the development of this study, we sought to articulate a basis of understanding of how the three dimensions of recognition might be applied in this research. Our interest was to contextualize the three dimensions in the context of student wellbeing in schools, keeping in mind

that for Honneth, the three dimensions of recognition *are not* beliefs about oneself nor are they emotional states, but rather dynamic process in which a person comes to know who they are through the daily encounters of life, including in relationships with others.

One of the first decisions made was to recalibrate the language of the three dimensions in ways that are consistent to the theoretical underpinnings of Honneth’s work but also intelligible in schools settings. The following descriptions of the three dimensions were agreed upon:

Love → Cared for

Rights → Respected

Solidarity → Valued

Replacing *love* with *cared for* was a deliberate attempt to align the study with Honneth’s emphasis that love includes relationships with significant others, including relationships of care such as parent–child, whereby one has the confidence to express one’s needs and desires, while at the same time acknowledging that the word *love* raises many difficult issues in the context of school settings when it is understood as primarily in terms of erotic or romantic love. In replacing the word *rights* with *respected*, we sought to maintain the spirit of the second dimension whilst negotiating the contested nature of children’s rights in relation to the status of children, in particular in schools settings (Graham, Shipway, & Fitzgerald, 2009). Replacing the word *solidarity* with *valued* was possibly the most obvious in terms of identifying a word that was readily understood by all participants in the study, including the young students in primary school who participated in Phase Two of the study.

It was also important in the early stages of the study to keep in sight that recognition is not neutral nor just a positive act. Key forms of exclusion, insult, degradation of both the individual and/or a group to which they belong, are also ‘acts of recognition’ which can be seen as violating self confidence, self respect and self-esteem. For the purposes of this study, we have sought to ground our inquiry into misrecognition and non-recognition in Honneth’s “empirically grounded phenomenology” (1995, p. 162) whereby he seeks to be open to ‘hurt feelings’ in order to provide insights into the source of struggles over recognition. Honneth (1995) says: “negative emotional reactions” (p. 135) constitute an “affective source of knowledge” (p. 143) and thus provide us with insights into the nature of a particular situation and the source of struggle. Put simply, Honneth (1995) suggests that struggles over recognition begin with hurt feelings arising from an injustice, and these can motivate collective protest and struggle. Hence, as Thompson (2006) describes, “By examining the direction in which these relations are moving, we can better understand the idea of recognition which is emerging” (p. 164). With this in mind we sought to also capture how student experiences of non-recognition might be also be identified in the study.

The following table (Table 1) provides a summary of the three dimensions.

Table 1 Honneth’s dimensions of recognition as applied in this research

	Loved	Respected	Valued
What might this dimension look like in the study?	<p>In this study, we might hear a student say that they know they are loved and cared for because they feel safe to express their own needs and wants and/or that they trust that a certain teacher desires to help them to realise these needs and desires.</p> <p>We might hear a student say that they feel safe to tell a teacher that they are struggling with schoolwork, or being bullied or with family troubles. We might hear students say how much they care for other students in the school.</p> <p>We might hear a teacher say that they are concerned for a student for his or her own sake.</p>	<p>In this study, we are likely to hear regular reference to words such as respect, dignity and rights. However, in regard to the dimension of respect as understood in recognition theory, we are also looking for evidence of the actualisation of these into lived experiences. In other words, that they will have an ‘active’ dimension. For example, student may say that they feel respected in a school because they know they can express their opinion on a matter and that their view will be heard.</p>	<p>Reference to individual contributions to a shared project or to the school community will be examples of being valued. Esteem for a person for simply being a member of a group (e.g. recognition of the status of children) is not enough and also requires acknowledgement of the individual’s contribution to the community.</p>
How is this dimension different to other dimensions?	<p>All recognition theorists say that the human need for love and care is universal and to some extent cuts across culture and history. Love is the most personal and intimate of the three dimensions and is experienced as such, including through the experience of bodily integrity.</p>	<p>Respect is different to being valued and loved in that it appeals to that part of our identity that is shared with others – i.e. it is a universal dimension. For example, a child will experience recognition where they sense that there is respect for childhood, and that children are afforded the status of people. Where we are analysing data concerned with participants sense of social status we will be in the heartland of this dimension of recognition.</p>	<p>Valued is an individualised form of recognition and finds its expression in the recognition of an individual’s contribution. It is therefore different to respect (which is the experience of recognition of humanity) and love which is a more intimate and personal form of recognition usually afforded by a significant person in a child / individual’s life.</p>

	Loved		Respected	Valued
What key words are associated with this dimension?	Recognition	Care, trust, affection, friendship, affection, fondness, tenderness, body, safe.	Respect, self-respect, rights, participation, responsibilities, capacity, autonomy, citizen, status.	Self esteem, individual, unique, special, capacity, talent, skill, ability, gift, belonging, peer, colleague, bond, binds/unites/brings together, power, values, achievement, rules, hierarchy.
	Misrecognition	Exclusion	Insult	Degradation
What key question is associated with this dimension?	Who is significant?		Who counts?	Who is valued? What binds us together?

In summary, recognition theory lends considerable significance to this study on wellbeing in schools. Although Honneth himself does not fully include children in his analysis, considering them only as recipients of love and care (dimension 1), not in terms of rights and respect (dimension 2) or solidarity and esteem (dimension 3), the above section indicates how these have been appropriated and translated within the current research.

We turn now to the second broad theoretical interest underpinning this research, which is the interdisciplinary field of Childhood Studies. This particular approach to conceptualising children and childhood contributes important complementary theorising that links the significance of recognition with our interest in the ways in which students’ own perspectives potentially contribute substantially to understanding ‘wellbeing’ in schools.

2.2 Childhood Studies

Different academic disciplines have developed various ways of approaching the study of children. Various disciplines consider childhood as: an experience; a biological fact; a social category; an artistic and literary construct; a category for historical and demographic analysis; a category of personhood; and as a locus for human rights and policy interventions. Childhood Studies is an emergent paradigm, catalyzed from within sociology and social anthropology (James & James, 2008), born from a critique of narrow versions of ‘the child’ and by a commitment to interdisciplinary approaches to research and teaching (Woodhead, 2009). A relatively new academic field of inquiry arising and developing in the 1980s and 90s, Childhood Studies offers the potential for

interdisciplinary research that provokes new ways of looking at children and childhood, and how these can be researched and theorised. This includes taking into account a wider range of childhoods than traditionally represented in social research, including diverse global and local experiences in the temporal dimensions of both past and present (Woodhead, 2009).

Childhood Studies has been defined by James and James (2008) as, “The interdisciplinary study of the early period of the human life-course that is legally recognized and socially (as well as, in part, scientifically) defined as childhood, as distinct from adulthood” (p.25). While this definition is neat and succinct, it doesn’t altogether capture the essence or the *raison d’être* of Childhood Studies. Childhood Studies points to the importance of *childhood* as a conceptual category and as a theoretical orientation for the study of *children*, and asserts that children are worthy of study in their own right and moreover, has a strong emphasis on developing ‘child-centred’ scholarship (Kehily, 2009). The notion of respect is evident in the literature of the 1990s, that demanded that children be respected as subjectivities, as meaning-makers, as social actors and as rights-bearing citizens (Woodhead, 2009).

In terms of the broad interests of contemporary Childhood Studies, Woodhead (2009) suggests there are three key features: the social construction of childhood; the status and rights of children; and childhood and adulthood (intergenerational relationships).

The first key feature, relating to childhood, encompasses the many senses in which childhood is socially constructed & culturally situated, which is mediated by beliefs and these have implications for the ways it is studied and theorised (see, for example, Jenks, 2009). The social construction of childhood is perhaps best explained by James and Prout (1997), who identify several key features of ‘the new sociology of childhood’:

- Childhood is understood as a social construction. As such it provides an interpretive frame for contextualizing the early years of human life. Childhood, as distinct from biological immaturity, is neither a natural nor a universal feature of human groups but appears as a specific structural and cultural component of many societies.
- Childhood is a variable of social analysis. It can never be entirely divorced from other variables such as class, gender and ethnicity. Comparative and cross-cultural analysis reveals a variety of childhoods rather than a single or universal phenomenon.
- Children’s social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right, independent of the perspective and concern of adults.
- Children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. Children are not just passive subjects of social structures and processes.
- Ethnography is a particularly useful methodology for the study of childhood. It allows children a more direct voice and participation in the production of sociological data than is possible through experimental or survey styles of research.
- Childhood is a phenomenon in relation to which the double hermeneutic of the social sciences is acutely present. That is to say, to proclaim a new paradigm of childhood sociology is also to engage in and respond to the process of reconstructing childhood

(James & Prout, 1990, pp. 8 – 9).

The second key feature of Childhood Studies is about recognising the status and rights of children (e.g., children's 'agency' displacing notions of 'dependency') as a starting point for research, policy and practice. Conventional discourses of the "innocent child, the irrational and sinful child, and the developing child" (Woodhead, 2009, p. 23) have shifted, replaced in part by new discourses of the child as a rights-bearing citizen. This is most powerfully expressed through the 1989 UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (Lansdown, 2001). Critically, this key feature of Childhood Studies is about:

...avoiding the objectification of children within scientific research traditions, encouraging research with children, not just on children, including looking for ways that children can actively contribute to the research process as participants in more than just a tokenistic sense (Woodhead, 2009, p. 23).

The third key feature, which is about childhood and adulthood, acknowledges that studying childhood is about generational and inter-generational relationships (Alanen & Mayall, 2001; Woodhead, 2009). Woodhead (2009) asserts that "children develop largely through their relationships with adults; they become adults and their status as children is defined in part by reference to largely adult defined cultural expectation of maturity and immaturity" (p.24). Moreover, Woodhead proposes that the binary between childhood and adulthood is socially constructed, and that incorporating adulthood within the study of childhood helps to deconstruct the myths surrounding maturity by encouraging a subtle and nuanced view of the many roles and identities humans adopt during their lifetime. Woodhead suggests Childhood Studies can assist in breaking down boundaries between various academic and professional constructions of adult-child relationships.

Childhood Studies, then, recognises that the 'immaturity' of children is a biological fact of life, but the ways we understand such immaturity is socially constructed (James & Prout, 1997). It challenges notions of children as natural, passive, dependent, vulnerable, incompetent and incomplete, i.e. as children being 'seen and not heard'; 'becomings' rather than 'beings' etc. Finally, Childhood Studies proposes:

- the lives, identities and experiences of children cannot be generalised or universalised;
- childhood cannot be separated from other factors and experiences such as class, gender, ethnicity etc that shape identity;
- children and their relationships are important and worthy of our close attention;
- children are active in the construction and determination of their lives;
- children are social agents.

Childhood Studies signals the importance of capturing the views of children and young people. There is increasing evidence that providing opportunities for children and young people to have a say has a number of benefits. Their participation has been acknowledged as a powerful instrument in raising levels of social and emotional functioning, assisting children to develop a sense of belonging in the community, gain new skills and experiences, meet new people, build a sense of their own agency and feel respected (Alderson, 2000; Lansdown, 2006; Morrow, 1999). There is also evidence from the procedural justice field that when children feel heard, they have greater trust and positive feelings about the institution and its perceived legitimacy (Weisz, Wingrove, & Faith-Slaker, 2008).

Opportunities for children and young people to express their views in the context of school improvement, however, still remain very limited (Graham & Fitzgerald, 2010; Tisdall, 2009).

Incorporating a Childhood Studies perspective in this research challenges notions of children as passive, dependent and unable to know what's in their own best interests (James & Prout, 1997). The underlying interests of such an interdisciplinary approach suggest that children's lives, identities and experiences cannot be known or responded to without hearing what they have to tell us about these; that matters concerning their wellbeing are likely to be nuanced and hence not readily generalised or universalised; that children are active in the construction and determination of their lives, including how they contribute to their own wellbeing; and that their relationships are important and worthy of our close attention (Morrow, 2009; Woodhead, 2009). The implications of applying such interests to an empirical study focused on children's wellbeing have not previously been explored in Australia.

Further, interdisciplinary perspectives in research concerning children's wellbeing are essential to the 'whole child' approach. As Hamilton and Redmond (2010) point out, such an approach is important in "linking social and emotional wellbeing to material wellbeing, to physical health, and more generally to the Aristotelian idea of the 'good life', including the capacity to be reflexive and critical, and to be an active agent" (p.6).

This research extends scholarship in the Childhood Studies field which, as mentioned previously has, to date, been largely confined to the United Kingdom, Norway, Germany and the United States (Kehily, 2009). By applying this scholarship to the context of wellbeing in Australian schools, it not only generates important empirical evidence about how wellbeing is understood and practised, but also contributes to insights on how particular constructions of children and childhood shape such evidence. The need to pursue novel approaches that apply interdisciplinary, child-centred scholarship to the 'real world' conditions of childhood, and the lived experiences of children, is now considered to be the frontier challenge for the Childhood Studies movement internationally (Kehily, 2009).

2.3 Why recognition theory *and* Childhood Studies?

Together, recognition theory and Childhood Studies offer important insights into how the wellbeing of students in schools is understood and practiced. As outlined above, Childhood Studies provides casts an interdisciplinary lens on fundamental questions about the identity of children ('What is a child?', 'Who is a child?'), and about the socially constructed nature of childhood ('How can we make sense of childhood?'). Such a perspective, with its emphasis on the child as a competent agent who actively contributes to shaping his/her social world, invites us to listen to the insights, challenges and critiques of children, rather than viewing these as disruptions (Jenks, 1996). Since listening to children and responding to their calls for change is central to the interests of Childhood Studies, recognition theory offers a synergistic theoretical 'partner' in that it suggests that such listening and responding begin with, or create the conditions for, the idea of recognition.

Recognition theory views humans as having an imperative need for recognition, and for recognising others, a view which acknowledges the centrality of relationships for wellbeing, including that of children (Watson et al., 2012). Moreover, as we have described above, recognition theory does not

just acknowledge the importance of relationships, it offers theoretical impetus to the importance of listening to children and young people. It does this by drawing attention to the dialogical conditions of reciprocity in which such listening takes place and a response is formulated (based on the premise that a just society would be one in which everyone gets due recognition).

The recognition of children and childhood called for by Childhood Studies requires a profound transformation in the political and social landscape of contemporary society. Childhood Studies argues that children and young people, as one group demanding and needing recognition, convey a strong sense of being “marginalised and excluded, left out and ignored” (Thompson, 2006, p. 7) as a result of their being constructed as incompetent, irrational and in need of protection (Woodhead, 2009). Recognition theory deepens our understanding of such constructions of childhood by acknowledging experiences of misrecognition and non-recognition arising from them, including the impact of misrecognition and non-recognition on the status, identity and wellbeing of children and young people. Recognition theory deepens such calls for recognition from within the field Childhood Studies by positing that such experiences of misrecognition can only be transformed through a struggle for recognition. It further suggests that struggles form the normative landscape of being fully human and must be freely played out for - as Tully suggests, struggles for and over recognition are “practices of freedom” (2001, p. 22) and thus very much a part of daily life. Recognition theory thus further compliments Childhood Studies in that it directs attention to the formulation of democratic processes of the recognition of children in schools such that struggles over recognition can be played as freely as possible. In summary, Childhood Studies and recognition theory are ideal theoretical partners for this study in that their common, albeit differentiated interest in identity, relationship and social change, lie at the heart of this study and its interest in understanding wellbeing and how it is practised in schools.

We turn now to a description of the research design and methodology for the study, which further highlights the key role of recognition theory and Childhood Studies in exploring how wellbeing is understood and practised in schools.

3 Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the design of this research project and its key methodological features. It begins with a justification of the mixed methods approach and an outline of the project phases. This is followed by detailed descriptions of each of the phases, including data collection tools which have been developed and refined in consultation with students, data analysis, participants and sampling procedures for each phase. The chapter ends with ethical considerations and the limitations of the study.

As signalled above, the research takes a critical constructivist approach (exemplified through the use of recognition theory and Childhood Studies), which allows for an intensive examination of the way wellbeing is conceptualised and currently practised in schools. A mixed methods approach, generating important descriptive and thematically coded data supports the theoretical analysis of child wellbeing. The views and perspectives of students and teachers, which are central to the research, have been sought through semi-structured interviews, focus groups and an interactive,

online survey instrument. The analysis of data has been informed by the relevant state and national policy context in which they were derived and by conceptual categories offered through recognition theory and Childhood Studies.

As outlined below, this research involves four phases, each developed with a focus on the research aim and objectives outlined in Section 1.3:

- Phase 1:** Analysis of key relevant local, state and Commonwealth policy regarding wellbeing ($N=80$)
- Phase 2:** Interviews with teachers and principals ($N=89$); focus groups with primary and secondary students ($N=606$)
- Phase 3:** Online surveys with primary students ($N=3906$), secondary students ($N= 5,362$) and school staff ($N=707$) across the three school regions
- Phase 4:** Synthesis of findings and professional development for schools

The research was conducted across three Catholic school regions⁶, each within a different Australian state, selected on the basis that they offered contrasting approaches to the implementation of wellbeing policy and programs in schools. Participation of students and staff was voluntary and anonymous. Researchers have been assisted by an expert Wellbeing Advisory Group (WAG) to help guide each of the above phases. This group comprised members of the research team from the Centre for Children & Young People at Southern Cross University, primary and secondary school students, teachers, principals, staff from the Regional Education Office and ARC Linkage partners.

Phases 1 and 2 provide qualitative data to progress the first research objective: *To develop a detailed understanding of how 'wellbeing' in schools is currently understood by students, teachers and educational policy makers*; Phase 3 provides quantitative data to further progress this first objective and to address the second research objective: *To investigate the potential of recognition theory for advancing understanding and improvements in relation to student wellbeing*; and Phase 4 provides data to progress the third research objective: *To generate new knowledge about how educational policy, programs and practices in schools could more positively impact on student wellbeing*.

The data collected in Phase 1 has been analysed using critical discourse analysis (CDA). The interview and focus group discussion data collected in Phase 2 were transcribed, coded and analysed for re-occurring themes to look for patterns in the data using the NVivo software program. The students' illustrations and/or lists of school improvements gathered in the Phase 2 focus groups were further analysed for repeated images/words and related transcript discussions that matched the drawings. The data collected in Phase 3 were cleaned and analysed using IBM-SPSS quantitative analysis software.

⁶ Non-government Catholic school regions were selected for this study given a) one of the ARC Linkage grant partners comprised one such region; b) there were identified benefits in being able to broadly compare understandings and approaches to wellbeing within one system; and c) there were major difficulties securing ethical clearance to conduct the research in government schools (since they were not partnering on the research).

Mixed methods approaches allow researchers to capture data through multiple data collection instruments and to apply different methods of analysis to those data sets. Additionally mixing methods can perform different functions “to enrich or explain, or even contradict, rather than confirm or refute. It may even tell ‘different stories’ on the same subject” (Jones & Sumner, 2009, p. 6). Critically, Jones and Sumner (2009) strongly argue the case for researchers of children and young people’s wellbeing to adopt mixed methods approaches, in order to better explore and capture the multidimensionality of the concept. The mixed method approach employed in this study also includes a second method of data collection via online surveys that allows for students to disclose more, or different, than they might in a face-to-face interaction (see, for example Joinson, 2001). This was considered important in triangulating the results from Phase 2, as neither face-to-face or computer-assisted data collection methods with school aged children and young people are without their limitations and both methods have their strengths (Rew, Faan, Horner, Riesch, & Cauvin, 2004). Critically important though, is that child-centred scholarship requires that any methods employed (generating qualitative or quantitative data) are developed collaboratively with young people, a matter we took seriously in this study.

As one of the most governed groups and highest users of state services in Western societies, children and young people continue to have little, if any, input into the policy, research and practice decisions made about them (Gallagher, 2006; Rose, 1989; Tisdall & Bell, 2006). In contexts where children are afforded a say, there remain widespread concerns their views don’t necessarily influence change or improvement (Cairns, 2006; Davis, Farrier, & Whiting, 2006; Gallagher, 2006; Kirby & Bryson, 2002; Partridge, 2005). While “obtaining knowledge about childhood situations from their insider perspective has the potential for change and transformation,” documentation of the diversity of ways in which children can participate in research remains the exception rather than the norm (Kellett, 2010, p. 8).

This study sought to include students in a variety of ways:

- As part of the project governance - four students (two primary and two secondary) were members of the Wellbeing Advisory Group. In addition to attending regular (three monthly) meetings over 2.5 years of the project, these students were also involved in the design and conduct of Phase 2 and Phase 3 data collection methods and tools, as well as other aspects of the study, including advice on ethics.
- As research advisors – primary and secondary students from a total of ten schools were involved in the refinement of the surveys and the design of the focus groups.
- As research participants – students were actively engaged through tailored focus group processes and surveys, which utilised innovative research tools to access, facilitate, interpret and report their understanding and experiences. These tools have built on recent innovations developed by the Centre for Children & Young People in tailored online surveys to increase interactivity and engagement.

Hence, this research makes an important contribution to the existing knowledge base concerning research *with* and *by*, as well as *on*, children (Kellett, 2010). It is important to note that participatory approaches do not ignore the voices of adults (Ennew & Plateau, 2004), as is seen in the meaningful

participation of adults in this study, namely teachers, principals and other relevant school staff (refer Sections 3.3 and 3.4).

Each of the phases of the research is now detailed in the following sections.

3.2 Phase 1: Policy Review

The first phase of the research, a comprehensive review of key policy relevant to wellbeing, has a foundational role in the mixed methods approach employed in this study. This phase, in addition to an extensive literature review, sets the context for and informs elements of the next phase of the research (semi-structured interviews and focus groups). Understanding how wellbeing is framed in current policy and policy-related documentation, and the implications of this, helps identify both areas of strength and existing gaps for consideration, as well as providing a platform for including policy in the dialogue with children, teachers and principals regarding student wellbeing and the potential of recognition theory and Childhood Studies as a conceptual approach to investigating this. Moreover, it is imperative that researchers utilise all possible sources of secondary data before setting out to collect primary data, as this informs not only the questions to be asked in the collection of primary data, but also deepens the researchers' understanding of participant responses. This reflects the context-sensitivity of best-practice approaches to policy analysis (Brunner, 2006).

The dominant focus of the review is education-based policy from federal and state government, and non-government sectors. However, policy-related documentation from sectors other than education with relevance to wellbeing has also been reviewed to provide a broader context for understanding how wellbeing is currently perceived and situated in relation to children and young people.

Phase 1 Terminology

The policy analysis in Phase 1 utilises critical discourse analysis (CDA) to identify how wellbeing is positioned within national, state and local policy contexts. Given there is considerable slippage in the way key terms are used and/or applied in policy analysis work, coupled with a key interest of CDA being the way in which meaning is created in and through language, the following definitions function as a starting point for analysis.

Policy is defined as “a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by an organization or individual” (Oxford Dictionary, 2013). In the context of this review, the term policy is used specifically to refer to documentation that has been identified as such by the source producing it (for example, if policy is used in the title or text of the document).

Policy-related documentation is the term used in this review to refer to documents related to a course or general plan of action (to be) adopted and pursued by government, institutions or individuals, which are not specifically identified as policy. Policy-related documentation includes frameworks, protocols, procedures and strategic plans that have been identified as relevant and included in the review. The following definitions (sourced from the Oxford Dictionary, 2013) best capture the meanings of these terms in the context of this review.

A **framework** is “a basic structure underlying a system, concept, or text”, in this case, underlying systems relevant to student wellbeing.”

A **protocol** is “the accepted or established code of procedure or behaviour in any group, organization, or situation.”

Procedures are “an established or official way of doing something; a series of actions conducted in a certain order or manner.”

A **strategic plan** is “a set of statements identifying the long-term or overall aims and interests for an organisation, together with the specific strategies designed to achieve the targets set for each of these.” Strategic plans referred to in this review are predominantly in the sectors of education, training and health.

Programs and services are some of the specific means of implementing policies, frameworks and plans. Programs are “a set of related measures or activities with a particular long-term aim.” Services are “a system supplying a public need,” in this context, in relation to education and/or wellbeing, or an aspect of this. Occasional reference is made within this review to programs and services relevant to student wellbeing. However, analysis of specific programs and services is not included, as the lack of clarity in defining and understanding wellbeing makes identifying them difficult and subjective.

Phase 1 Data Collection Methods

The methods used to access the above kind of documentation were internet searches and a telephone audit. Whilst every care was taken to locate all relevant documents it is likely that some exist that have not been accessed, as inclusion of documentation is contingent on it being openly accessible online, easily locatable with the search terms used or known to the respondents participating in the telephone audit.

An online search for relevant policy and policy-related documentation has been conducted on the websites of:

- National and state government departments
- Regional and state Catholic Education Offices
- Independent schools by state

An initial search was undertaken in July 2012 and repeated in June 2013. The keywords that were used in the online searches are: wellbeing; well-being; welfare; and pastoral care. Wellbeing was identified as a focus of the documentation if the term wellbeing was used in the title and on the basis of reference to wellbeing within the text (particularly in relation to the aim or purpose of the document).

Following the initial online search an audit was conducted by telephone of all state government education departments and Catholic Education Offices. This audit was undertaken to ensure that all relevant wellbeing policy and policy related documentation has been accessed, including any documentation that might not be available online. Relevant personnel in each state and Catholic

Education Office were telephoned by a researcher from the CCYP and, using scripted interview questions (see Appendix A), asked about policy related to wellbeing and any documentation guiding wellbeing. Respondents were also asked to email any relevant documentation to the researcher.

The CCYP researcher contacted government education departments and Catholic Education Offices in all eight states. Some offices requested that the questions be sent by email, in preference to participating in a telephone interview. Not all offices responded to telephone and email requests for information. In total, four telephone interviews were conducted and three email responses to interview questions were received.

Six of the interviewees referred the interviewer to the department or office website to access documentation. One interviewee sent electronic copies of relevant documentation. The telephone audit resulted in one additional document (from a state education department) being secured and added to the review.

Phase 1 Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion of a document in the analysis is determined by the extent to which it is relevant to student wellbeing. Documents are included if they meet the following criteria:

- (i) policy or policy-related documentation is relevant to children and young people; and
- (ii) the terms wellbeing, pastoral care or welfare are used in the title, aim or purpose; and/or
- (iii) important reference is made to wellbeing within the text of the document

Policy and policy-related documents that focus on pastoral care are included in the analysis because of the frequent conflation of pastoral care and wellbeing in documentation and discussion. The Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) (2006), for example, states that pastoral care is the base on which wellbeing is built. In another example, two of the respondents to the telephone audit also made specific reference to pastoral care documentation in response to being asked about wellbeing policy.

The distinction between wellbeing and welfare is that a wellbeing approach emphasises primary prevention and early intervention, whereas a welfare approach emphasises intervention and postvention (CEOM, 2006). However, the decision has been made to include documents focusing on student welfare in this analysis as “anecdotally the terms ‘welfare’ and ‘wellbeing’ have been used interchangeably” (CEOM, 2006, p.2).

A total of 99 documents were secured using the methods outlined, 68 of which are specifically from education sectors. Following review of the documents, using the inclusion criteria noted above, 80 documents were included in the analysis, 58 of which are specifically from education sectors. The number and source of documents secured and included in the analysis are indicated in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Documents secured for inclusion in wellbeing policy analysis

Document Source	Number secured	Number included in analysis
Australian national education documents	14	8
State government education documents	42	34
Sector documents		
Catholic Education	18	16
Independent schools	0	0
Australian national documents– sectors other than education	19	13
State government documents – sectors other than education	12	9

In addition, 21 webpages with a specific focus on wellbeing have been identified in the education sector and included in the review. Five of these are pages on Catholic Education websites.

Phase 1 Data Analysis

Phase 1 data analysis involved a critical analysis of relevant local, state and national policy regarding wellbeing in schools, with particular attention to the ways in which children and young people are recognised in educational and wellbeing policies. This analysis is premised on an understanding of policy as discourse (Fairclough, 1995) and focuses on the discursive positioning of wellbeing in education policy and policy-related documentation. Although wellbeing is generally conceptualised and defined as multidimensional, there is lack of clarity (as signalled earlier) around the definitions and theorists may not always agree on the specific dimensions and their components (Urbis, 2011). Consequently, the focus of this analysis has been the positioning of wellbeing, as indicated by explicit usage of the term in the text.

The discursive positioning of wellbeing has been explored through critical discourse analysis, which is considered an eminently suitable tool for critical policy analysis (Thomas, 2005). Critical discourse analysis involves exploring the relationship between (a) discursive practice, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes, to investigate the ways social and political domination are reproduced in text (Fairclough, 1995). The ‘critical’ aspect involves exploring and exposing the hidden connections, to make these evident for intervention and subsequent change. The analysis is therefore interested in problematising notions of wellbeing in policy discourses to critically examine the implicit representations of the ‘problems’ that wellbeing policy intends to solve (Bacchi, 2012), the discourses that circumscribe these and the means by which approaches to wellbeing are to be implemented in addressing concerns.

An analytical framework has been developed to gain a deeper understanding of how wellbeing is understood (including the contexts for this) and the ways in which children and young people are recognised in policy-related documents. The framework allows for assessment of the way policy indicates that wellbeing can be addressed, promoted or enhanced. These findings are brought into dialogue with the lived experiences and perspectives of students, teachers and principals sought in the second and third phases of the project. The framework categorises the policy and policy-related documents secured according to: the focus and primary purpose of the document; the contexts for wellbeing; and the domains for implementation of wellbeing.

The analytical framework identifies four primary domains for implementation of approaches to wellbeing: *relationships; systems and structures; environment; and teaching and learning*. These are the domains in which the documentation indicates or implies that wellbeing can be addressed, promoted or enhanced. These four domains are as follows:

1. **Relationships domain** refers to the multiple relationships occurring in relation to educational contexts. Primarily this includes relationships between teachers and students as a key area in which wellbeing can potentially be promoted or enhanced. Because of the import given to teachers in relation to students, this category also extends to include teacher wellbeing and any means of addressing or enhancing this. The relationships category is further extended in some documentation to include other school staff, such as principals or other employees. Importantly, the relationships domain also includes relationships between students and parents, as well as parents and the school. Wider community engagement for both school and students is a further context for student wellbeing.

2. **Systems and structures domain** includes policies and programs that are implemented by the school or organisation that potentially impact student wellbeing. These can be specifically applicable to the school context or relevant across wider contexts. Systems for provision of, or referral to, specialist services such as mental health, for example, are included in this domain. This category also includes the provision of resources relevant to wellbeing (other than curriculum) such as professional development for teachers.

3. **Environment domain** includes the school culture and ethos as potentially impacting on wellbeing, as well as physical aspects of the environment. In a lot of documentation, reference is made to the school environment or culture in relation to wellbeing in terms of its impact on or relevance to wellbeing, but this is not always accompanied by concrete definitions or descriptions, or more practical means of application to attend to wellbeing in this domain.

4. **Teaching and learning domain** primarily includes pedagogy and curriculum in the education context. In non-education sectors it also refers to the provision of information.

These domains emerged from analysis of the policy and policy-related documentation, and our confidence in the usefulness and robustness of this analytical framework is reinforced by two of the three 'lighthouse' documents analysed (and also by findings from the second phase of this research project). The analytical framework corresponds closely with domains of practice identified in Queensland (Queensland Government Department of Education, Training and Employment, 2012) and South Australian (Government of South Australia Department of Education and Children's Services, 2007) frameworks linking learning and wellbeing, confirming for us that the analytical framework developed resonates soundly at a practice level.

These domains are not exclusive and there are clearly areas of overlap. Relationships between teachers and students, for example, may be a forum for enhancing wellbeing with regards to the actual relationship (incorporating care and respect, or modelling appropriate behaviour), the curriculum (teaching social skills in physical education and health), systems (such as noticing if children require specialist services and facilitating referral to these) and environment (providing an emotional climate that enhances wellbeing and physical environment in which children feel safe).

The findings from Phase 1 (reported later in this Volume) informed the development of Phase 2 of the research. The following section provides details of Phase 2 participants, data collection and analysis.

3.3 Phase 2: Focus groups with students and semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers

Phase 2 of the research involved a combination of semi-structured individual interviews with teachers and principals and focus groups with students, from the three participating regions. The teacher interviews are consistent with critical constructivist approaches and rely on dialogic methods that combine observation and interviewing to foster conversation and reflection. This assists with the questioning of deeper assumptions, values, attitudes and beliefs about wellbeing in schools. The student focus groups also relied on dialogic methods but additionally utilised a drawing method refined in consultation with students who were consulted as part of a pilot process. This approach helped to ensure the focus group interviews elicited rich data concerning how students construct wellbeing and the ways in which they perceive the role of recognition in relation to these constructs. The interviews and focus groups were conducted across three Catholic school regions (A, B & C) in June and July, 2012 and the data have been transcribed and analysed using NVivo software.

Phase 2 Participants and Recruitment

Phase 2 schools were identified in consultation with the research partners and with regional Directors of Education (or their delegates) from each of the three regions. These regions included one from regional New South Wales, one from metropolitan Victoria and one from regional Queensland, selected because they potentially offer contrasting approaches to the implementation of wellbeing policy and programs. Schools were selected to provide a breadth of insights from both primary and secondary schools with a diverse range of sizes, socioeconomic, geographic and cultural characteristics.

Once schools were identified, a letter outlining the purpose and approach of the study, together with an invitation to participate, was sent to school principals. Once schools consented to participating in the study ($N=18$), students and teachers were selected for focus groups by the school principals or other school contacts (such as wellbeing co-ordinators, deputy principals and teachers in consultation with the principal researchers) using criteria provided by the researchers consistent with the diversity described above. Letters of invitation (including consent forms) outlining the research aim, process, methods and ethical considerations were sent to teachers, students and parents/carers (see Appendix B). The letters of invitation formed the basis of communication with students, and were adapted to ensure the information was relevant for participants of all ages, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

From each of the 18 schools, the researchers requested interviews with the principal and four teachers about their perspectives on wellbeing in schools and the best approaches to facilitating and supporting this. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with 89 staff consisting of 18 principals and 71 teachers (four teachers from 17 schools and three teachers from one school). These interviews were conducted in June and July 2012, and took, on average, 45 minutes each.

Students recruited for the study were from Years 1/2 (aged 6-7), Years 5/6 (aged 11-12), Year 8 (aged 14) and Year 11 (aged 17) in schools across the 3 regions. From each of the 18 schools, focus group interviews took place with four groups of ten students: two groups of Year 8 students and two groups of Year 11 students in each of the Secondary schools; and two groups of Year 1 and 2 students (combined) and two groups of Year 5 and 6 students (combined) in the primary schools.

In total, there were 67 focus groups from 18 schools; 13 schools held four focus groups, two schools held three focus groups, two schools held two focus groups and one school held five focus groups. Focus group sizes ranged from one ($n = 1$) to 16 ($n = 1$), with a mode of ten ($n = 28$). In total, 606 students participated in the focus groups: Year 1-2, $n = 139$; Year 5-6, $n = 150$, Year 8, $n = 160$, Year 11, $n = 157$. The focus group discussions took approximately 30 minutes for Year 1-2, and 60 minutes for Years 5-6, Year 8 and Year 11. These were conducted in June and July, 2012.

Consistent with ethical requirements, students were not invited who could possibly find participation in the focus group stressful or difficult; full consent to participate was sought from the students and their parents/guardians; consent was discussed with the students at the beginning of the focus groups; and students were advised they could ask questions about the process or leave at any time.

Phase 2 Data Collection Methods

Interviews provide a particularly useful means of data collection for this research as the method allows the researcher to investigate the perspectives of the participants (Kumar, 1996). Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals and teachers at each school. Accessing the deeply held assumptions, beliefs and values of teachers that drive their pedagogical practice required a creative, reflexive methodological approach (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006) that has been refined and applied in the interviews for this research.

Interviews with principals and teachers sought their perspectives on a range of issues including: how they would generally describe or define wellbeing; whether and to what extent policy shaped their understandings and approach; how they perceived wellbeing was facilitated and supported in their schools (what helps and hinders); the impact of leadership on wellbeing in schools; the relationship between teacher and student wellbeing; and how the concept of recognition was perceived in relation to wellbeing (see Appendix C for full interview schedule).

Focus groups with students followed a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix D) and consisted of four 'brainstorming' categories on wellbeing, these being: the students' individual definitions of wellbeing; who in their lives they saw as affecting their wellbeing; what it felt like to be cared for, respected and valued (the categories in this section link to recognition theory); and finally, the children were asked to imagine an ideal school that supported their wellbeing. Open-ended questions were asked at each stage of the brainstorming activities.

The final section of the focus groups, entitled 'Imagining great schools,' comprised a group drawing and/or writing activity. Students were asked to imagine what a great wellbeing school might look like. Further prompt questions included 'if schools were to take on board these insights, how would they be different to schools now?' Year 1 and 2 students mainly created group drawings (there were

several individual drawings), and Year 5 and 6 students created individual drawings or lists, depending on the flow of the focus group. The older students usually wrote down their responses.

These drawing and writing methods used in the focus groups allowed for an in-depth exploration of what wellbeing meant to the participants and how it was facilitated in school. Drawing and writing further allowed for a more relaxed, student-led discussion resulting in the students having an increased personal say in the focus groups (Fargas-Malet, McSherry, Larkin, & Robinson, 2010). As such, this element of the focus groups created a stronger participatory focus with the students. The sessions produced rich data concerning how students construct their wellbeing and the ways in which they perceive its facilitation within school.

Drawings have been used previously in studies that aim to elicit children's perceptions of their environment and their lived experience (see, for example, Lehman-Frisch, Authier, & Dufaux, 2012). Similarly, very young children have participated in imagining a future state of their environment and what might be important for them in that environment (Cunningham, Jones, & Dillon, 2003).

All individual teacher interviews and student focus group interviews were audio recorded using high quality digital recorders to offset background noise and 'overtalk' in the focus groups. Written documentation generated through the focus group activities also provided supplementary data. This was recorded using large sheets of paper (A0 size) and smaller sheets for individual activities. It was intended that the written documentation would serve several purposes - to help "fill the gaps" in the recordings, guide the focus group discussion and also serve as a reference point for students throughout the focus group process - this process was effective.

Phase 2 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is a process of inductive reasoning, thinking and theorising that is "dynamic, intuitive and creative" (Basit, 2003, p. 143). Hence, qualitative analysis is not a discreet procedure that is carried out only in the final stages of research, instead it continues throughout the life of the project (Basit, 2003). The process is subjective and there is no one 'right' way to analyse qualitative data (Neuman, 2007). Usually, qualitative data are organised into categories based on similar features or themes (Neuman, 2004). This is done through the coding of data, which is, in essence, two concurrent activities consisting of mechanical data reduction and the analytic categorisation of the data (Marvasti, 2004; Neuman, 2004). The intentional structure of the interviews and focus groups, moving from conceptualisations of wellbeing to the relevance of recognition concepts, guided both the mechanical data reduction and the analytic categorising of data.

The size of this project and the depth and complexity of the data warranted the use of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (Phelps, Fisher, & Ellis, 2007). Computer-based coding allows researchers to:

"...separately identify, on the same passage, a range of contextual, action, responsive or other factors, with any of these codes used in any combination, as appropriate, across any of the data. Immediately data are coded in this way, almost limitless possibilities for review, sorting, shifting, combination and comparison of text segments become available, with original source context available as required" (Bazeley, 2009, p. 5).

For these reasons, the 'NVivo' software package for qualitative data analysis was used to organise and analyse the unstructured information contained in the interviews (QSR International, 2012). The interviews were transcribed, coded and analysed for re-occurring themes to look for patterns in the data using the NVivo software program. There is a subjective aspect inherent in reinterpreting other people's responses (Kinchin, Streatfield, & Hay, 2010) and the constructivist approach employed in this research design allows for this subjective aspect to be acknowledged.

There were approximately 400 images gathered from the participants' drawings and/or written lists of ways school could be improved for wellbeing. These images were collated into age cohorts and then analysed for repeated pictures and words. Related transcript discussions were further sourced and coded into themes to align with the drawing/s created from the focus group session. The researchers took a reflexive approach in analysing the students' visual data and written lists (see Buckingham, 2009) and triangulated the analysis with reference to transcribed data of conversations that took place within the groups in respect to their images and words. As Buckingham (2009) advises, the researchers remained self-reflective when analysing the children and young people's visual data and lists of words and related transcripts, as this type of visual data can offer only one representation of a reality.

The findings from Phase 2 of the research directly informed the development of items for the online survey used in Phase 3.

3.4 Phase 3: Online survey

Phase 3 involved developing and administering online surveys for students and teachers (using Qualtrics software) to gather quantitative data regarding the conceptualisations of wellbeing identified during Phases 1 and 2. These surveys also included questions about the importance of relationships and recognition for student wellbeing.

Phase 3 Participants

Principals of all schools in each of the three regions were invited to participate in the student and staff surveys. A broadcast mail was sent out to schools by the regional offices, providing principals with information about the survey, an invitation for teachers and survey links. Schools that chose to opt in under this method contacted the CCYP directly to request their unique school code, parental consent forms, further information and links to the online survey. Based on previous experience the researchers set in place specific processes designed to ensure close collaboration with key members of staff. This also aligned with the advice of researchers in Britain who used an online survey instrument with a large sample of secondary schools (Madge et al., 2012).

The intended number of participants was 5400 (600 participants from each survey cohort, from each school region). It was important that the sample size would be large enough to collect survey responses from a range of students and teachers from diverse schools and socio-geographical contexts. The sample size of 600 per cohort in each school region would enable multivariate statistical analyses, such as factor analyses to be conducted on each cohort within each diocese and will achieve adequate statistical power for results to be reliable.

The final numbers of schools, staff and students that participated in the online survey are outlined in Tables 3, 4 and 5. A total of 9975 students and staff participated in the online survey. Table 3 presents the number of male, female and total participants who completed primary, secondary and staff surveys. Table 4 shows the number of staff, primary students and secondary students who participated in the survey in each school region. Table 5 shows the number of primary and secondary schools who participated in each region.

Table 3 Frequency of male, female and total participants in Phase 3 survey

	Primary Students	Secondary Students	Staff	Total
Males	1952	2562	166	4680
Females	1938	2791	541	5270
Missing (gender)	16	9	0	25
Total	3906	5362	707	9975

Table 4 Frequency of primary students, secondary students and staff participating in Phase 3 survey across regions

	Primary Students	Secondary Students	Staff	Total
A	2556	2685	385	5626
B	456	2172	195	2823
C	894	505	127	1526
Total	3906	5362	707	9975

Table 5 Frequency of primary and secondary schools participating in Phase 3 survey

	Primary Schools	Secondary Schools	Total
A	27	9	36
B	4	4	8
C	3	4	7
Total	34	17	51

Phase 3 Data Collection Methods

Four survey instruments were originally developed for Year 1 and 2 students (lower primary); Year 5 and 6 students (upper primary); Year 7-12 (secondary); and school staff. These survey instruments were placed online using Qualtrics software, and included a variety response options. In the pilot phase, the lower and upper primary survey instruments were also embedded with videos created by the researchers to facilitate understanding of key terms, progression through the survey and any challenges students may face in terms of reading ability and comprehension. The surveys were developed in an iterative process through numerous consultations with the WAG, consultation with school students, teachers and principals, and a formal pilot in May 2013 involving four schools in Region A.

One of the outcomes of the pilot study was that the lower primary survey was found to be too challenging for Year 1 and 2 students to complete without significant intervention from teachers.

This intervention would likely jeopardise the data collected as students might feel obliged to provide socially desirable responses, and teacher involvement in further explaining key terms and ideas may affect the way students perceive these concepts, thereby affecting responses given. For these reasons the researchers, in consultation with teachers, principals, partners and the WAG, decided not to proceed with the Lower Primary survey.

Another outcome of the pilot survey process was that some primary schools indicated they had technical constraints regarding downloading, watching and listening to the videos embedded in the surveys. Some of these constraints were related to software and other technical issues such as internet bandwidth, but also related to the issue of noise in the classroom. For these reasons, the researchers, in consultation with teachers, principals, project partners and the WAG, decided to remove the embedded videos and conducted a second primary school pilot using adjusted surveys. Pilot schools and schools that participated in the main survey did not report any technical difficulties or comprehension difficulties using the adjusted video-less survey tool.

Ultimately, three different surveys were used: one survey for teachers, principals and other school staff; and two surveys for students - primary (Years 3-6) and secondary school (Years 7-12). Many of the response options on the surveys consisted of 7-point Likert scales with only the end-points labelled, thus producing continuously scaled data. Other response options were categorical. The surveys were administered across the three school regions from mid-June to early August 2013.

The surveys build on previous work by the CCYP in developing computer-assisted tools that allow for greater engagement with children and young people. The economy and flexibility of using online data collection processes is well documented: “questionnaires do not need to be printed and posted, they can include multimedia objects, questions can be much more easily changed, participants need only a computer and internet access, and anonymity is more easily assured” (Madge et al., 2012, p. 418). Importantly, this economy allowed the survey to be made available to all students and teachers in all schools within the three school regions.

Phase 3 Data Analysis

The data from the survey were imported from Qualtrics into the software program IBM-SPSS. Data were then cleaned and analysed in SPSS. Descriptive analyses were conducted, such as frequency analyses and measures of central tendency (mean, mode, median) and variability (range, standard deviations) for all variables. Normality tests for all continuously scaled variables were conducted using z skew and z kurtosis at $p < .001$, and visual inspection of histograms, box plots and probability plots (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). As many of the variables were extremely negatively skewed and were unable to be normalised using mathematical transformation (e.g., reflection and inverse, reflection and logarithm), non-parametric inferential tests were primarily conducted (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Tests of statistical significance included Chi square tests of independence and Spearman correlations to test for relationships between variables, and Kruskal-Wallis tests and Mann-Whitney U tests to test for or differences between categories on continuously scaled variables. Categorical variables included wellbeing conceptualisations, primary vs. secondary school status, gender, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) status, Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CALD) status, and Year level at school.

3.5 Phase 4: Professional Development for Schools

The fourth and final phase of the research involves analysing and presenting the overall findings to each participating region. While this was originally planned as a culminating activity of the research, project partners requested continual engagement throughout the earlier three phases of the research. To facilitate this, summaries of findings from each of the phases were developed and used as a stimulus for discussion at meetings with Principals, education consultants and regional education offices (see Appendix E). The outcome of these discussions informed further project phases, particularly with respect to the priority interests of schools in relation to the research.

At the conclusion of the project a professional development learning ‘package’ was developed that would enable various levels of engagement with the findings. This comprises a one-hour (one-off) session that could be readily incorporated into a school staff meeting; a one-day professional development workshop; and a one-term (3 month) program for schools seeking a more prolonged engagement with the findings. Each of these three professional development opportunities is underpinned by an explicit focus on the relevance and significance of the findings for individual school contexts. Wider system level planning has been provided through meetings with project partners and identification of strategic, organisational responses to the recommendations of the research.

3.6 Ethical considerations

The “notion of ‘ethics’ is a complex construct...imbued with particular values and beliefs that influence how we approach research” (Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 134). It can signify underpinning philosophies and principles, or mechanisms for promoting conduct and compliance. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) further distinguish between “(a) procedural ethics, which usually involves seeking approval from a relevant ethics committee to undertake research involving humans; and (b) ‘ethics in practice’ or the everyday ethical issues that arise in the doing of research” (p. 263). All research involves both kinds of ethical considerations but these are particularly nuanced in research that involves children and young people.

In undertaking this study, several important features of leading international ethics-related work simultaneously being developed by our research Centre, *Ethical Research Involving Children* (ERIC) (Graham, Powell, Taylor, Anderson, & Fitzgerald, 2013), guided the approach taken in ensuring very considered attention was given to the ethical dimensions of the study. The underlying philosophy of the ERIC approach seeks to ensure the human dignity of children is honoured, and their rights and wellbeing are respected in all research, regardless of context. Hence, this research, with its focus on wellbeing in schools, is premised on a belief that ethics is more than procedural compliance. We adopted and endeavoured to apply – at every stage of the research process - well-established, accepted ethical principles, including autonomy, beneficence and non-maleficence, and justice. These principles were further supported by an emphasis on *reflexivity, rights and relationship*, with reflexivity understood as a way of fostering a kind of ‘ethical mindfulness’ (Warin, 2011) or ‘intellectual introspection’ (Kenway & McLeod, 2004). Given the size of the research team (up to 7 researchers at any one time), reflexivity was identified as key in moderating any ethical issues encountered along the way. Reflexivity is therefore conceptualised as “an attitude or ‘way of being’

during the research process” (Probst & Berenson, 2013, p. 8), rather than simply applying rules or a set of prescribed techniques.

Most importantly, every stage of the research gave close consideration to the most appropriate methods and processes for engaging students collaboratively in generating knowledge about their lives. Described in detail above, the methodology for the study was inextricably linked to ethical endeavours concerning children’s rights (for both protection *and* participation) and the various ways relationships (between researchers and students, researchers and teachers, teachers and students, principals and teachers, students and parents etc.) were woven throughout the research process.

In terms of attending to both the conventional compliance requirements *and* the ‘lived’ or ‘in-situ’ ethics of the project the following points are also important. Participation of students and staff in Phases 2 and 3 was voluntary and anonymous. Ethics approval was sought from each of the three participating school regions prior to proceeding with the focus groups, interviews and survey. Ethics approval was also sought from Southern Cross University’s Human Research Ethics Committee for each of the Phases and the survey pilot (approval numbers: ECN-12-072, ECN-13-096, ECN-13-138). Parental consent has been sought for those students participating in the focus groups (Phase 2) and the online survey (Phase 3).

For Phase 2, the study design and methodology created a safe space for all participants, while at the same time issuing a genuine invitation to students and teachers to participate in meaningful ways in the study. An ethically and methodologically sound research design ensured that the burdens of participation were balanced by the benefits of the study for participants. The researchers are well experienced in conducting interviews and focus groups and ensured that participants understood the potential benefits and risk of harm associated with participating in the study, as well as the voluntary anonymous nature of their involvement.

For Phase 3, the parental consent form provided parents with information about the survey and asked them to fill out and return the form to the teacher if they did not want their child to take part in the survey. Students whose parent/guardian had not opted out of their child’s participation in the survey undertook the online survey in class time. The beginning of the survey then provided students with information and the option to opt out of the survey entirely and/or to skip any or all questions at any time during the survey. Student consent was implied by their participation in and completion of the survey.

Throughout the research process, the researchers worked with students, Principals and teachers to help them identify potential benefits from the research. This is important in terms of reflecting the reciprocal relationship between researcher and participant, and honouring the time and thought that each brings to the research process. Every student and teacher was also offered an opportunity to comment on how they viewed the research, and their involvement in it, particularly with respect to whether directly hearing the views of children and young people is important in matters concerning their wellbeing.

3.7 Study limitations

This study is a very ambitious undertaking in terms of focus, methodology and scope. While not detracting from the attention to detail, rigour, significance and findings of the research, a number of points should be noted that may constitute limitations:

- The research was limited to three non-government Catholic school regions, which have an explicit values base that may influence understandings and approaches to wellbeing. Similar research conducted in government schools may therefore produce findings that vary from those reported here.
- Whilst every care was taken to locate all relevant documentation for the policy review, inclusion of documentation was ultimately contingent on it being openly accessible online, easily locatable with the search terms used or known to the respondents participating in the telephone audit.
- While schools involved in Phase 2 were provided with inclusion criteria for the student focus groups and teacher interviews, these weren't representative and it is possible Principals (or their delegates) may have invited students and teachers who they perceived could otherwise contribute most appropriately to the research.
- The focus on wellbeing and the emphasis on 'recognition' may have induced socially desirable responses from some participants.
- The beginning of the Phase 3 survey provided students with information and the option to opt out of the survey entirely and/or to skip any or all questions at any time during the survey. A limitation of this procedure is that it created missing data. Due to the very large survey sample and consequent high statistical power, the presence of missing data producing a smaller sample size was not of concern. It was deemed ethically more important for the children and young people to have a choice of skipping questions if they wanted to for whatever reason, instead of forcing all responses to be answered.
- The vast amounts of data generated through Phases 2 and 3 influenced the amount of time required for analysis and subsequently impacted on the project timeframes.

In the following Chapter we provide the findings from Phase 1, the analysis of national, state and local policy pertaining to wellbeing in schools. As previously indicated, the findings from Phase 2 are reported in Volume 2 of this report and the findings from Phase 3 can be found in Volume 3.

4 Phase 1 Policy Analysis

4.1 Introduction

There is a growing policy imperative to locate children's social and emotional wellbeing within the sphere of education (Wyn, 2007). A number of strategic policy documents, for example, the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008), and Investing in the Early Years—A National Early Childhood Development Strategy (COAG, 2009b), indicate that improving the wellbeing of children and young people is a key policy priority for Australian governments (Redmond, Skattebol & Saunders, 2013). However, there is considerable lack of clarity concerning the meaning of wellbeing itself (Ereaut & Whiting, 2008; Noble, McGrath, Wyatt,

Carbines & Robb, 2008; Rose & Rowlands, 2010) and consequently a fragmented and ad hoc approach within and across schools and school systems (Australian Secondary Principals Association, 2008; Victorian Auditor-General, 2010). Effective implementation of wellbeing practices within schools across Australia requires policy that is clear and consistent, both in meaning, application and anticipated outcomes.

Constitutionally, education in Australia has primarily been the responsibility of the states, but over recent years the federal government has enacted substantial policy reform and taken increasing fiscal responsibility for education (Pitman, 2012). The education reform agenda being implemented by the Commonwealth (COAG), through intergovernmental partnerships and National Agreements, is bringing about rapid and massive changes in education governance. Both state and Commonwealth governments, therefore, are making a policy claim on wellbeing.

In addition, documentation was also sought from the non-government education sector. The two largest sectors in Australian education are government schools (with 66 per cent of students in Australia attending these in 2010) and Catholic schools (20 per cent of students) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). In all states and territories across Australia, over the last decade, the number of non-government students has consistently increased at a greater rate than for government students.

Understanding how wellbeing is framed in current policy and policy-related documentation helps identify areas of strength and also existing gaps. It also provides a platform for including policy in the dialogue with children, teachers and principals regarding student wellbeing. The search reveals that wellbeing policy or policy related documents are most likely to be found in the government sectors of education, health and welfare. The rapidly changing landscape of education governance in Australia contributes to a broad and diffuse policy environment. However, there is very little education policy at any level *specifically focused on wellbeing*.

While documents within the education sector are of key interest and greatest relevance, policy-related documentation specifically referring, or of relevance, to wellbeing, is found in other sectors including health (in particular mental health), early childhood and child protection. These are discussed, along with a number of joint, cross-sector initiatives involving the wellbeing of children and young people, as they provide a broader context for understanding approaches to wellbeing.

This results section is divided into two main sub-sections, as follows:

- Educational policies and policy-related documentation at national and state levels (including government and Catholic education)
- Policies and policy-related documentation at national and state levels, from sectors other than education

Within these, each smaller sub-section starts with key headlines and a table identifying and describing the documentation included in that section of the analysis. This is followed by an in-depth text description of the documentation, in terms of its relevance to wellbeing. Summaries of these policies and policy-related documents for each sub-section (as above) for federal and state governments; for Catholic Education; and for the non-education sector policy areas (i.e. health, child protection, early education) are included at the end of each section.

As outlined in Section 3.2, the data is analysed across four domains of implementation: systems and structures, relationships, teaching and learning, and environment. The sub-sections in this chapter outline the policies and policy-related documents with reference to these. Following this, Section 4.4 provides a more in-depth analysis of the policies and policy-related documents across the four domains for implementation. References for the policies and policy-related documents can be found in Appendix F.

4.2 Educational policy analysis findings - at national and state levels

There is very little in the way of government or Catholic educational policy specifically focussed on wellbeing – there are **no** educational policies at a national level and few at state or local levels. The paucity of wellbeing policy is clearly indicated below in the policy column of Table 6: *Education policies and policy-related documentation with a wellbeing focus*, which summarises the documentation found across national and state sectors, in government and Catholic education.

Highlights of the findings, apparent in Table 6, include:

- No wellbeing policy in education at a national level.
- Limited *specifically titled* wellbeing policy – evident in only two state government education departments (Northern Territories and Tasmania) and one Catholic Education Office (South Australia).
- Wellbeing strategic frameworks or plans are located in three states – two government education frameworks related to learning (Queensland, South Australia) and one related to health (Victoria), and one Catholic Education Office wellbeing strategy (CEOM, Victoria).
- A large number of webpages focusing on student wellbeing – located on all state government education websites and half the Catholic Education websites.
- Victoria stands out as having the broadest range of wellbeing documentation in both state government education and Catholic Education.

These highlights are discussed in greater detail below, along with a more in-depth look at the findings.

Table 6 Education policies and policy-related documentation with a wellbeing focus

Education sector	Policy	Framework/ Plan	Webpage
National level			
State Level:	ACT		✓
	NSW		✓
	NT	✓	✓
	QLD	✓	✓
	SA	✓	✓
	TAS	✓	✓
	VIC	✓	✓
	WA		✓
National Catholic Education Commission			
Catholic Education:	ACT		
	NSW		
	NT		
	QLD		✓
	SA	✓	✓
	TAS		
	VIC	✓	✓
	WA		✓

National government educational policies and policy-related documentation

Key headlines from this section include:

- *Wellbeing is included in national educational frameworks primarily in the contexts of health (in particular health promotion and mental health) and safety.*
- *Emphasis is placed on the role of schools in promoting wellbeing.*
- *National education frameworks relevant to wellbeing take a whole school approach, which sees the approach to implementing wellbeing embedded across all the domains of implementation identified in the analysis.*

While there is no specific national government education wellbeing policy, wellbeing is nonetheless included, to differing degrees and in different contexts, in various national educational frameworks. These frameworks are identified in Table 7: *National educational policies and policy-related documents relevant to wellbeing.*

Table 7 National educational policies and policy-related documents relevant to wellbeing

Title	Focus and Scope	Purpose	Contexts for Wellbeing	Domains of Implementation ⁷			
				R	S&S	E	T&L
<p>Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians <i>Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) 2008</i></p>	<p>Education focus</p> <p>Declaration</p>	<p>Provides educational goals to improve educational outcomes: 1. Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence; 2. All young Australians become: successful learners; confident and creative individuals; active and informed citizens.</p> <p>Declaration made by all Education Ministers in Australia.</p>	<p>Wellbeing to be promoted by schools.</p> <p>-Multidimensional -Development and wellbeing</p> <p>Wellbeing not defined</p>	✓			✓
<p>National Safe Schools Framework <i>Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) 2011</i></p>	<p>Safety focus</p> <p>National framework</p>	<p>Framework that adopts whole school approach to creating safe and supportive learning and teaching opportunities – by preventing and responding to incidents of harassment, aggression, violence and situations of bullying and to implement responsibilities in relation to child protection issues.</p>	<p>Safety and wellbeing</p> <p>-wellbeing an element for safe schools -wellbeing a pre-requisite for learning - safety essential for wellbeing</p> <p>Student wellbeing defined (in NSSF Resource Manual) in terms of positive feelings, attitude and relationships, resilience, and satisfaction with self and learning experiences.</p>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>National Framework for Health Promoting Schools <i>Australian Government Department of Health and Family Services 2000-2003</i></p>	<p>Health focus</p> <p>National framework</p>	<p>Framework to guide interaction and coordination between health and education sectors and promote health promoting schools.</p>	<p>Holistic health context for supporting ‘learning, living (health) and wellbeing’</p> <p>- wellbeing and dignity</p>	✓	✓	✓	✓

⁷ R denotes Relationships; S&S denotes Systems and Structures; E denotes Environment; T&L denotes Teaching and Learning

Title	Focus and Scope	Purpose	Contexts for Wellbeing	Domains of Implementation ⁷			
				R	S&S	E	T&L
2000			Wellbeing defined in relation to social connectedness, resilience and social emotional learning				
Principles for School Drug Education <i>Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training 2004</i>	Health focus Framework	A framework comprised of principles for school drug education, drawing on evidence-based practice and a comprehensive whole school approach.	Health and wellbeing Drug education within a wider health promotion context – including physical and mental health Safety and wellbeing	✓	✓	✓	✓
National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools <i>Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training 2005</i>	Values focus National framework	Framework identifying values and key elements for implementation in schools of effective values education.	Not specifically focused on wellbeing – but relates safe and supportive environment to wellbeing; and refer to ‘improving student and staff wellbeing’ as a challenge for values education.	✓	✓	✓	✓
My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia <i>Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace 2011</i>	Learning focus National framework	National framework for school age care to be used by school age care educators, and aims to extend and enrich children’s wellbeing and development in school age care settings. Not school setting	One of five expected learning outcomes of the Framework is that – “Children have a strong sense of wellbeing” – therefore link between learning and wellbeing. Wellbeing focus on: social and emotional wellbeing; and health and physical wellbeing. Emphasis on what this looks like and how educators	✓			✓

Title	Focus and Scope	Purpose	Contexts for Wellbeing	Domains of Implementation ⁷			
				R	S&S	E	T&L
			facilitate it.				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010 – 2014 <i>Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) 2010</i>	Education focus Action plan	The Plan identifies national, systemic and local level action in six priority domains that evidence shows will contribute to improved outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.	Links wellbeing and learning/success at school Links health and wellbeing Reference made to wellbeing in the context of engagement and connections – specifically cultural and linguistic identity and validation by schools	✓	✓		
National School Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program Guidelines <i>Australian Government Department of Education 2013</i>	Welfare focus Guidelines	Guidelines for the voluntary program that assists school communities to support the spiritual, social, and emotional wellbeing of their student – with either chaplains or secular student welfare workers.	Spiritual, social and emotional wellbeing	✓	✓		

A key context for the inclusion of wellbeing in these national education documents, which are not otherwise focused on this, is the role of schools in promoting wellbeing. The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008) is a key document, referred to frequently in other education documentation. It acknowledges the vital role of schools in promoting the wellbeing of children and young people, nurturing student wellbeing, and enabling young people to manage their wellbeing. The role of teachers includes being an additional source of encouragement, advice and support for students outside the home, shaping teaching around the ways different students learn and nurturing the unique talents of every student. Accordingly, wellbeing is referred to in relation to two domains of implementation. These are teaching and learning (by reference to the school curriculum) and relationships by reference to “partnerships between students, parents, carers and families, the broader community, business, schools and other education and training providers” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 10). Given the purpose of the Declaration, there is no elaboration as to *how* wellbeing is to be implemented within these domains.

The means of implementing wellbeing is addressed more in other national frameworks and initiatives. Some of the common threads in the frameworks included in Table 7 are “consistent with many of the ‘active ingredients’ or key components identified in the research literature as critical to the implementation and sustainability of student wellbeing initiatives” (Noble et al., 2008, p.71). Noble and colleagues identify these common threads as:

- A whole child focus;
- The assumption that student wellbeing impacts on student learning;
- A whole school approach;
- A values-based and inclusive approach;
- A focus on safe and supportive school environment/ethos;
- The important role of the teacher;
- Programs should be across all school years;
- The importance of strong school leadership;
- Partnerships with parents and the community; and
- A strong focus on prevention and early intervention (pp.71-72).

These common threads highlight a whole school approach to implementing wellbeing that is embedded across all four domains identified in this analysis – relationships, systems and structures, environment, and teaching and learning. Four national education frameworks, identified in Table 7, take this approach across all domains of implementation, conceptualising wellbeing in relation to health and/or safety.

The context of health, and in particular mental health, is core to the *National Framework for Health Promoting Schools (2000-2003)* (Australian Government Department of Health and Family Services,

2000). This is a framework to guide interaction and co-ordination between health and education sectors. It contains a fleeting direct reference to wellbeing in relation to students, staff and parents. However, in a more recent inquiry into the potential for developing opportunities for schools to become health promoting settings, wellbeing, in conjunction with mental health, is conceptualised as being at the core of health promoting schools (Parliament of Victoria Education and Training Committee, 2010). The health promoting framework thus emphasises the role of schools in promoting wellbeing, which is framed in relationship with mental health. In addition, wellbeing in this health promotion context is defined in social and emotional terms, with varying definitions covering concepts of social connectedness, resilience and social emotional learning. In this framework, supporting mental health and social wellbeing in schools is acknowledged in relation to issues such as social relationships, bullying and the use of harmful substances. Health promoting schools are characterised as being inclusive, safe, supportive, responsive and empowering.

The whole school approach to promoting health and wellbeing is also the context for the framework, *Principles for School Drug Education* (Australian Government, Department of Education, Science and Training, 2004). The focus of this framework is on drug education within school communities, to be embedded within a comprehensive approach to promoting health and wellbeing. Alongside health, wellbeing is also conceptualised in the context of safety in this framework.

Student wellbeing is identified as an important element in the *National Safe Schools Framework* (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA), 2011), in conjunction with student ownership. As the title implies, this framework has a safety focus and adopts a whole school approach to creating safe and supportive learning and teaching opportunities which promote student wellbeing: “Student safety and wellbeing are enhanced when students feel connected to their school, have positive and respectful relationships with their peers and teachers, feel confident about their social and emotional skills and satisfied with their learning experiences at school” (p.2). ‘Student wellbeing and ownership’ is specifically identified as one element (out of nine) in creating safe and supportive schools – “where all members of the school community both *feel* and *are* safe” (p.2). The relationship between wellbeing and safety is thus conceptualised as bi-directional, with wellbeing both an element in creating safe schools and necessary for learning, and an outcome which is promoted by safe, supportive schools.

The *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* (Australian Government Department of Education Science and Training, 2005) also relates having a safe and supportive environment to wellbeing. Improving student and staff wellbeing is identified as one of the challenges for values education.

A further two national education documents have been identified which are more specifically targeted and include reference to wellbeing. One of these documents is focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, and the other focuses on school age care settings. Both of these incorporate school students but extend beyond the school environment. The approaches taken to wellbeing within them tend to concentrate on specific domains for implementation, rather than integrating all the domains.

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010 – 2014* (MCEECDYA, 2010) identifies national, systemic and local level action in six priority domains which evidence shows will contribute to improved educational outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. Wellbeing is referred to in the context of one of these domains - engagement and connections. Specifically, “a sense of cultural and linguistic identity, and the active recognition and validation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages by schools, is critical to student wellbeing and success at school” (p.12). Links are made between wellbeing and learning outcomes, and health and wellbeing. In regard to the latter, it is described that health and wellbeing issues that impact on education will be considered through cooperation between health services and education providers. Such cooperation is a recurring theme throughout the documentation in which wellbeing is linked with health and is identified in several parts of this report.

The key domains within this action plan for implementing wellbeing are relationships, and structures and systems. The relationships category covers several dimensions. In the context of this document, the dimension referred to is primarily partnerships with families and wider communities, rather than relationships with individual students. Other national education documents reviewed which contain specific reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (namely the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, 2008; and *Principles for School Drug Education*, 2004) also highlight the importance of partnership and engagement with the wider Indigenous community.

The education document *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia* (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace, DEEWR, 2011) is a national framework to be used by school age care educators. It aims to extend and enrich children’s wellbeing and development in school age care settings. Although such care is not always school-based, this document is directly relevant to school students. It draws directly on *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (COAG, 2009a) in which learning and wellbeing are linked, with one of the five expected learning outcomes of the Framework being that “Children have a strong sense of wellbeing.” The emphasis in these documents is on social and emotional wellbeing; and health and physical wellbeing, what this looks like and how educators facilitate it. The key domains for implementing wellbeing are relationships, and teaching and learning. The relationships domain in this document is primarily the relationship between the educator and the school age child, with emphasis given to secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships, although reference is also made to welcoming families.

While programs are intentionally excluded from the analysis, it is worth mentioning the *National School Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program Guidelines* (Australian Government Department of Education, 2013) here. It is a recent national education initiative, which is school-focused and has direct relevance to student wellbeing. The guidelines aim to assist school communities in supporting the spiritual, social, and emotional wellbeing of their students, through voluntary employment of chaplains or secular student welfare workers. Wellbeing is thus directly supported through the domains of relationship, and structures and systems. The relationships domain in the context of this document is clearly the relationship between the staff member (chaplain or student welfare worker) and the student.

Summary – National education policy-related documentation

None of the national education policy-related documentation analysed has wellbeing as the specific focus. However, they all include reference to wellbeing, which tends to be contextualised primarily in relation to health (in particular health promotion and mental health) and/or safety, and learning. Wellbeing is not specifically defined in most documents, however implicit and explicit references describe wellbeing in relation to social and emotional aspects, relationships, and physical and/or mental health.

The approach to wellbeing in half the national frameworks included in the analysis (four documents) incorporates all four domains of implementation. The remaining four documents included in the analysis focus on specific domains, primarily: relationships, systems and structures, and teaching and learning.

The relationships domain of implementation was the most frequently included in the national education documentation, with all of the documents including reference to some form of relationship. The majority included reference to supportive, caring relationships with students, and have specifically emphasised the dimension of respect in these relationships. The category of relationships potentially covers a wide range. In the documents analysed the relationship category referred to staff and parental wellbeing (*National Framework for Health Promoting Schools, 2005; National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools, 2005*), relationships between students and staff (*National Safe Schools Framework, 2011; My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia, 2011; National School Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program Guidelines, 2013*), and partnerships with families and wider communities (*Principles for School Drug Education, 2004; Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, 2008; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010 – 2014*).

State government education policies and policy-related documentation

Key headlines from this section include:

- *Differences evident between states' documentation in terms of:*

a) the amount of wellbeing policy or policy-related documents

b) the focus and scope of the policy-related documentation that does exist

- *State policy-related documents tend to contextualise wellbeing with learning, health (in particular mental health), safety and student behaviour.*
- *Few states (two – Northern Territory and Tasmania) have education policies with specific wellbeing focus (as indicated in the policy title) and the context for these is safety and student behaviour.*
- *Two other wellbeing-related policies (New South Wales and Victoria) focus on student behaviour, including student engagement, and management of this.*

- *Two recently developed frameworks for learner wellbeing (Queensland and South Australia) straddle policy, procedures and programs, and inextricably link learning and wellbeing – with an emphasis on the role of educators.*
- *Wellbeing is directly referred to in varying degrees in the documents analysed and rarely specifically defined.*
- *The most frequently mentioned domain of implementation for wellbeing practices across the state education policies and policy-related documentation is systems and structures.*

A substantial body of documentation has been reviewed in relation to wellbeing in state government educational policy-related documentation, as identified in Table 8. This documentation is discussed below in categories as follows: a) policy related to wellbeing, which includes documents specifically titled as policy or policy guidelines in the areas of wellbeing and welfare; b) policy-related documents with a wellbeing focus, which includes documents that are not named as policy but are specifically focused on wellbeing (as indicated by the title); and c) policy-related documents relevant to student wellbeing, which includes documents that are relevant to student wellbeing, but do not have wellbeing as the specific focus (as indicated by the title). In addition, education strategic plans are also discussed in relation to wellbeing.

Table 8 State government educational policies and policy-related documents relevant to wellbeing⁸

Title	State	Focus and Scope	Purpose	Contexts for Wellbeing	Domains of Implementation			
					R	S&S	E	T&L
Student Welfare, Good Discipline and Effective Learning – Student Welfare Policy <i>NSW Department of School Education School Welfare Directorate 1996</i>	NSW	Welfare focus POLICY framework	Provides providing framework to guide schools in developing their own student welfare policies and practices.	Focus on welfare Wellbeing referred to as a priority for schools alongside safety and health		✓	✓	
NSW School-Link Initiative <i>Memorandum of Understanding between NSW Government Departments of Health and of Education and Training 2010</i>	NSW	Mental health focus Initiative - Link between health and education	A collaborative partnership implemented statewide to promote mental health and improve prevention, treatment and support for adolescents with mental health problems. Incorporates strengthening links between mental health and education services; training programs for MH workers and school counsellors; supporting implementation of programs in schools.	Mental health ONLY No specific reference to wellbeing		✓		
Building Relationships and School Wellbeing <i>Northern Territory Government Department of Employment, Education and Training n.d.</i>	NT	School focus Project outline	Outlines project model for building relationships and school wellbeing project. This project has evolved through a call from teachers and schools for system support with issues of student management. The concept model utilised in the development of this project is one that highlights the interrelationship between teaching/learning, student outcomes and relationships.	Focus on school (not student) wellbeing. Evolved through a call from teachers and schools for system support with issues of student management.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Safeguarding the Wellbeing of Children – Obligations for the Mandatory Reporting of Harm and Exploitation <i>Northern Territory Department of Education and Training 2010</i>	NT	Child protection POLICY	Policy for reporting obligations of employees of schools, colleges and educational institutions regarding child abuse and neglect.	Safety context Wellbeing not defined or significantly referred to		✓		
Safe Schools NT: Wellbeing and Behaviour Policy Guide	NT	Behaviour focus	Guidelines and template for wellbeing and behaviour policy development. Includes	Behaviour	✓	✓		

⁸ In this table documentation is organised alphabetically by state.

Title	State	Focus and Scope	Purpose	Contexts for Wellbeing	Domains of Implementation			
					R	S&S	E	T&L
<i>Northern Territory Government Department of Education and Training n.d</i>		POLICY guidelines and template	sections on: school beliefs about behaviour and learning; creating positive learning communities; consequences for unacceptable behaviour; and student support networks					
Healthy School-Age Kids <i>Northern Territory Government Department of Health and Community Services; and Department of Employment, Education and Training 2007</i>	NT	Health focus Program	An evidence based health program for school aged children in remote areas of NT, aiming to improve the health, wellbeing and learning outcomes of children in remote areas. Incorporates health promotion, programs and services and health checks.	Health context – particularly mental health Minimal direct reference to wellbeing	✓	✓		✓
Guide To Social and Emotional Learning in Queensland State Schools <i>Queensland Government Department of Education, Training and the Arts 2008</i>	QLD	Social and emotional learning (SEL) focus Guidelines	A guide to provide information to support schools in selecting and developing SEL programs (resource)	Wellbeing linked to SEL - SEL contextualised as key component of improving student social and emotional wellbeing.		✓		✓
Learning and Wellbeing Framework <i>Queensland Government Department of Education, Training and Employment 2012a</i>	QLD	Learning and wellbeing framework	A resource outlining the ways in which teachers and schools optimise wellbeing in the four domains (curriculum and pedagogy, environment, policy and community) and provides links and ideas (including policies) in each of these.	Learning and wellbeing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Supporting Students’ Mental Health and Wellbeing <i>Queensland Government Department of Education, Training and Employment 2012b</i>	QLD	Mental health focus Procedure	Procedure outlines roles and responsibilities of departmental employees, Principals, case managers, teachers, Guidance Officers and Regional Contact Officers (Mental Health) in relation to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of school aged students.	Mental health and wellbeing Social and emotional wellbeing	✓	✓		✓
DECS Learner Wellbeing Framework for birth to Year 12 <i>Government of South Australia Department of Education and Children’s Services 2007</i>	SA	Learner wellbeing framework	A framework to support sites from child care to senior secondary schools incorporating the dimensions of wellbeing, influences on wellbeing and domains of practice.	Links learning and wellbeing – holistic approach Wellbeing defined in multidimensional, holistic, social and emotional terms	✓	✓	✓	✓
Student mental health and wellbeing	SA	Mental health focus	Defines mental health, and mental health problems and disorders. Outlines roles and	Mental health – which is defined as: “Mental Health refers to our	✓	✓	✓	✓

Title	State	Focus and Scope	Purpose	Contexts for Wellbeing	Domains of Implementation			
					R	S&S	E	T&L
<i>Government of South Australia Department of Education and Children's Services 2012a</i>		Procedure	responsibilities in relation to this within the DET – at central, regional and school levels	cognitive, social and emotional wellbeing” (p.2).				
Learner Wellbeing and Behaviour Policy <i>Tasmania Government Department of Education 2012c</i>	TAS	Wellbeing and behaviour focus POLICY	Policy outlining requirements for safe, respectful, inclusive environments, to model and promote socially acceptable and responsible values and behaviour, and whole school approaches to learner wellbeing and behaviour support.	Emotional and social context. Behavioural context. Wellbeing defined for younger and older children	✓	✓	✓	✓
Health Care and Wellbeing Policy Driver <i>Tasmania Government Department of Education 2012b</i>	TAS	Health and wellbeing focus POLICY driver	Aimed at staff creating a safe and inclusive learning environment for all learners.	Health and wellbeing; Safety and behavioural context			✓	✓
Health and Wellbeing Service Framework: An Integrated Approach to Service Delivery <i>State Government of Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2010b</i>	VIC	Service framework Health focus	A policy and operational document for child and adolescent health and wellbeing services, that provides a clear and shared understanding of how DEECD services can work in a coordinated way to promote, identify and address children’s health and wellbeing needs - developing a more coordinated, responsive and consistent approach to providing support services. Elements include: common service delivery domains; shared principles for delivery; stronger relationships and partnerships; effective leadership. Includes resources.	Links health, development and learning with wellbeing	✓	✓		
Effective Schools are Engaging Schools: Student Engagement Policy Guidelines <i>State Government of Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2009a</i>	VIC	Student engagement POLICY guidelines	Replaces the <i>Student Attendance Guidelines, 1997</i> and the <i>Guidelines for Developing the Student Code of Conduct, 1994</i> , and aims to assist schools in developing their Student Engagement Policy. Focuses on student engagement, attendance and behaviour; and promoting a safe and inclusive educational environment. Includes resources.	Links wellbeing and learning. Engagement and wellbeing Safety and wellbeing	✓	✓	✓	✓

Title	State	Focus and Scope	Purpose	Contexts for Wellbeing	Domains of Implementation			
					R	S&S	E	T&L
Framework for Student Support Services in Victorian Government Schools <i>State Government of Victoria Department of Education 1998</i>	VIC	Welfare focus Framework	Describes the principles, arrangements and resources provided to strengthen student welfare and support services – incorporating primary prevention, early intervention, intervention and postvention to promote, develop, improve and rebuild resilience.	Welfare focus – support and resilience building Wellbeing not specified		✓		
Student Support Services Guidelines <i>State Government of Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2012</i>	VIC	Welfare and support Service guidelines	The purpose of Student Support Services is to assist children and young people facing a range of barriers to learning to achieve their educational and developmental potential through the provision of a range of strategies and specialised support at individual, group, school and network levels. The Guidelines outline service provision and the role and responsibilities of all student support services staff	Health and wellbeing Frequent references to wellbeing		✓		
Dardee Boorai: Victorian Charter of Safety and Wellbeing for Aboriginal Children and Young People <i>State Government of Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2008</i>	VIC	Safety and wellbeing Charter for Aboriginal CYP	The Charter outlines (philosophical?) commitments to improving safety, health, development, learning and wellbeing outcomes (the five Charter domains) for all Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria. The Charter is signed by Victorian Government and Aboriginal community representatives. (not a plan)	“Child <i>wellbeing</i> implies resilience, social confidence, secure cultural identity and protection from prolonged isolation, emotional trauma or exclusion” (p.10).	✓		✓	
Balart Boorron: The Victorian Plan for Aboriginal Children and Young People (2010–2020) <i>State Government of Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2010a</i>	VIC	Plan to put Dardee Boorai Charter into practice	Plan putting the principles and commitments of <i>Dardee Boorai</i> (see above) into effect.	Numerous references to wellbeing – often in the context of health and wellbeing Specific reference made to partnerships and referral pathways building “capacity for schools and education providers to address the wellbeing of young people” (p.47).		✓		

Title	State	Focus and Scope	Purpose	Contexts for Wellbeing	Domains of Implementation			
					R	S&S	E	T&L
Protecting the Safety and Wellbeing of Children and Young People <i>State of Victoria Government Departments of Education and Early Childhood Development, and of Human Services 2010</i>	VIC	Safety Protocol	Protocol that details current policy and practice to promote and support the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in Victorian schools and child care centres.	Safety and wellbeing		✓		
Strategic Plans⁹								
Strategic Plan 2010-2013, Everyone Matters <i>ACT Government Department Education and Training 2010b</i>	ACT	Strategic plan		No direct reference to student wellbeing				
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Matters Strategic Plan 2010-2013: Priorities and Actions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education in ACT Public Schools. <i>ACT Government Department Education and Training 2010a</i>	ACT	Strategic plan Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders		No direct reference to student wellbeing				
5 Year Strategic Plan 2012-2017 <i>New South Wales Government Department of Education and Communities 2012</i>	NSW	Strategic plan		Wellbeing included in the vision statement – promote, foster and improve wellbeing	✓			
Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2009 – 2012 <i>New South Wales Department of Education and Training Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate 2009</i>	NSW	Strategy Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders		Strategies include – “ Embed student wellbeing approaches to increase student engagement, participation and retention” (p.2). “ Identify and disseminate				✓

⁹ Some strategic plans did not make any reference to wellbeing, therefore some have no domains of implementation checked in the table

Title	State	Focus and Scope	Purpose	Contexts for Wellbeing	Domains of Implementation			
					R	S&S	E	T&L
				innovative programs that redress educational disadvantage and promote learning and wellbeing for Aboriginal students” (p.2).				
Strategic Plan 2013-2015 <i>Northern Territory Government Department of Education 2013</i>	NT	Strategic plan		Reference made in context of ‘great start’ service provision for wellbeing and school readiness		✓		
Indigenous Education Consultative Bodies Annual Strategic Plan <i>Northern Territory Indigenous Education Council 2013</i>	NT	Strategic plan Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders		No direct reference to student wellbeing				
Health, Safety and Wellbeing: Strategic Plan 2011-2015 <i>Queensland Government Department of Education and Training 2011</i>	QLD	Strategic plan		Reference to student (and staff) wellbeing in the context of creating safe and sustainable learning environments; use strategies to support wellbeing		✓	✓	
Development of a Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood, School Education, Training, Tertiary Education and Employment Action Plan 2013–2016: Discussion paper <i>Queensland Government Department of Education, Training and Employment 2013</i>	QLD	Discussion paper Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders		One reference made - “improved outcomes in education and employment are cornerstones to increased health, social and economic wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and their communities” (p.i).				
The Strategic Plan 2012-2016 for South Australian Public Education and Care <i>Government of South Australia Department of Education and Children’s Services 2012b</i>	SA	Strategic plan		One reference to wellbeing – “Our funding decisions will be guided by the potential of our policies and programs to improve learning outcomes for young people and promote child and community wellbeing” (p.5).		✓		
Department of Education	TAS	Strategic plan		No direct reference to student				

Title	State	Focus and Scope	Purpose	Contexts for Wellbeing	Domains of Implementation			
					R	S&S	E	T&L
Strategic Plan 2012-2015 <i>Tasmanian Government Department of Education 2012a</i>				wellbeing				
DEECD 2013-2017 Strategic Plan <i>State Government of Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2013</i>	VIC	Strategic plan		Wellbeing is an outcome (alongside Achievement, Engagement and Productivity) – in the context of “healthy development and wellbeing”- to be measured by indicators including: children being ‘on track’; and feeling connected to their school. Reference to strengthening approaches to wellbeing and developing a strategy		✓	✓	✓
Excellence and Equity Strategic Plan for WA Public Schools 2012-2015 <i>Government of Western Australia Department of Education 2012</i>	WA	Strategic plan		One reference - Students, their achievements and their wellbeing drive all decisions and actions.		✓		
Aboriginal Education Plan for WA Public Schools 2011–2014 <i>Government of Western Australia Department of Education 2011</i>	WA	Education plan Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders		One reference – in relation to Attendance: “Implement programs in partnership with other agencies to increase the resilience, health and wellbeing of Aboriginal students” (p.5).		✓		

a) Policy related to wellbeing

Only two Australian states, Northern Territory and Tasmania, have education policies that contain the word *wellbeing* in the title. Both of these are related to safety although the contexts for these differ.

One of the policies, the *Learner Wellbeing and Behaviour Policy* (Tasmanian Government Department of Education, 2012c), focuses on student behaviour within the school and learning environments and ensuring that these promote safety. The stated purpose is to provide learning environments that are “safe, respectful, inclusive and must support positive behaviour and be free from discrimination, harassment and bullying both face-to-face and via information technology” (p.3). A whole school approach is taken to learner wellbeing and behaviour support, and reference is made to partnership with parents. In this policy, wellbeing is defined and characterised primarily in social and emotional terms, by positive feelings, attitudes and relationships, resilience, and satisfaction with school and learning. A distinction is made between defining wellbeing for different age groups, with wellbeing in relation to younger learners being characterised more by the positive feelings and relationships, and for older learners defined in accordance with their level of satisfaction about the quality of their life at school/college.

This Tasmanian policy is supported by a policy driver *Health Care and Wellbeing Policy Driver* (2012b). The policy driver is aimed at education staff, with the stated purpose “to ensure that all learners are provided with a safe and inclusive learning environment which supports them and allows them to strive for excellence and to reach their potential” (p.2). Within this document wellbeing is not defined but is referred to in conjunction with health. Alongside this, however, there is a strong emphasis on safety in the learning environment that accords with the *Learner Wellbeing and Behaviour Policy*, highlighting the connection between wellbeing and health, with safe environments a domain for implementing wellbeing.

The other policy that specifically names wellbeing also links it with safety, although this is in relation to child protection rather than the learning environment per se. *Safeguarding the Wellbeing of Children – Obligations for the mandatory reporting of harm and exploitation* (Northern Territory Government Department of Education and Training, 2010) is a policy outlining the reporting obligations and procedures for employees of schools, colleges and educational institutions regarding child abuse and neglect. In this policy the emphasis is on protecting wellbeing, which is not clearly defined but can be harmed through abuse or neglect, by using existing systems and structures that are obligatory.

The Northern Territory Department of Education and Training also has available online, *Safe Schools NT: Wellbeing and Behaviour Policy Guide* (n.d.). While this is not a single specific wellbeing policy, it is designed to provide guidance in developing wellbeing and behaviour policy. Domains of implementation include relationships and systems and structures. Within these contexts, it has a section on student support networks, which are conceptualised as a team of people including members of the wider community, and asks how schools can acknowledge and reward exemplary behaviour.

Guidelines for developing policy were identified in four states (Northern Territory and Tasmania as noted above, and New South Wales and Victoria), all centring on student behaviour and safety, with

a focus on managing behaviour, establishing safe environments and (in one policy) mandatory reporting of concerns about child abuse and maltreatment.

The *Student Welfare, Good Discipline and Effective Learning – Student Welfare Policy* (New South Wales Department of School Education School Welfare Directorate, 1996) focuses on student behaviour, and links wellbeing with learning and a safe learning environment. Aimed at education employees, the Student Welfare Policy provides a framework to guide schools in developing their own student welfare policies and practices. The key focus is welfare as related to student behaviour and it contains objectives and outcomes related to effective learning and teaching, positive climate and good discipline and community participation. The term *wellbeing* is not used, however, student welfare is perceived to encompass “everything the school community does to meet the personal, social and learning needs of students” (p.4). This extends across the domains of implementation and includes areas related to safe environment, curriculum, discipline, preventive health and social skills programs, collaborative early intervention, educational services, recognising diversity, resource to link families with community resource services.

The Victorian policy guidelines, *Effective schools are engaging schools: Student engagement policy guidelines* (State Government of Victoria, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2009a), also focus on student behaviour in the school environment. The purpose of these guidelines is to support Victorian schools in developing policy around student engagement, attendance and behaviour, taking a whole school and preventive approach. A particular focus is placed on establishing positive and respectful relationships, particularly between teachers and students and school cultures in which students feel valued and cared for. Reference is made to students wanting to be recognised as individuals by their teachers, and on teachers knowing their students, acknowledging diversity, encouraging active and meaningful student participation and proactively engaging with parents. It states that “students can reach their full educational potential only when they are happy, healthy and safe, and when there is a positive school culture to engage and support them in their learning. Student wellbeing and student learning outcomes are inextricably linked, and schools should aim to promote an understanding of this link in both the school environment and in the classroom” (p.5). Thus, while student wellbeing is explicitly linked with student engagement as a key outcome, the construction of wellbeing in this document is broader than in the other policy guidelines included here.

With the exception of these Victorian (2009a) student engagement policy guidelines, all the state education policies and policy guidelines identified thus centre on student behaviour and safety, with a fairly narrow focus on managing behaviour, establishing safe environments and (in one policy) mandatory reporting of concerns about child abuse and maltreatment. One policy and one policy guidelines document make reference to all the domains of implementation for wellbeing. The others emphasise systems and structures and environment. Wellbeing is conceptualised as something to be protected, by development and provision of safe environments and implementation of systems to manage identified behaviour and concerns.

b) Frameworks and policy-related documents with a wellbeing focus

The search identified policy-related documents from six states and territories (all, except the ACT) with a specific wellbeing focus in relation to four areas – learning, health, behaviour and safety. Documentation specifically focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children has also been identified. Within these the contexts for wellbeing primarily include: health, mental health, safety, learning and development. Wellbeing is variously conceptualised as a goal or outcome, an environmental component and/or an existing condition to be protected.

Learning - Two recent, comprehensive, wellbeing-focused frameworks (Queensland and South Australia) straddle policy, procedure and program. Both of these frameworks link learning and wellbeing, conceptualise wellbeing as multidimensional, and encompass implementation of wellbeing across all four domains in a whole school approach. Domains of practice in relation to wellbeing are articulated in these two framework documents. These domains correspond with those identified independently in this review confirming for us the relevance and robustness of the analytical framework we developed – partnerships (equating with *relationships*, including community partnership); policies and procedures (equating with *structure and systems*); environment; and curriculum and pedagogy (equating with *teaching and learning*). These two wellbeing-focused frameworks stand out as something of ‘lighthouse’ documents in relation to student wellbeing (along with the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (2011) *Student Wellbeing Strategy 2011-2015*, discussed in the following section).

The *Learning and Wellbeing Framework* (Queensland Government Department of Education, Training and Employment, 2012a) outlines the ways in which teachers and schools optimise wellbeing specifically in four domains of curriculum and pedagogy, environment, policy and community partnership, and provides links and ideas (including policies) in each of these. Optimising wellbeing is seen to require a whole-school approach that covers practice in the four domains: ideal *learning environment* optimises wellbeing; *curriculum and pedagogy* builds the foundation for wellbeing; *policies and procedures* enable schools to make good decisions that optimise wellbeing; and schools expand their capacity to support the wellbeing of students by nurturing *partnerships*. The framework encompasses teachers demonstrating respect for students as individuals and suggests opportunities for this. Student participation is encouraged, for example, in relation to class meetings, student councils and school decision-making. Learning and wellbeing are considered inextricably linked – “Wellbeing is both central to learning and an outcome of learning” (p.1).

The South Australian *DECS Learner Wellbeing Framework for birth to Year 12* (Government of South Australia Department of Education and Children’s Services (DECS), 2007) provides a framework incorporating identified dimensions of wellbeing (cognitive, emotional, physical, social and spiritual), influences on wellbeing (family factors, community factors, individual characteristics, care and education settings) and domains of practice (learning environment, curriculum and pedagogy, policies and procedures, partnerships). Similarly to the *Queensland Learning and Wellbeing Framework*, wellbeing is linked to learning. The three underpinning principles in the *DECS Learner Wellbeing Framework* are highlighted and elaborated on in *Thriving at our Place: Findings from the wellbeing for learning inquiry* (Government of South Australia DECS, 2010). They are:

1. Wellbeing is central to learning and learning is central to wellbeing

2. Educators make a positive contribution to learner wellbeing
3. Wellbeing is built on the strengths of individuals, groups and committees working together. (Government of South Australia DECS, 2010, p.10).

Although both of these frameworks incorporate all the domains of implementation, the *DECS Learner Wellbeing Framework* emphasises the positive contribution made by educators in learner wellbeing - “everything educators do has the potential to influence wellbeing” (2007, p.11). Positive relationships are considered paramount, built by educators who are respectful, interested and caring, and fostered through reciprocal communication. A collaborative and relationship-based quality to promoting wellbeing, articulated in the third principle above, is core to the framework.

Health – three of the identified documents link health and wellbeing, with two of these specifically focusing on student mental health and wellbeing. All three documents focus on providing guidance in relation to services and procedures for prevention and early intervention in health-related issues, particularly mental health, for children and young people. Educators and others employed in the education sector are therefore viewed as having a role to play in recognising mental health issues and responding to these either directly or through referral to specialist services.

The Health and Wellbeing Service Framework (State Government of Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development; DEECD, 2010b) is a planned policy and operational document for child and adolescent health and wellbeing services, aimed at guiding DEECD in developing a more coordinated, responsive and consistent approach to providing support services. It defines health “as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” and wellbeing as “a sustainable state of positive mood and attitude, health, resilience, and satisfaction with self, relationships and experiences in the community” (p.6). The focus is on improving service delivery between DEECD workforces and services, which operate in a range of settings. It provides a clear and shared understanding of how DEECD services can work in a coordinated way to promote, identify and address children’s health and wellbeing needs. Elements of this include: common service delivery domains; shared principles for delivery; stronger relationships and partnerships; and effective leadership. The focus is clearly on services but reference is made to the important role of teachers and educators in identifying health and wellbeing concerns and referring appropriately.

A Queensland Government document links students’ mental health and learning and offers procedural support - *Supporting Students’ Mental Health and Wellbeing* (Queensland Government Department of Education, Training and Employment, 2012b). The procedure provides guidance for educators in relation to mental health prevention and early intervention. The focus is clearly offering procedural support for mental health. Interpersonal relationships are acknowledged as the context for education staff responding to individual students. Interestingly, while definitions of key terms such as mental health promotion, early intervention, mental health difficulties, are provided, wellbeing is not defined.

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing (Government of South Australia Department of Education and Children’s Services, 2012a) is a document that defines mental health, and mental health problems and disorders and outlines the roles, responsibilities and procedures in relation to this, at central, regional and school levels. Mental health is defined in relation to wellbeing - “Mental Health refers

to our cognitive, social and emotional wellbeing” (p.2). The role of school staff in supporting students’ mental health and wellbeing includes providing individual support for students; providing safe, respectful and engaging learning communities; encouraging students by monitoring their attendance; and responding to emerging mental health needs within their professional boundaries.

To sum up the health sector documents, the Victorian *Health and Wellbeing Service Framework* (2010b) focuses on collaboration between health and education services, whereas the Queensland and South Australian student mental health and wellbeing documents identified here focus more on the roles and responsibilities of education staff. The key domain for implementing wellbeing and responding to concerns about student (mental) health is through systems and structures, but other domains are also incorporated in implementation approaches and the role of educators in the context of relationships with students receives some acknowledgement. The documents also acknowledge the environmental support teachers require in meeting the mental health needs of students.

Behaviour – a project model for building relationships and school wellbeing is outlined in the document *Building Relationships and School Wellbeing* (Northern Territory Government Department of Employment, Education and Training, n.d.). The project evolved through a call from teachers and schools for system support with issues of student management. The model has developed from “reflections on the complexity of student behaviour by representatives of principals, advisors from Student Services and the Australian Education Union (NT) and acknowledges the relationship between context, values, school culture and behaviour” (p.2). The focus is on *school wellbeing*, rather than making specific reference to the wellbeing of the individual student. Taking a whole school approach it makes reference to all the domains for implementation. However, the concept model utilised in the development of this project is one that highlights the interrelationship between teaching/learning, student outcomes and relationships, thus perhaps placing greater weight on the domain of relationships for implementing approaches to wellbeing. Specific reference is made to members of the school community being connected and having a sense of belonging through their participation in active, trusting relationships. Recommendations are made for students’ collaborative involvement in democratic school processes and having activities that address individual students’ learning needs.

Safety – child protection is the focus of another Victorian document *Protecting the Safety and Wellbeing of Children and Young People* (State of Victoria Government Departments of Education and Early Childhood Development, and of Human Services, 2010). This document is a protocol, providing information to support licensed children’s services and Victorian schools to take appropriate action when it is believed that a child has suffered harm, or is likely to suffer harm, through abuse or neglect. It details current policy and practice, and defines the respective roles and responsibilities of relevant government department employees. Wellbeing is clearly perceived in conjunction with safety, as something needing protection, and the sole means of approaching this in this document is through implementation of systems and structures.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people – wellbeing is linked with safety in the title of a document specifically focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. *Dardee Boorai: Victorian Charter of Safety and Wellbeing for Aboriginal Children and Young People* (State Government of Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2008) is a

Charter signed by Victorian Government and Aboriginal community representatives. Although the title focuses on safety and wellbeing, Dardee Boorai outlines commitments to improving outcomes in five domains, safety, health, development, learning and wellbeing, for all Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria. It states that “child *wellbeing* implies resilience, social confidence, secure cultural identity and protection from prolonged isolation, emotional trauma or exclusion” (p.10). Dardee Boorai thus conceptually links wellbeing with social and emotional aspects, safety and, importantly, cultural identity. Greatest emphasis is therefore placed on the domains of relationships, particularly in the broader community sense, and environment.

The principles and commitments outlined in Dardee Boorai are put into effect in *Balart Boorron: The Victorian Plan for Aboriginal Children and Young People (2010–2020)* (State Government of Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2010a). Numerous references are made throughout the plan to wellbeing, frequently in the context of ‘health and wellbeing.’ Specific reference is made to partnerships and referral pathways building “capacity for schools and education providers to address the wellbeing of young people” (p.47). Although the emphasis in the underlying philosophy and commitments as articulated in Dardee Boorai is on the domains of relationships and environment, the implementation of approaches to address wellbeing in Balart Boorron emphasises systems and structures.

c) Policy-related documents relevant to student wellbeing

Other state government education documents that are relevant to student wellbeing, but do not have wellbeing as the specific focus, have been identified. These are in the areas of student welfare, health, mental health, and social and emotional learning (SEL).

Student welfare - is a key area of focus in education in the state of Victoria. One of the earliest, frequently referred to frameworks focusing on issues related to student wellbeing is the *Framework for Student Support Services in Victorian Government Schools* (State Government of Victoria Department of Education, 1998). Its purpose is to “implement a comprehensive operational framework for the provision of student welfare that will support schools in responding to the wide variety of issues facing our young people today such as depression, self-harm, and drug misuse as well as suicide prevention” (p.4). Thus the focus is welfare, which is conceptualised in relation to counselling and support services. This framework describes the principles, arrangements and resources provided to strengthen student welfare and support services. Continuity of care and partnerships between the school and community are considered key to improving services. Professional development support materials identify four levels at which services might take effect: Primary prevention; Early intervention; Intervention and Restoring wellbeing (post-intervention).

Wellbeing is not specifically mentioned in this Victorian framework. However, it is included in this review as the welfare focus draws on concepts related to wellbeing such as support and resilience building. The Victorian Auditor-General’s report on *The Effectiveness of Student Wellbeing Programs and Services* (2010) notes that the 1998 framework “does not constitute a comprehensive and up-to-date, overarching framework that links DEECD’s current student wellbeing objectives with the goals and objectives of related programs and services, and the expected outcomes for student wellbeing” (p.viii). Moreover, the report goes on to say that there is no single document that integrates all of the Victorian government education student wellbeing programs and services and “shows how, for

example, school nurses, student welfare coordinators and student support service officers align with other wellbeing staff in schools” (p.viii).

In 2012, the State Government of Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) produced *Student Support Services Guidelines*. This provides an overview of the Student Support Services’ governance model and guidelines. The Student Support Services “enhances the capacity of Victorian government schools to meet the additional learning and wellbeing needs of children and young people through the provision of access to school and community specialist support” (DEECD, 2009b, p.1). It is described as “a key element of the Victorian Government’s Safe and Caring Schools policy ... [and the Guidelines will] ... provide a starting point for networks of principals to determine the service delivery model for Student Support Services in their network” (DEECD, 2012, p.10). The Guidelines outline service provision and the role and responsibilities of all student support services staff, including psychologists, guidance officers, speech pathologists, social workers, visiting teachers and other allied health professionals who work with vulnerable students and their families, or those students with additional needs, to improve learning and wellbeing outcomes. The key focus for implementation of approaches to wellbeing is thus on the domain of structures and systems.

It is particularly interesting to note the shift within discourses of ‘student support services’ in Victoria. The *Framework for Student Support Services in Victorian Government Schools* (1998) made frequent reference to student ‘welfare’ (41 instances of the word in 24 pages) and just a single reference to ‘wellbeing’. The subsequent *Student Support Services Guidelines* (2012) makes some reference to student welfare (10 instances in 120 pages), but predominantly refers to wellbeing (98 instances). This shift lends weight to the impression gained throughout the analysis that the discourse of wellbeing is increasingly being employed and broadly conceptualised in policy-related documentation.

Health – is the focus of guidelines for a joint services initiative in the Northern Territory, *Healthy School-Age Kids* (Northern Territory Government Department of Health and Community Services; and Department of Employment, Education and Training, 2007). The subtitle of the document describes it as *The Northern Territory School-Age Child Health Promotion Program Manual for Remote Communities*. Although this is referred to as a program it is included in this analysis because of the relevance to wellbeing and the broad (beyond single program implementation) approach. The aim of *Healthy School-Age Kids* is to improve the health, wellbeing and learning outcomes of school-age children living in remote communities of the Northern Territory by education and health staff working together. Wellbeing is thus linked with health and learning. The components of the program are: health promotion in the school and community setting; integration of other services and programs for school-age children; and health checks (screening).

As identified earlier, a health promotion context takes a whole child and whole school approach to implementing wellbeing, which is embedded across the four domains – relationships, systems and structures, environment, and teaching and learning. *Healthy School-Age Kids* promotes programs that enhance wellbeing through building a sense of connection and belonging, by creating caring relationships, a culture of high (achievable) expectations and opportunities for participation and contribution. However, the program manual predominantly focuses on systems and structures in offering a framework of integrated services and programs, and providing resources.

Similarly, the *NSW School-Link Initiative* (New South Wales Government Departments of Health and of Education and Training, 2010) is a collaborative partnership between the health and education sectors, to promote mental health and improve prevention, treatment and support for adolescents with mental health problems. It incorporates strengthening links between mental health and education services; training programs for mental health workers and school counsellors; and supporting implementation of programs in schools. It does not make specific reference to wellbeing, but it has been included here given the mental health focus and the collaboration between health and education. As with the Northern Territory *Healthy School-Age Kids* (2007) the primary domain of implementation is systems and structures.

Social and emotional learning – is clearly the focus in the *Guide to Social and Emotional Learning in Queensland State Schools* (Queensland Government Department of Education, Training and the Arts, 2008). This document provides information to support schools in selecting and developing social and emotional learning (SEL) programs. Wellbeing is not defined but is linked to SEL, with SEL contextualised as a key component of improving student social and emotional wellbeing. The domains of implementation are systems and structures, and teaching and learning.

d) Strategic plans

Strategic plans for education from all state government education departments have been included in the review to examine the extent to which reference is made within these to student wellbeing. Given the increasing emphasis placed on schools as a context for addressing and promoting wellbeing, it is interesting to consider the extent to which the discourse of wellbeing has become integrated in education documentation at this strategic level. Plans from all states were secured for review. In addition, plans from four states specifically focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were also reviewed.

Education strategic plans from two states (*ACT Department of Education and Training (2010b) Strategic Plan 2010-2013, Everyone Matters* and *Tasmanian Department of Education (2012a) Strategic Plan 2012-2015*) did not use the term ‘wellbeing’ at all.

Plans from two states made singular fairly generalised reference to wellbeing. The South Australian Department of Education and Children’s Services (2012b) plan, *Strategic Plan 2012-2016 for South Australian Public Education and Care*, stating that “funding decisions will be guided by the potential of our policies and programs to improve learning outcomes for young people and promote child and community wellbeing” (p.5), and the Western Australian Department of Education (2012) plan, *Excellence and Equity Strategic Plan for WA Public Schools 2012-2015*, claiming that “students, their achievements and their wellbeing drive all decisions and actions” (p.4).

Similarly, the Northern Territory Department of Education (2013) *Strategic Plan 2013-2015*, stated that the purpose of the Department of Education was to deliver services to children and young people “to maximise their educational outcomes, safety and wellbeing from their early years through to senior years of schooling” (p.4). It makes a further reference to wellbeing in the early childhood context of integrated and targeted service provision to improve child wellbeing and school readiness.

Three states' strategic plans made multiple references to wellbeing. The New South Wales Department of Education and Communities (2012) *5 Year Strategic Plan 2012-2017* makes generalised references to wellbeing, for example referring in the vision statement to people participating in activities that contribute to their wellbeing, and stating "our students, their wellbeing and achievements, are always at the centre of our decision making" (p.9). However, it also alludes to the implementation of wellbeing approaches by referring to coordinating efforts across agencies and strengthening partnerships to improve wellbeing.

The Queensland Department of Education and Training (2011) *Health, Safety and Wellbeing: Strategic Plan 2011-2015* makes reference to student (and staff) wellbeing in the context of health and wellbeing. These references are in the domains of environment - creating safe and sustainable learning environments, and systems and structures – using strategies to support wellbeing.

The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2013) *DEECD 2013-2017 Strategic Plan* makes the most comprehensive references to wellbeing, compared to the other plans. As well as making reference to strengthening approaches to and developing a strategy for wellbeing, the plan also has wellbeing as a key outcome of the plan (alongside three other outcomes: achievement, engagement and productivity). In this context wellbeing is conceptualised in relation to health and development. The focus is on measurable improvements in these key outcome areas, and a framework provides indicators for measuring these, with measures for wellbeing including (amongst others) the proportion of children being developmentally 'on track', feeling connected to their school, and with a positive opinion about safe and orderly school environment for learning.

Education strategic plans for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were located in the online search from four states and territories – ACT, New South Wales, Northern Territory and Western Australia. In addition a discussion paper for developing a plan in Queensland was reviewed. Victoria does not have a specifically named strategic plan for education focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. However, a broader plan produced by the Victorian Government DEECD (2010a) encompassing education, *Balart Boorron: The Victorian Plan for Aboriginal Children and Young People (2010–2020)*, has been discussed above. South Australia and Tasmania may well have strategic plans specifically targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, but these were not accessible through the web searches conducted.

Two of the plans, the ACT Department of Education and Training (2010a) *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Matters Strategic Plan 2010-2013* and the Northern Territory Indigenous Education Council (2013) *Indigenous Education Consultative Bodies Annual Strategic Plan*, made no direct reference to wellbeing at all. The West Australian Department of Education (2011) *Aboriginal Education Plan for WA Public Schools 2011–2014* contains one reference to wellbeing, which is in relation to school attendance, stating that programs will be implemented in partnership with other agencies to increase the resilience, health and wellbeing of Aboriginal students.

The New South Wales Department of Education and Training (2009) *Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2009 – 2012* includes strategies to: "**Embed** student wellbeing approaches to increase student engagement, participation and retention ... **Identify** and disseminate innovative programs that redress educational disadvantage and promote learning and wellbeing for Aboriginal students" (p.2).

The Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment (2013) discussion paper *Development of a Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early childhood, school education, training, tertiary education and employment action plan 2013–2016* contains a single reference in generalised terms to wellbeing. This is in the introductory message from the Minister stating, “Improved outcomes in education and employment are cornerstones to increased health, social and economic wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and their communities” (p.i).

Overall, the majority of strategic plans made reference to wellbeing, with only four of the plans reviewed not making any reference at all. This indicates that the term wellbeing tends to be now included in educational discourses at strategic planning levels. What is less clear is the understanding or underlying meaning attributed to the term. The references made varied from a single to multiple references. The majority of these were fairly nebulous, understandably as most strategic plans clearly did not venture much into domains of implementation. However, some plans contained quite specific approaches or strategies for implementation of wellbeing-related aspects, for example, Victoria’s *DEECD 2012-2016 Strategic Plan* and *Balart Boorron: The Victorian Plan for Aboriginal Children and Young People (2010–2020)*. For the most part, references to wellbeing in strategic plans were clustered in the domain of systems and structures.

e) Summary – State education policy-related documentation

There is very little specific wellbeing-focused policy in state government education. All the state education policies and policy guidelines identified a focus on student behaviour and safety, emphasising managing behaviour, establishing safe environments and reporting concerns about child abuse and maltreatment. Wellbeing is conceptualised as something to be protected. The primary emphasis is on development and maintenance of systems and structures, and environmental approaches to protect the wellbeing of children, within a context resonating with discourses of ‘risk’ and ‘harm’.

A range of state government education policy-related documents were identified and included in the analysis from most states (all except the ACT), varyingly focusing on learning, health, behaviour, safety and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students. The ways in which wellbeing is conceptualised in these documents varies, with some taking whole school, whole child, strengths-based approaches to supporting student wellbeing (for example, in the contexts of learning and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students) and others having a more protective, interventionist approach (in contexts of mental health and safety). The documents incorporate a range of domains for implementing approaches to wellbeing, with the learning frameworks covering all four identified domains, and the others mostly focusing on implementing systems and structures and (to a lesser degree) relationships.

Policy-related documents with relevance to wellbeing were identified in the areas of student welfare, health and social and emotional learning. These predominantly took a systems and structures approach to implementing approaches to wellbeing. In relation to student health and welfare, the documents provide integrated frameworks for accessing services and resources.

Finally, reference to wellbeing was made in the majority of education strategic plans. This inclusion indicates acknowledgement that the education sector has a role in attending to student wellbeing.

Interestingly, reference to wellbeing appears to be more frequently made in documentation at a national level than a state level. This may reflect the timing of the shift from state to federal governance and consequent production of policy-related material. It may also reflect a more theoretical inclusion of the term, with the practicalities of implementation still being explored at state levels.

Catholic Education policies and policy-related documentation

Key headlines from this section include:

- *No national Catholic education wellbeing policy.*
- *Only one state Catholic education policy with wellbeing in the title (South Australia).*
- *Pastoral care is a relevant focus of interest in the Catholic education policy and policy-related documentation.*
- *Catholic education policy-related documentation relevant to wellbeing and/or pastoral care was identified in only four states (New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and West Australia)*

A few notable features emerged when identifying Catholic education documents for inclusion in this analysis of wellbeing policy and policy-related documentation (see Table 9). One is the paucity of specific wellbeing-focused documentation, with such documentation being identified and accessed from only four states. Another is the roughly equal amount of documentation focused on pastoral care. As discussed earlier, documentation focused on pastoral care has been included in the analysis because of the frequent conflation of pastoral care and wellbeing in documentation and discussion. The pastoral care policies and policy-related documentation included emphasise the Catholic context, Christ's teachings and the gospels. For example, all refer to the dignity of the person made in the image of God. Within the documentation, wellbeing is conceptualised as an outcome of pastoral care, with pastoral care posited as action taken to promote student wellbeing.

a) Wellbeing policy

The National Catholic Commission does not have any specific wellbeing policies. Only one specifically titled wellbeing policy was found within the Catholic education sector. This is the South Australia Commission for Catholic Schools (2011) policy entitled *Policy for the Care, Wellbeing and Protection of Children and Young People*. It has a clear child protection focus, outlining the principles, policy statement and responsibilities in relation to care and protection of children. Although wellbeing is not defined in this policy, it is clearly contextualised within the framework of safety to be protected, with abuse being described as "detrimental to the child's wellbeing" (p.9). The primary domain for implementation referred to in the policy is that of systems and structure, but reference is also made to relationships and teaching and learning in regard to children's wellbeing. The policy encourages participation, highlighting children's right to be heard regarding decisions affecting their lives, and schools' responsibilities to promote respectful and caring relationships.

Table 9 Catholic educational policies and policy related documents relevant to wellbeing

Title	State	Focus And Scope	Purpose	Contexts For Wellbeing	Domains Of Implementation			
					R	S&S	E	T&L
Policy for the Care, Wellbeing and Protection of Children and Young People <i>South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools 2011</i>	SA	Child protection and wellbeing POLICY	Outlines the principles, policy statement and responsibilities in relation to care and protection of children.	Care, wellbeing and protection Safety and wellbeing Wellbeing not defined, but abuse defined in relation to wellbeing as “detrimental to child’s wellbeing” (p.9).	✓	✓		✓
Pastoral Care in Catholic School Communities: A vision 2008 <i>South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools 2008</i>	SA	Pastoral care POLICY	Outlines the policy, rationale and responsibilities regarding pastoral care. Building supportive, caring, inclusive relationships.	No specific reference to wellbeing	x ¹⁰	x		
Catholic Education Office Commitment to Wellbeing 2012 <i>Catholic Education South Australia</i>	SA	Employee wellbeing Commitment	Wellbeing of employees	Within context of respect, dignity and restorative justice	x	x	x	
Guidelines for Pastoral Care in Catholic Schools <i>Catholic Education Commission New South Wales 2003</i>	NSW	Pastoral care Guidelines	Aim of Guidelines is to create safe, supportive environments in schools; guide school communities in the promotion of pastoral care policies and programs; assist schools to be proactive in addressing the wellbeing of all members of the school community, and promote positive relationships between teachers, students and their families. Whole school approach.	Primarily in context of emotional wellbeing Also, health and wellbeing “Wellbeing refers to the overall healthy state of a person’s life, which is impacted upon by factors such as education, work, social relationships and physical condition” (p.59).	✓	✓	✓	✓
Framework for the Development of Pastoral Care	WA	Pastoral Care	Aims to assist schools in developing and refining its approach to Pastoral Care.	Mentioned in relation to whole school community – not defined	x	✓	x	x

¹⁰ An ‘x’ denotes domains of implementation for pastoral care rather than (specifically named) wellbeing.

Title	State	Focus And Scope	Purpose	Contexts For Wellbeing	Domains Of Implementation			
					R	S&S	E	T&L
in Catholic Schools <i>Catholic Education Office of Western Australia 2007</i>		Framework	"Pastoral Care in Catholic schools is concerned with enhancing the dignity of the human person within a safe and supportive Catholic faith community."					
Student Wellbeing Strategy 2011-2015 <i>Catholic Education Office Archdiocese of Melbourne 2010</i>	VIC	Wellbeing focus Strategic plan	Informs leadership and strategic support to align student wellbeing, teaching and learning in a school improvement context.	Links wellbeing, school community and learning. SEL and curriculum based learning.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Policy 2.26 Pastoral care of students in Catholic schools Catholic Education Melbourne 2013b	VIC	Pastoral care POLICY	Policy statement outlines what pastoral care is – contextualised with wellbeing. "Pastoral care of students in this policy refers to action taken within a school by its leaders and community members to promote and enhance student wellbeing of a personal, social, physical, emotional, mental or spiritual nature."	Contextualised within pastoral care – whole school approach to pastoral care Key elements of student wellbeing are positive self-regard, respect for others, positive relationships, responsible behaviours and personal resilience.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Guidelines for Student Behaviour Management Catholic Education Melbourne 2013a	VIC	Behaviour management Guidelines	Recommended procedures regarding student behaviour management - to be read within the context of the CEOM Policy 2.26, Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools	Wellbeing linked with belonging, connectedness and engagement	✓	✓		
CEO Strategic Plans¹¹								
Towards 2017 Strategic Plan <i>Catholic Education Office & Schools Diocese of Darwin, Northern Territory 2013</i>	NT	Strategic plan	Strategic plan for education – Has a section on pastoral care and wellbeing.	Linked to pastoral care	✓	✓		

¹¹ Some strategic plans did not make any reference to wellbeing, therefore some have no domains of implementation checked in the table

Title	State	Focus And Scope	Purpose	Contexts For Wellbeing	Domains Of Implementation			
					R	S&S	E	T&L
Strategic Renewal Framework 2012-2016 for Catholic Schooling <i>Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane 2012</i>	QLD	Strategic framework	Outlines the systematic approach to managing change and planning and implementing action in relation to Catholic education priorities, strategic intents and local school priorities.	Whole school approach – includes fostering social and emotional wellbeing				✓
One in heart and mind – Strategic directions toward 2016 <i>Tasmanian Catholic Education Office 2013</i>	TAS	Strategic plan	Identifies strategic goals in five areas: Catholic culture and ethos; Learning; Human wellbeing; Leadership; Stewardship	In relation to pastoral care, rights and dignity	✓		✓	
Catholic Education SA Strategic Plan 2010-2014 <i>Catholic Education South Australia 2010</i>	SA	Strategic Plan	Identifies six strategic directions and objectives.	Wellbeing in the context of developing a culture that fosters wellbeing			✓	
Strategic Plan 2008-2012 <i>Catholic Education Office of Western Australia 2008</i>	WA	Strategic Plan		Reference made to staff personal and spiritual wellbeing; students contributing to others' wellbeing	✓			
Strategic Plan 2012-2014 <i>Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Catholic Education Office 2012</i>	ACT	Strategic Plan	Five sections	No direct reference to wellbeing (or pastoral care)				
CEC Workplan 2011 <i>Catholic Education Commission New South Wales 2010</i>	NSW	Strategic Plan		No direct reference to wellbeing				
2011-2015 Directions for Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne <i>Catholic Education Office Archdiocese of Melbourne 2011</i>	VIC	Strategic Plan		Reference to families and community involvement – critical to students learning, development and wellbeing.	✓			

Pastoral care policy – two state Catholic Education Offices have specifically titled pastoral care policies. The Catholic Education Melbourne (2013b) *Policy 2.26, Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools*, has been identified (by the Catholic Education Office for the Archdiocese of Melbourne, CEOM, Wellbeing and Community Partnerships Unit) as the foundational document for this ministry of service, clearly articulating the link between wellbeing and pastoral care. The policy 2.26 statement outlines what pastoral care is and states that the CEOM expects every Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Melbourne to formulate its own policy on pastoral care and related policies and procedures, in areas such as special needs provisions, student behaviour code, student behaviour management, safe school environment (anti-bullying) and critical incident management.

Pastoral care is conceptualised as a means of achieving the outcome of enhanced wellbeing in the context of relationships. Policy 2.26 states that pastoral care of students “refers to actions taken within a school by its leaders and community members to promote and enhance student wellbeing of a personal, social, physical, emotional, mental or spiritual nature. Key elements of student wellbeing are positive self-regard, respect for others, positive relationships, responsible behaviours and personal resilience” (Catholic Education Melbourne, 2013b, para 2). A whole school approach is taken which incorporates all the domains, but pastoral care is conceptualised in the CEOM policy as a means of achieving the outcome of enhanced wellbeing in the context of relationships. Principle 5 states “Student wellbeing is best achieved within a school environment that is safe, supportive, inclusive and empowering, where diversity is respected and valued, where human rights and the common good are honoured, where inter-relationships are positive, where students experience connectedness and engagement, and where those experiencing difficulty or special need receive particular care and support” (Catholic Education Melbourne, 2013b, Principles, para 5).

The Catholic Education Melbourne (2013a) *Guidelines for Student Behaviour Management* are recommended procedures regarding student behaviour management, to be read within the context of the CEOM Policy 2.26. These state that positive behaviour education and management should be “pastorally driven, comprehensive and whole-of-school in nature” CEOM, 2013a, Guiding Principles, para 1). Student wellbeing is linked with belonging, connectedness, being accepted and valued, and positive engagement, highlighting the relationships domain of implementation. However, the procedural focus of the guidelines firmly locates them in the domain of systems and structure.

The South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools (2008) also has a policy, entitled *Pastoral Care in Catholic School Communities: A vision 2008*, which outlines the Commission’s policy, rationale and responsibilities. Again, although this refers to “school structures, policies, programs and services that build inclusive, supportive and caring relationships within the Catholic school community” (p.2), the relationship focus is clearly evident. It advocates structures, policies, programs and services that build inclusive, supportive and caring relationships within the Catholic school community, and outlines commitments in regard to these, such as fostering quality relationships; being compassionate and forgiving; fostering networks of care, respect for diverse family structures and valuing cultural perspectives and traditions. It does not contain any specific reference to wellbeing.

b) Wellbeing frameworks and other documentation

A range of documentation relevant to wellbeing was identified and reviewed from the Catholic Education sector, with only one being specifically wellbeing focused. This document, the *Student Wellbeing Strategy 2011-2015* was produced by the CEOM. The CEOM provides a comprehensive

strategic approach to student wellbeing, which stands out strongly in the current education landscape. Theoretical frameworks are offered in the *Student Wellbeing Research Document 1* (CEOM, 2006) that inform understandings and practices related to whole-school approaches to student wellbeing, and link wellbeing and school improvement, the Health Promoting Schools Framework, the Framework for Student Support Services in Victorian Government schools, and the CEOM Student Wellbeing Framework.

The *Student Wellbeing Strategy 2011-2015* outlines the foundational principles and strategic direction provided by the CEOM to school communities in relation to wellbeing. It supports the development of a strong culture of wellbeing to promote learning, informs leadership and offers strategic support to align student wellbeing and teaching and learning in a school improvement context. The *Student Wellbeing Strategy* has three underpinning, interconnected strategic themes - Lead, Learn, Partner. The first refers to *Leading wellbeing to enhance learning* – highlighting the critical role of school leaders in developing a wellbeing culture which links student wellbeing and improved learning outcomes. The second refers to *Creating safe and effective learning environments* – school structures, processes, procedures including curriculum teaching and learning which contribute to provision of safe and effective learning environment for all. With the third *Promoting school community partnerships for learning* – the role of the school in building community and reaching out to broader community to build diverse and inclusive partnerships for learning. The *Student Wellbeing Strategy* emphasises the connections between student wellbeing, social and emotional learning (SEL), and curriculum based learning, and states that a culture of wellbeing promotes “teaching and learning that provides rich and meaningful opportunities to enhance student engagement, connectedness and belonging”(p.2). It clearly locates approaches to wellbeing across all identified domains of implementation.

The CEOM strategic approach to wellbeing includes having Student Wellbeing Co-ordinators in schools, who must have completed or be in the process of completing credentialed learning under the provisions of the Master of Education (Student Wellbeing). The CEOM is engaged in the Student Wellbeing Action Partnership (SWAP) with the University of Melbourne, offering postgraduate courses for teachers in student wellbeing, and collaboration on ARC research projects related to student wellbeing.

Another aspect of the CEOM wellbeing strategic approach is the Wellbeing and Community Partnerships Unit (WCPU). The WCPU supports and empowers school communities as they care for the wellbeing of their students, by providing information and strategic support to school leadership, assisting schools to build capacity in the design, implementation and evaluation of student wellbeing policy, initiatives and practices, and the engagement of teachers, families and community partners to support student learning and wellbeing. The CEOM student wellbeing strategy clearly contextualises wellbeing with communities – both schools as learning and teaching communities and within broader community partnerships.

Pastoral care – As already noted in discussion of *Policy 2.26*, the CEOM also considers pastoral care foundational to student wellbeing. Two other state Catholic education offices (New South Wales and Western Australia) also have policy-related documentation focusing on pastoral care. The New South Wales *Guidelines for Pastoral Care in Catholic Schools* (Catholic Education Commission New South Wales, 2003) has a whole school approach to implementing wellbeing within the contexts of

pastoral care, health and emotional wellbeing. It aims to create safe, supportive environments in schools; guide school communities in the promotion of pastoral care policies and programs; assist schools to be proactive in addressing the wellbeing of all members of the school community, and promote positive relationships between teachers, students and their families. One of the objectives of the Guidelines is to enhance the wellbeing of all members of the school community by promoting security, communication and positive regard. This document thus includes significant reference to wellbeing and approaches to it are from all four domains of implementation.

The Western Australian *Framework for the Development of Pastoral Care in Catholic Schools* (Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2007) aims to assist schools in developing and refining their approach to pastoral care. It states that this requires a collaborative approach and consideration of the following elements: ethos and environment (including development of policies); curriculum, education and training; and families, partnership and services. Thus pastoral care is implemented through the domains identified in this analysis. Specific mention is also made that “Catholic schools develop policies, programs and practices that are proactive, focus on prevention and intervention and that engage, nurture and promote the wellbeing of the whole school community” indicating approaches to wellbeing are implemented in the domain of structures and systems. Importantly though, the whole school community is included, implying recognition of the multiple relationships existing in the school context, and stating that “Catholic schools promote care, respect and cooperation, and value diversity” (p.2).

Pastoral care is conceptualised as a means of achieving the outcome of enhanced wellbeing in the context of relationships, and reference is made to supportive, caring, inclusive and/or positive relationships in all the pastoral care documentation (Catholic Education Melbourne, 2013b; Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2007; Catholic Education Commission NSW, 2003; South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools, 2008).

Finally, a South Australian single page document, the South Australian *Catholic Education Office Commitment to Wellbeing* (2012) focuses on the wellbeing of employees. Although this is not focused on student wellbeing, it is of interest as it provides a broader context for wellbeing in education, contextualising it within authentic relationships, with respect, dignity and restorative justice in relation to employee wellbeing. It states “membership of the Catholic Education Office compels each individual to commit to one’s own wellbeing and that of every colleague” (p.1)

c) Strategic plans

Strategic plans have been reviewed from Catholic Education offices in all states. Two of the plans reviewed made no reference to student wellbeing – the *Strategic Plan 2012-2014* from the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Catholic Education Office (2012) and the New South Wales Catholic Education Commission (2010) *CEC Workplan 2011*.

Single references to wellbeing are made in the strategic plans of Queensland, Melbourne and South Australian Catholic education. The Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane (2012) *Strategic Renewal Framework 2012-2016 for Catholic Schooling* has as a strategic intent in relation to teaching and learning, “comprehensive whole school approaches provide pastoral care, protection of students, student behaviour support and foster social and emotional wellbeing” (p.19). Similarly, the Catholic Education South Australia (2010) *Catholic Education SA Strategic Plan 2010-2014* makes reference to

developing a culture “that is accountable, transparent, ethical and which fosters wellbeing” although it specifically relates this to “such areas as assessment, monitoring and the analysis and use of data” (p.5).

The *2011-2015 Directions for Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne* (2011) has one reference to student wellbeing, in the context of engagement with parents and the wider community. Such active engagement is seen as critical to each student’s wellbeing and learning.

Relationships are also central to the reference to wellbeing made in the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia (2008) *Strategic Plan 2008-2012*. In this context a strategic outcome is that students will experience an education that, amongst other things, enables them to make a “positive contribution to the wellbeing of others and the natural environment” (p.2). This plan also makes reference to staff experiencing personal and spiritual wellbeing.

The Tasmanian Catholic Education Office (2013) *One in heart and mind – Strategic directions toward 2016* frames wellbeing in conjunction with pastoral care, human rights and dignity - “Human wellbeing is about enabling students, staff and communities to flourish, where ... all people, including those who live in poverty or who are marginalised ... have their rights and dignity upheld” (p.1).

The Northern Territory (Catholic Education Office & Schools Diocese of Darwin, Northern Territory 2013) plan *Towards 2017 Strategic Plan* has a section on ‘pastoral care and wellbeing’, which talks about “the development of a Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Policy that incorporates Gospel values and their implementation in programs and processes” (p.4). Reference is made in the plan to both programs and processes, and communication processes in the context of wellbeing and pastoral care.

Overall and similarly to the state education strategic plans, the majority of Catholic education strategic plans make reference to wellbeing. However, unlike the state education plans, only one made reference to wellbeing in relation to systems and structures. Most were in the domain of relationships, with some also in environment and teaching domains. In keeping with the findings from reviewing the policy and policy-related documentation several references to wellbeing were made in conjunction with pastoral care.

d) Summary –Catholic education policy-related documentation

Within Catholic education there are noticeable gaps, with policy-related documentation being identified and accessed from only four of the seven states and territories. There is little specific wellbeing-focused documentation, but a greater amount of documentation focused on pastoral care than in the government sector. One wellbeing policy was identified in the area of child protection and framed within wider discourses of risk and harm, with the primary domain for implementation that of systems and structure. The pastoral care policies, on the other hand, are relationship focused incorporating child safety and inclusive of other aspects of wellbeing beyond this. Pastoral care is conceptualised in the CEOM policy as a means of achieving the outcome of enhanced wellbeing in the context of relationships.

Policy-related documentation identified in the Victorian CEOM offers a comprehensive, strategic approach to student wellbeing that incorporates a range of areas and all the identified domains of implementation. Other than that, policy-related documentation in other states focuses on pastoral

care and relationships within the school community, with frequent indications that this extends beyond the school gates. Similarly, most references to wellbeing in the Catholic education plans were associated with relationships and/or in conjunction with pastoral care.

Wellbeing webpages

An unanticipated finding of the online internet searches, for policy related documentation relevant to wellbeing, was a number of webpages specifically dedicated to student wellbeing policy, programs or information. All state education departments and most Catholic education offices (five) have webpages with wellbeing in the title. These webpages were wellbeing resources in and of themselves, without necessarily linking to any documentation, and in some instances were the only information available regarding student wellbeing. In some instances the text on the webpage was the only information available in relation to student wellbeing.

Some state education departments indicate on their websites that they have wellbeing policies. Specifically, both New South Wales and Victoria have webpages entitled 'wellbeing policies'. However, the policies on these webpages are focused primarily on welfare and safety.

Generally, wellbeing webpages provide links to policies, procedures or information across a range of topics related to student wellbeing. The term wellbeing appears to have become something of a 'catch-all', most often incorporating information related to welfare, safety and health (frequently mental health). It is usually not defined, and webpages can cover a wide range of diverse topics, such as headlice, bullying, drug use, counselling, school attendance and exclusion.

4.3 Non-education sector policy analysis findings - policy-related documentation relevant to wellbeing

As well as specifically searching for documentation from the education sector to analyse, other sectors were also included in the search for wellbeing policy-related documentation. The policy imperative appears to increasingly indicate that education is the sector in which children's wellbeing is to be addressed. However, the inclusion of other sectors in this analysis avoids making the assumption that other sectors do not share this interest and provides a look at the broader policy landscape in which wellbeing policy is located. As discussed earlier, some initiatives relevant to student wellbeing are joint initiatives undertaken by education and health or child protection departments.

Key headlines from this section include:

- *No national or state policy specifically related to or focusing on wellbeing and children in any sector.*
- *Sectors (other than education) that have developed national frameworks relevant to wellbeing are health, early childhood, and child protection.*
- *The majority of national and state frameworks/documents were developed relatively recently, most since 2005 - The three child focused integrated frameworks were all produced by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2009.*
- *There are differences between the states in terms of the amount of policy-related documentation relevant to wellbeing.*
- *The state sectors that have documentation most relevant to wellbeing are (mental) health and child protection.*

National (other than education-focused) policy-related documents

Sectors at the national government level, other than education, which have policy-related documentation specifically referring, or of relevance, to wellbeing, include health (in particular mental health), early childhood and child protection (see Table 10).

The term wellbeing is only used in the title of two documents in this table of national policy-related documentation. One of these is the *Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework: National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Well Being (2004–2009)* (Social Health Reference Group for National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Council and National Mental Health Working Group, 2004). This document is discussed further below.

The other document which contains wellbeing in the title is the *Health and Wellbeing of Young Australians: Indicator framework and key national indicators* (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2010). This is not a policy document; rather, it is a preview of the reporting framework and the key national indicators that are the basis of the subsequent report *Young Australians: Their health and wellbeing* (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2011). It was included in this review on account of it being one of only two documents found during our search at a national level with a title that specifically pertained to the wellbeing of young people. Wellbeing is primarily framed within the health context in this document, and while reference is made to wellbeing encompassing measures of physical, mental, and social wellbeing of individuals, the key indicator for wellbeing (1.1) is physical and mental wellbeing. However, links are made between parental wellbeing and community and civic activities and young people's wellbeing. Wellbeing is also referred to in the context of safety and wellbeing, in relation to child protection issues. Overall then, wellbeing is conceptualised more broadly than is implied at first glance.

Health – The relationship between health and wellbeing is underscored in the health policy-related documentation identified, which generally tends to incorporate or include reference to wellbeing, although the extent of this varies. These documents do not all focus specifically on children and young people, or on wellbeing specifically, but they do contain reference to wellbeing. In the documents developed within the health sector, wellbeing is clearly (and as would be expected) framed in relation to health. This is particularly evident in the phrasing, with the common use of the phrase 'health and wellbeing' (in, for example, *Australia: The healthiest country by 2020*).

Table 10 National policies and policy related documents (other than education) relevant to wellbeing

Policy	Focus and Scope	Purpose	Contexts for Wellbeing	Domains of Implementation			
				R	S&S	E	T&L
Australia: The healthiest country by 2020, National Preventive Health Strategy <i>Australian Government Department of Health and Aging, National Preventive Health Taskforce 2009</i>	Health General population Strategic plan	Preventive health strategy	Primarily in relation to health. Also, reference to community wellbeing (one of four underpinning principles to the strategy).		✓	✓	✓
Healthy Children: Strengthening Promotion and Prevention across Australia: A National Public Health Framework for Children 2005–2008 <i>National Public Health Partnership Child and Youth Intergovernmental Partnership 2005</i>	Health Children (0-12 years) Strategic framework	The aim of the <i>Strategic Framework</i> is to improve the health and wellbeing of Australian children	Health related context – ‘health, wellbeing and development’	✓	✓		✓
Health and Wellbeing of Young Australians: Indicator framework and Key National Indicators <i>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2010</i>	Health Young people (12?-24 years) Preview - Reporting framework	Provides a preview of the reporting framework and the key national indicators that are the basis of the report, <i>Young Australians: their health and wellbeing 2011</i>	Primarily in relation to health (physical and mental). Related to parental wellbeing and communities. Also, in relation to care and protection.				
Healthy Weight 2008: The National Action Agenda for Children and Young People and their Families <i>Australian Government Department of Health and Aging, The National Obesity Taskforce 2003</i>	Health Children Strategic framework	A national strategic framework for action to address the challenges of overweight and obesity in children and young people (ie aged 0-18 years) and their families.	Minimal reference, but one ref made – Health related		✓		
National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait	Health	Aims to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have a health life, equal to that of the	Primarily in relation to mental health		✓		

Policy	Focus and Scope	Purpose	Contexts for Wellbeing	Domains of Implementation			
				R	S&S	E	T&L
Islander Health 2003-2013 <i>Australian Government Department of Health and Aging 2007</i>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population Strategic framework	general population that is enriched by a strong living culture, dignity and justice.	"Social and emotional wellbeing"				
Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework: National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Well Being (2004–2009) <i>Social Health Reference Group for National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Council and National Mental Health Working Group 2004</i>	Health Framework Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population	The Framework aims to respond to the high incidence of social and emotional well being problems and mental ill health, by providing a framework for national action. It has adopted a population health model to provide needs based care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This <i>Social and Emotional Well Being Framework</i> is based on the Aboriginal definition of health (NAHS, 1989) recognising that achieving optimal conditions for health and well being requires a holistic and whole-of-life view of health, referring to the social, emotional and cultural well being of the whole community.	Social and emotional wellbeing Health and wellbeing Mental health and wellbeing	✓	✓	✓	
National Action Plan for Mental Health 2006 – 2011: <i>Fourth progress report (covering implementation to 2009-10). Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Standing Council on Health 2012</i>	Mental health General population Strategic framework	A strategic framework for mental health care emphasising coordination and collaboration between government, private and non-government providers.	Minimal reference to wellbeing		✓		
Budget National Mental Health Reform package <i>Ministerial Statement, May 2011</i>	Mental health General population Budget package	Package of budget measures for mental health reform - including three referring to children and wellbeing.	Primarily in relation to mental health. Also references made in relation to physical health; and social, emotional and mental health.		✓		

Policy	Focus and Scope	Purpose	Contexts for Wellbeing	Domains of Implementation			
				R	S&S	E	T&L
A Ten Year Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform (DRAFT) <i>Council of Australian Governments 2012</i>	Mental health General population Action plan - Roadmap	Sets out a vision for preventing mental health problems and supporting those with mental illness and their families/carers.	In relation to mental health. Also, in relation to health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia <i>Coalition of Australian Governments 2009a</i>	Early Childhood development Learning framework	Early Years Learning Framework for early childhood educators - aims to extend and enrich children’s learning from birth to five years and through the transition to school. Advocates holistic approach	Defined as - A central concept incorporating physical and psychological aspects - includes good physical health, feelings of happiness, satisfaction and successful social functioning.	✓		✓	✓
Investing in the Early Years—A National Early Childhood Development Strategy <i>Council of Australian Governments 2009b</i>	Early childhood development Strategic framework	Provides an outcomes framework for collaborative effort between the Commonwealth and the state and territory governments to ensure that by 2020 all children have the best start in life.	Referred to in conjunction with health and/or development			✓	
Protecting Children is Everyone’s Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020 <i>Council of Australian Governments 2009c</i>	Child protection Strategic framework	A national framework for an integrated response to child protection, recognising the responsibilities and reforms implemented by state and territories.	In relation to safety		✓	✓	
National Strategy for Young Australians <i>Australian Government 2010</i>	Youth Strategic plan	The National Strategy for Young Australians articulates the Australian Government’s aspiration for all young people to grow up safe, healthy, happy and resilient. It aims to guide future government policy making to ensure that this aspiration can become a reality for all young Australians.	‘Health and wellbeing’ is one of the eight priority areas for action Environment Participation	✓	✓		✓
The Nest Action Agenda <i>Australian Research Alliance for</i>	Children and Young People	The purpose of <i>The Nest</i> is to deliver a resource for the community, non-government	Focus is on improving wellbeing for children and young people in six	✓			

Policy	Focus and Scope	Purpose	Contexts for Wellbeing	Domains of Implementation			
				R	S&S	E	T&L
<i>Children and Youth (ARACY, 2013)</i>	Action plan	organisations and state and federal governments – bringing together activities, services, programs, research and policy to provide a roadmap for how governments, community based groups, businesses and individuals can pool their efforts to give all children and young people in Australia a good childhood.	priority directions encompassing: early childhood learning and development; educational performance; physical health; social and emotional wellbeing; participation and disadvantage arising from income disparity.				

One health policy-related document that stands out as being focused on children and wellbeing is the strategic framework, *Healthy Children – Strengthening Promotion and Prevention across Australia - A National Public Health Framework for Children 2005–2008*, (National Public Health Partnership Child and Youth Intergovernmental Partnership, 2005). The stated aim of the framework to improve the health and wellbeing of Australian children aged 0-12 years, by providing “strategic directions for coordinated and integrated action to build and sustain the infrastructure, capacity and effort necessary to improve the health and wellbeing of children in Australia” (p.22). Throughout the document there are references to ‘health, wellbeing and development,’ however, wellbeing is not actually defined. This document suggests implementing approaches to wellbeing through the domains of relationships, systems and structures, and teaching and learning.

The only other health document specifically focused on children is the strategic framework - *Healthy Weight 2008: The National Action Agenda for Children and Young People and their Families* (Australian Government Department of Health and Aging, The National Obesity Taskforce, 2003). This is a framework for action to address the challenges of overweight and obesity in children, young people and their families. The term wellbeing is only used once in this document in the statement: “Healthy Weight 2008 should be seen as a first step towards shaping Australia’s future for better health and wellbeing” (p.4). The minimal reference is interesting given the preponderance of physical health focused information and guidance given on education wellbeing websites, including that related to healthy eating and physical exercise. It suggests that at the time of developing the strategy physical health issues such as obesity were not conceptualised in accordance with wellbeing.

Mental health documents tend to frame wellbeing as ‘health and wellbeing’, specifying both physical and mental health and/or ‘mental health and wellbeing.’ Measures included within the *Budget National Mental Health Reform Package* (Ministerial Statement, 2011) pertinent to children and young people include reference to health and wellbeing in the *Health and Wellbeing Check for 3 year olds and Expert Group in Child Mental Health*; wellbeing as one of five areas of early childhood development to be measured with reference to both mental and physical health in the *Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)*; and identification and measurement of dimensions of wellbeing to inform policy to respond to the social, emotional and mental health needs of children and young people in their middle years in the development of a *Social Engagement and Emotional Development (SEED)* survey. So, within this document three measures have reference to wellbeing in the context of: health; mental and physical health; and social, emotional and mental health needs. Although wellbeing is clearly contextualised within a health framework, no definition of wellbeing is offered in relation to any of these measures. The domain for implementation of approaches to wellbeing is systems and structures.

Links are explicitly made between mental health and wellbeing in some mental health documentation. Examples of this include, the intention that the National Action Plan for Mental Health 2006-2011 (COAG, 2012) will contribute to the wellbeing of people with mental illness, implementing approaches through the domain of systems and structure. Another recent example is the draft *Ten Year Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform* (COAG, 2012), of which a key aspect is building good mental health and improving mental health and wellbeing. Within this document mental health is defined as a state of wellbeing. The draft Ten Year Roadmap is one of the few policy documents that include definitions. Interestingly, it provides a definition of social and emotional wellbeing based on “an holistic Aboriginal definition of mental health that includes: mental health;

emotional, psychological and spiritual wellbeing; and issues impacting specifically on wellbeing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities such as grief, suicide and self harm, loss and trauma” (COAG, 2012, p.40). It also stands out from other mental health documentation in approaching wellbeing across all domains of implementation.

This linking of wellbeing, mental health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health is also apparent in the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health 2003-2013* (Australian Government Department of Health and Aging, 2007). This framework is primarily health focused, and aimed at the general Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population rather than specifically children and young people. However, one of the key result areas is ‘social and emotional wellbeing’ and there are references to the wellbeing of children and to young people in training and educational activities. The context for social and emotional wellbeing appears to be less broad than that of the draft Ten Year Roadmap, and is primarily related to mental health service delivery, workforce issues, and issues of substance use. The domain for implementation of wellbeing is thus clearly systems and structures.

The *Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework: National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ Mental Health and Social and Emotional Well Being (2004–2009)* (Social Health Reference Group for National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Council and National Mental Health Working Group 2004) is a response to the high incidence of social and emotional wellbeing problems and mental ill health amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations. This document defines and describes social and emotional wellbeing in the context of health and mental health. In it, social and emotional wellbeing is understood multi-dimensionally and is “part of an holistic understanding of life itself” (p.7). The first Key Strategic Direction in the framework is a focus on children, young people, families and communities. The domains through which wellbeing is approached in this context are primarily relationships (with families and wider extended communities, as well as professionals and specialists) and systems and structures. The environment is a key context as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ approach to mental health and wellbeing recognises the importance of connection to land, culture, spirituality, ancestry, family and community.

The primary domain of implementation of approaches to wellbeing in the health documentation identified is systems and structures. However, environmental contexts are relevant for the conceptualising of wellbeing in the national frameworks, in the documentation focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing and other documentation. Wellbeing is referred to in contexts of community wellbeing in, for example, *Australia: The Healthiest Country by 2020* (Australian Government Department of Health and Aging, National Preventive Health Taskforce, 2009). This framework makes reference to wellbeing in different environments (for example workplace and school) and suggests that schools can embed health and wellbeing through their policies, programs and environment. In another national framework, *Health and Wellbeing of Young Australians: Indicator Framework and Key National Indicators* (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2010), wellbeing is referred to in the contexts of parental and community influences on children’s wellbeing, incorporating relationships and environmental aspects.

Child development - Some frameworks and strategies frame health and wellbeing in conjunction with children’s development, using phrasing such as “child health, development and wellbeing” or variations thereof (for example, *Australia: The healthiest country by 2020; Investing in the Early*

Years - A national early childhood development strategy; Healthy Children – Strengthening promotion and prevention across Australia 2005-2008).

Investing in the Early Years – A national early childhood development strategy (COAG, 2009b) is a collaborative effort between the Commonwealth and the state and territory governments providing an outcomes framework and areas for action, for their vision that by 2020 all children have the best start in life to “create a better future for themselves and for the nation” (p.4). References to wellbeing within this document tend to relate to influences and impacts on wellbeing, such as parents’ or communities influence on wellbeing, highlighting the environmental domain of implementation. The term wellbeing is not actually defined.

There are two other frameworks developed by the collaborative COAG in the same year (2009) and specifically aimed at children - *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* focused on early childhood development and *Protecting Children is Everyone’s Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020*.

Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (COAG, 2009a) is the first national framework for early childhood educators.¹² The aim of the framework is to extend and enrich children’s learning from birth to five years and through the transition to school. It contains five learning outcomes, one of which is: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing. Wellbeing is thus seen as incorporating physical and psychological aspects and acknowledged as central to the framework. It is defined within the glossary of terms as resulting from “the satisfaction of basic needs - the need for tenderness and affection; security and clarity; social recognition; to feel competent; physical needs and for meaning in life (adapted from Laevers 1994). It includes happiness and satisfaction, effective social functioning and the dispositions of optimism, openness, curiosity and resilience” (p.46). Wellbeing is discussed throughout the document, such as the statement that “To support children’s learning, it is essential that educators attend to children’s wellbeing by providing warm, trusting relationships, predictable and safe environments, affirmation and respect for all aspects of their physical, emotional, social, cognitive, linguistic, creative and spiritual *being*” (p.30). The key domains of implementation are relationships, environment, and teaching and learning.

Child protection – *Protecting Children is Everyone’s Business* (COAG, 2009c) is a national framework, aimed at an integrated response to protecting children. The focus is clearly on safety, and wellbeing is contextualised in accordance with this, for example, frequent references are made throughout the text to ‘safety and wellbeing.’ Wellbeing is also apparent in the context of strategies to increase funding for disadvantaged schools with a focus on improving student wellbeing (through the Low SES School Communities National Partnership); and to enhance services to vulnerable or at risk children (for example NSW’s *Keep Them Safe* initiatives including new Child Wellbeing Units). The domains for implementation of wellbeing are thus systems and structures, and environment.

Young people – The *National Strategy for Young Australians* (Australian Government, 2010) articulates the Australian Government’s aspiration for all young people to “grow up safe, healthy, happy and resilient” (p.2). One of the eight priority areas for action is ‘health and wellbeing’ and the

¹² This framework is included in this section rather than the National education-focused policy section as it was produced by the COAG rather than an education department.

document outlines why this is important and future directions towards achieving this. The directions are in the domains of systems and structures, relationships and teaching and learning.

While it is not government policy or policy-related documentation, the national plan for child and youth wellbeing *The Nest Action Agenda* recently released by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY, 2013) is an important document that merits attention. The culmination of almost three years' work by leading thinkers, service providers and advocates, as well as consultation with over 4,000 young Australians and their families, it details key evidence-based, preventive-focused priorities to improve child and youth wellbeing across Australia, and includes six operational principles and six priority directions to mobilise collective efforts to achieve this. The six priority directions for improvement are: early childhood learning and development; educational performance; physical health; social and emotional wellbeing; participation and disadvantage arising from income disparity. It outlines these along with means of applying the principles, through strategies incorporating development and implementation of policies, programs, services and systems approaches, to bring about improved wellbeing.

Programs – While this analysis of policy-related documentation does not extend to programs, it is important to make reference to the *MindMatters* resource and professional development initiative. This initiative, developed by the Australian Government of Health and Aging, and supported by and further developed in conjunction with the Principals Australia Institute, is a suite of resources incorporating *MindMatters*, *KidsMatter*, *Whole School Matters* and *Community Matters*. The purpose of the resources is to support Australian schools to implement a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing within schools or other educational sites, with the aim of promoting and protecting the mental health, and social and emotional wellbeing of all members of school communities.

The following section turns to look at state policies and policy-related documentation from sectors other than education.

a) State (other than educational) policy-related documents

At a state level no policy specifically focused on, or clearly related to, wellbeing was found. Similar to the findings at a national level, policy-related documents which have relevance to wellbeing were found in areas of health and child protection (see Table 11). The table clearly indicates a difference between states in terms of the existence of documentation and an inconsistency of focus. It is unclear whether this reflects the search methods we used (online web searches) or if such documentation simply does not exist. It is therefore difficult to get a sense of parity across states in these areas. The documentation discussed below should be taken as an indication only of what documentation is accessible.

Table 11 State policies and policy related documents (other than education) relevant to wellbeing

POLICY	STATE	SCOPE	PURPOSE	FRAMING OF WELLBEING	DOMAINS OF IMPLEMENTATION			
					R	S&S	E	T&L
Child protection reform program: Keeping Them Safe <i>Government of South Australia Department for Families and Communities 2004</i>	SA	Child protection focus Reform plan	Statement of Government’s position on and agenda to reform child protection services and systems	Various references to safety, health, and future wellbeing	✓	✓		
Sharing Responsibility: A Framework for Service Collaboration for the Care, Protection and Well-being of Children and Young People in the ACT <i>ACT Government Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services 2005</i>	ACT	Child protection focus Framework	A framework for service collaboration for the care, protection and well-being of children and young people in the ACT - to coordinate responses, outlining the roles and responsibilities of departments and agencies in responding to the safety and protection of children and young people.	Linked to care and protection		✓		
Keep Them Safe: A shared Approach to Child Wellbeing: 2009-2014 <i>New South Wales Government Department of Premier and Cabinet 2009</i>	NSW	Child protection focus Action plan	Action plan to re-shape the way family and community services are delivered in NSW to improve the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of children and young people.	Safety and protection		✓		
Key Directions for a Social, Emotional, Cultural and Spiritual Wellbeing Population Health Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in Queensland <i>Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health Queensland, 2009</i>	QLD	Population health focus Strategy Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians	The aim of the document is to inform population level policy, program development and practice across the range of relevant sectors and agencies regarding key directions for development.	Health/Mental health – and safety		✓		
Child Health and Parenting Service Strategic Plan 2009-2014 <i>Tasmania Government Department of Health and Human Services 2009</i>	TAS	Children and parents health focus Strategic plan	Details 5 year strategic plan for the Child Health and Parenting Service (CHAPS) (2009-2014).	Frequent references in relation to health and wellbeing		✓		

POLICY	STATE	SCOPE	PURPOSE	FRAMING OF WELLBEING	DOMAINS OF IMPLEMENTATION			
					R	S&S	E	T&L
Melbourne Charter for Promoting Mental Health and Preventing Mental and Behavioural Disorders <i>VicHealth 2009</i>	VIC	General population Mental Health Charter	Identifies principles and actions that governments, communities, organisations and individuals can take to influence the interconnecting social, economic, cultural, environmental and personal factors that influence mental health and wellbeing.	Frequent references in relation to mental health	✓			
Evidence-Based Mental Health Promotion Resource: Report for the Department of Human Services and VicHealth, Melbourne. <i>Keleher & Armstrong, 2005</i>	VIC	General population Mental Health Resource (service)	Resource to assist in planning, implementing and evaluating mental health promotion programs across Victoria. Includes a section on school based programmes for mental health and wellbeing – advocates whole school approach.	Mental health	✓	✓	✓	✓
Using Policy to Promote Mental Health and Wellbeing: A Guide for Policy Makers <i>State Government of Victoria Department of Health. 2012</i>	VIC	General population Mental Health Policy guide	Guide is intended to encourage and enable policy makers in Victoria to systematically consider the social and environmental determinants of mental health when developing or reviewing policy or programs.	Mental health and wellbeing		✓		
Western Australian Health Promotion Strategic Framework 2012-2016 <i>Government of Western Australia Department of Health 2012</i>	WA	General population Health Strategic framework	Outlines the strategic directions for promoting healthier and safer lifestyles for the Western Australian population.	Health – minimal reference specifically to children and wellbeing		✓	✓	

Child protection – Policy related documents relevant to wellbeing were found in the child protection sector in New South Wales, ACT and South Australia. All three states have documents that are essentially plans to reform, re-shape and clarify aspects of service delivery in relation to child protection. The most recent of these, the *NSW Keep Them Safe 2009-2014* (NSW Government Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2009) action plan includes the intention to establish Child Wellbeing Units, to provide services to mandatory reporting agencies (which occurred in 2010). These documents contain varying degrees of reference to wellbeing. While there are no definitions of the term wellbeing, the references tend to be in the context of safety and child protection. The South Australian *Child Reform Program: Keeping Them Safe* (Government of South Australia Department for Families and Communities, 2004) also has references to health and wellbeing, and children’s future wellbeing, in the context of provision of child protection services and systems.

The purpose of *Sharing Responsibility: A Framework for Service Collaboration for the Care, Protection and Well-being of Children and Young People in the ACT* (ACT Government Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services, 2005) is to coordinate responses, outlining the roles and responsibilities of departments and agencies in responding to the safety and protection of children and young people. The primary domain for implementation of wellbeing in these child protection documents is systems and structures.

Health – Policy-related documents relevant to wellbeing were evident in the health sector in Tasmania and Western Australia, and the mental health sector in Victoria. Both of the health focused strategic plans in Tasmania – the *Child Health and Parenting Service Strategic Plan 2009-2014* (Tasmania Government Department of Health and Human Services, 2009) and Western Australia – *Western Australian Health Promotion Strategic Framework 2012-2016* (Government of Western Australia Department of Health, 2012), make references to wellbeing. The Tasmanian one in particular, which is a child and parent focused document, specifies wellbeing in the stated mission: “working together to deliver integrated services for the health and wellbeing of children and their families in Tasmania” (p.3). This plan makes frequent references to wellbeing and takes an ecological approach in which children are seen as the key concern of health services, but the opportunity to influence the child’s health and wellbeing is totally dependent on those caring for the children and the community in which they live. As was found with most of the documentation, neither of these strategic plans define what is meant by wellbeing.

Taken collectively, the three Victorian mental health documents aim to address gaps and provide a comprehensive approach to promoting mental health and wellbeing. The *Melbourne Charter for Promoting Mental Health and Preventing Mental and Behavioural Disorders* (VicHealth, 2009) identifies principles and actions that governments, communities, organisations and individuals can take to influence the interconnecting social, economic, cultural, environmental and personal factors that influence mental health and wellbeing. The purpose of the *Evidence-based Mental Health Promotion Resource* (Keleher & Armstrong, 2005) produced by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) and the Victorian Department of Human Services, is to bridge a gap in available materials to advance and inform policy, research and practice responses to the promotion of mental health and wellbeing. The guide for policy makers, *Using Policy to Promote Mental Health and Wellbeing: A Guide for Policy Makers* (State Government of Victoria Department of Health, 2012), is intended to encourage and enable policy makers in Victoria to systematically consider the

social and environmental determinants of mental health when developing or reviewing policy or programs. All of these documents incorporate wellbeing in the context of mental health promotion. None of them are specifically child focused, although the *Evidence-based Mental Health Promotion Resource* (Keleher & Armstrong, 2005) includes school based programs for mental health and wellbeing, as an intervention to increase social connectedness, and programs for children and young people, in relation to interventions to address violence and discrimination. Wellbeing is not defined in the documents, although the *Melbourne Charter for Promoting Mental Health and Preventing Mental and Behavioural Disorders* (VicHealth, 2009) defines mental health in terms of wellbeing: “a state of complete physical, mental, spiritual and social wellbeing in which each person is able to realise one’s abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and make a unique contribution to one’s community” (p.1). Wellbeing is contextualised with mental health, and a multi-faceted, multi-sectoral approach is taken to promoting mental health and wellbeing.

A state document focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health in Queensland was identified – *Key directions for a social, emotional, cultural and spiritual wellbeing population health framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in Queensland* (Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health Queensland, 2009). This document is not child focused, however it contains reference to children and families and aims to inform population level policy, program development and practice across a range of relevant sectors and agencies. The key domain for implementation of approaches relevant to wellbeing is thus systems and structures.

Summary – policy and policy-related documentation from sectors other than education

There is no national policy specifically focusing on wellbeing and children in any sector. However, several sectors other than education have recently developed national frameworks that are relevant to student wellbeing. These are in the sectors of health (particularly mental health), early childhood, and child protection. As with the education sector, the documentation primarily approaches wellbeing through systems and structures.

Similarly, at a state level, no policy specifically focused on, or clearly related to, wellbeing was found. Policy-related documents relevant to student wellbeing were found in the areas of health and child protection. States differ in terms of the existence of documentation and the focus of this.

In this documentation wellbeing tends to be an addendum to another concept, for example, safety or health. Within these sectors, the conceptualisations of wellbeing in these documents are therefore influenced by the dominant discourses in relation to those other concepts.

4.4 Domains for implementation of wellbeing

This section takes a closer, more integrated look at the domains for implementing approaches to wellbeing, identified in the analytical framework, and woven throughout the discussion of the documentation thus far. As noted in the methods section, the domains for implementation, *relationships; systems and structures; environment; and teaching and learning*, are not exclusive and there are clearly areas of overlap.

Some documentation, most notably that which advocated a whole school approach to wellbeing including half of the national educational documents, incorporated reference to all four domains of implementation. Three frameworks, for example, which can be considered ‘lighthouse’ documents regarding student wellbeing, (Catholic Education Office Archdiocese of Melbourne, 2010;

Government of South Australia Department of Education and Children's Services, 2007; Queensland Government Department of Education, Training and Employment, 2012a) incorporate all four domains of implementation. However, overall only 15 documents out of the 80 analysed explicitly referred to all four domains of implementation for wellbeing. This section looks at documentation in the context of each of the domains in turn.

Systems and structures domain of implementation

The systems and structures domain includes policies and programs that are implemented by the school or organisation, which potentially impact on student wellbeing, including systems for service delivery, and the provision of resources relevant to wellbeing (other than curriculum). Across all the documentation analysed, the greatest emphasis by far was placed on the domain of systems and structures (occurring in 56 of the 80 documents). The emphasis was particularly evident in the state government education documentation (in which only two documents did not include reference to systems and structures) and the national and state documentation from other (than education) sectors.

A number of documents have systems and structures as the sole domain of implementation, including one of the only two state education wellbeing-titled policies identified (Northern Territory Government Department of Education and Training, 2010). Directly focusing on wellbeing in the context of safety from harm and exploitation, it outlines the reporting obligations and procedures for employees of schools, colleges and educational institutions regarding child abuse and neglect using existing systems and structures. Systems and structures were also identified as the sole domain in four other state education policy-related documents, focusing on student safety, welfare and mental health, three of which are Victorian (New South Wales Government Departments of Health and of Education and Training, 2010; State Government of Victoria Department of Education, 1998, State Government of Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, DEECD, 2012; State of Victoria Government Departments of Education and Early Childhood Development, and of Human Services, 2010).

Some documents contain reference to other domains but clearly place the primary emphasis on systems and structures such as collaborative services, referral pathways and service delivery to support the wellbeing of children and young people. These include two Victorian documents *The Health and Wellbeing Service Framework* (State Government of Victoria DEECD, 2010b) and *Balart Boorron: The Victorian Plan for Aboriginal Children and Young People (2010–2020)* (State Government of Victoria DEECD, 2010a). *Balart Boorron* emphasises systems and structures in putting the principles of Dardee Boorai (State Government of Victoria DEECD, 2008) (which puts greatest emphasis on the domains of relationships and environment) into effect. Other documents related to mental health (Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment, 2012b; State of South Australia Department of Education and Children's Services, 2012a) focus more on the roles and responsibilities of education staff in supporting student mental health and wellbeing, and include the domain of systems and structures, but also incorporate other domains in implementing approaches to wellbeing.

A number of the documents that have systems and structures as the primary domain of implementation focus on school responses to child protection, student welfare, and mental health concerns. This is in keeping with policy-related documentation in the health and child protection sectors, which emphasise systems and structures as the dominant (and often sole) means of

implementing approaches to wellbeing. The education sector documents tend to emphasise a collaborative approach between services, provision of strategies and access to specialised support. Wellbeing is conceptualised within discourses of risk and harm, as something to be protected, through development and provision of safe environments and implementation of systems to manage identified behaviour and concerns.

Relationships domain of implementation

The relationships domain incorporates the multiple relationships occurring in relation to educational contexts, within the school environment and in the wider family and community contexts. Given the critical role of teachers in relation to students, this category also extends to include teacher wellbeing and means of addressing or enhancing this.

Relationships were the second most emphasised domain (referred to in 36 documents), following systems and structures. Greatest emphasis was placed on relationships as a domain of implementation in the national education documentation, with all of these including reference to relationships of one type or another. The relationships, with emphasis varying according to different documents, included staff and parental wellbeing (*National Framework for Health Promoting Schools, 2000-2003; National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools, 2005*), relationships between students and staff (*National Safe Schools Framework, 2011; My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia, 2011; National School Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program Guidelines, 2013*), and partnerships with families and wider communities (*Principles for School Drug Education, 2004; Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, 2008; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010 – 2014*).

Relationships are a key domain in documents focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (State Government of Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2008; Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2010) and also national education documents containing specific reference to these students (namely the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, 2008*; and *Principles for School Drug Education in Australian Schools, 2004*). These documents highlight the importance of partnership and engagement with the wider Indigenous community, and cultural and linguistic identity.

The domain of relationships is particularly evident in the Catholic education documentation, in which equal (and greatest) emphasis was placed on the domains of relationships, and systems and structures, with half the documents including reference to each of these domains. Relationships are especially emphasised in the documentation focusing on pastoral care. Pastoral care is conceptualised as a means of achieving the outcome of enhanced wellbeing in the context of relationships, and reference is made to supportive, caring, inclusive and/or positive relationships in all the pastoral care documentation (CEOM, 2013b; Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2007; Catholic Education Commission NSW, 2003; South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools, 2008). However, while relationships are the critical element in the implementation of pastoral care, a whole school approach is taken which incorporates all the domains.

The Catholic education strategic plans also made greater reference to the domain of relationships than any other domain, while systems and structures were only referred to in one of these. In marked contrast to this, the domain of relationships was referred to in only one of the state

government education plans, and systems and structures were the most frequently referred to domain.

An emphasis on relationships as a domain of implementation for approaches to wellbeing is consistent with evidence signalling the importance of relationships for children's wellbeing. Given the strong history of pastoral care in Catholic education, it may be that the relationships domain is a relatively comfortable fit conceptually and systemically.

Teaching and learning domain of implementation

The teaching and learning domain primarily includes pedagogy, curriculum and the provision of information. The domain of teaching and learning was emphasised to a similar extent as the domain of environment. Teaching and learning was referred to in relation to wellbeing in 29 of the documents analysed and environmental aspects were referred to in 28 documents. Unsurprisingly, teaching and learning was the domain least frequently referred to in the documentation from sectors other than education.

Inclusion of teaching and learning implementation approaches to wellbeing tended to be in the context of whole school approaches, in which all four domains were referred to. In two instances, both of which are strategic plans (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2012; New South Wales Government Department of Education and Training Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate, 2009), broad references are made to approaches to wellbeing, but specific references are made only in the context of teaching and learning. The New South Wales *Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2009 – 2012*, for example, includes both a nebulous reference to "Embed student wellbeing approaches to increase student engagement, participation and retention" and a more specific reference to "Identify and disseminate innovative programs that redress educational disadvantage and promote learning and wellbeing for Aboriginal students" (New South Wales Government Department of Education and Training Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate, 2009, p.2). No documents have teaching and learning as the sole means of implementing wellbeing.

The majority of documents make fairly nebulous references to teaching and learning in relation to wellbeing. The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008), for example, states that the curriculum will "nurture student wellbeing through health and physical education in particular" (p.13). However, some documents, *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (COAG, 2009a) for example, provide a more detailed approach. This first national framework for early childhood educators, which specifies (as one of five learning outcomes) that 'children have a strong sense of wellbeing', provides detailed examples of ways in which educators might support this. These strategies are then replicated in other documents, such as the *My time, Our Place* the national framework to be used by school age care educators (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace, 2011).

Environment domain of implementation

The environment domain includes the school culture and ethos, as well as physical aspects of the environment. In a lot of documentation, reference is made to the school environment or culture in terms of its impact on or relevance to wellbeing, but this is not always accompanied by concrete definitions or descriptions, or more practical means of application to attend to wellbeing in this domain. The domain of environment was referred to least in the documents analysed (28

documents). However, environment is arguably implicitly (and invisibly) incorporated in aspects of other domains.

The references made in some documents to developing and sustaining 'safe' environments and positive culture in relation to wellbeing tend to be fairly generic without elaboration on specific means of achieving this. However, some documents provide a greater sense of the means of environmental approaches to supporting wellbeing. *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (COAG, 2009a) provides examples (including environmental) of how educators can help children have a strong sense of wellbeing and *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020* (COAG, 2009c) has strategies to improve wellbeing for disadvantaged schools and enhance services to vulnerable or at risk children.

Environmental aspects are incorporated in wellbeing contexts in several national health frameworks (Australian Government Department of Health and Aging, National Preventive Health Taskforce, 2009; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2010) and the collaborative early childhood development strategy (COAG, 2009b).

The environment is a key context in documentation focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's wellbeing. *The Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework: National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Well Being (2004–2009)* (Social Health Reference Group for National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Council and National Mental Health Working Group, 2004) is not focused on children and young people, but highlights the holistic and multidimensional approach to mental health and wellbeing recognising the importance of connection to land, culture, spirituality, ancestry, family and community. Similarly, wellbeing is conceptually linked with social and emotional aspects, safety and, importantly, cultural identity in an environmental context in *Dardee Boorai: Victorian Charter of Safety and Wellbeing for Aboriginal Children and Young People* (State Government of Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2008). Conceptually, social and emotional wellbeing describes a holistic view of health recognised by many Indigenous people (Lyons & Janca, 2012).

Finally, two Catholic education strategic plans (Tasmania Catholic Education Office, 2013 and Catholic Education South Australia, 2010) consider means of implementing wellbeing explicitly in terms of culture.

Summary – domains of implementation

Although there is some overlap, documents tend to emphasise particular domains of implementation for approaches to wellbeing to greater or lesser extents. A frequency count of the domains indicates that while all four domains are identified multiple times (with each domain being identified in 16 to 27 documents), in the education policy and policy-related documentation (excluding education strategic plans for both government and Catholic Education) the domain most commonly identified is that of systems and structures.

A frequency count across **all** education and non-education policy and policy-related documentation (which sees each domain identified in 23 to 46 documents), indicates that systems and structures continue to be the most identified domain. This is particularly interesting, given that a fairly substantial evidence base signals the importance of *relationships* for children's wellbeing (Bernard et

al., 2007; Bernard, 2005; Eckersley, 2008). This would suggest that the domain of relationships is likely to be the most singularly effective domain for implementing approaches to wellbeing, and even more effective in conjunction with the other domains.

The documents which do emphasise relationships as a domain of implementation for approaches to wellbeing have a particular relevance in the broader context of our study, when looking at the role that recognition plays in wellbeing in schools. Recognition of the individual, across the three dimensions identified by Honneth (1995) – love, rights and solidarity, conceptualised in our study as *cared for*, *respect* and *valued* - occurs in the context of reciprocal relationships. Within the education documentation that emphasised the relationships domain, most included specific reference to at least one aspect of recognition. All of the national education documents, the vast majority of the Catholic Education documents (7 out of 8), and just over half of the state government education documents (11 out of 20) referred to one or more recognition aspect.

Aspects relevant to the recognition dimension of *cared for* were the most frequently incorporated in the documentation across all sectors. These tended to be with regard to ensuring caring, supportive relationships for students, and establishing a sense of connection and belonging for students within the school context. Interestingly, the national and Catholic education policy-related documentation contained proportionately more reference to aspects related to *respect* for students, than the state education documentation. In the national education documents there was the same proportion of references to respect as there were to *cared for*, with the Catholic documents having nearly the same amount, whereas the state documentation had only half as much. The main aspects of respect referred to were in the context of respectful relationships and active participation in school activities and processes. Aspects relevant to *valued* were marginally more apparent in the state and Catholic education documents than the national documents. These aspects tended to be in relation to valuing diversity and recognising unique individual attributes.

There are also some policy-related documents within which all four domains can be identified (ten education documents; and three non-education documents). These documents tend to promote a *whole-school approach*, in which wellbeing is embedded in the culture of the school.

4.5 Conclusion

Wellbeing policy, guidance and information are most evident in the sectors of education, health and child protection. Within the education sector, there is minimal specific wellbeing policy at national and state levels, in government or Catholic education. The policy contexts are primarily focused on safety and behaviour, and in Catholic education, pastoral care.

However, although there is very little by way of specific wellbeing-focused education policy at national and state levels, there is considerable reference to wellbeing throughout policy-related documentation. It is apparent that, whilst infrequently defined, the terminology of wellbeing is well integrated into policy lexicons, particularly those of education and health. Analysis of education strategic plans, for example, from all state governments, Catholic education offices and also plans from four state governments specifically focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, indicates that the term wellbeing has been integrated in educational discourses at strategic planning levels. Wellbeing webpages are another burgeoning area warranting further exploration, and indicating the need for ongoing work, to better understand the role these play.

There are several discourses of wellbeing evident throughout policy-related documentation, in its use across multiple contexts. The term wellbeing is frequently used in conjunction with other terms. For example, references are made in the documentation to children's 'health and wellbeing' or 'safety and wellbeing'. These accompanying terms tend to be the primary context and the concept of wellbeing is ill-defined (if at all) and appears something of an adjunct to these. Specific wellbeing focused documents include those in the areas of learning, health, behaviour, safety, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Within these documents, the contexts for wellbeing primarily include: health, mental health, safety, learning and development. Wellbeing is variously conceptualised as a goal or outcome, an environmental component and/or an existing condition to be protected.

The increased frequency of the term wellbeing in policy over recent years, reflects the shifting discourses evident in the literature. The discourses most evident in documentation related to student safety, behaviour management and, to an extent, health and mental health, are those of risk and harm. In these contexts children are viewed as vulnerable and in need of protection, from others and their own potentially risky and impulsive behaviour. Wellbeing is conceptualised as something to be protected, primarily through procedural application of regulatory systems and structures.

However, most specifically wellbeing-focused policy-related documentation is relatively recent and reflects the shifting discourses around wellbeing, from those of risk and harm to more strengths-based emphases espousing whole child and whole school approaches. Whole child approaches encompass children's social, emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual dimensions (Noble et al., 2008) and ensure the needs, rights and interests of children and young people are taken into account. Children are viewed as active participants in the construction of their own social worlds and childhood, rather than passive victims of circumstance. Thus, in these more recent wellbeing-focused documents the conceptualisation of wellbeing is more broadly and universally applicable to all children, and defined and discussed with greater depth and nuance than in earlier documented references to wellbeing.

Of the four domains for implementing approaches to wellbeing, systems and structures is the dominant one in policy-related documentation. However, there are also a number of documents incorporating relationships-based approaches to wellbeing. Further, there are recent initiatives taking a whole school approach. This approach has been identified as the most likely to be effective in realising the key determinants of children's wellbeing (Noble et al., 2008; Rowe et al., 2007; Wells et al., 2003), such as positive adult-child relationships, a sense of belonging, positive self-esteem and opportunities for students to be given responsibility and be involved in decision-making (Bernard et al., 2007; Bernard, 2005; Eckersley, 2008).

The domains for implementation of approaches to wellbeing are of interest in the broader context of the study, when looking at the links between wellbeing and recognition in schools. A key theoretical interest in our study is how wellbeing in schools could be improved through approaches emphasising the core tenets of recognition theory. Recognition of the individual, across the three dimensions identified by Honneth (1995), occurs in the context of reciprocal relationships. Clearly, then, the domain of relationships is of key relevance, particularly with a large number of policy-related documents incorporating a whole-child, whole-school approach. While the whole-school approach involves implementation across all the domains, the key wellbeing determinants as outlined above

(such as belonging, positive self-esteem and participatory activities), which resonate with identified tenets of recognition theory, are essentially effected through relationships. Further, aspects of all three dimensions of recognition were evident in most of the education policy-related documentation that emphasised the relationships domain, with the dimension of 'cared for' being the most obvious. It is of particular interest that findings indicate that the domain of *relationships* is not the dominant emphasis of policy, rather that the domain of *systems and structures* is. Clearly, all the domains have an important role to play in supporting children's wellbeing. However, the policy analysis suggests that documentation is currently not focused on the main domain (relationships) in which recognition likely takes place.

Implementation of approaches to wellbeing that involve cooperative service delivery and collaboration between health and education sectors are a recurring theme in the documentation. Cross-sector joint initiatives and national frameworks aimed at children and young people in the areas of learning, early development and child protection highlight a multidimensional view of wellbeing, albeit within narrow contexts.

Policy-related initiatives that stand out in the current landscape, in the context of this study, are those that take a holistic approach, integrating policy, procedures and practices and incorporating all four identified domains of implementation. The state of Victoria appears to lead the way, particularly in Catholic education, with a comprehensive whole child, whole school approach to student wellbeing. The CEOM wellbeing strategy is well supported by wellbeing coordinators in schools, a wellbeing team that provides resources and support to schools, and postgraduate learning opportunities.

In summary, the wellbeing policy environment in Australia, particularly as this pertains to schools, can best be described as ad hoc. This is evidenced by the range of documentation that constitutes guidance in relation to student wellbeing, the differences across states (in both government and Catholic education), in the nature of documentation that does exist, and the lack of an over-arching framework. However, there is also clearly a major policy interest in notions of student wellbeing, indicated by the increasing use of the terminology, the joint cross-sector initiatives and the recent strategic approaches developed in some states and sectors. A key interest in our study is to develop a detailed understanding of how wellbeing in schools is currently understood by students, teachers and educational policy makers. The findings of this Phase 1 policy analysis demonstrate that three broad constructions of wellbeing are present in the policy-related documentation, either explicitly or implicitly. The first two of these are essentially problem-focused, namely, safety, which is common in education policy; and mental health, which is common in the health sector. A broader conception of wellbeing as applying to all children, is less common but apparent in some documents, particularly in the state of Victoria and in some Catholic school policies.

Keeping this policy backdrop in mind, Volumes 2 and 3 of our study turn to exploring how wellbeing is perceived by students and teachers. Volume 4 then brings together the discussion of findings and recommendations from the study and includes references and appendices.

This Volume is to be read in conjunction with Volumes Two, Three and Four of the Final Report:

[Final Report: Volume One](#) – Overview, Methodology, Research Design, Phase 1 Policy Analysis Results

[Final Report: Volume Two](#) – Phase 2 Qualitative Interviews and Focus Groups Results

[Final Report: Volume Three](#) – Phase 3 Quantitative Survey Results

[Final Report: Volume Four](#) – Discussion of Findings, Recommendations, References and Appendices

Additionally, the Executive Summary is available as a separate document.

Additional copies of all Volumes of the Final Report can be accessed at:

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