Strengthening student support services
directions paper
The way forward...

Every child, every opportunity
Introduction

The student support service program 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. Student support services staff comprise psychologists, guidance officers, speech pathologists, social workers, visiting teachers and other allied health professionals who work with students and their families who are vulnerable or have additional needs to improve learning and wellbeing outcomes.

As part of the 2008-09 State Budget the Victorian government announced an additional $33.2 million over four years to build on the existing investment in this program through the employment of additional staff and to strengthen key management and delivery components of the service.

The changing context and issues relating to the structure and delivery of student support services have required the Department to think in new ways in order to optimise the benefits of the program. Strengthening student support services: A discussion paper for consultation August 2008 (the Discussion Paper) was distributed to all relevant stakeholders signalling the proposed directions and components of a significantly enhanced service model.

The discussion paper provided the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development’s (DEECD) proposed five key elements for strengthened student support services delivery in Victorian government schools:

- overarching statewide student support services policy
- targeted service delivery model in all regions
- improved management structures
- workforce support and supervision
- better accountability and performance reporting arrangements.
The Department undertook a comprehensive consultation process during August and September 2008 to seek the views and feedback of stakeholders. The consultation process included:

- the facilitation of nine regional forums for DEECD personnel including SSSOs, principals, early childhood personnel, primary and secondary school nurses, and senior regional staff including regional directors
- individual consultations with key stakeholder organisations
- the opportunity for all individuals and groups to provide comment in writing or by email.

Regional forums were attended by 680 people and a total of 88 written submissions were received.

The consultation process provided the Department with strong support for the implementation of the five key elements of a strengthened student support services program as proposed in the Discussion Paper, and provided valuable detailed feedback and information on how each component could be implemented. The complete list of proposed components from the Discussion Paper can be found in Appendix 1.

The new service delivery approach and associated improvements to the program will ensure an increase in the timeliness, responsiveness and targeting of support services to schools. This is consistent with the *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* which articulates a new vision for Victorian education and early childhood development over the next five years based on four key priorities:

- increase access to high-quality early childhood health, education and care services
- strengthen public confidence in a world-class school education system, with a strong and vibrant government school sector at its core
- integrate services for children and families
- improve outcomes for disadvantaged young Victorians.

The new approach to the provision of student support services also supports the objectives of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians: December 2008* which was recently released by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. The *Melbourne Declaration* emphasises a national commitment to providing targeted support to disadvantaged students in order to achieve better and more equitable educational outcomes. Indigenous children and young people, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, those from remote areas, refugees, homeless young people, and students with disabilities are identified as often experiencing educational disadvantage and requiring particular support.
The way forward

For each of the five key elements of the strengthened program, this report outlines:

- the components of the model proposed in the initial Discussion Paper
- the relevant feedback themes from the consultation process
- what the enhanced student support services program will include.

Implementation of the components of the strengthened program will occur from Term 1, 2009. However, any enhancements to student support services must be tailored to the requirements of each region. As there are a variety of service delivery and management models in place at the current time, changes will need to occur at different stages and rates according to local needs, structures and arrangements.

For this reason, each DEECD region will develop a Regional Implementation Plan by 1 March 2009 which outlines how each component of the strengthened model will be put into place and the timelines for actions to occur. Regional Implementation Plans will detail:

- the student support services management and leadership structure to be implemented in the region and networks in accordance with regional requirements
- the allocation of student support services to each network and how this will be reviewed
- the regional arrangements for the employment of additional student support services staff following the provision of the additional funding by the Victorian government
- how student support services will be included in school, network and regional strategic planning, school improvement and broader departmental priorities
- the referral and service delivery arrangements to be implemented in accordance with the requirements outlined within this Directions Paper relating to referral, intake and service delivery
- regional student support services capacity building, support and supervision arrangements to be implemented in-line with the requirements outlined within this Directions Paper regarding staff support, supervision and professional learning
- how student support services accountability and performance reporting arrangements will be implemented in the region, acknowledging that the Office for Government School Education will play a key role in developing statewide systems and the time it may take to finalise these systems
- regional arrangements and timelines for the co-location of multi-disciplinary student support services teams in networks or sub-regions.

While Regional Implementation Plans will be developed by 1 March 2009, these plans will continue to be further developed and refined over time by regions in consultation with student support services staff as planning progresses. All regional implementation planning will be in-line with the requirements outlined in the Directions Paper.

Many of the components of the strengthened student support services program will be developed and implemented at a statewide level in order to achieve consistency and common accountability measures. Where this is relevant, subsequent sections of this Directions Paper will outline how and when these components will be implemented.
The development of an overarching statewide policy for student support services will provide strong theoretical and practical guidance for the program. This policy will be developed by the Student Wellbeing and Health Support Division during Term 1, 2009.

Component 1: Comprehensive student support services policy

Feedback themes from the consultation process:
- statewide policy would greatly assist with statewide program consistency and common understanding of the purpose of student support services
- the policy needs to allow for the provision of student support services to be more flexible in order to account for the needs of local areas
- student support services staff have been quite isolated from the broader work of the Department and any policy should ensure there are stronger connections

The strengthened student support services program will include **statewide policy that:**
- outlines the student support services program objectives, service delivery model, governance structure, workforce support and supervision arrangements and program accountability and performance reporting requirements
- establishes clear linkages between the role of student support services, the Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development and the directions and priorities of DEECD
- encourages local innovation and flexibility to meet regional, network and community needs.

Component 2: Clearly defined role and functions of student support services

Feedback themes from the consultation process:
- student support services policy should clearly outline the functions and work priorities of student support services staff.
- the work and role of student support services staff has changed over time and has recently been driven by the needs of the Program for Students with a Disability. It’s important to look again at what the program is set up to do.
- primary prevention and early intervention were a key aspect of the Framework for Student Support Services and this should not be lost in the policy development.
The strengthened student support services program will include *statewide policy that*:

- builds upon the *Framework for Student Support Services* and provides specific direction about the role and functions of student support services staff and teams
- defines the role of student support services in relation to the range of available child and family support services and student wellbeing staff in schools
- establishes student support services teams as important contributors to school and network strategic planning.

**Component 3: Building the capacity of schools to respond to students with additional learning or wellbeing needs**

**Feedback themes from the consultation process:**

- SSSOs can impact on a larger number of students by helping to build the knowledge and skills of the teachers and staff in schools
- schools value and rely on SSSOs running or organising professional development for staff
- an important part of SSSOs’ time is spent just talking to Principals, teachers, Student Welfare Coordinators, Primary Welfare Officers etc. While this is informal, SSSOs use the time to coach these staff or help build up their knowledge about student wellbeing issues and information
- working with and building the capacity of families to support students with additional learning or wellbeing needs is also really important and SSSOs can help schools to do this better

The strengthened student support services program will include *statewide policy that*:

- ensures a key role for student support services staff and teams is to provide teaching and learning advice, strategies and resources to schools and teachers, and contribute to the development of student wellbeing structures and processes within schools
- defines the facilitation of professional learning for school and student wellbeing staff and the provision of secondary consultation when required as important functions of student support services teams
- acknowledges the importance of providing opportunities for principals, teachers and student wellbeing staff to liaise and consult with student support services staff.
Component 4: Formal planning mechanisms for students and their families who require intervention support

**Feedback themes from the consultation process:**
- there should be increased focus on early identification of additional needs through increased liaison with early childhood services and the use of screening tools to enable earlier planning and support
- there are a variety of individual student support planning approaches currently in use and it would be useful to have consistent strategies and templates
- intervention and support planning with students and families is the responsibility of the school, student support services and external services (where relevant) team and sometimes it is not clear who is leading student support planning
- external services don’t always understand student support planning processes in schools so this should be more clearly spelt out in order to better engage them in planning and support.

The strengthened student support services program will include *statewide policy that*:
- defines a key function of student support services teams is to provide of expertise in the development of student learning or support plans for students with disabilities, behavioural issues or other learning and wellbeing needs including identifying and facilitating the involvement of other services
- provides a consistent student support planning approach that can be tailored to individual student or school needs
- outlines the variety of screening tools that can be utilised by schools to identify students that may have additional learning or wellbeing needs in order to commence earlier support planning.
2. Targeted service delivery

Essential to a strengthened student support program is an optimum service delivery model to ensure students and schools with the greatest need receive support while also maximising the number of students benefiting from additional assistance.

The service delivery model outlined below provides consistent statewide elements for implementation in regions commencing Term 1, 2009.

It is recognised that regions and networks require flexibility to adapt the elements of the service delivery model to their local context and that there can also be changes over time in networks and regions with regard to rates of disadvantage and school improvement need. The service delivery model must also allow the flexibility to enable cross-network and regional responses when required. Accordingly, regions will determine the specific detail of the regional service delivery model that best meets their needs in consultation with student support services staff.

Regional Implementation Plans, to be developed by 1 March 2009, will provide information on how the service delivery model will be put in place locally.

Component 5: A service delivery model which identifies and targets need

The service delivery model must identify and target students with the greatest need and match student or school needs with the expertise of members of the network student support services team. Student support services will be provided on a network or sub-regional basis depending upon local arrangements, particularly geographic issues, in order to provide more equitable support for students with the greatest need and ensure more effective distribution of services across schools, networks and regions. This will replace the current model of operation in many areas where individual student support services staff are allocated to schools to deliver services as this model does not make the best use of the range of staff expertise and knowledge.

Feedback themes from the consultation process:
- there should be a targeted responsive approach to the needs of schools that can be developed with a multi-disciplinary and referral based delivery model
- the Grampians model of service delivery is supported in principle but flexibility is required to adapt the model to local structures and needs
- student support services are best delivered through a multi-disciplinary team approach
- building understanding and relationships with individual schools and student wellbeing staff is essential for effective service delivery and support

The strengthened student support services program will include a service delivery model that:
- clearly articulates the student support services regional and network management and coordination structure, aligned with networks or sub-regions
- provides for delivery of service through multi-disciplinary, co-located teams which provides greater capacity to respond to differing and complex needs and enhances the opportunity for staff to communicate when they are working with students, schools or issues in common
• establishes a network or sub-regional referral and intake process that provides a consistent approach to meeting priority needs across the local area including:
  o clear documentation of the referral and intake process within the network or sub-region to ensure all schools and staff are aware of the process
  o a consultation process to ensure each school has access to student support services staff to consult regarding potential referrals or student wellbeing issues that may require intervention. This process can assist in directing schools to the most appropriate support service for the student and their family which may be student support services, another departmental program or an external organisation. Options for the communication and liaison process between schools and student support services staff could include:
    · an identified student support services liaison person for each school
    · an alternative process such as a consultation and intake phone line
  o consideration of referrals on a network or sub-regional basis to ensure that referrals are assessed across the local area and prioritised according to greatest need. Referral issues may relate to individual students, groups of students, school or teacher wellbeing issues, critical incidents or distressing events and the referral and intake process should also identify where requests for service can be appropriately provided by other services or means
  o a network or sub-regional system to assess and allocate referrals to the most appropriate student support services team member (or multiple team members if multi-disciplinary intervention is required) with the greatest knowledge of the school or family or specific expertise related to the referral issue
  o a referral system that complies with privacy and health records legislative requirements including informed consent
• allows for the provision of prevention and early intervention strategies to build the capacity of schools to engage, support and improve the learning outcomes for vulnerable children and young people
• allows for the provision of intervention and emergency responses for vulnerable children and young people where required
• acknowledges that the strengthening of service partnerships is essential to the improved functioning of student support services
• enables the development of regional and network expertise within teams which can be mobilised to support cross network or regional priorities as required.

Component 6: Student support services as an important part of school and network improvement teams

The alignment of student support services with the enhanced network model for Victorian government schools provides the opportunity for strengthening the provision of support for vulnerable children and young people through more effective coordination and targeting. Collaborative and evidence informed decision making is central to school improvement within networks. Improved student support services coordination and leadership within regions and networks provides for systemic inclusion of the service in school and network decision making processes particularly in relation to network goals and targets and reporting consistent with the Network Accountability and Improvement Framework.
Feedback themes from the consultation process:

• SSSOs require access to school and network data to effectively prioritise need and enable targeted support to schools and students
• student support services delivery should align with regional and network processes and planning and contribute to the implementation of school, network and regional improvement goals and targets

The strengthened student support services program will include a service delivery model that:

• aligns with network and regional strategic planning and is responsive to DEECD priorities as they relate to the needs of vulnerable children and young people
• ensures the Network or Sub-regional Student Support Services Coordinator works with the Regional Network Leader and the Network Executive to identify how student support services will contribute to the network goals, targets, and key improvement strategies within the three key areas of strategic intent: student learning; engagement and wellbeing; and, pathways and transitions
• enables Network or Sub-Regional Student Support Services Coordinators to access relevant data including school and network level reports, service referral and relevant community based data in order to identify priority areas of need
• responds to the relevant key considerations in network strategic planning as they relate to support for vulnerable children and young people including:
  o strategic interventions
  o school and network capacity
  o community partnerships
  o Commonwealth and State priorities
• ensures support of Network or Sub-regional Student Support Services Coordinators and teams by the Regional Student Support Services Coordinator and Regional Student Wellbeing Management in all matters related to school improvement
• establishes student support services network or sub-regional planning processes including the development of annual student support services work-plans that identifies priority goals for targeted service delivery in-line with the Network Accountability and Improvement Framework, regional strategic planning and broader departmental priorities
• ensures that professional learning programs for student support services staff are consistent with the relevant goals and targets of the network or sub-regional student support services planning and broader departmental priorities in order to enhance the capacity of student support services teams to address the identified goals and targets.
Component 7: Regular reviews of student support services resources allocations

Integral to the new student support services model is the need for flexibility to meet regional, network and local community needs. Network or sub-regional resource allocations must take into account the higher needs and rates of disadvantage in some areas and changes in demographics over time. The Department has developed a resource allocation mechanism that improves statewide consistency in relation to how students are supported and also takes into account the higher rates of disadvantage in some areas where greater support is required to achieve good learning outcomes.

The resource allocation formula is based on the number of students at government schools in each region and factors in the higher rates of disadvantage in some areas (using the Student Family Occupation index), rurality and the number of small schools, to ensure the total program resources are distributed in a consistent and targeted manner from the 2008-09 financial year onwards. This formula was used to identify additional resource numbers required to deliver this targeted service delivery that was part of the additional funding provided by the Victorian Government.

Feedback themes from the consultation process:
- there were historical resource allocation formulas and processes that meant student support services resources weren't always allocated where they were most needed
- resource allocation processes should be based on disadvantage and need
- statewide and regional resource allocation mechanisms should be regularly reviewed to ensure they respond to changing demographics and needs

The strengthened student support services program will include a service delivery model that:
- establishes regional resource allocation mechanisms for distribution of student support services resources to networks or sub-regions consistent with the statewide formula and the identified regional school improvement needs as they relate to vulnerable children and young people
- allows for flexibility within network or sub-regional resource allocations to enable the targeting of student support services expertise across networks and the region as required.
- ensures regular reviews of resource allocations to networks or sub-regions which takes into account changes in populations of students and their families with higher rates of disadvantage and need for additional support
Component 8: Increased focus on service partnerships

The development of school, parent and community partnerships is a core component of network strategic planning. This core component of the work of the network and its schools is of particular significance in the support of vulnerable children, young people and their families. The establishment of effective partnerships between schools, SSSOs, early childhood services, child and adolescent mental health services, family support services and local government services maximises the opportunities for support.

Feedback themes from the consultation process:
• partnerships should be strengthened between schools, parents and community
• partnerships with early childhood services are critical to improve communication and to avoid duplication of service
• partnership development and referral to external services are important components of the work of student support services
• development of partnerships needs to be strategic to establish strong relationships with services that support children, young people and their families

The strengthened student support services program will include a service delivery model that:
• emphasises the importance of the development of connections between schools and local service providers who may be able to provide timely and ongoing support to students and their families
• establishes strategic and annual implementation planning for inclusion of strategies for:
  o strengthening school/parent partnerships
  o strengthening of service relationship between student support services and other DEECD staff including early childhood services, school nurses, and school focussed youth service coordinators
  o strengthening of partnerships between student support services network or sub-regional teams and key government and community support agencies, as relevant to the service delivery model, in the student support services strategic and annual implementation plans
• recognises partnership development as a key component of student support services responsibilities and ensures appropriate time is allocated within the network or sub-regional team for strategic development in this area
• defines that Regional and Network or Sub-regional Student Support Services Coordinators will take a lead role in:
  o developing formal agreements and protocols as appropriate
  o regularly reviewing partnership agreements and protocols
  o the resolution of partnership issues if and when they emerge.
3. Improved management structures

The central, regional and network coordination of the student support services program will be strengthened including the management of professional streams. Regional and network coordination will be important features of management structures to most effectively ensure support and oversight of the service delivery model and inclusion and participation of student support services in strategic planning. The overall program management structure is outlined within Figure 1 below. The flexibility to adapt the management structure to meet regional needs is an important element of a strengthened program. The broad program configuration, roles and responsibilities are outlined below and regions will tailor the arrangements to their needs and regional structure. Regional Implementation Plans will outline the positions and responsibilities to be put in place and the timelines for this to occur.

It is also essential that the student support services management structure is aligned with the network management and strong linkages are developed between Network Student Support Services Coordinators and Regional Network Leaders to enable involvement in network and regional strategic planning. Regions may also choose to establish or re-configure student support services network advisory or reference committees comprising of key stakeholders such as Regional Network Leaders, Network Student Support Services Coordinators and principal representatives to ensure there is appropriate opportunity for these groups to provide input and advice about service planning and delivery at the network level.

Component 9: A statewide student support services coordination role

Feedback themes from the consultation process:

- A statewide coordinator would need to provide direction and consistency for the student support services program including identifying common issues and needs so that regions can come together to work through any issues.
- A statewide coordinator should be able to ensure there is common induction and professional learning for staff so that all staff receive the same information and opportunities

The strengthened student support services program will include a program management structure that:

- establishes a clear role and functions of the statewide student support services coordination position within the Student Wellbeing and Health Support Division including the development, improvement and support of the program.
Component 10: Regional student support services management arrangements

**Feedback themes from the consultation process:**
- Regional and network governance and management structures must be reviewed to ensure they are aligned with the new program directions and management structure.
- Regional and network management could provide/maintain consistency and quality of service.
- The various roles and responsibilities require greater clarity at a statewide, regional, and network level.
- Accountability within the context of professional support and supervision is essential to improved service delivery.

The strengthened student support services program will include a program management structure that:
- Defines regional coordination of student support services as a core function within the regional student wellbeing team lead by the relevant regional manager.
- Establishes Regional Student Support Services Coordination roles to work with Network or Sub-regional Student Support Services Coordinators to define and implement the regional service delivery model, the management of operational functions, service improvement and accountability reporting.
- Ensures planning and delivery of student support services is consistent with and contributing to the objectives and priorities of the Department.
- Clarifies that an Assistant Regional Director, reporting to the Regional Director, will provide program direction, and hold overall responsibility for the delivery of student support services in each region.
Component 11: Network student support services coordination

Feedback themes from the consultation process:
• the Grampians model where a Network Student Support Services Coordinator manages a multi-disciplinary team of SSSOs provides a strong team structure and service coordination
• SSSOs could work more effectively if co-located in multi disciplinary teams
• line management of SSSOs should be by staff who understand the role
• management and leadership roles need an appropriate time allocation to be able to provide support and supervision for staff

The strengthened student support services program will include a program management structure that:
• establishes Network or Sub-regional Student Support Services Coordination positions who are senior network-based allied health staff with responsibility for:
  o line-management and overall supervision of a multi-disciplinary team of student support services staff including performance planning and evaluation
  o implementation and oversight of the service delivery model within the network or sub-region in collaboration with the Regional Student Support Services Coordinator, the Regional Network Leader and student support services staff
  o resource and service coordination including the purchasing of additional services where required and appropriate in consultation with the Regional Network Leader and network principals
  o reporting to and working with the Regional Student Support Services Coordinator on the service delivery model, the management of operational functions and improvement and accountability reporting
  o working with Regional Network Leaders and principals to contribute to school improvement planning and support
  o developing of network or sub-regional student support services annual work-plans which clearly link to Network Strategic Plans and outline the goals and priorities of the team
  o establishing the roles and responsibilities within the multi-disciplinary team
  o working with student support services Stream Leaders to ensure the profession specific supervision, educative and professional learning needs of each individual staff member are addressed
• ensures an appropriate time allowance for Network or Sub-regional Student Support Services Coordinator to undertake their responsibilities.
Component 12: Professional stream leadership within regions

**Feedback themes from the consultation process:**
- professional stream expertise and support can maintain quality of service delivery and enhancement of SSSO knowledge and skills
- professional stream leadership would be well placed to contribute to supervision and professional learning for staff within their specific stream
- SSSOs should have the opportunity to work with stream leaders and peers on relevant professional issues related to their discipline

The strengthened student support services program will include a **program management structure that:**
- establishes student support services Stream Leader positions for psychology, speech pathology, social work and others as appropriate in each region with responsibility for:
  - coordinating and providing professional support and learning programs or opportunities
  - working with Network or Sub-regional Student Support Services Coordinators to coordinate or provide the educative or profession specific functions of supervision for staff within their stream which are tailored to the needs and experience of individual staff
  - disseminating relevant information and materials to staff within their stream
  - working with Network or Sub-regional Student Support Services Coordinators to ensure all staff within their stream have access to appropriate advice, consultation, supervision and learning opportunities
  - reporting to and working with the Regional Student Support Services Coordinator on service delivery and professional practice issues
- ensures an appropriate time allowance for Stream Leaders to undertake their responsibilities.

Component 13: Regional management of visiting teachers and emergency management teams

**Feedback themes from the consultation process:**
- visiting teachers can add significant educational expertise to the work of SSSOs
- visiting teachers work on a regional or sub-regional rather than network referral basis and this will need to be recognised in management and support arrangements
- there may be other visiting teacher streams or areas of expertise that could be considered within regional visiting teacher teams such as special education / learning difficulties, autism or behaviour issues depending upon regional and local needs
- emergency management responsibilities are considered a core function for SSSOs within appropriate streams although not every SSSO may want to participate in providing this support
- emergency management regional teams require coordination and significant support and supervision given the nature of crisis response
The strengthened student support services program will include a program management structure that:

- establishes a Regional Visiting Teacher Team Leader role, reporting to the Regional Student Support Services Coordinator, with responsibility for service coordination and delivery, line-management, professional support and supervision of visiting teachers across the region.
- establishes an Emergency Management Team Leader role, reporting to an Assistant Regional Director, with responsibility for coordination of appropriate support to school communities and professional learning and opportunities for student support services staff who provide emergency response assistance across the region.
- ensures an appropriate time allowance for Team Leaders to undertake their responsibilities.

**Figure 1: Broad student support services program structure**
A strengthened student support services program requires effective program governance, management and leadership.

4. Enhanced workforce support and supervision

Clear staff support and supervision arrangements will be a key feature of the strengthened student support services program. This will provide for a well-supported workforce with opportunities for staff to extend their skill and expertise and to work as part of a team. The overarching student support services policy will outline what workforce support and supervision will comprise and Regional Implementation Plans will detail how structures and support mechanisms are to be put in place locally.

Component 14: Opportunities for advancement into more senior roles

Feedback themes from the consultation process:
- the workforce has wanted a career structure for a long time and the proposed implementation of management and leadership roles is extremely positive
- to be well-supported as allied health professionals, SSSOs to be managed by people who really understand the requirements of the role and to be able to access other professionals in their own stream who can provide advice and support

The strengthened student support services program will include workforce support arrangements that:
- provide a career structure for student support services staff who will have the opportunity to apply for management and leadership positions within the program
- ensure a key responsibility of management and leadership roles is to provide guidance and support to staff.

Component 15: Student support services professional learning programs

Feedback themes from the consultation process:
- induction training for SSSOs is extremely important at a local, regional and statewide level as it currently seems to occur on an ad hoc basis so it should be consistent for all new staff.
- program changes must be supported with professional learning in areas such as providing consultation to schools, management/supervision training and working as a multi-disciplinary team
- professional learning programs should be available both in regions and statewide depending upon the topics and needs of different student support services streams

The strengthened student support services program will include workforce support arrangements that:
- outline how the professional learning needs of the student support services workforce will be identified and the associated professional learning strategies
- contain induction requirements for new staff.
Component 16: Professional support and supervision opportunities

Access to appropriate professional learning opportunities for student support services staff to enhance their skill and expertise in areas relevant to their work and role is essential and must be supported by network and regional managers.

Feedback themes from the consultation process:
- professional support and supervision arrangements need to take into account that SSSOs come from many disciplines so management, professional support and supervision may need to be provided by different people
- supervision can have a variety of meanings for different professions so it will be important that this is clearly defined for the student support services context

The strengthened student support services program will include workforce support arrangements that:
- include a range of professional support and supervision options that may be appropriate for staff including professional learning materials and opportunities, mentoring, debriefing, teamwork, consultation and individual or group supervision
- specify the role of Network or Sub-regional Student Support Services Coordinators in relation to managing a multi-disciplinary team within a network or sub-region depending upon regional arrangements. This includes responsibility to ensure that staff have access to professional support and supervision opportunities via the network team, Stream Leaders within the region or external professional support where appropriate
- specify the role of Stream Leaders in relation to working with Network or Sub-regional Student Support Services Coordinators to ensure that all staff within their have access to professional support and supervision opportunities appropriate to their needs and level of experience and to provide or facilitate the educative or profession specific functions of supervision where appropriate.
Component 17: Co-location of multi-disciplinary student support services teams

A key feature of a strengthened student support services program is the co-location of staff in network or sub-regionally based collaborative multi-disciplinary teams wherever this is geographically possible. Teams will be located in appropriate network accommodation to be determined by regions as part of the regional implementation planning in consultation with student support services staff. In some regions, staff are already co-located while in other areas it may take time for an appropriate location to be identified.

A multi-disciplinary approach strengthens staff professional development and enables staff to develop areas of expertise or specialty which can complement the array of services available to network schools, extending the breadth and range of services available. Staff from different streams can also strengthen service capacity by supporting the knowledge and learning of other team members.

Feedback themes from the consultation process:
- SSSOs have often been physically isolated from their teams and should be co-located in multi-disciplinary teams wherever possible
- Visiting Teachers mostly provide services across a whole region or a number of networks but also need to located as part of student support services teams

The strengthened student support services program will include workforce support arrangements that:

- responds to the functional requirements of the student support services staff in their primary work accommodation including:
  - conferring with team members, school colleagues and external partners
  - participating in student support services network or sub-regional team meetings
  - report writing
  - accessing web information, email, and student support services databases
  - handling telephone referrals and follow up
  - participating in and leading professional supervision and support and learning and development activities one-on-one and in small groups.
- provides student support services primary work locations that provide staff with a work environment that fosters high performance including:
  - individual workstations including computer with internet access
  - ergonomic furniture and lockable cabinet
  - telephone and access to other office support equipment (E.g. printer/scanner)
  - meeting room access as appropriate.
- provides access for student support services staff to secondary office accommodation to support work when visiting the regional office. This space will be in addition to the primary work location for the majority of staff who are not located in regional offices including:
  - provision of workstations with telephone and internet access on the basis of one workstation for every four student support services staff in the region.
Every effective service must include a means of measuring how objectives are being contributed to or achieved. Better accountability and performance reporting arrangements are required to strengthen the student support services program as such arrangements are not consistently in place across the state. This will also provide an evidence base to better understand and analyse the demand for student support services, the types of services provided and the outcomes of intervention.

The impact of a strengthened student support services program must be able to be understood and measured. Strong accountability and performance reporting arrangements will also enable the identification of service effectiveness and improvement opportunities. The Student Wellbeing and Health Support Division is responsible for the development of accountability mechanisms and will develop these systems during 2009 for subsequent implementation in regions and networks.

Accountability arrangements and these must be based upon a fair and valid reflection of the work and contribution of student support services to student learning and wellbeing and take into account that the work is both qualitative and quantitative, with benefits often indirect or challenging to measure. It is therefore critical that in moving forward, student support services activities are consistently recorded, reviewed and outcomes are measured as effectively as possible.

Component 18: Consistent statewide program performance effectiveness measures

**Feedback themes from the consultation process:**
- There is a need to measure activities and services provided as well as evaluate the impact of these services, however, it should be recognised that some outcomes are not quantifiable nor are they easily attributed to student support services intervention
- Whatever performance measures are used, they should be consistent across the state

The strengthened student support services program will include **accountability and performance reporting arrangements that:**

- define the performance indicators which will be utilised to measure student support services delivery and effectiveness across the state
- ensure the performance measures are linked to the data collected and measures used within the School and Network Accountability and Improvement Frameworks.

Component 19: A data collection system for student support services

**Feedback themes from the consultation process:**
- A student support services data collection system needs to be able to collect information on the range of services provided such as group programs or provision of professional development for school staff

The strengthened student support services program will include **accountability and performance reporting arrangements that:**

- establish a data collection and reporting system that captures service delivery and performance data.
Proposed components of a new model from Strengthening student support services: A discussion paper for consultation August 2008

In the scheme suggested in Strengthening student support services, A discussion paper for consultation August 2008, each component linked to and built on the others:

1. overarching statewide student support services policy
2. targeted service delivery
3. improved management structures
4. enhanced workforce support and supervision
5. better accountability and performance reporting arrangements.

Appendix 1:
### Proposed components for inclusion in the strengthened student support services model

#### 1] Overarching statewide student support services policy

- Develop comprehensive Guidelines for Student Support Services to define the role and work of SSSOs and establish clear linkages with the directions and priorities of DEECD. Student support services should be strongly connected to network school improvement planning and intervention.

- Clearly define the role of student support services in relation to the range of available child and family support services and student wellbeing staff in schools. There should be more detailed information within the Guidelines about the specific expertise and functions of SSSOs and how they can contribute to school strategic planning and whole-school approaches to student wellbeing, particularly prevention and early intervention activities.

- Strengthen the capacity of schools to respond to students with additional learning or wellbeing needs. This should be a clearly defined function of student support services and may involve providing teaching and learning advice, strategies and resources to schools and teachers, and contributing to the development of student wellbeing structures and processes within schools. Other important capacity building mechanisms are the delivery of professional learning for school and student wellbeing staff, provision of secondary consultation when issues arise, and the development of connections between schools and local service providers who may be able to provide timely and ongoing support to students and their families.

- Formalise planning mechanisms for individual students and their families who require intervention support. A key role for SSSOs is to provide expertise in the development of student support plans for students with disabilities, behavioural issues or other needs to ensure ongoing support is available once student support services involvement has reduced or ceased. Guidelines for student support services could include advice on how SSSOs can assist in the development of ongoing, evidence-based strategies and student support plans, including identifying and facilitating the involvement of other services.

#### 2] Targeted service delivery

- Develop and implement a service delivery model which identifies and targets need and matches student or school needs with the expertise of members of the network student support services team. In some regions and networks it may be necessary to purchase additional professional services to increase the capacity of the existing student support services team or where specialist support is required. An innovative example is used by the Grampians Region. A referral triage model is employed that prioritises needs, responds in a timely manner and allocates referrals to the most appropriate SSSO team member. [The structure of this model appeared in Appendix 1 of the Discussion Paper].

- Establish student support services as an important part of school improvement teams. The flexibility to respond to schools with the highest need is a key aspect of the school improvement agenda and must be an important element of the student support services model. This could involve the flexibility to mobilise student support services resources to provide additional targeted support to specific schools at particular times.

- Identify mechanisms to determine and regularly review student support services resources provided to schools, networks and regions. The service delivery model must ensure that service provision and resource allocation take into account changes in populations of students and their families with higher rates of disadvantage and need for additional support. The model must be responsive to these changing demands.

- Increase the focus on partnerships with internal services such as Early Childhood Intervention Services and external organisations such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Family Support Services providers, Local Government services, Community Health Centres and local community service organisations. The service delivery model must include capacity for SSSOs to work closely with other services and to arrange or jointly deliver early intervention programs for vulnerable children and their families.
Proposed components for inclusion in the strengthened student support services model

3] Improved management structures

- Implement a student support services statewide coordination position to undertake the development and improvement of the program following feedback from the consultation process. This role should also provide support to regions and networks in the enhancement of their own program governance and management structures.
- Establish arrangements for the administration and support of the student support services program within the region. This could include designated responsibility by a senior regional staff member for resource distribution, program functioning and performance.
- Formalise network student support services coordination positions which could encompass line management, work-function supervision, resource coordination, purchasing of additional professional services where required or necessary, and performance management responsibilities for SSSOs within a network or group of networks. There should be strong linkages between network coordination positions and senior school improvement positions.
- Formalise student support services professional stream leadership positions within regions with responsibility to disseminate relevant information and materials to SSSOs, offer consultation to staff regarding professional practice issues, ensure professional supervision opportunities and contribute to professional learning forums.
- Establish regional management arrangements for services such as visiting teachers and emergency management coordinators to ensure appropriate service coordination, equitable access across the region, support and the provision of professional learning opportunities for staff in these roles.

Proposed components for inclusion in the strengthened student support services model

4] Enhanced workforce support and supervision

- Establish student support services management and leadership roles for SSSOs and provide opportunities for advancement into more senior roles within the program.
- Develop professional learning programs for SSSOs to provide knowledge and skill development opportunities. This could include statewide learning forums and formal regional and network induction processes.
- Provide professional supervision opportunities for SSSOs outside of regional and network work-function management arrangements. There should be capacity for stream-specific professional development, such as learning forums, provision of secondary consultation for stream staff, and individual, peer or group supervision, as appropriate.
- Develop regional and network agreements relating to the physical location of SSSOs which provide for the strengthening of a supportive team environment and improved connections between student support services staff.

Proposed components for inclusion in the strengthened student support services model

5] Better accountability and performance reporting arrangements

- Develop consistent statewide student support services program performance effectiveness measures. These should be linked to the school accountability and improvement framework, particularly the student learning, engagement and wellbeing outcomes and measures.
- Establish a data collection system for student support services to collate important data about the services being provided to schools and students. This would enable statewide, regional and network performance reporting to occur more readily and identify opportunities for program improvement.