

Schools Ministry Group: 2025 Annual Report

Prepared for the Uniting Church Synod of South Australia

About Schools Ministry Group

For over 30 years, SMG has continued to work in partnership with schools and local churches to deliver pastoral care and wellbeing services to school communities across South Australia. Helping to support their wellbeing in a variety of ways, including one-to-one pastoral care, group services, and whole of school support.

Our student wellbeing programs, including Life Matters and Kimochis®, are tailored to meet the needs of each school and help build strong foundations of wellbeing into the culture of the whole school community.

SMG works closely with the South Australian Department for Education as a service provider for the National Student Wellbeing Program (NSWP).

SMG Leadership Transition

In 2025, SMG experienced some significant leadership changes, marking the end of one season and the start of another.

After two years as CEO, Graham Stephenson stepped down from his role at the end of January after leading SMG through a period of change and foundation building. We were deeply grateful to Graham for his hard work, leadership and dedication to the mission of SMG during his time.

In May 2025, Sarah Reimann was appointed CEO after serving in the interim CEO role since February. Under Sarah's leadership, SMG undertook a thorough review of operational requirements and as a result, additional personnel changes occurred to help ensure long-term financial sustainability.

The current Board and Executive team are committed to upholding the mission of SMG to provide pastoral care and wellbeing support to school communities across South Australia, and striving to deliver purpose, value and hope to all those who access our services.

Pastoral Care Workers

Our Pastoral Care Workers (PCWs) are positive role models who deliver caring, compassionate pastoral and practical support to their school communities. Each role is tailored to meet the individual needs of the students, staff and families in their local context.

PCWs provide one-to-one support to students as needed, additional activities and small group work to address particular needs, along with wider school support such as breakfast clubs.

PCWs are part of the wellbeing team within the school community and work with school leadership to support students most effectively.

They offer a constant presence within their school community and help to support the social and emotional wellbeing of thousands of students every day.

Working in Partnership

As we walk alongside schools to support the wellbeing of students, staff, and families, we continue to need your help. In partnership with churches and community groups across South Australia, we're working together to make a lasting difference in our school communities.

Our Pastoral Care Workers (PCWs) are supported by members of local churches who work together to offer practical and prayer support.

In addition, our support groups generously raise funds to provide additional working hours for our PCWs, and the gifting of wellbeing seminars and workshops to their schools.

Volunteer Support

Across 261 schools, 752 volunteers gave 2,071 hours of their time each term to help our PCWs deliver programs and wellbeing supports to their school community.

Around 36% of those volunteers came directly from local churches and support groups. That makes you, the church, one of the greatest assets to our PCWs.

Volunteers provided support across the following areas:

- Role modelling and mentoring
- Educational support
- Social and emotional support
- Spiritual support
- Community development
- Extra-curricular activities

Your Support

In 2025 the Uniting Church Synod of South Australia generously donated \$15,515 to support the ongoing work of SMG.

We are deeply grateful for this longstanding partnership and the Uniting Churches ongoing commitment to helping SMG provide pastoral care and wellbeing support to students and school communities across South Australia.

Impact of Pastoral Care

2025 Snapshot

smg.
purpose value hope

222

Pastoral Care Workers

in
261

SA schools

working on average

2.3 days

per week

Each term, **99%** of SMG Pastoral Care Workers have a significant impact on providing students who feel unsafe, with a safe place to be while at school.



95% of SMG Pastoral Care Workers have had an impact supporting the spiritual health and wellbeing of students.

Each week, SMG Pastoral Care Workers have formal conversations with



956

with students



245

with staff



168

with parents/carers

100% of SMG Pastoral Care Workers have had an impact helping students to develop a stronger sense of belonging at school and/or the wider community.



A formal conversation requires a pastoral resolution, referral or follow-up.

Top 5 Pastoral Issues for Students

Based on number of pastoral conversations per week

Friendship/Peer Issues

21%

Bullying/Harassment

14%

Educational Support

12%

Mental Health

11%

Family Issues

9%