

## Creating communities and environments that value wellbeing and nurture good mental health is essential for strengthening mental health care in NSW.

Behavioural disorders, particularly those that begin in childhood, are among the strongest predictors of serious health and social problems in adulthood. Ten per cent of pre-school children (aged three to five years) show mental health problems, and in 2012, suicide was recorded as the leading cause of death for 15 to 17 year olds.

Students at risk require timely access to support. Early intervention will reduce the likelihood of young people developing mental illness.

Schools play a critical and pivotal role in helping children and young people make sense of the world around them. It is a shared responsibility between parents, teachers and community members to equip children and young people for the opportunities and challenges they face as they develop and grow.

**The NSW Department of Education and Communities is addressing wellbeing in schools.** This will be a holistic approach to supporting the wellbeing of students and will assist schools to implement whole-school approaches to wellbeing.

A key aspect will also be effective coordinated wellbeing service delivery for students with complex social and emotional issues. Through initiatives such as the Networked Specialist Centres, public schools will have access to a cascade of services supporting universal prevention to acute intervention.

**The number of School Link Coordinators will be increased from 15 to 18** to help create stronger links between new Department of Education and Communities' Networked Specialist Centres, schools and mental health services in the community.

School Link Coordinators also facilitate education and training on child and adolescent mental health for health and education workers.

### Key statistics

Between 1996 and 2013:

- The number of students identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander increased from 3.1 per cent to 6.5 per cent of the student population.
- The number of students from a language background other than English increased from 19.8 per cent to 30.9 per cent
- The number of students with disability increased from 2.7 per cent to 12 per cent.

The NSW Mental Health Commission *Living Well Report* found that:

- 23 per cent of children live in a household where at least one parent is experiencing a mental illness
- 10 per cent of pre-school children (aged 3-5 years) show mental health problems, which rises to 14 per cent in following years (4-16 years)
- In 2012, suicide was recorded as the leading cause of death for 15 to 17 year olds.

In NSW, there are:

- 756,000 students in NSW public schools (aged 5-18 years)
- 2200 public schools
- 60,000 teachers and 10,000 support staff.