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CATHOLIC EDUCATION BALLARAT

Staff Wellbeing Guide



Resources



This guide is both a resource and an invitation — designed to support staff wellbeing across all roles.

It encourages reflection, conversation and meaningful action, and promotes shared responsibility for staff wellbeing.

Resources and references to support this guide can be accessed via the link or QR code.

<https://dobcel.catholic.edu.au/staff-wellbeing-guide>

Additional resources will continue to be added as they are developed.

Pursuing fullness of life for all

DOBCEL STRATEGY 2035



A high performing system of Catholic schools

DOBCEL is aspiring to become a **high performing system of Catholic schools** by 2035.

A high performing system of Catholic schools *has Catholic identity at its core.*

A high performing Catholic school system is one where students and staff feel safe, valued, and respected, and where their wellbeing and health are enhanced as foundations of productive learning and teaching.

Acknowledgements

This Staff Wellbeing Guide has been informed by the voices of staff and leaders across DOBCEL. We thank all those who participated in consultation activities and generously shared their perspectives, experiences and ideas.

Your contributions have helped shape a guide that reflects the realities of our workplaces and supports a shared commitment to staff wellbeing.

The Objective of the Staff Wellbeing Guide

Staff wellbeing within the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) is grounded in the belief that each person is created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27), called to live life in its fullness (John 10:10). Rooted in the Gospel, our approach to wellbeing honours the sacred dignity of every individual and the unique gifts they bring to the Body of Christ.

As St. Paul reminds us, "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord... Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). In this way, wellbeing is not only personal but communal — nurtured through relationships of trust, compassion, and mutual support.

Inspired by the example of Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45), we are called to create environments where all can thrive — spiritually, ethically, emotionally, intellectually, and physically. The Catholic tradition teaches that true wellbeing is found in right relationships: with God, with self, with others, and with creation (Laudato Si', 66). It is through this holistic lens that DOBCEL supports the flourishing of all staff, recognising that their wellbeing is integral to the mission of Catholic education.

In this spirit, our commitment to staff wellbeing acknowledges the diverse abilities, insights, and experiences each staff member brings to their role, their workplace, and their broader school community.

This Guide aims to provide all staff at DOBCEL with:

- Initiatives to nurture a culture of wellbeing
- Approaches to enhance staff wellbeing
- Practical resources and support initiatives
- DOBCEL staff wellbeing model (page 7)

The Guide includes evidence-based initiatives and practical resources designed to enhance the wellbeing of all staff, while promoting a positive and inclusive workplace culture. By focussing on staff wellbeing, DOBCEL fosters an environment where staff feel valued, safe, and included, which leads to stronger staff engagement, and enables staff to thrive both personally and professionally.

The Guide encourages us to invest in the health and wellbeing of staff, so we become a high performing system of Catholic schools.

What is Wellbeing?

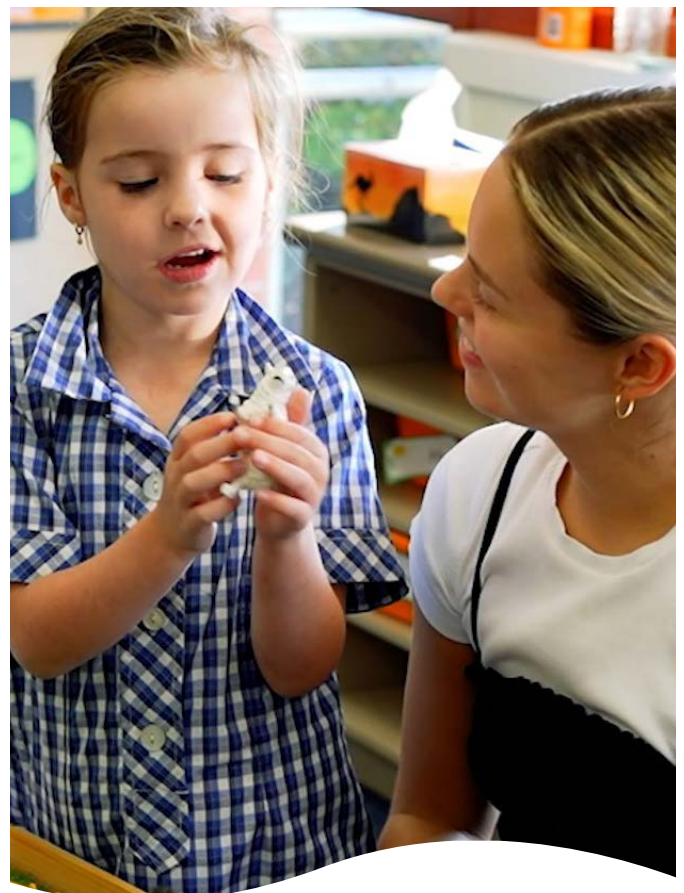
Wellbeing is a positive state experienced by individuals and societies.

Similar to health, it is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions. Well-being encompasses quality of life and the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose.

(World Health Organisation, 2021)

Staff wellbeing is the holistic state of employee physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and social health, which directly influences their job satisfaction, performance in school, and overall quality of life. (DOBCEL Strategy 2035 - Global trends)

Wellbeing is expressed in diverse ways across our workforce. At its core, it encompasses the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual flourishing of each staff member, enabling a life of purpose, connection, and service within our Catholic mission.



The Purpose of the Staff Wellbeing Guide

The DOBCEL Staff Wellbeing Guide is designed to provide every staff member — educators, support staff, and those in administrative and leadership roles — with access to practical approaches and initiatives that promote both personal and workplace wellbeing.

Supporting all staff is not only a strategic priority but a spiritual responsibility. In Catholic education, this commitment aligns with the core principles of human dignity and the common good. According to the DOBCEL Strategy 2035, wellbeing challenges affect the entire educational community. Research confirms that positive staff wellbeing is closely linked to student wellbeing and academic success, making it both a strategic and moral imperative. When those who serve in Catholic education are nurtured in their vocation, they can fully live out the vision - as partners in Catholic Education, open to God's presence, we pursue fullness of life for all.

This Guide offers practical approaches and initiatives to help leaders and staff foster collaborative dialogue and embed wellbeing into everyday practice. It also emphasises individual responsibility — encouraging all staff to engage in self-care, recognise stressors, seek support, and maintain a positive work-life balance. By taking ownership of their wellbeing, individuals strengthen resilience and contribute to a supportive environment that benefits the entire school community.

Personal and workplace wellbeing are deeply interconnected and require a shared commitment. Staff wellbeing is a shared responsibility, demonstrated by how we lead ourselves, support others, and contribute to a healthy workplace culture. Through open dialogue, continuous improvement, and leadership grounded in justice, mercy, and compassion, we can cultivate environments where wellbeing thrives. Ultimately, this Guide seeks to empower schools to flourish as high-performing Catholic communities that positively impact staff, and students.

Personal and workplace wellbeing are interconnected and represent a shared and collective responsibility.



Why is Workplace Wellbeing Important?

DOBCEL values all staff and strives to create workplaces that assist individuals to experience a positive and supported work environment through engagement, connection and collaboration. This commitment reflects our belief in the inherent dignity of every person, a cornerstone of Catholic Social Teaching.

Martin Seligman, a pioneer in Positive Psychology, studied positive emotions and character strengths to promote a flourishing life. His research showed that focusing on elements such as engagement and relationships enhances resilience and fulfillment, fostering psychological safety and contributing to thriving workplaces.

In 2023, the Black Dog Institute conducted a national survey of over 4,000 teachers, emphasising that fostering a mentally healthy workplace can reduce absenteeism, increase employee engagement, and boost productivity.

Complementing this, research from the McKillop Institute's ReLATE Program highlights the critical importance of workplace wellbeing for educational staff, noting that 80% of teachers have worked with at least one child or young person who has experienced trauma, while 45% report their own experiences of trauma, placing education staff at significantly higher risk of burnout and secondary traumatic stress.

Workplace wellbeing is essential in educational settings as it directly influences staff and student outcomes. Healthy, supported workforces are more engaged and effective, leading to dynamic teaching and learning. This, in turn, enhances student learning, improves academic performance, and social-emotional learning.

Furthermore, a focus on staff wellbeing reduces staff turnover, ensuring students benefit from consistent and experienced educators. In Catholic schools, this continuity supports the building of authentic relationships and the transmission of Gospel values over time.



The Model

The model is based on the [Healthy Workplaces Achievement Program](#) which aligns to the [World Health Organisations Healthy Workplaces Model](#) and [Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems \(OHSMSs\)](#).

Wellbeing is a collective responsibility. The model (see below) illustrates the connectedness of individual and workforce wellbeing, both of which are shaped by dynamic work environments. Both individual and workplace wellbeing are integral, each influencing the other.

Individual health and wellbeing - **My Wellbeing** - is at the core of the model, highlighting that individuals have a responsibility for fostering their own positive wellbeing, which in turn contributes to overall workforce wellbeing.

Surrounding my wellbeing, are six related and connected elements. The elements of my wellbeing and workplace wellbeing are supported and shaped by three essential attributes of system wellbeing. These attributes enhance personal wellbeing while being influenced by the broader workforce and the system environment.

Leaders and staff collaborate to foster a culture that ensures all members of the workforce feel supported and where individual wellbeing can flourish, benefiting the entire workplace and school community.

Definitions:

My Wellbeing - the individual staff member.

Workforce - all staff within schools and CEB staff members.







System Wellbeing - the DOBCEL system of governance.

Workplace Wellbeing - the wellbeing of individual schools and all CEB offices.

Based on the belief that God's plan is for every person to achieve fullness of life (John 10:10) and that people working in community bring different and diverse gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

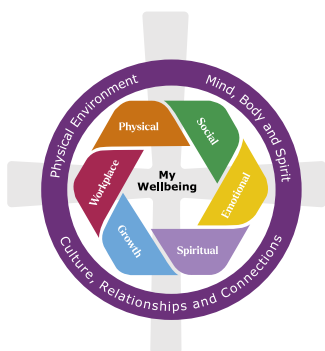


Wellbeing Elements– Individual and Workforce

Element	What is it about?	Individual Examples	Workforce Examples
 <p>Spiritual</p>	<p>Honouring the dignity of every person, made in the image and likeness of God, grow in self-awareness of their spiritual life as well as the spiritualities of others. In dialogue with the Catholic tradition and for the sake of human flourishing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invitations to develop/ deepen personal prayer life • Meditation and reflective journaling practice • Participation in liturgies or retreats • Social justice actions large and small • In solidarity with others for the sake of their dignity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invitations to participate in liturgy and retreats • Access to sacred, quiet/ reflective spaces • Faith formation and regular exploration of spiritual professional learning • Recognition and observance of sacred dates and holidays
 <p>Emotional</p>	<p>Recognising and managing one's emotions, fostering positive feelings, and developing emotional resilience and optimism, with a focus on mental health and wellbeing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek support from Employee Assistance Program • Individual wellbeing plan • Individual personal goal setting • Professional development regarding initiatives for resilience, stress management etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Employee Assistance Program • Regular feedback and check ins • Recognition programs • Mental Health First Aid Program • Support in accessing relevant professional learning
 <p>Social</p>	<p>Building and maintaining meaningful connections, creating inclusive and diverse workplaces, fostering a sense of belonging and support within teams and the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building connection with work colleagues • Shared hospitality • Celebrating achievements of others • Engaging in inclusive practices • Sharing break times with colleagues • Constructive issue resolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouragement of social justice projects/initiatives • Team functions or events • Acknowledgment of birthdays and other personal celebrations • Mentorship/buddy programs • Fostering cultures that enable collaboration
 <p>Physical</p>	<p>Promoting individual physical health through balanced nutrition, regular physical activity, sufficient rest, and lifestyle habits that support overall wellbeing and vitality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical health goals including nutrition, exercise and sleep routine/habits • Walking meetings • Participation in health screening • Regular desk breaks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff influenza vaccination programs • Information access to nutrition, exercise etc. • Ergonomics reviews for workstations • Health challenges (accessible) • Invitational walking meetings with encouragement from leaders
 <p>Growth</p>	<p>Engaging in mentally stimulating activities, continuous learning, and the pursuit of knowledge. Understanding professional autonomy and agency in the capacity of an individual's role.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional goal setting • Continuous Professional Development • Seeking out of career conversations • Being open to feedback • Engagement in development processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development opportunities • Study sponsorship • Coaching or mentoring • Annual Review Process (ARM) • Use of Leadership Competency Framework for development • Career conversations • Recognition and Acknowledgment • Timely feedback
 <p>Workplace</p>	<p>The creation of a work environment that is both fair and safe, promoting equity for all employees, while minimising risks and hazards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of OHS obligations • Participation in health and safety training • Continuous learning in risk assessments • Confidence in the use of the Hazard Identification Notification Tool (HINT) reporting tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work health, safety and risk management • Industrial relations and compliance • Equity focused practices • Engagement surveys • Career conversations • Consistent use and feedback of HINT

Wellbeing Attributes– DOBCEL System

Attributes	What is it about?	DOBCEL System Examples
<h2>Mind , Body and Spirit</h2>	<p>A holistic approach to wellbeing integrating spiritual, emotional, social, and physical elements. It supports staff in nurturing their inner life, mental health, relationships, and physical health — honouring the dignity of each person and encouraging connection to faith, community, and self-care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Catholic Identity programs: Opportunities for staff to engage in faith formation, spiritual reflection, and mission-aligned activities. ● Parish connection: Strengthening ties between schools and local parishes to foster community and spiritual support. ● Employee Assistance Program (EAP): Providing access for all staff to health and wellbeing support for mind and body. ● Retreats and reflective spaces: Encouraging spiritual renewal and personal wellbeing and connection with others.
<h2>Culture, Relationships and Connections</h2>	<p>Fostering strong, positive relationships among staff, families and within the community, along with promoting an inclusive, respectful, and supportive work culture through positive work practices, encouraging a sense of belonging and professional growth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engagement Surveys: Staff feedback and data to guide wellbeing planning. ● Catholic Education Week: Celebrates mission, service and builds connection. ● Consultation: Deeper collaboration, networked local innovation, collective autonomy and agency. ● Service Awards: Recognises contribution and fosters belonging. ● Professional Learning: Supports growth, faith, and wellbeing across the system. ● Collaborative Innovation Research Prototype (CIRP): aligns with the strategic vision outlined in the DOBCEL Strategy 2035. ● Fostering Cultures: supports collaboration with peers.
<h2>Physical Environment</h2>	<p>Creating safe, healthy, and inclusive workplaces that support the physical wellbeing of staff. This includes meeting safety standards, promoting fair and equitable conditions, and ensuring that all staff feel secure, respected, and supported in their daily work environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safety Regulation Compliance: Audits and updates to meet legal standards. ● Assurance and Risk Committee: Oversees safety, risk, and wellbeing-related policies. ● Enterprise Bargaining Consultation: Ensures fair working conditions and staff consultation. ● Workplace Safety Professional Learning: Ongoing training to support physical and psychological safety ● OHS Expertise: DOBCEL OHS and staff wellbeing expertise to engage where relevant. ● Leadership: Professional learning and induction.



Based on the belief that God’s plan is for every person to achieve fullness of life (John 10:10) and that people working in community bring different and diverse gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:4–6)

Getting Started

Individual Investment and Collective Responsibility

Supporting staff wellbeing is both a personal commitment and a shared responsibility. Before a whole-workforce approach can succeed, it is important for individuals to reflect on their own wellbeing, recognise its importance, and take intentional steps to invest in themselves. At the same time, building a culture of wellbeing depends on collective ownership and collaborative action across the entire system.

Individual Investment

Reflect on your own wellbeing: Take time to assess your current wellbeing, recognising areas of strength and areas you would like to attend to.

Prioritise self-care: Identify practices that help you recharge — rest, exercise, spiritual reflection, social connection — set boundaries that enable these.

Model healthy behaviours: Be open about demonstrating balance, share challenges, and talk about your commitment to growth.

Engage in professional learning: Seek opportunities to deepen your understanding of wellbeing and learn strategies to support yourself and others.

[DOBCEL Staff Wellbeing Plan Template](#)

Collective Responsibility

While individual investment in wellbeing is essential, enhancing staff wellbeing also depends on collective efforts across all levels—workplace teams, schools, and the DOBCEL system. This shared responsibility involves leadership, communication channels, and a professional development framework that supports and shapes a culture of wellbeing throughout DOBCEL.

This Guide offers a three-stage approach to help DOBCEL Leaders take purposeful, shared steps:

Stage 1 – Prioritising wellbeing: Establish staff wellbeing as a clear priority by building awareness and creating strong foundations through shared understanding and clarity of purpose.

Stage 2 – Development in wellbeing: Develop and implement targeted actions that respond to your workplace’s identified needs.

Stage 3 – Embedding wellbeing: Ensure wellbeing becomes a sustained, integrated part of workplace culture.

By progressing through these stages, leaders can help create a supportive, inclusive, and thriving environment for all staff. This structured approach provides a practical framework for assessing current practices, identifying priorities, and guiding meaningful action.



Measuring Staff Wellbeing at DOBCEL

Our commitment to 'the pursuit of fullness of life for all' places staff wellbeing at the heart of our vision. Measuring wellbeing ensures that initiatives are effective, inclusive, and aligned with the Catholic values of care, respect, and human dignity. This is supported by a clear and actionable approach to enhancing staff wellbeing through three key components: identifying needs, applying solutions, and evaluating success.



Identifying Needs

To create a supportive workplace environment, it is important to first understand what staff need to thrive.

This may include:

- Accessing data or conducting staff wellbeing surveys focused on psychological safety, workload balance, and access to support.
- Engaging in dialogue to identify challenges and opportunities.
- Drawing on educational research and wellbeing literature to inform best practice.

Applying Solutions

Once needs are identified, we can implement targeted initiatives to support staff.

This may involve:

- Encouraging participation in wellbeing initiatives such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- Promoting clear and consistent communication around health and wellbeing staff resources.
- Ensuring leadership actively supports and models wellbeing practices within the school community.

Evaluating Progress

Evaluating the effectiveness of wellbeing efforts helps schools to grow and improve.

Key focus areas may include:

- Monitoring staff engagement, morale, and satisfaction.
- Tracking workforce patterns such as absenteeism and staff retention.
- Gathering feedback on the accessibility and relevance of wellbeing initiatives, resources and supports.
- Routinely identifying staff wellbeing needs using insights to inform targeted actions and continuous improvements.

Resources



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*We are called to care for one another and for ourselves,
recognising that everything is connected.*

Adapted from Laudato Si' (2015)

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