

Mindarie Senior College Student Services Team

Opened in 2003, Mindarie Senior College, located 39 kilometres north of Perth in Western Australia, caters to over 800 students in Years 11 and 12.

Many students travel from as far as 80 kilometres away, and the college has students from over 30 feeder schools as well as approximately 80 who have recently arrived from a variety of overseas locations. About 25 per cent of the college's students have transferred from the private system.

Early on, Mindarie Senior College's Student Services team identified issues of transition and positive familiarity as key contributors to the academic, social, physical and mental health and wellbeing of students. In response, the team, comprising a Manager, Year Leaders, Dean of Studies, full-time Chaplain and full-time Psychologist/Counsellor, set about developing and delivering a comprehensive education program for staff, students and parents.

At the heart of the program is a mentor system. Mentors are allocated around 15 students for the two years of schooling, with selection often organised around perceived student needs. Mentor time is allocated across two hours each week and includes set programs, including an hour-long 'Mental Health First Aid' presentation to students, and mentor excursions to help build a sense of community.

All members of Mindarie Senior College's Student Services team also attend *Mind Matters* training and have subsequently formulated a mental health policy for the college.

Other measures undertaken as part of the program include a half-day 'transition meeting' with each of Mindarie's main feeder schools to facilitate the transfer of information and best advice regarding the care of each student. Volunteers, known as 'Mindarie Ambassadors', also return in teams to their old schools to validate their experiences, and provide tips to other students about their school transition.

Mindarie Senior College's education program has not only raised excellent awareness of mental health issues among the student community, but has also been valuable in proactive and reactive treatment for individuals and families.