YouthCARE | mccrindle

A positive presence in Indigenous communities



In regional and remote Western Australia, regular school attendance relies heavily on relational safety and consistent community connection. The following profiles illustrate how embedded chaplains support schools with high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student populations. These profiles are intended as a companion to the report The Impact of School Chaplaincy on Attendance and Educational Outcomes produced by McCrindle for YouthCARE. By offering trusted pastoral care, classroom assistance, and family support, chaplains help clear the path for learning and foster sustained school engagement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Western Australia.

Rob is a full time chaplain at a remote school where more than 50% of students have an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background. Together with other chaplains, YouthCARE provides formal pastoral meetings with an average of 235 students, 40 staff, and 15 parents/carers per year. Outside of direct one-on-one support for the community, Rob is often involved with student council and leadership programs, as well as classroom assistance that supports learning and development, and programs that support other school staff. Delivery of socio-emotional support programs (Rock and Water and Seasons for Growth), team-building and orientation/transition programs are also part of Rob's role in the school.

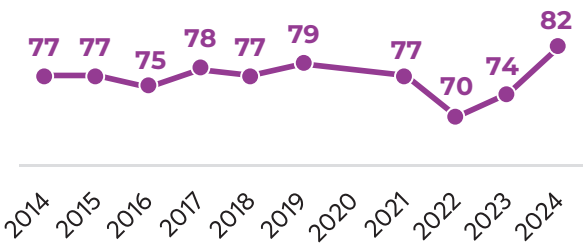
> *"I was referred to an upper primary student because of his struggles with attendance. He was becoming withdrawn and is often leaving class and sitting by himself. When we spend time together, sometimes we would talk, sometimes we would just sit without discussing anything. As I was working out how to help him, a meeting with his mum caught me by surprise, "I remember you! You were my chaplain when I was in my Year 8 engagement class. I am so glad you are working with my son because I know that I can trust you!" We were able to discuss some of the challenges at home (overcrowded housing, a brother who is living with intellectual disability, having witnessed incidences of domestic violence) and worked out a plan to best help the student. He is now in high school and has been able to open up to those around him. He is more open to communicating when he is in a low mood and has been able to re-engage in class. He is now often seen with a smile on his face."*

*Chaplain name and image has been changed



Rob - Full time chaplain at a very remote combined primary and secondary school for over 20 years

Attendance over the past decade



Indigenous students

52%

students – **1,010** | ICSEA – **6th percentile**



Vicky – together with husband has been supporting one high school and three primary schools in the local community before relocating in 2024

Charlotte – supporting two primary schools and one combined primary and secondary school in the region since 2021

Henry – part time at a high school since 2025

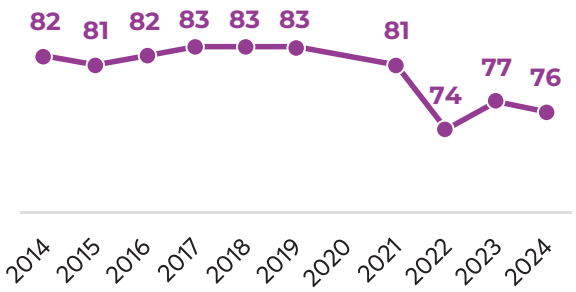
Vicky, Charlotte and Henry are chaplains in a remote region of WA. Across the different schools in the region, YouthCARE chaplains meet with an average of 552 students, 154 school staff, and 34 parents/carers per year. Chaplains run a variety of students and staff support programs, lunchtime and classroom activities, breakfast clubs, Headspace and other socio-emotional support programs, and participate in day-to-day school programs and activities. Chaplains also serve a notable referral function to other support professionals, particularly across remote communities. Helplines, counselling, education-related support, and employment-related referrals are some of the more common connections made by YouthCARE chaplains. They are also frequently working with school staff and external organisations (Clontarf) to support the whole family, often across multiple schools and different communities.

"We first connected with this family through our church. The father also connected with us through the local football club and the children were enrolled in a school where I was the chaplain. I supported a few of the children in school with grief and loss and some behaviour issues. I also supported the mother through legal and court processes that she was going through with her family at the time. Relationships can only be formed after living deeply connected with the community."

*Chaplain name and image has been changed

HIGH SCHOOL 1

Attendance over the past decade



Indigenous students

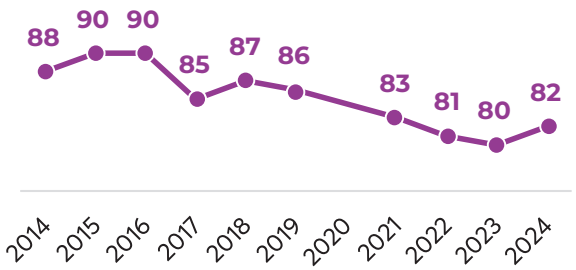
30%

students – **1,253**

ICSEA – **14th percentile**

PRIMARY SCHOOL 1

Attendance over the past decade



Indigenous students

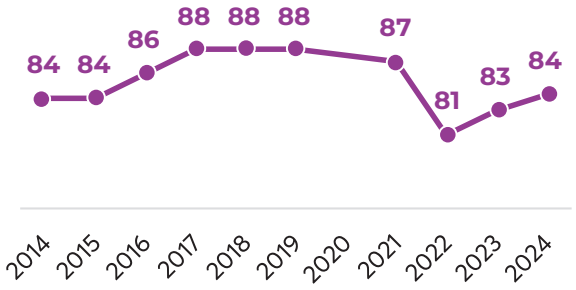
32%

students – **234**

ICSEA – **10th percentile**

PRIMARY SCHOOL 2

Attendance over the past decade



Indigenous students

32%

students – **355**

ICSEA – **12th percentile**