



MEDIA RELEASE
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NEW MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM TO SUPPORT 600 SCHOOLS ACROSS REGIONAL AND RURAL AUSTRALIA

Applications now open for Smiling Mind's evidence-based school program

As students settle into classrooms for the new school year, leading mental health not-for-profit Smiling Mind has opened nationwide applications for its award-winning school program.

The evidence-based Smiling Mind Regional and Rural Schools Program, driven by a \$2.5 million funding boost from the Australian Government, is set to impact 600 regional and rural schools — including Government, independent and Catholic — across the country.

With one in seven children and young people (aged four to 17) experiencing a mental disorder in any given year, available spots are expected to be quickly filled by educators looking to make a positive change in the lives of their students.

Participating schools will receive free access to Smiling Mind's award-winning training and resources, providing teachers with evidence-based professional development workshops and tools to support the development of sustainable mental health habits.

Delivered entirely online over three terms, schools will receive in-depth training for all staff, designed to help schools implement mindfulness-based social and emotional learning. Teachers will also receive digital tools and resources, and practical guidance on how to implement these strategies in the classroom.

As part of the program, teachers will be given access to the newly developed Smiling Mind Learning Hub. The online hub will provide teachers in remote areas the opportunity to connect and share experiences with educators across the country who are also participating in the program.

Skills taught within the program are far reaching, with benefits including more engaged and focused students, calmer classrooms, greater emotional regulation and increased resilience.

Federal Health Minister, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, acknowledged the importance of the Smiling Mind program.

“The Government understands how important it is to equip young people with the skills to build resilience and maintain good mental health throughout their life, and are proud to partner with Smiling Mind to deliver this vital program nationwide.”

“By providing \$2.5 million over four years for the Smiling Mind Schools Program, the Morrison Government is delivering on its commitment to support the mental health of all young Australians. This program will provide practical training, resources and support in up to 600 schools in regional and remote areas, reaching teachers and students in communities that may not have had access otherwise.”

Smiling Mind CEO and Clinical Psychologist, Dr Addie Wootten, reflected on the urgent need for this training.



“With one in seven children experiencing mental illness in any given year, it’s essential that we take action now. If we want to see a meaningful reduction in the incidence of mental illness in Australia, it is critical that we deliver proactive, prevention-focused mental health support from an early age.

“By offering an online, evidence-based mindfulness program, we are able to provide Australian children with equal access to mental health tools, without cost and regardless of where they are located.”

Applications for the Smiling Mind Regional and Rural Schools Program are now open to eligible schools nationwide, with training cohorts running through to mid-2022. Offers will be made on a rolling basis but demand will be high, so school leaders are encouraged to apply early.

Queensland and South Australia will be the first to receive training via the program in Term 1, with all states to follow suit from Term 2.

To register your schools in the Smiling Mind Regional and Rural Schools Program, or to find out more information about the program, visit:

<https://www.smilingmind.com.au/regional-and-rural-schools-program>

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Webinar sessions

Free information webinars are available to those interested in applying for the program. Visit <https://info.smilingmind.com.au/regionalruralschools> to register your attendance.

- **Thursday 18 February**: timings vary across states
- **Thursday 25 February**: timings vary across states
- **Tuesday 2 March**: timings vary across states

About Smiling Mind

Smiling Mind is a whole lot more than Australia’s #1 mindfulness app.

It’s a not-for-profit that is helping make future generations happier and healthier through the practice of mindfulness meditation – a proactive approach to maintaining positive mental health.

Since launching in 2012, Smiling Mind has helped 5.9 million people’s minds thrive with hundreds of free meditations, activities, tools and resources.

Note to editors

Interviews with spokespeople are available on request. For more information, case studies, imagery or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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