



# Our Lady of Mt Carmel School Mullewa

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## CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

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Originally released: 2002

Revised: 2003

Due for Review: 2008

Revised: 2009

Due for review: 2014

**An established contingency plan for managing traumatic incidents occurring in the context of school activities and in the school community.**

### RATIONALE

While experiencing or witnessing highly traumatic events is still uncommon, it is clear that the frequency of such events is growing. Consequently, the risk faced by students, staff and the broader school community are also growing. Such events can impact considerably on the psychological well-being of students, teachers, and families having an adverse influence in areas such as learning, occupational performance and family interactions. This school is concerned to reduce the traumatic effects of crisis situations both in the short and longer terms and accordingly shall ensure that adequate and appropriate measures are in place to manage the response to traumatic events.

### PRINCIPLES

1. Our Lady of Mount Carmel School recognises the importance of the four key elements of an effective Crisis Management Plan: Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery. It is committed to ensuring these elements are covered as clearly and comprehensively as possible, and will continue to work in liaison with the Catholic Education Office Personnel, both regionally and in Perth, to seek the best possible help and assistance available.
2. Due to its rural isolation, and small size, the staff of Our Lady of Mount Carmel School value highly the need to create strong, supportive ties and relationships with a sense of trust between all members of staff. One of the intentions of these ties is that staff will appreciate the importance the role these ties could play in responding to a crisis situation within our school community.
3. As a small school, members of Our Lady of Mount Carmel School community have the opportunity to develop and maintain close ties with members of the local community. The creation of these liaisons and subsequent maintenance of ties are important to the school's Crisis Management Plan, many of these possibly being invaluable players in response to a school crisis.
4. The school is committed to ensuring the identification of risks specific to the school occurs. It also works toward the reduction or elimination of sources of risk to ensure the school is as well prepared for eventualities as possible.
5. Our Lady of Mount Carmel School staff, led by the school Principal, is committed to providing the training for those skills required for members of

staff to perform as members of the Crisis Management Team. The school will continue to liaise with the Regional School Psychologist in the refinement of an effective Crisis Management Plan.

6. The school is committed to ensuring support and counselling services are provided to those individuals and groups at risk of emotional and psychological damage consequent to a traumatic event.

#### **PROCEDURES**

1. Our Lady of Mount Carmel School has established a comprehensive and integrated Crisis Management Plan for the management of highly stressful or traumatic events. This plan identifies and targets the four levels of Trauma Management – Prevention, Preparation, Response and Recovery and includes specific details for various actions.
2. The Crisis Management Plan is to be communicated as a whole to all staff person with training for specific roles within the plan provided to appropriate members of the school community. As the school experiences a transient staff population, responsibility is to be taken for particular roles, rather than allocated to particular people. Communication needs to include those members of the school community integral to the successful functioning of the plan, such as the Parish Priest, School Nurse, local medical services, School Board and Parents and Friends Executive, and members of the local parish.
3. The school has ensured there are appropriate organisational systems to allow prompt and effective responses to a crisis situation. In a physical sense these include:  
Individual Action Plans for medical emergencies
  - Anaphylaxis and Asthma Policies
  - Formal Evacuation Procedure in event of fire, bomb threat, chemical spill etc
  - Crisis Management Action Plan steps to be taken by Crisis Management Team (outlined in Response section of Plan)
4. In dealing with the emotional trauma of a school crisis the school will liaise closely with the Regional School Psychologist through the Geraldton Catholic Education Office, assisted by Anne Cullinder, the Principal School Advisor from the Geraldton Catholic Education Office. Processes are to be set in place for dealing with the event of a school crisis, such as the death of, or serious accident or illness to a member of the school community. Steps taken within the Response section of the Crisis Management Plan will include an immediate to within the first 24 hours Task Checklist, medium term and long term Task Checklists.
5. The school has established and maintains liaison with the appropriate community organizations that may be involved in a response to a crisis situation. These are listed specifically in the Action Plan.
6. A training program is to be set in place for all staff, particularly those in leadership roles, which include the Principal and Senior Teacher. All school personnel are to be informed about the pre-crisis levels of prevention and preparation and all physical steps taken by the school to prevent a crisis. Staff are also to be trained in detailed organisational systems which allow for prompt and effective responses to a situation. Staff members are to be trained in

- handling particular roles within the Crisis Management Plan, in the event of some staff members not available to assist.
7. Staff members also need to be involved in professional development on Crisis Management, in particular informed in the Recovery phase of the plan; those immediate, medium and long term tasks that need to occur. Teachers are not expected to be trained as counsellors but rather to be able to give basic counselling skills in situations where they can be most useful.
  8. Where a crisis event should occur in the context of school activities or where such an event has significant impact upon the school, Our Lady of Mount Carmel ensures that all students, staff and families have appropriate support available to them. This support will take the form of counselling and debriefing programs whenever and wherever appropriate, as outlined in the Response and Recovery phases of the plan.
  9. The school has ensured the development of its Crisis Management Plan has followed a participative and consultative approach and addressed the four levels of Trauma Management - Prevention, Preparation, Response and Recovery. These four levels are detailed in the school action plan detailed below.

### **Crisis Management Action Plan**

#### **Prevention**

This includes the identification of risks specific to the school, along with the reduction or elimination of sources of risk to ensure the school is as well prepared for eventualities as possible.

- It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure all staff are made aware of all occupational health and safety issues, safe codes of practice, school regulations and security.
- The school follows the guidelines of its Occupational Health and Safety Policy, adopting a safe code of practice at all times in terms of school rules, playground behaviour, safety issues and security.

#### **Preparation**

- Both current and new staff members must be informed of all aspects of the School Medical Policy (included in the Staff Handbook) which includes: individual student action plans for emergencies; the steps involved in practising and carrying out evacuation drills with all staff and students; the need to display the evacuation procedure in prominent places throughout the school (all rooms); and educating the entire school community about potential hazards.
- Both current and new staff members need to be made aware of theirs and others' roles and responsibilities if the need arose for the Crisis Management Plan to be put in action.
- A focus at this school is building on the positive feeling amongst staff members, enhancing the commitment and staff morale amongst current and new staff members, as well as the development of a supportive organisational climate.

#### **Response**

- Our Lady of Mount Carmel School aims to have an organised and rapid response which involves the prompt implementation of effective actions and the mobilisation of effective resources, so as to lessen the psychological

impact and aid recovery. Immediate and long term commitments are set in place. The school has established a Crisis Response Team under the leadership of the Principal which includes members of both the immediate and wider school community.

- The Principal as Team Leader (Senior Teacher when needed) is directly involved in organising: the level of response required for the particular incident; the need for involvement of outside agencies and; the level of disruption likely to normal school routine. The Principal will set in place immediate actions following the critical incident and make a decision on those agencies to be contacted.

Immediate actions may include:

Contacting the appropriate emergency agencies (listed below)

Coordinating and allocating specific tasks to members of the Crisis Response Team and staff members where appropriate.

Liaising with CEO in Geraldton and Perth

- *The Crisis Response Team includes:*

Steve Gibbs	Principal
Jill Hollands	Assistant Principal
Julie Freeman	Teacher in Charge
Renata Steele	Teacher Aide
Sharon Hebiton/	Administration Officer
Tarleah Thomas	Administration Officer
Steph Keeffe	School Board President
Kevin Weir	Parish Council member
Father Michael	Parish Priest

- *Emergency Agencies include:*

Mullewa Police Station	Sergeant Trevor	99611104
Mullewa Fire Brigade	Tony Crudeli	99611223 (Home) 99611606 (Work)
	Nino Messina	99611052 (Home) 99611076 (Work)
Mullewa Hospital	DON	99611002
Mullewa Shire Council SES	Mr Tom Hartman	99611007

CEO Geraldton

Regional PSA	Anne Cullinder	99645699
School Psychologist	Adele Ribnick	92511808

CEO Perth

School Psychology Team	Wilson MacNeil	9212 9310
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- *First Aid Equipment*

The school's first aid equipment is located in the staffroom and includes 2 stocked first aid boxes.

Asthma equipment is located in the asthma drawer (labelled) in the administration area.

A list of students suffering from asthma and/or allergies is held in the asthma drawer and listed on the staffroom pinup board.

- *Location of emergency evacuation assembly areas, emergency coordination centre and recovery centre*

When an evacuation of the school is required the school evacuation policy will be used. This is outlined below.

If the need arises for a recovery room, this will be organised by the Principal or Senior Teacher as required. Rooms to be available include the Principal's Office, staff room or computer room.

### **Recovery**

- Recovery needs to be immediate.
- A recovery room needs to be established.
- All necessary parties must be informed. When and where appropriate the expertise of the Crisis Management team from Perth and/or Geraldton needs to be used
- All staff, children and parents involved must be debriefed.
- The management of any media involvement and planning for memorials or funerals will be the responsibility of the Principal.
- Recovery should not be viewed as an isolated phase and can commence while the crisis is still current.
- Reappraisal of the event may be needed and early intervention while the event is still being evaluated can do much to influence the perception and assist towards positive outcomes.
- Teachers and others can play a vital role in the recovery phase. In the first few minutes and hours of a crisis teachers will be best placed to administer psychological first aid to distressed students.

**Following a critical incident there needs to be a review of the plan to determine its effectiveness.**