

Young people from Macarthur and Werriwa.

Last year the Federal Government announced spending \$55,000,000 a year for three years on the National School Chaplaincy Program. This meant that schools could apply for money to employ Chaplains. Chaplains were meant to provide spiritual guidance, help in personal relationships and assist in the welfare of the school community.

Personal advice, spiritual well-being, support and guidance can be provided well by Chaplains, but can also be provided by people who do not work in a religious framework, like youth workers.

We don't intend to discriminate or mock Chaplains or religion, as the majority of us are from a religious background. Our concern is which would be more beneficial for our youth, educating and teaching religion and spirituality or educating and teaching about social issues that are essential for our youth, the young people of today to benefit their future.

What's more important to a young person, being able to talk openly about whatever they need to, to a person who will listen and not judge or speaking to someone where religion might get in the way.

The importance of support for young people should not be measured by religious beliefs, socio-economic status or any issue that affects their lives, but it should be measured by the importance of social justice and choice among young people.

Who made the decision of having the Chaplaincy programs in the schools? Young people should have been consulted, after all, it is about the young people. Do young people even know what a Chaplain does?

Youth workers can cater to many needs that are relevant to youth issues, as this is what youth workers are trained and educated to provide and do for youth. Youth workers can look at prevention strategies to educate and advise young people about real issues, like alcohol and drugs, sex and health, domestic violence and relationships, crime and much more. Youth workers can look at surveying needs and wants of young people to look at issues concerning our youth in schools. Issues like truancy, mediation between teachers, bullying, cultural diversity, peer pressures, career advice and more.

{Closing caption} Vote for youth friendly schools.