



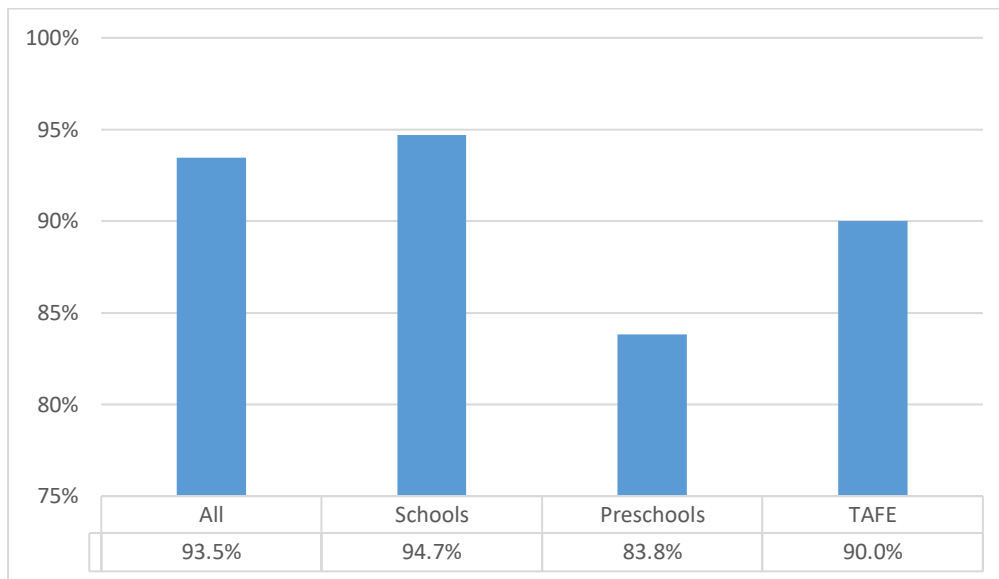
Mental Health Royal Commission – AEU Vic Branch Member Survey Results

Media backgrounder

- Survey to inform the AEU Vic Branch submission to the Mental Health Royal Commission
- AEU members (principals, teachers, educators and support staff) in early childhood settings, disability settings, schools – primary and secondary and TAFE campuses.
- Conducted June 2019
- 3507 respondents

Awareness of mental health issues

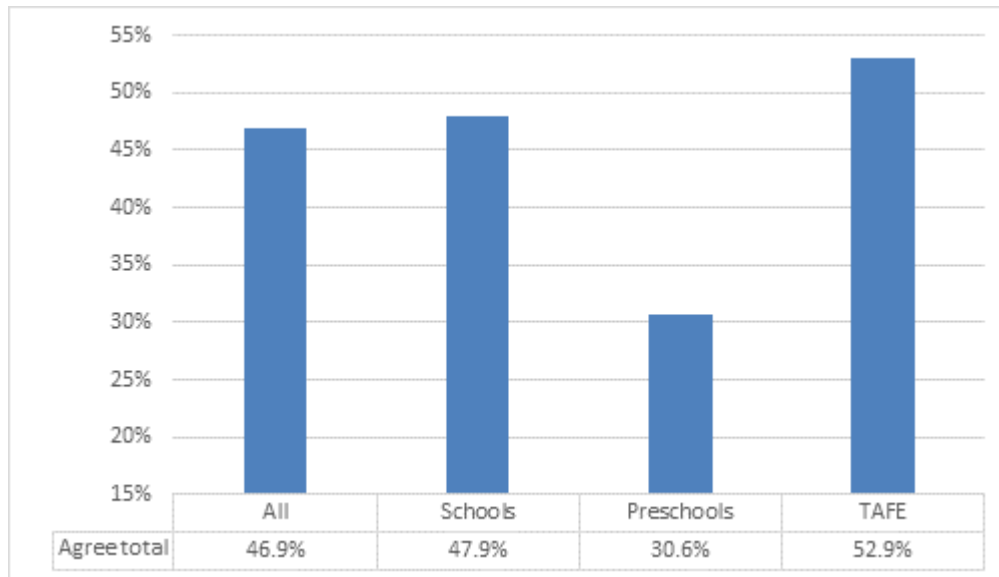
In the past year 93.5% of survey respondents were aware of students in their workplace who had mental health issues



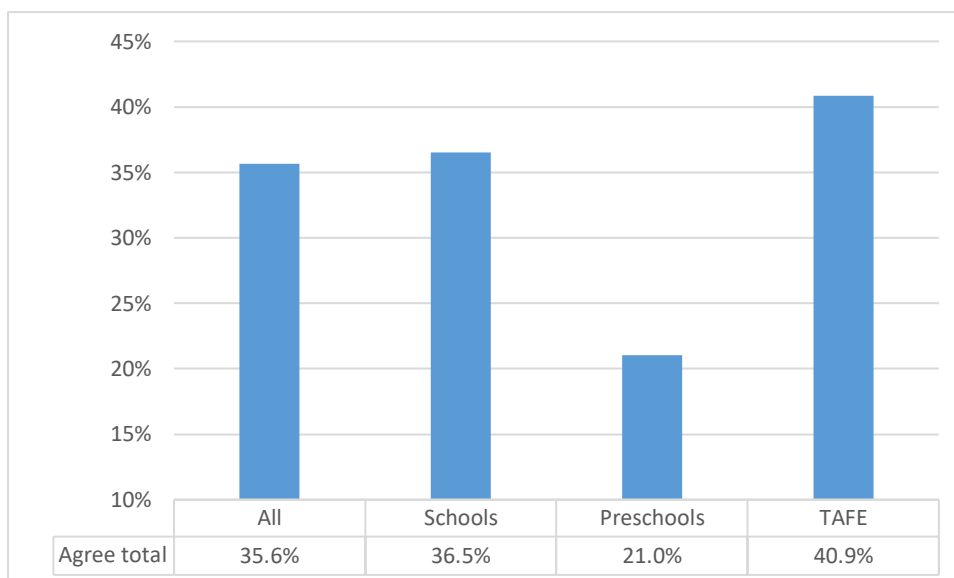


Access to appropriate mental health services

Students at my school (schools I teach at/work with) have access to appropriate mental health services.

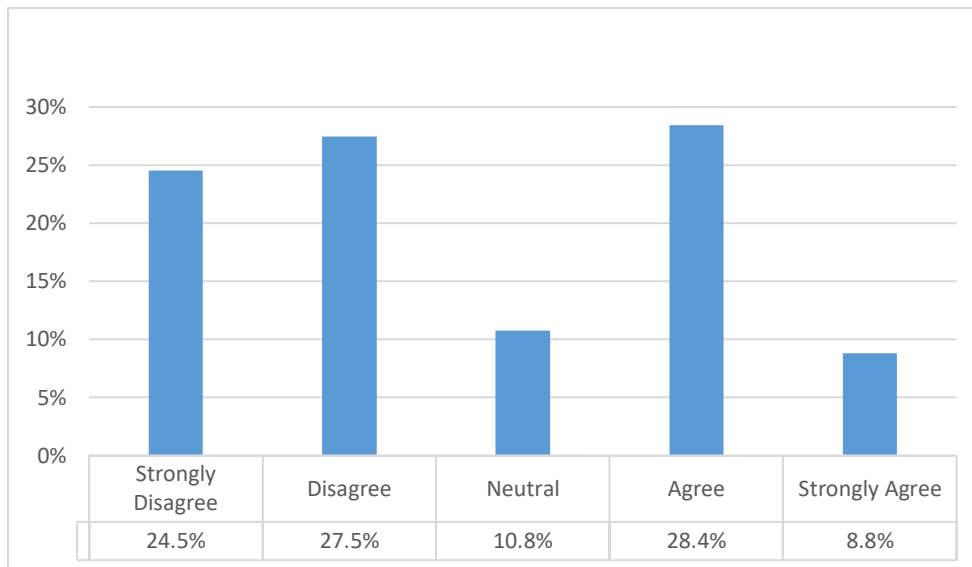


Only 35.6% of survey respondents felt students had timely access to appropriate mental health services when required.

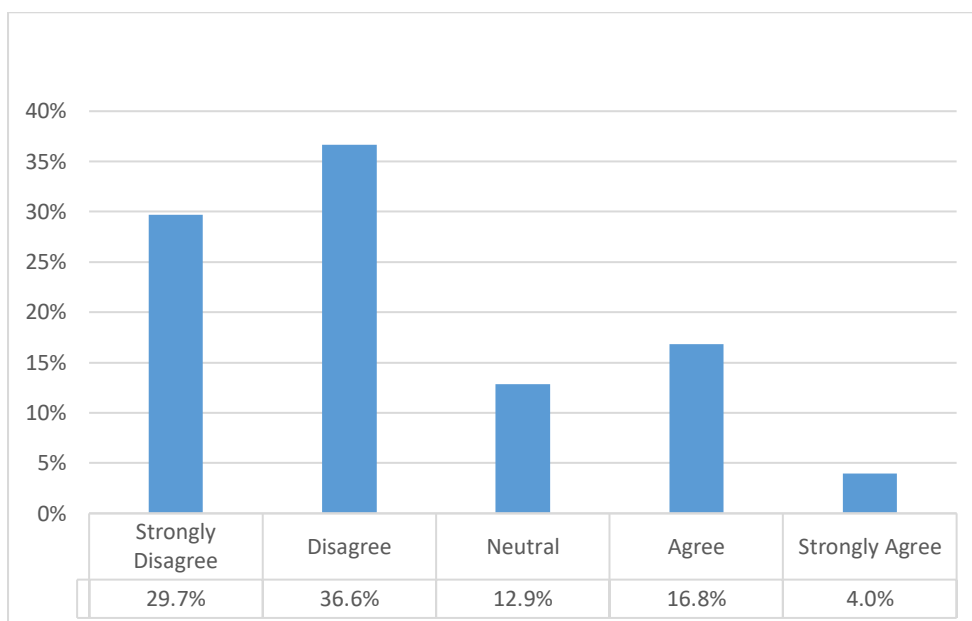




Percentage of **principals** reporting that “Students at my school have **access** to appropriate mental health services”



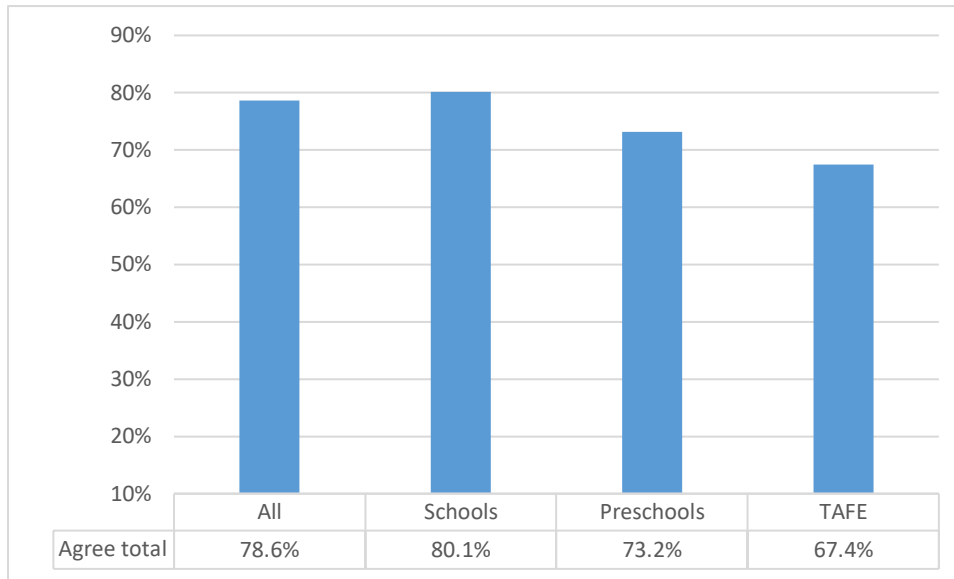
Percentage of **principals** reporting that “The students at my school have **timely access** to mental health services”





Impact on student learning

In the last year 78.6% of respondents indicated student well-being issues had negatively affected student learning at their workplace.



Low SES schools

The impact on low SES (socio-economic status) **schools** was significant, indicating those with the greatest need were less likely to receive the support they need

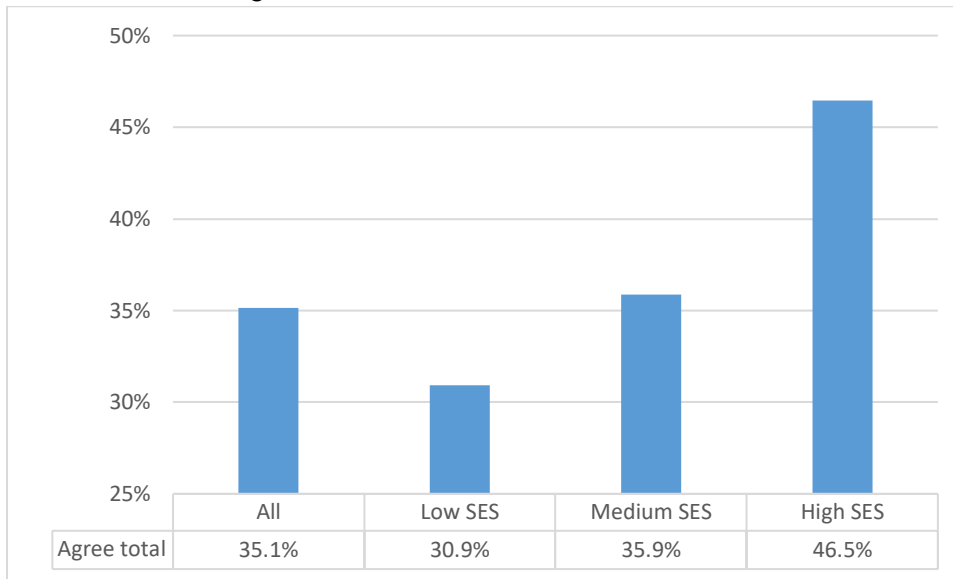
- 56.2% of staff in low SES schools reported students with mental health issues compared to 47.9% of high SES schools
- 48.6% of staff in low SES schools indicated issues with student friendship/peer relationships affected student wellbeing compared to 39.5% of high SES schools
- 91.7% of staff in low SES schools reported anger management issues compared to 67.7% of high SES schools
- 85.2% of staff in low SES schools agree that student wellbeing issues had negatively affected student learning compared to 73.7% of high SES schools

Issue	Low SES schools	High SES schools
Staff reported students with mental health issues	56.2%	47.9%
Staff indicated issues with student friendship/peer relationships affected student wellbeing	48.6%	39.5%
Staff reported anger management issues	91.7%	67.7%
Staff agree student wellbeing issues had negatively affect student learning	85.2%	73.7%



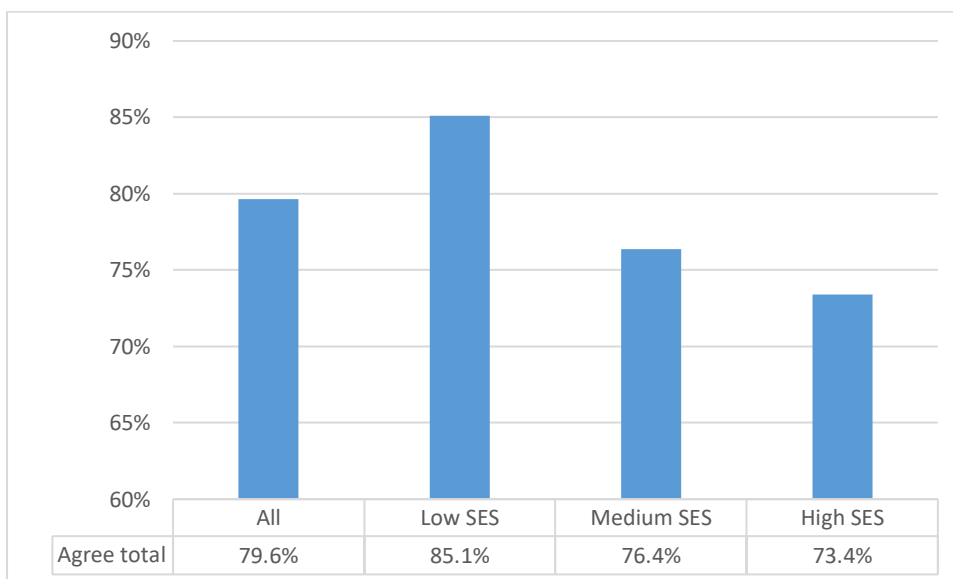
Students at my workplace have timely access to appropriate mental health services when required.

- Only 30.9% of staff in low SES schools agree students have timely access compared to 46.5% of high SES schools



Over the last year student well-being issues have negatively affected student learning at my workplace (schools and preschools only).

- 85.1% of staff in low SES schools report negative impact on student learning compared with 73.4% in high SES schools

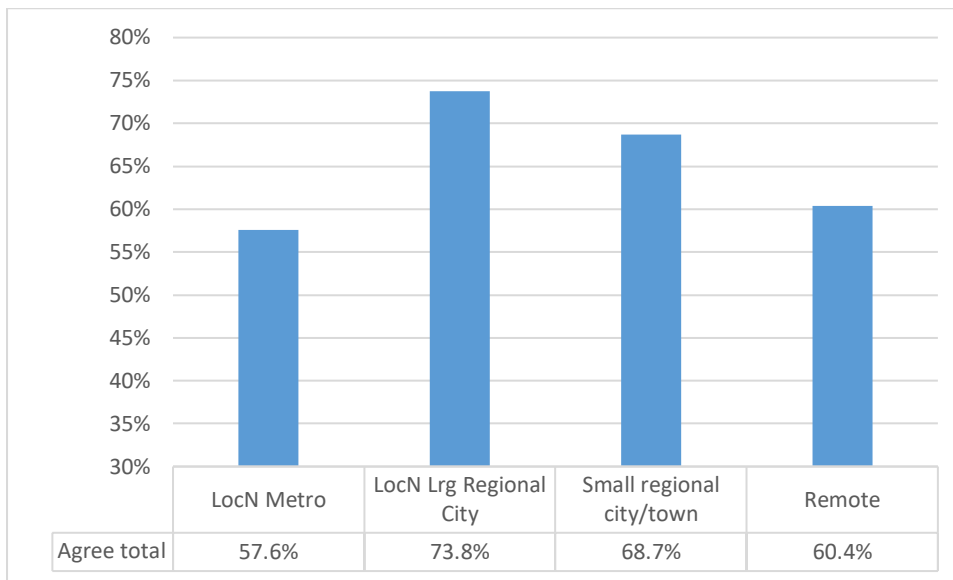




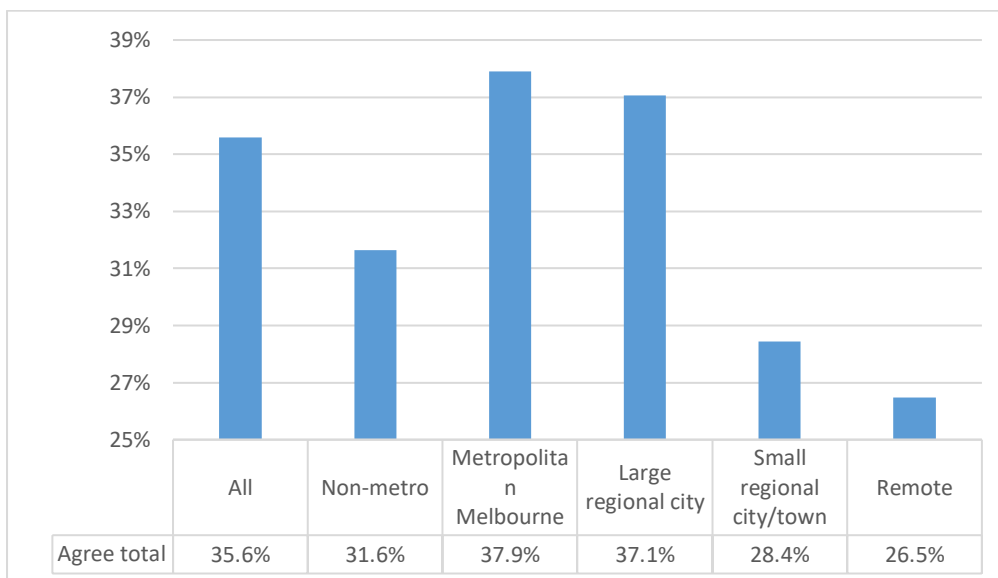
Regional and Rural

The contrast between metropolitan and rural and regional schools was stark

73.8% of staff from large regional towns indicated child safety and protection issues affected student wellbeing compared to 57.6% in metro schools.



Only 26.5% of remote schools felt their students had access to timely and appropriate mental health services compared with metro schools 37.9% and the Vic average of 35.6%





- 86.6% of staff from large regional cities indicated trauma affected student wellbeing compared to 68.9% of metro schools
- 58.2% of staff in large regional towns indicated drug and alcohol affected student wellbeing compared to 39.3% of metro schools
- 32.9% of staff in small regional towns and only 12.7% in remote schools reported their schools employed a qualified psychologist/counsellor compared to 51.3% of metro schools
- 77% of large schools (with more than 600 students) had a student welfare coordinator compared to 24.3% of schools with 80 students or less

Other key results

- 67.8% of VCE teachers have students with mental health issues in their class
- 85.2% of VCE teachers agreed or strongly agreed that mental health/wellbeing issues had negatively affected student learning at their school
- 50.6% of TAFE teachers reported being aware of at least one student in their classes with mental health issues
- 83.8% of preschool teachers and educators reported that they were teaching children with mental health issues
- Only 13.8% of staff felt their initial teacher training adequately prepared them to identify and support students with mental health issues



AEU Recommendations

1. As part of a whole of government initiative, the Department of Education and Training should provide a Mental Health Service Access Guarantee which stipulates the right for Victorian students in public schools, preschools, and TAFE to access the support they need. The Guarantee would ensure:
 - availability of mental health services
 - timely provision of mental health services
 - ongoing provision of mental health services where required.

This should follow a detailed review of the current provision of school, preschool, and TAFE student access to mental health services. The review should cover:

- the level of unmet need for timely access to mental health services
 - strategies to improve access to Student Support Services in schools and its quality
 - unnecessary blocks and limitations in communication between mental health professionals and educators.
 - funding increases required to enable schools, preschools, and TAFEs to meet the needs of their students in a timely manner, with particular consideration for students from low socioeconomic status (SES) and non-metropolitan backgrounds.
2. All public schools should have dedicated funding in addition to the existing Student Resource Package to enable the provision of mental health support by the employment of:
 - Student Welfare Coordinators at each school and
 - extra qualified psychologists, mental health professionals, and social workers.A ratio of public school students to psychologists, mental health professionals, and social workers should be established to determine the allocation of resources based on the needs identified in the review outlined in Recommendation 1.
 3. Any new programs for schools should be assessed before they are implemented against a set of student wellbeing criteria based on principles that aim to safeguard the wellbeing and mental health of children and young people. The teaching profession should play a pivotal role in developing the criteria and be central to providing advice about the potential impact of the proposed program. Where concerns have been raised about existing programs they should also be subject to a similar review.
 4. The Department of Education and Training should provide free relevant professional development to educators in how to identify and support students with mental health issues. Professional development should enable educators and mental health professionals to come together to enhance mutual understanding of their respective roles.



5. There should be a funded research program to better understand the impact of student mental health issues on learning and the curriculum and pedagogical support teachers need to provide.
6. All initial teacher education (ITE) courses should include compulsory content covering the knowledge and skills teachers need to support student wellbeing and mental health. Teachers in their early years of teaching should be provided with additional support and time to build on what is learnt through ITE.
7. The present NAPLAN whole cohort testing program should be abolished. Standardised testing of primary and secondary students for system quality assurance should be on a sample basis only. School-based formative assessment should be used to inform parents of student progress.
8. The Department of Education and Training should fund a review of the VCE and the ATAR system to recommend ways in which their negative impact on the wellbeing and mental health of students can be alleviated.
9. The Department of Education should further increase resources to support students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds who have mental health issues and do so in ways which support indigenous self determination, sovereignty, culture, and ways of knowing.
10. The Department of Education should expand programs to support young people with a greater likelihood of developing mental health issues, including young people:
 - who identify as LGBTIQ+
 - in 'out of home' care
 - with a disability
 - living in rural Victoria.
11. Given teachers are recognised by students with mental health issues as a significant source of support, the Department of Education and Training should employ additional teachers to reduce teacher-student ratios to better carry out this role.
12. The unsustainable workloads of staff in schools, preschools, and TAFE identified in this submission, resulting in high levels of stress, anxiety and other mental health issues, needs to be addressed. Measures including investment in more staff are critical to ensure the capacity of education professionals to carry out their work effectively and safely.