Transcript of Crossroads - WHAT?

Crossroads - WHAT?
Frame 1: Crossroads-WHAT?
(Speaker) The revised version of Crossroads is for implementation in government schools from 2015. This presentation provides an overview of:

- the requirements for schools
- the key principles on which the course is founded and what role they play
- the focus areas
- the learning contexts and how they are used, including the content which needs to be delivered
- methods of delivery for Crossroads in schools and what should be considered
- what schools can do to ensure their school based program meets the needs of students in each senior cohort
- what resources are available to support Crossroads implementation.

This presentation is designed for school based staff involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of Crossroads and for external providers including camps who offer a service to supplement school Crossroads programs. The presentation also explains the content and intentions of the Crossroads course for parents/carers and the wider community to discuss further with their child’s school.

More support on how Crossroads can be implemented in schools and why Crossroads is to be delivered to Year 11 and 12 students is available on the Crossroads website.

Frame 2: What are the requirements for schools?
The Department’s Curriculum Planning and Programming, Assessing and Reporting to Parents K – 12 policy standards requires all government secondary schools to deliver Crossroads for a minimum indicative time of 25 hours.

Crossroads can be completed in either Year 11 or Year 12 or ideally across both years. It aims to prepare and support students as they encounter situations related to identity, independence and their changing responsibilities.

Frame 3: What are the key principles on which the course is founded?
Crossroads is underpinned by a strong research base and this is evident through the principles of Crossroads as well as the modes of delivery and course content. The intent is that the seven evidence-based principles provide the foundation for the effective delivery of Crossroads in NSW schools.

Crossroads should be viewed by schools as a tool to support and enhance student health and wellbeing within a whole school approach or wellbeing framework. This reflect the evidence behind Crossroads Principle 1. Crossroads is most successful in schools where
health and wellbeing are promoted and supported through the whole school environment, including curriculum programs, policy, partnerships and the school ethos.

The school case studies on the Crossroads website outline examples of how schools have implemented Crossroads successfully within a whole school focus on health and wellbeing to meet student needs and support and enhance academic achievement.

The mandatory requirements of schools to deliver Crossroads in Years 11 and/or 12 reflects the evidence behind Principle 2 - Crossroads is an ongoing and sustained program that builds on student knowledge, attitudes and skills across Year 11 and 12. Crossroads is designed to build on the learning experiences of 7-10 PDHPE and changes to content in the revised Crossroads course ensures that progression is apparent.

The Principles will be further explored throughout this presentation. More information can be found in the Principles of Crossroads video on the Crossroads website.

Frame 4: What are the focus areas and what role do they play?
This version of Crossroads explores a broader range of physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual health factors that may impact on the lives of young people. Crossroads has an equal focus on the health, wellbeing and safety of young people.

The Crossroads content is explored through two focus areas, Owning yourself and Responding to others. The two focus areas are interrelated and inform and support each other. These two focus areas are designed to encourage students to explore concepts, attitudes and skills through their personal perspective, before considering the perspectives and influence of others in their world.

When developing teaching and learning activities for Crossroads, schools are encouraged to combine content from across focus areas and learning contexts to provide students with learning experiences that meet their needs, interests, abilities and local settings. Planning decisions should take into account available resources and community priorities.

Frame 5: Crossroads structure – focus areas – Owning yourself
For young people, “owning yourself” can be described as ‘being the best version of themselves they can be and being someone they want to be”. Young people who own themselves, recognise their strengths, their personal power, their rights and their responsibilities. They respect themselves fully and have a clear set of values, beliefs and attitudes. When a young person owns themselves and feels personal empowerment, they are more likely to act with self determination, autonomy and choice. They are more likely to feel comfortable with themselves and work confidently towards goals, aspirations and potential for a life of meaning and purpose. Young people who own themselves are more confident and competent when interacting and responding to others.

Frame 6: Crossroads structure – focus areas – Responding to others
A purposeful and meaningful life includes belonging to or serving something bigger than oneself. If we view this as "others" then responding to others reflects the way young people respond to their world AND how their world and others shape and contribute to their health, safety and wellbeing. The ways in which young people respond to others can have a significant impact on their health, safety and wellbeing now and in the future.

When a young person is able to respond to others they are more likely to:
- feel a positive sense of self
- have supportive and positive relationships and connections with family, community, land and the wider society
- enjoy stable and secure living arrangements
- confidently work towards autonomy where possible and making informed choices
- access and thrive in education and work

Frame 7: Structure of Crossroads
Crossroads is divided into two focus areas (the outside arrows on this diagram):
1. Owning yourself
2. Responding to others

Each focus area is explored through the six learning contexts (the inside coloured boxes):
- Personal identity
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Relationships
- Sexuality and sexual health
- Drugs and alcohol
- Safe travel.

These learning contexts were identified as the key areas for further learning in Year 11 and 12. They were strongly supported by research into the current health, safety and wellbeing of our young people. These learning contexts were overwhelmingly supported by the key stakeholder group, teacher advisory group and student focus groups throughout our review.

It is mandatory for schools to address BOTH focus areas and ALL six learning contexts in their Crossroads program. The content and the amount of time devoted to each focus area and learning context is a school-based decision. This decision should reflect the needs of the student cohort each year.

This allows schools to identify the key issues in their school community each year and tailor the content and the course to meet those needs. It is expected that the Crossroads program in schools may look each year as the needs of each cohort will vary. Involvement in students in the planning process will ensure that the school based program is developed to meet the identified needs of that student cohort.
The learning contexts are not organised in any hierarchical order. The selection of specific content and methods of delivery will be carried out at the school level. These decisions should again reflect school resources and student needs.

Frame 8: Personal identity
The **Personal identity** learning context offers a chance to explore aspects of identity, values and beliefs and goals and aspirations as part of the owning yourself focus area. Students can consider the influences on their values and beliefs and recognise their strengths and potential. This content could be easily integrated with content within other learning contexts including mental health and wellbeing.

Students can challenge social and cultural norms and analyse the positive and negative influences of technology and media, including the role of social media and technology in the reliance of some young people on self enhancement and the desire for instant gratification, such as the use of filters and Photoshop techniques to edit images and post online or share with others.

This learning context can be easily integrated with other learning contexts. The focus on respect for others and inclusivity can be easily integrated with the relationships context to enhance learning about how to relate to others and form and maintain respectful relationships in a range of contexts.

Content on identity and behaviour can be easily integrated with learning contexts such as alcohol and drugs or safe travel to consider how values, attitudes and beliefs influence decisions and actions in various contexts.

Frame 9: Mental health and wellbeing
The mental health and wellbeing learning context is focused on positive psychology. Positive Psychology is an umbrella term for work that investigates happiness, wellbeing, strengths and flourishing or feeling good and functioning well.

Feeling good includes the strengths and resilience to cope with negative emotions and experiences in a healthy and adaptive way. It includes feeling content about the past, happy in the present and hopeful about the future.

This learning context provides opportunities for students to learn more about mindfulness, optimism, resilience and the benefits of health behaviours such as sleep and physical activity. The practice of mindfulness is believed to have a positive impact on the physical body, in particular a calming of the stress response and a state of relaxation. A helpful skill for senior students who are experiencing increasing levels of stress or pressure.

An optimistic person is hopeful about future possibilities and feels confident about his or her ability to overcome challenges and achieve future goals. This content can be easily integrated with the personal identity learning context, with a particular focus on planning for the future and working towards goals and aspirations.

Through this learning context students also learn skills and strategies for managing change and challenges such as grief, loss, multiple commitments and stress. Connecting
and reaching out online and offline are also a key focus to build the skills of students to access services for themselves and others.

Frame 10: Relationships

Relationships
Building and maintaining respectful relationships in a range of life contexts and environments is crucial for young people. The focus of this learning context is on applying the relationship skills in contexts. These skills should be integrated with other learning contexts to create situations which are realistic and relevant for students, for example using communication and assertiveness skills in drugs and alcohol or driving situations or negotiating consent or contraception in sexual relationships. Respectful relationships education is key to reducing the risk and prevalence of relationship violence, including domestic or family violence. This learning context provides a chance for students to develop greater understanding of their rights and responsibilities in different relationships. Power and influence are a key focus to increase understanding of the need for a balance of power in mutually respectful relationships.

Through this learning context students learn about challenging and changing attitudes and beliefs about gender, assault and relationship violence. Challenging stereotypes and gender roles are key to this learning, including opportunities to challenge discrimination. Advocacy and asserting a stance on a situation or decision are included to build student understanding and skills to be an upstander online and offline where possible.

Making connections and accessing help is also an important part of the relationships learning context. Connections and services for support can be online and offline and the skills to seek help should be experienced and developed within this context and others.

Frame 11: Sexuality and sexual health

The sexuality and sexual health learning context focuses on safe and ethical behaviour. Students can investigate factors that influence gender and sexual identities including cultural values, social pressures, diversity and attitudes and actions which address homophobia and transphobia.

Safe practices and ethical behaviour encompasses respect for self and others, effective communication and consent.

When delivering this content it is crucial for schools to recognise that not all students participate in or demonstrate the same behaviours or attitudes. The links with other learning contexts such as personal identity and relationships should be made. Relationship skills such as negotiation and seeking help can be contextualised within the sexuality and sexual health learning context, through accessing services, negotiating consent or safe sex practices or communicating openly with a health service officer.

The influences on behaviour in the area of sexuality and sexual health is a key aspect of the responding to others focus area. Students have opportunities to investigate the
influence of social pressures, alcohol and drugs, personal values or explicit imagery on sexual behaviour and sexuality. Critical media literacy is important for young people to debunk myths and make informed decisions using valid and reliable information. The influence of technology, media and the law on sexuality and sexual behaviour is explored through challenging perspectives and assessing standards of behaviour. It is important for students to develop their understanding on laws and standards related to sharing information and images through technology, including material which could be considered explicit.

Young people are increasingly exposed to material of a sexual nature through technology and media. Help seeking behaviours and critical media literacy skills are important to reduce harm and minimise unwanted exposure of our young people to content or behaviours.

Frame 12: Drugs and alcohol
When delivering this content it is crucial for schools to recognise that not all students participate in or demonstrate the same behaviours or attitudes towards drugs and alcohol. Programs and learning experiences should reflect this.

Through this learning context, students will learn to identify solutions and respond to situations which involve the use of drugs and alcohol. This includes planning strategies to reduce harm in various situations, assessing and applying personal strengths to respond to situations, assertive behaviours and avoidance strategies.

Student will also develop help seeking strategies specific to the drug and alcohol context. This includes accessing and assessing reliable information, services and support, strategies for supporting self and others, recognising an emergency situation and first aid in drugs and alcohol related situations, including the need to call for help. This learning context also offers opportunities to address drug related issues in the community, including synthetic drug use, social attitudes to alcohol and drug use, responsible behaviour, supply of alcohol to minors, responsible service of alcohol and intoxication and its effects.

Student will build skills to make responsible choices in a wide range of environments, such as end of school celebrations, festivals and concerts, public places, parties and moving between venues. Choices around gambling and challenging socially acceptable behaviour and peer expectations can be explored.

There are opportunities to link this context to others through content such as protecting self and other from aggressive behaviour (linked to the relationships content) and safe travel in alcohol and drug related situations.

Frame 13: Safe travel
The safe travel learning context covers travelling safely locally and overseas. With many young people choosing to travel overseas post school and gaining independence and adopting roles as a driver, this learning context builds the understanding, skills and
attitudes for young people to demonstrate safe behaviours and make informed decisions.

This learning context focuses on planning for safe travel and strategies to minimise harm to self and others. Through the safe travel learning context students will challenge personal attitudes and behaviours as increasingly independent road users, this includes their rights and responsibilities as a passenger and as a driver.

Analysing the ripple effect of decisions and the impact of motor vehicle crashes or road related incidents is crucial in this context. Skills must be contextualised in real life situations to aid their development for students. There are clear opportunities for students to practice planning, critical thinking, decision making and assertiveness skills in relation to driver and passenger related situations.

Safe road use is explored through current social issues and factors which impact on road related incidents, injuries and fatalities. These include alcohol and drugs and driving, drink walking or riding or walking or riding under the influence of drugs, minimising road user distraction and strategic planning to prevent at risk situations. As a result of this content students will build the necessary skills and attitudes to make safe decisions as road and transport users and how to look out for others, including first aid in road related situations.

Staff are reminded that research has consistently found that programs which attempt to use shock tactics or activities to frighten young people by focusing on disastrous consequences of risky behaviours are ineffective. The assumption that attempting to arouse fear or anxiety through exposure to shocking images, messages or trauma will result in positive behaviour change is flawed.

Warnings may not match young people’s personal experiences or perceptions. It often results in them detaching and feeling that they are not part of an ‘at risk’ group. It is recommended that schools do not engage external providers or use one off events that use shock or fear tactics to cover this safe travel content in isolation from quality teaching and learning experiences.

Learning experiences which are planned to encourage students to reflect critically on issues, share thoughts and feelings, plan for action and contribute in a positive manner are found to be most effective.

Frame 14: What are some methods for Crossroads delivery and what should be considered?
The Principles of Crossroads, the needs of students and the local school context should all be considered when identifying approaches to implementation. These approaches may include:

• Timetabled lessons
• Seminars
• Camps
• Online delivery
• Combination of approaches

A timetabled lesson approach involves integrating Crossroads into the normal school timetable for Year 11 and/or Year 12. More information about possible structures of this timetabling is available on the Crossroads website. Timetabling Crossroads in schools provides an ongoing and sustained program that builds on student knowledge, attitudes and skills across Year 11 and 12. This approach recognises staff involvement in period allocations, supports regular monitoring and attendance of students and maximises the potential to develop positive teacher-student relationships and to establish a safe and supportive learning environment important for achieving the outcomes of Crossroads. Timetabling Crossroads can be difficult for many schools due to the inability to find staff with Crossroads expertise on that line or challenges with fitting Crossroads into the existing timetable structure. Timetabling Crossroads can also open the program up to disruptions and reduced continuity. For information on school using timetabled lessons view the St Johns Park HS case study video on the Crossroads website.

Many schools use seminar programs or camps on their own or in combination with other approaches. Seminar approaches involve organising extended blocks of time (e.g. half or full days) away from normal timetabled lessons to be conducted in school or outside of school. Seminar programs and camps provide greater flexibility of staffing, increasing the opportunity to utilise staff who are committed, skilled and highly motivated. Both the seminar approach and camps have the potential to enrich the learning experience of students by adding variety to the normal school routine. Schools should consider the timing of seminar programs to ensure continuity of learning and to provide opportunities for students to explore issues as they arise across Year 11 and 12.

For those schools which may decide to hold their seminar days at the beginning of Year 11, or use a camp as a sole method of delivery, there are no avenues for ongoing learning or to follow-up on issues important to students later in the year or across years. Out of pocket expenses make it difficult for some families, and schools must consider costs and issues of equity when planning seminar programs and camps. To find out more about the seminar approach or use of camps access the Crossroads website or watch the Willoughby Girls High School case study.

Many schools choose to use a combination of approaches. Examples of this can be viewed in the Cheltenham Girls High School and Dungog High School case studies on the Crossroads website.

Frame 15: Using external providers and accessing events, forums and providers

Some schools may access events, forums, seminar days or camps delivered by individuals or groups other than school based teaching staff. These events, days or camps should not be considered a sole method of delivery on their own as they do not offer an ongoing and sustained program that builds on student knowledge, attitudes and skills across Year 11 and 12 (Principle 2). Research shows that one-off events are
ineffective on their own. Teaching and learning activities before and after the event are needed to contextualise and supplement student learning. A key principle of *Crossroads* is to develop a school based program which meets the needs of students in that senior cohort. Where events, seminars or camps are delivered by external agencies and providers, schools must consider the learning focus, purpose and value of that event. A one-stop-shop approach delivered to all schools will not effectively recognise student needs or local school context. Principals and course coordinators must consider what this service or approach offers students that the school cannot offer.

Many providers are highly skilled and reputable services which can supplement the school’s *Crossroads* program. Principals and course coordinators must review and assess prior to engaging the service, the materials and mode of delivery to be used by the provider. Does it reflect the key principles of *Crossroads* and therefore reflect the evidence based approaches which maximise student learning and involvement. Are shock and fear tactics used to convey messages? If this service is utilised how will you provide activities to debrief students and ensure clear links to *Crossroads* content to enhance student development of understanding, skills and attitudes? How will you assess and plan for the emotional and social impact of the event, service or camp activities on students and staff? Is counselling required before, during and after the event and how will you plan for this?

Long term partnerships, strong communication and planning with external providers and camps before the event will ensure that services provided support existing *Crossroads* programs, comply with Department policy and practices and provide students with safe and meaningful learning experiences which meet their learning and support needs.

External providers delivering *Crossroads* must be familiar with the outcomes and stage appropriate content of *Crossroads*. External providers must be familiar with the school’s local context. Services provided by external providers must be relevant to students’ needs and be integrated into the school’s *Crossroads* program. More information including Guidelines to help principals determine the appropriateness of engaging external providers for curriculum implementation can be found on the *Crossroads* website.

Frame 16: What can schools do to ensure their school based program meets the needs of students in each senior cohort?
It is important that the content of the school’s *Crossroads* program is based on the needs, interests and diversity of students. This means that, for each year, each school should develop a program that is relevant to the particular group or cohort of senior students.

*Crossroads* Principle 3 states that Partnerships with parents, carers and community will maximise the positive outcomes. For *Crossroads* to be successfully delivered, the support of staff, community, parents, carers and students is essential. Research suggests
that, where parents or caregivers have an understanding of the rationale, structure and content of the program, students’ learning is improved.

Staff involved in the delivery of Crossroads should have demonstrated expertise in the course content, skills in engaging and interacting with young people and a commitment to the intended outcomes of the course. Staff involved in Crossroads should have a strong understanding of the current and evolving issues and challenges young people in their school may experience, and the kinds of behaviours young people are engaging in. PDHPE teachers are trained to deliver health education using interactive methods which maximise student learning outcomes. Other staff who could be involved include student welfare teachers, the school counsellor, year advisers or other interested staff with expertise and commitment to student health and wellbeing. This reflects Principle 4 of Crossroads.

To ensure Crossroads programs focus on issues, situations or experiences that students believe are important and relevant to them, students should have input into planning the content, delivering appropriate aspects of the program and evaluating Crossroads. Click play to watch the video on the importance of the student perspective in Crossroads.

Frame 17: Including the student voice to meet the needs of students each year
The strategies used in delivering Crossroads programs should encourage student-centred learning. This means students should have the opportunity to be involved in discussion, reflection, critical thinking and problem-solving. Interactive learning methods are the most effective for developing knowledge, attitudes and skills that promote health, safety and wellbeing. This reflects Crossroads Principle 5. Interactive learning methods include discussions, guided practice, role play, group work, simulations, use of narrative, debates and practising specific skills in particular contexts and scenarios.

Student-centred learning can also be facilitated and enriched by involving senior students in the delivery of the program where appropriate, after training and with support from skilled staff.

There are a number of ways that student can be involved in the planning and evaluation of Crossroads. Schools should select those methods for involving students that best suit their needs.

- Consult with senior members of the Student Representative Council (SRC). Allow them to make suggestions about content and ways of involving fellow students in the planning process.
- Organise a group of students to conduct a random survey or to conduct focus group discussions with students in their Year. Collect information relating to feelings, values, attitudes, needs and interests.
- Set up a mini-forum for interested senior students to discuss their needs and interests in relation to course content.
• Target particular students or ask for volunteers who would like to be part of a steering committee for development of the course.
• Create an area in the school where materials related to the course can be displayed, such as newspaper articles, pamphlets or posters relating to the course content. Include a suggestion box, so students have the opportunity to make comments about issues for inclusion in the school program, following their reading of the materials on display.
• Organise a Year meeting and outline the nature of Crossroads. Divide students into small groups and discuss their needs and interests in relation to course content any other issues relevant to implementation.
• Distribute a survey to senior students to gauge their needs and interests.
• Use brainstorm groups to gather evaluation data and comments specific to aspects of the Crossroads course. Seek information on content, mode of delivery, any external providers or events and their value and what was or was not valued by students in the program.

Frame 18: Communication with parents and carers
Communication is essential between the school and parents and carers in relation to potentially controversial or sensitive issues covered in any aspects of the school based Crossroads program, including the content and delivery methods of external providers. Whilst active permission is not essential for this course, the school still has a responsibility to inform parents or carers prior to the delivery of Crossroads to enable them to raise any concerns and exercise their right to withdraw their child from particular sessions.

A sense of community and inclusion promotes feelings of belonging and connectedness in all young people, families and staff. This has shown to have a positive effect on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. Partnerships with parents and carers is fundamental to the success of any educational program and Crossroads is no exception.

Frame 19: What resources are available to support Crossroads implementation?
A wide range of resources continue to be developed and are available on the Crossroads website to support planning, implementation and evaluation of Crossroads. These include:
• Answers to frequently asked questions for teachers and Principals about Crossroads
• Case study videos of schools implementing and evaluating Crossroads in different contexts using different approaches
• Teaching and learning activities mapped to each learning context, integrated across contexts and mapped to outcomes
• Videos and presentations to view and share with staff, networks and school communities on the health and wellbeing of young people, the principles of Crossroads, the importance of Crossroads from the perspective of Principals, teachers and students and the why behind Crossroads – the review – the focus areas – the content and its delivery in Year 11 and 12.
Frame 20: Crossroads what overview
Schools are encouraged to use the information provided in this video and on the Crossroads website to plan for and delivery a Crossroads program to meet the needs of the student cohort each year.

Take time to consider:
- Does your Crossroads program incorporate and reflect the Principles of Crossroads?
- Are there areas of your program or delivery which could be reviewed, updated and enhanced in light of new information or resources?
- What are the needs and behaviours of your current cohort of senior students? How can you access this information to ensure relevance of your Crossroads program?
- What learning contexts can be explored to develop a Crossroads program which meets these needs?
- What information and resources do you need to plan for and deliver your Crossroads program?
- How will you evaluate your program to ensure relevance and effectiveness?

More information and resources to support the planning, delivery and evaluation of Crossroads in government schools is available on the Crossroads website. For more information contact the Department’s Secondary Education PDHPE Advisor.