

# Australian Principals Federation

## President's Message—Julie Podbury



### *Too much to report to wait another week!*

We have had outstanding feedback following on from the newsletter last week generating a number of matters for discussion. [See below](#). On top of that DET has been busy making many announcements which deserve either comment or praise, depending on the announcement. [See P4](#).

One member wrote this and I thought it made the point we were trying to make last week perfectly, in a topical and relevant context.

*"I watched a documentary the other night 'Collingwood From the Inside Out.' It told the story of Nathan Buckley and his evolution as a coach. He talked about how he thought leadership was all about numbers, data, playing stats and simply telling players what to do. It wasn't until he realised that success is about human connection and genuinely caring about those around you, that the club experienced success. It had me thinking about the evolution of The Education State and how it is about data, data and more data. I came to the sad conclusion that as school leaders, there is very little genuine care for us as people. Sadly, if any comparison can be made with what has happened at Collingwood, I believe that there will be very little improvement in education in this state until people are genuinely appreciated, respected, cared for and trusted."*

Another member wrote about her sense of **loss of autonomy as a leader** and feeling as if she has let her community down and cannot keep them safe.

*As a principal of a large co-educational 7-12 secondary college, I'm struggling to make sense of the recent decisions to overturn the expulsions of students in my school, (five in the last two terms). I am writing to express my utter frustration as, once again, I am thwarted in my attempts to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff.*

*I can't help but feel I have let my school community down, even though it is clear we work tirelessly to support all of our students. Through this experience, I now understand that the interventions we put in place will never be seen as enough by appeal panels. It is evident that they search for any possible loop-hole to overturn the expulsion rather than taking into account the damage they are inflicting on schools by sending these students back.*

*Students have no consequences for their behaviours. In fact, they return as heroes, bragging on social media and further threatening their victims. This is extremely damaging to our school culture. There is no end game for these students. It is apparent to any student who is expelled that all you need to do is appeal and you will return to school. What are the consequences for students who don't follow rules and put others at risk? This is the culture that is being created. Unfortunately, it is the victims who are forced to move schools because of the anxiety these decisions create. There are no winners here.*

*After the first expulsion was overturned early last term, I expressed my concern to the independent review panel regarding her safety. My professional judgement was not heeded, my concerns fell on deaf ears. Ironically, three of the current expulsions came about because of a violent attack on this girl in the school yard. Two staff, one disabled, put themselves at risk to stop the fight and were shoved in the process. Thankfully, due to the efforts of staff, the physical damage was not as bad as it could have been. This all occurred despite the safety plans in place and the support programs for the girls in question. The fallout from this fight has been huge and is still ongoing.*

*My staff are struggling, feeling utterly deflated - their efforts and professionalism have not been acknowledged through the process. The hours they put into investigating these significant incidents - which included violence and drug trafficking - in an attempt to gather the facts, was seemingly for naught. Not to mention the hours and hours of work put into supporting students with difficult behaviours. We feel we are being challenged for holding students accountable for their behaviours. We are challenged by parents, students and the department and it is exhausting and degrading.*

*As I write this, I know that I am not the only principal feeling these frustrations. I have spoken to principal colleagues who are facing the same challenges with overturned expulsions.*

*When is the department going to stand up for the victims and hold students accountable? When is the*



### *In this issue:*

Annual PD Day information on [Inclusive Education is on P6](#).

Register via links.

**Due to the high level of registration, we negotiated with the golf club to expand our booking by 50 places. Therefore some places still remain.**

Note our sponsors have all committed to support this event.

Thank you to



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[Dr Lisa Vinnicombe begins her report on the findings of her thesis on P2](#)

*system going to support these troubled young people in a way that doesn't compromise the safety and wellbeing of other students and our staff?*

*When is the department going to support their employees as they work to keep their workplaces safe?*

*Finally, what is it going to take for the department to value the professionalism of school leadership and support our decisions?*

*It beggars belief that a 13 year old girl can fill in her own appeal document, the grounds of which were shaky to say the least, and her word holds more weight than that of the principal, which was supported in the many pages of documented evidence presented. It makes a mockery of the whole process.*

## **Dr Lisa Vinnicombe reports her findings and wants your comments.**



**Lisa, Assistant Principal at University High School is the member discussed in last week's newsletter as having recently completed a thesis which I believe has great bearing on the issues of concern we have raised with DET. The following is the first of the findings from her thesis, "How teachers manage mandated pedagogical change and its enactment: a case study of ten teacher leaders".**

There are some compelling reasons why we should be concerned about the state of education in the education state. Over the coming weeks, I want to explore some of those reasons through this newsletter and I welcome some discussion and feedback from principals and assistant principals. I intend using as starting points for consideration a number of themes and commonalities which emerged from my thesis. As Julie mentioned in the last newsletter, the various initiatives and policies that are proposed and mandated by DET are often frustrating for school leaders to implement and sustain in their schools. I am interested in exploring those frustrations and identifying the issues that are most pressing and seeing if collectively, we can find ways to take some steps to feeling as though we are somewhat more in control of our work and our schools.

My research area was teachers managing change. I focussed specifically on those changes that are mandated and continually imposed from above, that are driven by an external agenda and an agenda that is often political rather than educational. I wrote a case study and engaged ten teacher leaders to participate in three levels of data collection. It was crucial to the integrity of the study that the focus was on those who understand best what it is to be a teacher and school leader.

Over a couple of years, I collected and analysed the data and through written narratives, interviews and discussions, various themes emerged. It soon became clear in the data analysis that it was just as important to focus on *who we are* as it was to explore *what we do*. I realised that the idealism that is so crucial to maintaining our drive and beliefs and which is so intrinsically a part of who teachers are, can quickly be eroded when we feel like we have become sidelined and to some degree diminished, by authorities greater than ourselves. When I was writing up the discussion and conclusion chapters, I felt that I was really finding a teacher voice and giving that voice a platform. That was incredibly empowering, because it is the absence of a place for teacher voice that underpinned my purpose for exploring how change impacted on teachers and schools.

I would like to put those themes – not an exhaustive list - down here in some kind of sequence and invite comment from principals and assistant principals. The concerns and themes will



Podium 2,  
Tooronga Village,  
766 Toorak Road,  
Glen Iris, 3146.  
Tel: 0412 584 002

***Thank you for all  
the new referrals.***

***Note: APF  
membership is  
open to all  
Principal Class  
members,  
including those in  
Acting positions.***



Gemma Naylor  
APF Executive  
Officer

[gnaylor@apf.net.au](mailto:gnaylor@apf.net.au)

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without a doubt be instantly recognizable.

- The relentlessness of change
- Loss of autonomy
- Losing trust
- Teacher identity: moral purpose and social justice
- Targeted resistance to change: self-preservation and personal safety
- The “technical professional”
- Jumping through hoops – the external agenda
- The accountability culture – performance over humanity?

I can see a real dichotomy in our current system. On the one hand, we have quite clear purpose in FISO in school direction – it’s hard to argue with goals for school improvement that include student agency and building learning communities, among others. Yet in spite of these reasonable goals, there is a sense of diminishing autonomy for school leaders and staff in their everyday practice. We could attribute this to a range of things – the accountability culture might be a good place to start.

Recently, I was talking to a principal about a particularly difficult student and family they have been dealing with for some time now. It has reached such a level that they expressed feeling quite diminished in their responsibilities to the child and at the same time, very compromised by ongoing intervention from outside. The principal said to me: “But we’re good at this. This is what we do. Why don’t they just let us deal with it?” It’s a fair question. We are good at this – the relationships, the community building, the caring – it is indeed what we do. So it’s a fair question to ask why we all can’t just get on with it.

The participants in the case study – who represented most levels of practice from classroom teachers to principal class – generally felt excluded from educational policies, innovations and reforms. They strongly felt compromised as professionals and reported often feeling quite diminished in their practice when they had no choice but to jump through hoops set by an external agenda. When teachers and school principals talk about change, they do so with a really well tuned sense of the complexity of change and how to manage it best in the school. We have been practising this for years and have long been aware of the need to consider a whole range of contexts when implementing change – if we want any chance of success.

In a nutshell, in today’s educational climate we are not setting the agenda. And I’d argue we should be. It would be refreshing to see an educational agenda survive two rounds of change of government but that has not been seen for such a long time that it is hard to recall what that might have even looked like. It would be refreshing to have some consultation around the big ticket items that have major impacts on school. The case study participants questioned the lack of a “humanistic” agenda, and sensed that their driving motivation to teach, their moral purpose, was considerably undermined. They felt that in a climate of accountability, comparison of schools (and therefore judgement of teacher performance) failed to take into account the human side – the knowledge about what schools really do. This to me is a really crucial point that underpins any debate about accountability and autonomy – this notion that we do know what we are doing and we are actually really good at it.

First and foremost, as teachers and school leaders we are professionals and we all bring to our schools a strong identity as ourselves as educators. Whatever our own personal history and whatever the influences that led us to this path, we share a collective drive and responsibility to



## A POSITIVE SPIN ON DATA

**Teachers often make negative comments about too much testing,** too many classroom assessments and an annoying emphasis on data-driven instruction. They wistfully recall a time when teachers had more freedom and classrooms were fun places to work. But life is really a series of data-informed assessments and actions. In a classroom, we collect insights on our students the minute they walk into the classroom in the morning – homework questions, moods, things to be dealt with. Data and assessments don’t need to be cold-hearted tools that reduce students to weaknesses and numbers. Instead, they can be another way we build deeper and more loving connections. We must get content- and skill-based data *and* socio-emotional information to best support our students.

“Assessment As an Act of Love” by Christina Torres in *Education Update*, February 2019

Quoted  
from Hippocampus,  
an email publication of  
Principal’s Digest

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improve the lives of young people and develop the next generation of human and social capital. Over the coming weeks, I would like to explore further some of the themes which arose throughout my research, and share those ideas with current leaders and seek your feedback and discussion. I hope that by exploring the issues that impact most on us – such as our diminishing autonomy and loss of trust - then we can take collective responsibility in addressing some of the concerns that impact on our capacity to do our work as best we can.

I will end this first article in the series with one of my favourite quotes from the focus group discussion in my research:

*“We do have a really hard-wired tradition amongst Victorian teachers, public schools, that we actually work really deeply with the kids and we care”.*

I couldn't imagine a better way to describe how we work and how we have always worked. I'd hate to see that under threat. Let's have a real crack at preserving a hard-wired tradition that is so very worthwhile.

**Dr Lisa Vinnicombe, Assistant Principal**  
**The University High School, Parkville, Melbourne**  
[vinnicombe.lisa.l@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:vinnicombe.lisa.l@edumail.vic.gov.au)

\*Thesis title:

“How teachers manage mandated pedagogical change and its enactment: a case study of ten teacher leaders”. Deakin University

Full thesis available to read at <http://dro.deakin.edu.au/eserv/DU:30103246/vinnicombe-howdo-2017.pdf>



## DET is on a roll!

There is so much that has recently been announced by DET, I thought it worthy of some analysis.

**The maintenance blitz** was a huge bonus and desperately needed by our school leaders to shore up the fabric of their schools. The Minister announced a \$515 million 'maintenance blitz' for schools. (<https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/massive-maintenance-blitz-to-upgrade-every-state-school/>)

The funding is over five years, with an extra \$97 million in 2019 school year and an extra \$236 million in 2020. Following the 'blitz', there is \$72m extra in the 2021 school year and then an extra \$43m ongoing. The fact that every single school will benefit from this largesse, is deeply appreciated. ✓ ✓

Next came the **Response to the Expert Advisory Panel for Regional and Rural Students**. The APF is aware of the enormous amount of work that went into the consultation process across the state. Eight consistent themes emerged from the consultation process and this was used to develop and strengthen the learning and development opportunities and outcomes for Victorian students in rural and regional areas. These were: Planning and strategy; Wide aspiration, high expectation and informed choice.; School resourcing; Student support; Inclusive communities; Provision and collaboration; Attraction and retention of Principal, teachers and support staff;



### Support for members

We are here to support and offer advice to all members at any time.

**Julie - 0419 103 664**

[jpodbury@apf.net.au](mailto:jpodbury@apf.net.au)

**Mark - 0418 551 375**

[industrialofficer@apf.net.au](mailto:industrialofficer@apf.net.au)

**John—0407 557 862**

[jjmhandley@gmail.com](mailto:jjmhandley@gmail.com)

**Ring us direct**



Mark Arkinstall  
APF Industrial Officer

**“Women leaders are expected to be both personable and authoritative, both analytic and affable, both warm (including being open to any question, no matter how off-putting) and clearly commanding. Conversations with staff, faculty, and students can turn on a dime from inter-role (employer to employee) to interpersonal. When this happens, too often personal traits replace leadership capabilities as the metric by which women are judged.”**

Mariko Silver, President of Bennington College, in “What Are the Biggest Challenges You’ve Faced as a Female Leader?” in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 2018. From Hippocampus.

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Professional development. The DET announcements as a response to this report are sorely needed by our rural and regional members, who struggle with so many aspects of their role in contrast to their urban colleagues, in respect to their location.

The announcement of **\$12 million to attract teachers to relocate to the country**, will almost be like a return to the days of studentships. \$50K and \$9k annual retention funds for 3 years, will make a big dent in, or even wipe out the HEC's debt, and give those prepared to hang their hat in a country home a great start in their career. ✓ ✓ A watch-note about those aggrieved staff, already sacrificing a lot in rural schools, who may perceive they have been overlooked.

**\$12.9 million for expert turnaround teams:** See our earlier comments about teacher autonomy.

**\$7 million to fund additional Executive Class Principals** to take on the most challenging, complex and specialised school leadership roles. ✓ Especially if a reasonable contract is negotiated with those individuals; contact the APF for support with this.

**\$12.8 for VET & VCAL teachers:** ✓ If you can find those high quality teachers; we fear supply will be an issue.

Then there was a **further \$37 million for a range of other supports** such as :

**\$13.2 million to get kids to and cover costs for VCE revision lectures.** ✓

**\$7.8 million to expand PD for teachers.** ✓



Total of **\$7.4 million for Outreach and Virtual programs** and associated costs for parents. ✓

**\$2.5million for increased mentoring, role models and information re post school pathways.** ✓

Finally, in this list, **\$1.4million for Tech schools to offer STEM programs.** ✓

As if that is not enough, on top of all this, **there was also:**

**\$59.9 million to double internet speeds for all Government Schools across Victoria.** ✓ ✓

**\$22.1 million for the Affordable School Uniforms Program**, for families in financial hardship. ✓

**\$1.3 million for Glasses for kids**, for families in financial hardship ✓

**\$160.9 million for Camps, Sports and Excursions fund**, for families in financial hardship. ✓ ✓

**Next came the revamped GAT.** The APF has some concerns around this, especially for kids who have structured their secondary schooling to avoid exams. We wait to see how this unfolds.

**Last of all was the announcement re sanitary items:** The **\$20.7 million** to provide students in every government primary, secondary and specialist school in Victoria access to free pads and tampons. Schools already support their students in this way, where it is needed. Presumably this will remove the cost burden from schools. I can however, foresee some issues for schools with this. ✓

*The APF awards the DET an elephant stamp for good work in supporting our students, staff and Principal Class (who will of course have the role of implementing most of these initiative at school level).*



## COACHING A STRESSED TEACHER

**Some teachers can seem tired, overwhelmed, and stressed – there's just too much to do and too much pressure to do it all.** How do we coach teachers in this predicament?

- Ask teachers to describe their state of mind because emotions can be guides to self-understanding. Strong emotions get us to pay attention to what's going on.
- Have them recall previous experiences. Where did it fall on a 1-to-10 stress scale? What worked last time to make things better? What was helpful?
- Identify a next step that is manageable. Small bites, small steps.
- Plan for action. This might be something as simple as getting a good night's sleep, asking a parent to volunteer to help straighten out the classroom, or making a comprehensive to-do list. When coaching someone it's important to know the signs and indicators of depression and anxiety disorders. In some cases, expert help is required.

"How to Coach the Overwhelmed Teacher" by Elena Aguilar in *Education Week Teacher*, February 14, 2019

Quoted  
from Hippocampus,  
an email publication of  
Principal's Digest

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## Abstract

Of all the matters our members deal with, the issues around inclusive education and severe behaviour disorder generates the most stress and pressure. Inclusive education is very complex and yet some of our members have faced the most incredible challenges and found a way forward in the best interest of both the school and the child. The aim of this day is to discover how to find the way forward in this space and share best practice.

**We have  
now negoti-  
ated for 50  
extra places  
with RGC.  
Book now!**

Reminding you about the annual PD which is designed to address the most pressing of all issues facing our members. APF members and DET experts are working together to make this a valuable day from which you will take away valuable knowledge and skills. Places are limited. Book now to ensure your place.

# Inclusive Education is Complex

Pathways to Success

## APF Annual PD & AGM

8.30 to 8.55 Registration & Coffee



9.00 Welcome: Julie Podbury, Victorian Branch President

9.05 Opening Address: Stephanie Woollard, OAM, Seven Women and Hands on Development: Education of Women & Girls with disabilities in Nepal and study tours for students to Nepal to broaden perspectives through hands on experience. (30mins)

9.40 Session 1. Policy Framework Snapshot & Navigating Pathways; Sharon Barry, Todd McBeth. (Data Capture, Knowledge building, Problem Solving) (50 minutes)

10.30 Session 2. Working with Parents & Advocates; Best Practice; Frank Handy, Chair, Independent Office (50 minutes)

11.20 Morning Tea (15 mins)

11.45 Session 3. Case Studies; Neil Cunningham, Brent Heywood (PINs, Staff Wellbeing, Restraint & Seclusion, Facilities, Legal matters, BCBA's) (45 mins)

12.30 Lunch (30 mins)

1.00pm Session 4. Opportunities; John Mooney, Todd McBeth (Sharing Session. Training of staff, Scholarships, Specialist Schools supporting mainstream schools, Case Studies) (45 mins)

1.45pm Session 5. Panel: John Mooney, Emerson School, Murray Geddes, Lookout Centre, Neil Cunningham, Kilberry Valley PS, Georgina Lyell (DET NDIS), Helen Quiney DET Safety, Todd McBeth, DET Inclusion (each panel member has 5 minutes to talk about their area of expertise relating to their portfolio (30mins).

Panel members are invited to respond to three set questions (15-20 mins) then we open for Q&A (20-25mins) (Total 70 Mins)

2.55pm AGM (15 mins) Peter Beckingham, Federal APF President

3.15pm. Close, Thank you, Sponsors and Door Prizes

3.30pm End

APF Councillors note: A brief State Council meeting will be held at 3.40pm



Thursday 24<sup>th</sup>  
October, 2019



RIVERSDALE  
GOLF CLUB

200 Huntingdale Road  
Mt Waverley, 3149  
9.00am-3.30pm

Members \$65

Non-members \$85

[See Map](#)

Parking information: Enter at front gate and park in designated spots. For overflow parking follow the road past the back of the clubhouse.

Note: If travelling by Train, Jordanville Station (Glen Waverley line) is a 9 minute walk to the front door of the club. (36 mins from Flinders Street)

## Contact

Gemma for information

0412 584 002

EMAIL:

[gnaylor@apf.net.au](mailto:gnaylor@apf.net.au)

This is the link to registration and payment on our website.

<https://apf.net.au/apf-agm-2019/>



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