

Australian Principals Federation

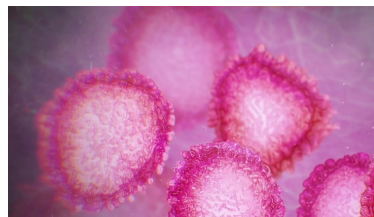
President's Message—Julie Podbury



Term 1, 2020 begins with more than a few challenges!

While the APF have not had much down time in the summer break, we trust that you have been able to switch your brain off from school matters for a time. Mark has had a number of MPB matters to prepare for and attend and I have been busy with responses to allegations as well as making an APF submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Managing School Infrastructure (thank you to Dr Ian Sloane for his work with this) and preparing for the development of our Log of Claims for the next VGSA.

You start the year with a few additional challenges. The bushfires are still burning in parts of the state, posing on-going threats, and, at the same time we enter a recovery phase for those schools and areas affected. Some schools have had flood damage to contend with and there is also the Coronavirus and it's implications that will need careful management.



While there is a mountain of work flowing from all these matters for school leaders, you have to be impressed at the responsiveness of DET in a crisis. The bushfires have presented challenges across the state for people who were trapped in holiday areas, lost homes or businesses or who have been fighting fires. The loss & or trauma for these individuals is unimaginable and those suffering could be from all parts of the state, not just the affected areas. DET has developed a comprehensive response relating to all aspects including school infrastructure, staff, student and family well-being, power provision, water and air quality at school sites, rolling communication, student transport and bus routes.



These links from DET provide further details: The [Bushfires 2020](#) website provides resources and supports to help address questions from student families and other community members. For targeted advice, phone Bushfire Case Support: **1800 560 760**.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION Please continue to stay updated on incidents and warnings, including air quality, in your area via:

- 📞 VicEmergency Hotline (**1800 226 226**)
- 📱 [VicEmergency website](#) or the VicEmergency mobile app
- 📱 [Country Fire Authority \(CFA\) Facebook](#)
- 📱 [CFA Updates Twitter page](#)
- 📻 ABC local radio, Sky News and other emergency broadcasters.

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/information-public-novel-coronavirus>

Violence in schools

One of our members has been through a horrendous experience of violence in his school and he was sickened with the light treatment this was given in court recently. He relays his experience to members in a letter on the following page. In light of this, it is worth revisiting the facts about the role of the Principal Class. [These figures are from the Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey 2018 Data](#)

According to Ass Prof Philip Riley *“Principals experience high levels of job demands (1.5 times the general population) emotional demands (1.7 times) and emotional labour (1.7 times) being*



In this issue:

Term one challenges re **bushfires** and the **Coronavirus** are discussed on page on this page, along with **helpful links**.

Because some of you were on a real and complete break over the last few weeks, (Well done you) I am **repeating some information in this newsletter**, that was included in the last newsletter 164.

Violence in schools is raised by a member, in a matter he wants to share with you, his colleagues. [His letter is on P2.](#)

John Handley's outstanding article on **resetting school and teacher work practices commences on P3**

We encourage members to make use of **Principal mentoring**. [Information is on P4.](#)

Information about **mandatory reporting changes** [are on P5](#)

My comment re [Social Media](#) is on P5

[I issue a challenge to you](#) is on P5 re your work practices.



the highest demands when compared to the general population. This is correlated with higher levels of burnout (1.6 times higher), stress symptoms (1.7 times higher), difficulty sleeping (2.2 times higher), cognitive stress (1.5 times higher), somatic symptoms (1.3 times higher), and, depressive symptoms (1.3 times higher)."

However, the APF notes with concern his report of the increase of offensive behavior in schools.

"Principals and deputy/assistant principals experience far higher prevalence of offensive behaviour at work each year than the general population.

- *The prevalence rate for Threats of Violence is extremely high (in 2011, 38% of participants had been threatened. This rose to 45% by 2018; close to 1 in 2 principals receiving a threat). The highest prevalence is in Government primary schools (49%). The lowest prevalence is in Independent P/K-12 schools (12%, which is still 1.5 times the population rate).*
- *Actual Physical Violence prevalence has risen from ~27% in 2011 to ~37% in 2018; 1 in 3 principals (now 9.3 times the rate of the general population, up from 7 times in 2011). The highest prevalence is in Government primary schools (42%; 10.5 times the population rate). Women are most at risk with 40% experiencing violence compared to 32% for men. The lowest prevalence is in Independent P/K-12 schools (5%, which is still 1.3 times the population rate)."*

Letter from a member in an Urban Primary School

"I write to share my frustration in what cannot be seen as anything other than an unbelievable lack of respect and protection for educators.

I wonder, when, if ever, it is worth seeking legal advice following an incident in which an assault against a teacher occurs. Based on my recent experience, I'm not so sure.

In mid 2018 a grade 2 student at my very middle class, eastern suburb school, appeared upset when her mother came to collect her.

Approximately fifteen minutes later, the student's father arrived, walked into the classroom, approached the CRT and said "are you the teacher" and punched him in the face. No discussion. He then pushed the teacher out the door and into the garden bed where he kicked him. Another teacher, our crossing supervisor and myself arrived on the scene and sent the victim to the administration building for protection while we tried to calm the parent down. He just kept yelling expletives saying he was going to "f'ing kill" the teacher. I hasten to add, we still have no evidence of anything the teacher did to upset this student.

The victim was in lockdown in the office as the perpetrator paced outside saying he wanted to "f'ing kill him, where is he, get him out here". It was an extremely frightening experience for all concerned. Eventually the parent left at which time the victim sought professional medical attention. He then went to the police. The teacher who witnessed the entire event and I went to the police station where we were interviewed and asked to lodge a statement. A trespass order was then enacted for the safety of all, the family, left the school.

To my surprise the perpetrator argued the case and kept saying that he didn't do anything wrong. He actually denied assaulting the teacher. Fast forward eighteen months and finally we go to court where he continues to deny any wrongdoing. He represented himself, and although he spoke fluent English previously, to my surprise he communicated via an interpreter in court.

During the hearing, it became very clear he was guilty and ultimately he pleaded so. While this provided some relief, this quickly turned to frustration because he only received a \$650 fine with no conviction or criminal record.

Not even a slap on the wrist. Consider the police hours this took, the hours my staff spent, court costs etc. \$650 is a drop in the ocean. But it's not about the money, it's the principle.



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NOTE: Tax receipts are automatically sent at the end of the financial year.

*** NOTE: Monday, Thursday & Friday are my APF working days. If you need assistance on Tuesday and Wednesday, text Julie or Mark direct please.**



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Join the APF

www.apf.net.au

Forms can be completed on line.



join

This parent entered a school classroom, without any discussion whatsoever, punched a teacher, in the face then pushed him to the ground and kicked him, he then continued to behave in an extremely aggressive and threatening manner and the victim required medical attention. Let's not even start to consider the mental anguish this caused the victim or the young graduate teacher who saw the whole scene unfold before her eyes.

When the verdict was read out, a fine of \$650, I shook my head and asked myself, what respect does our society have for educators if the consequence for assaulting a teaching professional is so insignificant.

I thank the police officers for their wonderful and caring support, they were amazing. I also thank my staff for their quick action in supporting the victim in such trying circumstances. Sadly, I can't say the same for the legal system. I believe the legal system has let us down and sent a poor message by handing down a pathetic consequence for bashing a teacher."

Editorial Comment: The APF believes that any serving member of DET working in a Government School, including CRT's, deserves a safe workplace. We believe that Legislation should be introduced to make incarceration mandatory for perpetrators for acts of violence on staff in schools. We know that this has not worked well for emergency service workers, however the judiciary should have this capacity in sentencing offenders.



An opportunity to reset school and teacher work practices.

John Handley, APF Advisor

With all the external and internal expectations in our schools, establishing a mindset of teachers on productive and intrinsically rewarding practices must surely be a powerful impetus to their school year. In my experience, too much thinking on the what, and not enough on the how of teacher practice and classroom learning, is a recipe for individualism, mediocrity and poor culture.

In an APF Newsletter in early December 2019 it was suggested that it might be time to "revisit our narrative of leadership and school improvement.

It can include:

- (a) restating our understanding of context of the work at our school;
- (b) reminding others of our school values and goals;
- (c) in the context of current school performance and aspirations, highlighting our progress and achievements in the school's improvement plan (SSP, AIP), especially that made in the school's teaching & learning practices, both explicit and implicit, what we hoped to see and are seeing; and what each staff member's responsibility has been in this context; and
- (d) reinforcing our understanding of expectations of each other as colleagues, community members and members of the profession, including recognition of the commitments and sacrifices each has made. This is both a reflection and celebration of what we've achieved and experienced in 2019."

In that context as the new school year begins we are presented with another opportunity to reset; and to establish clear indicators for ongoing reflection and review in 2020.

With so much emphasis on measurable student outcomes like NAPLAN and VCE results, it can easily be overlooked that such outcomes result from what and how we impact learning in our schools. That is, instead of overemphasising these results, it is often more useful to focus on what underpins high quality learning outcomes - consideration of improving teacher and teacher team practices that we know are the drivers of school improvement. The more one thinks about



Support for members

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

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Ring us direct



Mark Arkinstall
APF Industrial Officer

"Leadership is lonely ... I'm not going to be afraid of confrontation to get us to where we need to go. There's a big misconception where people thinking winning or success comes from everybody putting their arms around each other and singing kumbaya and patting them on the back when they mess up, and that's just not reality. If you are going to be a leader, you are not going to please everybody. You have to hold people accountable. Even if you have that moment of being uncomfortable."

Kobe Bryant, died January 2020

them, the more surprising it is that these practices aren't prioritised to a greater extent across our schools.

If we are to learn from John Hattie and others' findings of the impact of school leadership and teachers on student learning outcomes, it is a no brainer to focus on such work practices.

Imagine if across our system and schools, school leaders, teachers and teacher teams regularly assessed their performance against these work practices:

- consistency in expectations for high level student learning
- consistency in practice across classrooms and grade levels
- agreement about what high-level student work looks like
- cross-talk amongst teachers and school leaders about problems of teaching and learning (reciprocal responsibility)
- collaborative planning and problem solving around instructional practice
- level of agreement (and explicit statements) among individuals about norms, values, and instructional practice
- processes and structures for making common problems common
- collective ownership (responsibility & accountability) of student learning.

Where for each of these points there is discussion and subsequent identification of what the work would look like if each was practised at a highly effective level. And what would be the impact on the learning environment in staff rooms and classrooms.

Imagine the responses in the Staff Opinion Survey in areas like collective efficacy, collective responsibility, staff trust in colleagues, teacher collaboration, and collective focus on student learning. And from a leadership perspective, areas like leading change, cultural leadership, flexibility, Intellectual stimulation, leader's support for change and instructional leadership!

Imagine the energy and excitement generated by teachers as they take responsibility for more than just their own students in their classrooms!

If your school has a culture whereby such practices are clearly articulated and embedded, I expect your student learning outcomes continue to improve, and your workplace is buzzing! If for one reason or another these practices are not valued and enacted widely in your school, maybe it's time to reset and for giving them careful consideration.



STUDENT VOICE

Three ways to give students a degree of choice without sacrificing control over essential curriculum direction:

- Student-generated test questions - Have students work in groups for 30-45 minutes to devise test questions that might be used in the actual exam. This not only gives students a sense of control over their learning but also serves as an effective review session.
- Open assessments – Leave 10% of the syllabus for an assignment that students create with the instructor. The default is a paper, but students are free to come up with a more creative and interesting assignment.
- Class constitutions – Having students collectively come up with ground rules for a course gives them a collegial sense of working together toward a shared purpose. This could include the use of cell phones, tablets, and laptops in class or how late work is handled.

Offer students one new choice, either in how they demonstrate their learning to you or in how your class forms its community rules. In doing so, you just might nudge them one step closer to the goal we have for every student: taking ownership of their own education.

"Small Changes in Teaching: Giving Them a Say" by James Lang in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 22, 2016

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

Principal Health & Wellbeing—Mentoring & General Support

Principal Mentoring links Substantive & Acting Principals with experienced current or recently retired principals in a mentoring relationship. These trained mentors partner with their mentees to share their expertise and provide support, as sounding boards and trusted advisors.

Mentors are trained in psychological first aid, and will be able to help recognise emerging health and wellbeing issues and link mentees up with other support and services as needed.

The program offers up to twelve hours of mentoring time. Sessions can be delivered face-to-face, via Skype or phone, or a combination of the two.

You can participate in this program at any career stage, and the service is totally confidential.

How can I register for the program?

Principals are able to access the mentoring program by expressing their interest through the Bastow website. See: [Principal Mentoring](#). For further information contact **Sarah Carthew** on 8199 2986

You will be asked to complete an expression of interest as part of the registration, to help match you with a mentor.

A new mandatory reporter group , from DET

From 31 January 2020, if a person works (other than on a voluntary basis), to provide direct support to school students, at or directly connected with a school, for mental, emotional or psychological wellbeing, they will be a mandatory reporter as a 'school counsellor'.

In a school, 'school counsellors' may include:

- Student Support Service staff
- primary welfare officers
- mental health practitioners in secondary schools
- student wellbeing coordinators
- school chaplains
- speech pathologists
- youth workers
- social workers

Many staff in schools, such as principals, teachers, registered psychologists and school nurses are already mandatory reporters.

What must mandatory reporters do?

Mandatory reporters must report to the Department of Health and Human Services' Child Protection if they form a belief on reasonable grounds during the course of carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities that:

- a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical abuse and/or sexual abuse, and
- the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

It is a criminal offence not to report in these circumstances.

Do school staff still need to follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools?

Yes, school staff must still follow the Four Critical Actions for Schools to respond to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse to ensure they fulfil all their legal obligations, including mandatory reporting obligations. See: [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)

More information

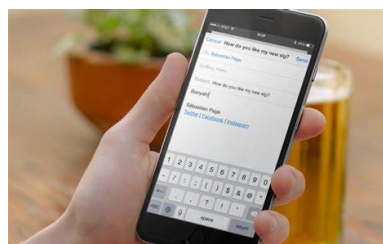
Principals can also remind school staff who are mandatory reporters that they must complete the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Obligations eLearning module](#) every year. For more information, see: [Child Protection – Reporting Obligations](#)

Workload and Wellbeing—A Challenge

More and more of you are taking on board the need to challenge current culture and take active steps towards the protection of your own health & wellbeing. It was apparent in the summer break the number of you that had disengaged from the email onslaught and posted a message to indicate you were on leave and a response would not be forthcoming.

A colleague of ours in WA has removed the Government email from his phone. He contends that this was tying him to his job 24 hours a day. He can now only respond to Department emails when he is sitting at his desk in his office at work. In an emergency he can still be reached by mobile phone.

Emails are allowing us to dramatically increase our hours of unpaid work, essentially invisible labour. I challenge you to review your work practices in respect to emails. Dare you delete edumail from your phone?



Social Media

Once upon a time, when we got cranky about something, we mulled it over for a few days, and then wrote a letter to the editor or the offending company to express our considered concern. This required effort, a stamp and a letterbox.

Today it seems that people get cranky, don't think, and fire off or post an invective filled opinion, which often does long term harm to the writer as well as their intended target.

Social media is a huge issue in our schools. Some wronged or unhappy parents fire off public comment at will on their Facebook page, personal blog or Twitter, rather than bringing their concerns directly to the school.

Social media poses another set of risks for our staff and it is worth reminding them of these on day one of each year.

On-line contact with or friending students socially is a huge risk for staff and should be discouraged. Members can also cite challenging issues arising re staff making contact with former students.

Staff commenting negatively about you or the school on social media is a breach of the Public Sector Code of Values.

Parents and staff should be encouraged to bring their concerns directly to you to be addressed, rather than voice them online.

Julie Podbury

The industrial organisation for the Principal Class