

# Australian Principals Federation

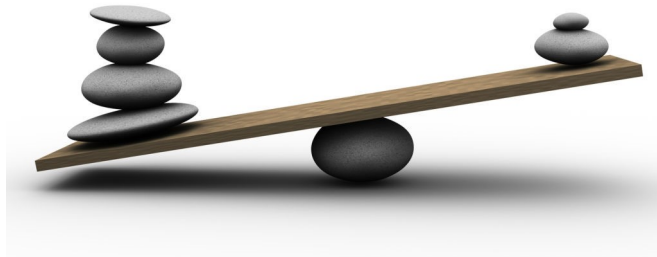
## President's Message—Julie Podbury



### **Workload and loss of autonomy.**

Workload and loss of autonomy continue to be the issues that most distress our members. All schools are a different type and size and located in different demographic areas, and with staff with varying skills and talents, yet we still largely have a one size fits all approach, which is problematic. While the DET has worked hard to reduce the work burden of the Principal Class, for each improvement there are even more initiatives, projects or policies that requires more person hours to implement and deliver. So the net change is going in the wrong direction for all the good intentions.

The DET listened when we said you are asking too much of the Principal Class. They implemented the Policy Portal, where there are templates that reduce your need to start from scratch on policies as we have all done forever; the new Policy Advice Library, the one source of knowledge in DET is to be released in the next few weeks, which will save hours of hunting down important information. The work with OHS has also lifted a burden. However, at the same time we have introduced the Graduate Mentor Scheme, The Rural Financial Incentive Scheme, School Council Evaluation, MYLNS, DSSI, Education plans, The Early Years Learning Development Framework Evaluation, Accelerated Improvement Program, the mobile phone ban, the sanitary dispenser units in schools: The list goes on and on. Most of these incentives are worthy and maybe even important, however each comes with an untold administrative and management load and with significantly increased animosity from staff in some schools.



I refer everyone to the 2017 VGSA, Section 12, **School Based Consultation**, clause (16) Principal Consultation. *“Consistent with clause 12(3) where the Employer proposes to introduce a significant change in the work required of principals the Employer will provide an opportunity for principals and their union(s) to be consulted about that change and give consideration to matters raised by principals prior to the decision to implement any significant change.”* This has not happened. Being briefed is not consultation: The Workload has increased exponentially and yet at the next round of enterprise bargaining the Government will be seeking productivity improvements. Really? There are complaints about Coles, Woolworths and the restaurant industry not doing the right thing by staff. The Principal Class in Victoria are under an enormous overload. They are operating in a system that exploits their goodwill with the expectation they will contribute invisible labour to achieve the goals of the Government. The mean hours of a Principal Class Officer in Victoria was 60 in 2018. I hate to think what it will be now.

Let's look at some examples. The Accelerated Improvement Strategy is laudable in it's intent. 129 schools were nominated to get a lift in the year 3 & 5 top two bands and the Year 9 mean for T4 2019 and T1 2020. Just a few weeks ago the schools were informed of the fact that this incentive is now being extended to the end of 2020. DET entered a new KIS to each of the schools AIP's in respect to this initiative (Autonomy?). Schools are required to enter an evaluation of their progress every 5 weeks. This scheme appears to rely on resources of the SEIL and EILs, but the untold pressure on Principals, and the damage to relationships is now starting to emerge in some schools according to reports I have received.

The sanitary dispenser scheme has had issues reported to me with kids emptying units into toilet bowls or using the contents to decorate bathrooms. Some have declared the units will remain empty from now on. Time and money wasted. I hope there are some good news stories about this one.

### **In this issue:**

There is a lot of information and reading.

After finishing with **Workload and loss of autonomy** on P1 & 2 you need to press on.

**Member feedback** is on P2 & 3, which will strike a chord.

John Handley reports back from the latest FISO meeting on P4 with a discussion about the VTLM (**Victorian Teaching and Learning Model.**)

**Mental Health & Wellbeing Support** is on P5.

Info about the **SSS hard copy files** is also on P5

On P6 we discuss the **transition to Office 365 email** issues.

**Funding for Safety training for wood and metalwork teachers** is on P6

We add to this the endless emails to schools from their regional contacts about reminders of deadlines. One principal told me yesterday that he has been managing Foundation English Online Interview since it began and has never missed the deadline once, however 3 email reminders would suggest otherwise. This causes learned helplessness. In other words... I don't need to be the leader of my school and know my job because I will get reminded regularly. It reminds me of the scenario where you keep the whole class in because two kids were misbehaving. Yet, I believe this arises from SEILs having far too much to do. It is easier to send out a group email rather than a discerning one. Given the demands of the Education State Agenda, SEILs and EAD's are also overloaded.

I have 2 serious suggestions that should help in workload terms. The Principal Class PDP is causing a ridiculous load for SEILs and Principals, and dare I say, can damage what should be a positive, collaborative, collegiate and supportive relationship.

Each school has an Annual Implementation Plan, then that should be the PDP. We have been saying this for years. You can add three questions:

1. How did you go with your targets?
2. What Professional Learning did you undertake and how has that impacted on your practice?
3. To what extent did you engage with the system? This can be a question about support used or support provided to others, depending on your circumstances.

We do not need the convoluted, time consuming process we have now.

SEILs should have no more than 15-20 schools each, so they can provide the necessary time to the struggling schools, differentiating their approach, especially for small and rural schools where Principal Class are often teaching as well doing everything else.

## Member Feedback—Workload

I write to you in response to many of the items that you included in the newsletter this week. (166) most of them resonated with me and they all seem to link.

This is not a whingefest- more just an analysis of what I spend my day doing as a principal in a small school with all teachers at Range 2-6 and a very tight budget. In order not to increase class sizes and not to name anyone in excess in my small school with unstable enrolments but slowly declining due to a change in housing demographics in the area.

I have no AP- Two LTs who teach and are struggling to manage teaching their own grades plus their additional roles.

I do student and family welfare, OHS, infrastructure, HR, recruitment, PDP and managing staff performances etc, etc, basically everything else even answering the phone as I don't always have someone in the office. Yard duty, first aid, supervision of PSD students. The percentage of PSD students is now 15% and seems to be increasing. We have a good reputation for caring for these students and families.

So much so that in desperation whilst managing the behaviour of a Year 2 student with Severe Behaviour Disorder, I do the following-: investigated and finally got him funded L3 last year even though we care for him fulltime. He is never unsupervised. Finally got him into a special setting for 6 months to try to establish some behaviour routines. To engage the family with this I now have to: Transport him to and from there every day, provide 2 aides to do this when I am unable to do it myself, allow him to attend Before and After Care even though he is a danger to himself and others, manage his behaviour on the day he is currently with us and continue to try to engage with a very challenging family who refuse to back us up or make any changes that impact on their 'work'.

If I just had the one student it would be difficult but I currently am case managing up to 15 students who need assessments, PSD applications, behaviour modification plus engage their families and get what I need. Not only that but the myriad of other families who turn up each day at 3.30 'wanting to speak to me'. So much so that I had to do something I've never had to do before today. I put a message in the newsletter asking parents not to just turn up but make an appointment to see me as I am simply drowning.

All of the students above have the potential to be aggressive and so are some of their parents. I shield my



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***Have you moved or changed schools since joining the APF? Please let me know so I can update our records.***

***\* 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](http://www.apf.net.au)

*Forms can be completed on line.*



join

staff from this every day. I also shield them from the parents who suck them dry by constantly wanting to catchup at the end of the day and monopolising their time. I do that so they can just teach.

We have a school review this year but not until term 4. I am paying to outsource the policy writing and the management of the self-reflection. When would I do that? The only time available is evenings. I work until 6 every day and I think that’s enough. I have achieved excellent data in my 4 years here. Changed a culture to a focus on learning and have built a culture of wellbeing for all. However, I think it has been at my expense.

I still love being a prin in a small school. I like knowing my students and their families and having the day to day connections but I am simply done.

I have no capacity to do any more and yet I constantly feel that what I do is not enough.

I hope someone else can come in and have a go at updating our buildings and improving our infrastructure. I’d love to do that and bring our school into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We have wonderful teachers and a fantastic community. They deserve it.

I sometime feel like they deserve better than me. I have made plans to retire at the end of the year. I hope new blood will continue to bring renewal and improvement.



**Support  
for members**

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

**Julie - 0419 103 664**

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**Ring us direct**

**Member Feedback—The APF**

I have been a Principal for almost 20 years. For the first couple of years I remained in the union I was in as a teacher, but unfortunately found that their advice and support was sometimes compromised by their commitment to their largest stake-holder group. I found that my interests were not always their main interest.

Since I have been a member the APF I found the advice, support and guidance to be brilliant, as they totally support my wellbeing as a Principal Class Member. The team know the education system, understand how the Department works and importantly they understand how difficult and challenging the many, varied demands of being a Principal are.

I have required representation at an industrial level on several occasions, and believe I would not still be loving my job if it wasn’t for the wonderful support, knowledge and advocacy of the team at the APF. I believe every teacher who takes the step into Leadership should be a member of the APF, so that they can access the best knowledge, support and access to meaningful Professional Development aimed at our workforce group.

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Dealing with staff underperformance, I found myself facing the Merit Protection Board with a personal claim made against me. While I understand that everyone has the right of appeal, naturally I found facing this situation less than ideal.

With surprisingly little effort on my part, Mark Arkinstall commenced researching the case, using his vast experience to support and guide me through the process. Expressing gratitude toward his professional management of the case, is insufficient, it does not incorporate the significant contribution he made towards my mental wellbeing, my efficacy as Principal, and the need to maintain some life balance.

As my representative at the hearing, Mark was able to succinctly address the claim, and the positive outcome was an incredible relief. What Mark does not get to see, is his impact on my resilience as I fulfil my role as student advocate. Upholding our school values and addressing teacher underperformance placed me in the firing line, and with Mark’s support I feel better equipped maintaining this moral imperative.

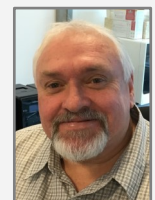


**Conflict of Interest**

This issue is still causing concerns for some of our members. If in doubt please ring to ask for advice.

I am happy to come to Network or other meetings to present to you on this topic.

Please email me or ring to discuss.



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## FISO Advisory Group Meeting Report & Commentary, 19 February 2020



John Handley

It's always interesting to attend these meetings for us to conduct two-way discussions about the types of support DET is planning, implementing or reviewing.

In this instance the two major talking points concern the Victorian Teaching and Learning Model (VTLM) and Insights into the schools' improvement cycle.

**VTLM** It is fair to say the breadth and depth of material now available on the VTLM is impressive. Design wise it is exemplary. More recent additions include the tools for Reflection and some Case Studies of how schools engaging with this resource.

From our knowledge from feedback from our members and that from DET personnel, it is clear there is a wide continuum of engagement levels with VTML. It appears the most commonly accessed component is the High Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS), followed by the Practice Principles for Excellence in Teaching & Learning, and the Pedagogical Model.

It was recognised that the take up and relative rates of improvements of practice are highly contextual, and often dependent on the capacity of schools to successfully engage with VTML due to other constraints that are often beyond the control of School Principals. This state of readiness to engage and progress is so dependent on the size and capability of the workforce, the time available when teachers and school leaders are under great pressure simply 'doing the work', and the myriad of social and emotional student and/or family issues confronting schools on a daily basis, just to name a few.

There is little doubt that a major impediment to progress for school leaders and their teachers is finding/prioritising time for reflection in what are often unpredictable, full on working days. Being able to stop and think –

*How well are we doing as a school on all Practice Principles? Which ones should we select as areas of focus? What are the strengths and areas for improvement in regards to the Practice Principles that we selected as areas of focus? What is the evidence supporting our judgement? What are the next steps to share or improve your practice?*

The VTML reflection tools for self-assessment and planning include (a) guided Whole-School Reflection Activities, and (b) guided Teacher Self-Reflection Activities. These are both worthy of your consideration.

Instead of producing more and more resource documents it was recommended to DET that they identify schools from a wide range of school types and contexts that could be shared as Case Studies. It would be useful for SEILs and the like to be across this material and be able to point Principals in the best direction as they plan their next steps on the improvement journey.

**Insights** Using SPOT, DET has identified schools' recent past use of the improvement cycle. For example, more than 6000 Key Improvement strategies have been their focus in 2019, with more than 13000 professional learning priorities in 2019 AIPs and on average 9 priorities per school. That said there were 50% of KIS actions delivered in 2019 with 25% targets met. It appears that school made judgements are often pre-dominantly qualitative without supporting evidence. Surprise, surprise - Schools reported focussing on too many key improvement strategies was a significant barrier! It would be interesting to know whether this is a result of schools expecting too much of themselves or DET/regional expectations or direction!

From the secondary school perspective, it would appear –

- they understand where they are in their improvement journeys but may not be precisely diagnosing improvement needs at the classroom level to inform planning;*
- they are increasingly too ambitious in their improvement planning, attempting to implement many strategies and actions that may not be aligned to precise targets; and*
- Teaching practice is the main barrier to them achieving their goals, due to challenges of inconsistency and capability. Whole-school structures and processes are an important enabler to supporting teachers' focus on teaching and learning.*

These insights come directly from school input into SPOT and are not DET making 'judgements about school practice'.

School improvement is complex, multi-faceted and not universally understood at any level of DET. That said DET has some big questions that need answering about how best to support many Principals and their schools be 'more ready and capable' to progress on their improvement journey. It was [\(see following page\)](#)



### Role of the APF:

#### Industrial Relations 101

At the **APF** consistent with industrial relations '101' we are concerned with matters such as your salaries, classification, entitlements, protections, contracts of employment and amongst other matters, the manner in which you are assessed and the consequences thereof.

Further, your access to industrial and/or legal advice, advocacy and support in relation to matters of discipline, conflict resolution, conflict of interest, complaints and/or performance.

#### Industrial Relations 102

Industrial matters arising from the management and implementation of one's professional role. Specifically as a function of the Principal Class Employee interpreting and performing their accountabilities and obligations as defined by their contract of employment; the operation of industrial agreements, Ministerial Orders and the changing compliance environment determined by legislation, regulations and policy.

recommended that the best place to start was by asking Principals in an environment whereby they can feel safe and give honest feedback without fear of judgement or retribution. I think it might be called a more 'organic' than a 'top down' approach. Thinking big but starting small is often a successful improvement strategy!



### **Safe and Well in Education: employee mental health and wellbeing supports—DET**

New services were launched by the Department of Education and Training in 2019 to support the mental health and wellbeing of all staff in Victorian Government schools and the Department's central and regional offices, as part of the [Safe and Well in Education Strategy and Framework](#).

The *Safe and Well in Education Strategy and Framework* outlines a five-year roadmap to improve support, systems and capability for employee health, safety and wellbeing, and to help employees thrive at work. It also means an expansion to a range of existing services, and new ones introduced, including:

**Expanded EAP services** EAP is a free, short-term, strictly confidential counselling service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the independent, external provider LifeWorks. EAP has always been available to the Department's schools and corporate workforces, and it is now also available to school council employees, including casual relief teachers, and immediate adult family members of staff.

Staff (or their family members) can call 1300 361 008 to access the service, and [visit HRWeb](#) for more information.

**Mental Health and Wellbeing Procedure and Guide** A new [Mental Health and Wellbeing Procedure and Guide](#) outlines practical strategies that employees, managers and Health and Safety Representatives could implement to help mental health and wellbeing, including building psychological safety for strong teams and improved organisational performance. The guide provides direction on what good practice looks like, and connects our employees to a range of expert supports and materials.

**Expansion of Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Service** DET Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Service has been expanded with mental health and wellbeing experts to help managers and staff integrate psychological risks into their local approach to health, safety and wellbeing.

**For more information**, see [Employee Health Safety and Wellbeing Support Services](#) on HRWeb.

To access the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Procedure and Guide as part of the Occupational Health and Safety Management System, see: [Mental Health and Wellbeing](#) on HRWeb,

For free expert advice, contact the Department's OHS Advisory Service by phoning 1300 074 715 or emailing [safety@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:safety@edumail.vic.gov.au)

### **SSS Hardcopy files—This is follow up from a member issue**

A new system has been deployed to support Specialist Student Support (SSS) workforces across the state to manage hardcopy files. Hardcopy SSS files are being registered in RecordPoint to enable SSS staff to efficiently locate, retrieve and transfer files.

Since the project commenced in August 2019 more than 50,000 files have been registered in RecordPoint with a further 200,000 files to be completed this year.

As part of project, inactive SSS files are being transferred from schools and regional offices to the Department's offsite storage facility for archiving. SSS staff can request records held in offsite storage by emailing the [Records and Digitisation Services team](#). Priority requests will be delivered by the following business day and standard requests within three business days.

If you would like to know more about the SSS project, or the records management support services available to schools, please contact [Kara Krusche, Manager, Records and Digitisation Services](#).



### **LOOKING AFTER NEW TEACHERS**

**Many school leaders believe it's wise to leave new teachers alone for 4-6 weeks** but new teachers say they want principals in their room immediately. Frequent informal visits starting on the first day of school are the best way to provide reassurance, build trust, and give the quick tips that will help rookies succeed. Regular visits are also the key to preventing bad habits from forming; those will take much more time to undo later in the year. They also help to reduce isolation. This is important because the club that pushes negativity always has room for one more member. Positive staff members should be encouraged to reach out to newbies and stay in touch as the year progresses.

"How Principals Can Support New Teachers" by Todd Whitaker, Madeline Whitaker Good, and Katherine Whitaker in *Educational Leadership*, September 2019

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

## Migration of edumail to Office 365—Julie Podbury



The APF have been using this for some time now for our email service and there are a heap of issues. The main problem is all bulk mail is treated as junk. We send nearly all our communication to members as bulk mail. I have been told there is no solution to this and you need to check you junk mail regularly to pick up thing you are subscribed to. Saving email addresses in your contacts is worth doing all the same.

The following changes will occur to school email account

- will be upgrade to have @education email address
- will be migrated to o365
- all content within the school email account will be migrated
- migration will occur at the same time that all school staff accounts are migrated
- Account management will be allocated to the school principal who will be able to delegate access as required. When there is a change to school principal the management of the account will be removed and granted to the new principal .

For the most part, schools are in a 'ready state' for upgrade and migration. All current active accounts attached to your school will be migrated in one batch. This will include:

- School account
- School Campus accounts (if school is a multi-campus school)
- School Council President account
- CRT and other casual employed staff
- All staff who are on any form of leave (sick leave, annual leave, long service leave, leave without pay etc.)

Staff on secondment to another school (or corporate/regional office), but are still listed in eduPay (eduMail) as being attached to your school.

To ensure DET executes a successful migration for your school, ensure that your staff are listed correctly in eduPay. Identify any CRT, casual or contracting staff who are not and will not be engaged at your school in Term 1 and close off their eduPay record with:

- ✦ Action: Termination
- ✦ Reason: Inactive Casual

[See here for a link to further information.](#)

## Update on findmyschool and enrolment

I can report that there has been 400,000 unique visits to the **findmyschool** site which is up to 3,000 per week. The team involved in this project have advised that minor changes will be advised ASAP, hopefully before the end of term. The team is pretty happy with the uptake of the use of this tool.

[Further information](#)

## Funding offer for all School Wood and Metalwork teachers,

This is only for teacher who use machinery as part of their role and is a safety initiative. DET will fully fund the course fee, CRT replacement, accommodation, travel and meals. There are currently two TAFEs that offer 'Safe Use of Machinery' training for woodwork and metalwork teachers, these are Holmesglen and Victoria University. The course is 22-40 hours (3-5 days) and is an accredited course that the Department has worked with relevant stakeholders to develop. This course is designed to provide current qualified trade teachers in schools with information relating to the use and safe teaching of machinery including lathes, drills and saws. Further information or queries contact [wall.timothy.c@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:wall.timothy.c@edumail.vic.gov.au)



**“When we’re in the presence of someone who intimidates us, it gets a lot harder to speak up publicly, especially if there’s a chance that what we say might be wrong or different from the norm in any way. This is about a thousand times more true if you’re around 13 years old and your whole goal in life is to fit in.”**

“When You Get Nothing But Crickets” by Jennifer Gonzalez in *The Cult of Pedagogy*, August 18, 2019

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

# The industrial organisation for the Principal Class