

# Australian Principals Federation

## President's Message—Julie Podbury



### *How are you travelling?*

I recently spent a whole day ringing principal class members to talk to them about how they were travelling and what was emerging as concerns for them. My first question was “How are you going?” One principal cried and said that is the first time anyone has asked me that. The stress people are under was patently clear.

Below is a summary of what principals or assistant principals reported to me. This document has been sent to Deputy Secretary, Schools & Regional Services, David Howes, to help inform decisions going forward. DET have been very receptive to the contributions we have been making.

A number of key themes emerged:

1. The Principal Class are exhausted. They told me they are working 14-16 hours a day M-F, with about 10 hours a day on the weekend. The key drivers of this are touching base with staff, connecting more deeply with staff they are concerned about in their capacity to cope; Regional meetings and requests for information; answering endless communications from staff and parents; the worst part is the small number of parents (5-10%) who are pushing very hard to have their children return to school because that is what will suit them best, (Most of these people are working from home and the kids are making it difficult for them to work.) These parents are combative and causing a great deal of stress. The bulk of the parents have been brilliant and are very supportive of the current arrangements. Many members discussed their inability to sleep as they cannot switch off. All reported grief about the last term break, not having a break at all and then the lateness of the communication late on the Thursday, causing a huge amount of work over the 4 days of Easter.
2. Teachers and support staff have been exceptional and are working very hard to monitor the kids and keep them engaged in education. The teacher's creativity is re/emerging, although they too are working very hard. Staff with their own children at home are finding it very difficult, however, are enduring. A small number of teachers are flying under the radar. A number of Secondary principals reported having to ask their staff to back off a bit and not be trying to do a traditional amount of work and the same class time as it is exhausting them and the kids.
3. Rural Principal Class members are expressing a very real fear that this current arrangement might end too soon under pressure from vocal parents, the media, the Federal Government and now the Victorian Opposition. The challenge is around the number of rural schools with older staff, many of vulnerable health, who will not be able to return if the virus is still an issue. With the paucity of CRTs available to rural schools, they may be forced to remain in the flexible mode.
4. IT continues to be a problem in low SFEO communities and the roll out of devices and dongles is slow and hindering them. I understand from Brett James that sourcing is the issue. Once devices are made available often the families and children struggle to get things working due to limited English in NESB areas. Principal Class report standing on the doorsteps of homes offering advice and instruction! Internet drop out an issue. Zoom bombing an issue. Google Classrooms & Meet working well. Webex a good option.
5. The one bright note is the attendance of students. Some report 100% all the time. Better still, the school refusers have been engaging in their learning in some schools as never



### *In this issue:*

An update on how members and their schools are travelling on P1.

**Your wellbeing.** I again question how well you are looking after your own physical and mental health. P2

Information about **Proactive Wellbeing Supervision**, now extended to include Assistant Principals is on P3

Feedback from the **Superloop** offer P4

**Zoomed out?** See P4

**Issues facing staff** in one high NESB urban school on P5

**Advice on PDPs** P5

### **APF Website**

**<https://apf.net.au>**

Members only sections requires log-in. This is the same as was previously used.

If you need this information please text Gemma or Julie. Gemma can respond Mon, Thur & Fri only.

before with the issue of 'unhelpful' class members no longer a concern.

6. The CRT deal negotiated is a source of white-hot anger in many Primary principals, who cannot make use of CRT's., have lost a huge amount of their locally raised funding and feel betrayed. Secondary principals are less so, as in the bigger schools, with less financial impact are able to make use of them in creative ways. A number are using Agencies for CRTs so are unaffected. Some principal had not even heard about it.
7. Secondary schools have few or no students attending. One primary principal I spoke to had an average of 80 present/out of 640. Another 8/104, another 12/200, another 15/560. Huge concern expressed about VCE/VCAL and lack of advice and the impact of this on VCE teachers and students. Concern for preps, 1's & 2's. **(In a late emerging matter, members have reported their deep concern about the rise in numbers on site in this last week. Some students have doubled or tripled their on-site students from their initial numbers. The fear is that if these numbers keep growing, it will be a challenge to have enough staff operate in the dual mode.)**
8. **On the issue of the eventual return to school I have had comments suggesting that the first day of return should be a student free day** as there will be so much to catch up on. One member sent this *"If we can't win a full day what about a staggered return with year 11&12s coming back first day then the rest. I think staff need to touch base with one another in their KLAS and share any issues discovered for their kids completing set work and do this face to face. Staff often work across 2 KLAS. At years 7 to 10 we will have kids all over the shop with completing the work set and will need to discuss strategies on how we should approach the recommencement of face to face. We can't expect kids to be at the same point, even at VCE some of ours have gone a bit missing and just after two weeks of at home learning. A pupil free day does also send the message that teachers are valued"* There was also horror raised at the prospect of a NSW style return of one day per week...which most cannot comprehend. Too confusing and what is the point?

Its tough out there, and there are some issues, but in general terms it is working.

### **Your Wellbeing, Julie Podbury**

I don't like to sound like a nag, however, I continue to raise concerns with individual members about their well-being. The reported 14-16 hour days in this emergency period are not sustainable and your health will suffer significant damage. Please examine ways to reduce this urgently.

- Control your IT use after a set time at night.
- You need to be doing some exercise daily if you can. A mix of weight bearing and aerobic exercise across a week.
- Good diet and reasonable amounts of sleep are both vital.
- Managing alcohol consumption is also important
- Social support with friends or colleagues is important.

Principal Class are a breed apart and almost always put school, staff and students ahead of themselves. If you are to get through this period unscathed you need to address this matter urgently. Some health facts follow:

- **50% of Principals have sleeping problems.**
- **52% of Principals are in the low general health category.**
- **High stress, burnout, poor health and sleeping troubles all have a predictive risk.**
- **Mental health starts to decline at around 32 hours for women and men at 39.5 hours per week.**



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**Many new members this week. Thank you all for your help in spreading the word.**

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



Gemma Naylor  
APF Executive  
Officer

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Join the APF

<https://apf.net.au>

Forms can be  
completed on-line.

## The Union exclusively for the Principal Class

## Principal Health & Wellbeing

In our last newsletter we provided you with the information about The Early Intervention Program and the Mentoring Program and gave you contact details for both. Today we can advise that DET have agreed to expand the Proactive Wellbeing Supervision to include Assistant Principals for 2020.

### Proactive Wellbeing Supervision – now available to assistant principals for 2020



The extension of this program is a direct response to feedback received from the profession.

All principals, acting principals and assistant principals are encouraged to access the program to receive support through these challenging times.

Proactive Wellbeing Supervision is a confidential and safe forum for principals to engage with an independent professional in some much-needed reflection, debriefing and planning for their own personal

wellbeing. Now, more than ever, staff and students are looking to principals and assistant principals to promote a sense of safety and calm in uncertain times.

**In response to the changing needs of principals across the state, the scope of the Proactive Wellbeing Supervision program has been expanded to include coaching on how to lead through uncertainty and how to support others in your school community who may be experiencing heightened levels of distress. This means that in addition to discussing matters relating to your own wellbeing, you can also get some immediate support and practical strategies to help you support your staff and communities at this time.**

Proactive Wellbeing Supervision sessions are conducted with an experienced psychologist and will now be delivered via phone or Zoom (independent video conferencing app) – all you need is a mobile or desktop device with a webcam to link up with the provider, FBG Group for your session.

All principal class employees can access four sessions in 2020.

If you would like DET's provider, FBG Group, to contact you to book your first appointment, enter your [registration details here](#). Alternatively, you can call FBG Group directly on 1300 326 941 or email [wellbeing@fbggroup.com.au](mailto:wellbeing@fbggroup.com.au).

For more information, see the Department's [Proactive Wellbeing Supervision intranet page](#). If principals or teachers are in need of any further health, safety and wellbeing support, more information can be found on the Department's [COVID-19 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Support for Schools](#) page.

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***If you understand the importance of Health & Wellbeing and determine the need to focus on your wellbeing and lead a [healthy school culture](#), then this might be for you.***

On offer is a highly practical course, run by **Bastow**, enabling you to identify your role in leading wellbeing within your school and community. Principal Health and Wellbeing moves beyond simplistic strategies to help you to examine your wellbeing and the impact your leadership has on your own and others' wellbeing. The course engages deeply with your context and motivating beliefs to develop and implement an alternative action plan. You'll focus on better health and wellbeing and the direct benefits for your school.

Over 6 months, you will participate in 6 online workshops. Each workshop will explore a specific area of wellbeing:

- Workshop 1: Unpacking mental models of wellbeing and leadership
- Workshop 2: Understanding personal wellbeing and how to implement habits that make a difference



### 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

### 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.



Mark Arkinstall  
APF Industrial Officer

**Mark - 0418 551 375**

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- Workshop 3: Understanding 7 drivers of personal wellbeing as a leader – Part 1
- Workshop 4: Understanding 7 drivers of personal wellbeing as a leader - Part 2
- Workshop 5: Building a culture of wellbeing: Preparing for the fundamentals of a healthy school environment
- Workshop 6: Building a culture of wellbeing: implementing and evaluating your school’s wellbeing plan



Course contact is: **Bella Di Lullo, Course Coordinator 03 8199 2955** [Here is the link to the program.](#)

### Feedback re Superloop offer made in last newsletter.



Members report, that from contact to connect was only 5 days to have an operational internet service. A remarkable effort. We repeat the key details here FYI. Well done Superloop!

superloop

In summary, Superloop are making available an NBN plan for \$0/month for 6 months for disadvantaged families with children at school through this crisis.

The offer is for 6 months of a free NBN service. There are various qualifications for this (details in the first link below) but we are sure for some of the families in our school communities this could be a really big benefit. Use COVID19 as the offer code.

The online details are available at [this link](#) and the press release is also online [here](#) .

### WEBEX, ZOOM, etc, Andrew Cock, APF Vice President, Principal Blackburn PS

Those of you who’ve been having to do lots of Zoom or Webex meetings may find this article interesting. It explains why they can be quite tiring as they are really taxing on the brain as explained in the article. The link is [here](#).



For many of the Principal Class, teachers and students, working from home during COVID-19 has meant we are spending a lot of time on video meeting applications like Webex, Google Meet, Skype and Zoom. This has had a differing impact on each of us as we are all experiencing more screen time, higher levels of concentration (for longer periods) and days glued to the chair in “your study” whatever that may look like!

Watching my 7 year-old work his way through the mire of 3-4 hours of live online lessons has brought about one very tired young man, a mixture of increased screentime and larger focus as he tries to process unmuted microphones, technical glitches and the strange echoing sound of his teacher in the distance. Zoom fatigue has definitely kicked in for him as he tries to figure how this new mode of learning occurs and is so different to his normal Year One classroom. The normal interruptions and downtime of the classroom is not there for him, he misses the challenges of learning and the classroom and most importantly (according to him) he misses his friends and Teacher!

#### 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.



**\$0/MONTH ONLINE LEARNING PLAN FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS\***

\*Eligibility criteria and Terms & Conditions apply. See [superloop.com/education](https://superloop.com/education) for details.

USE CODE  
**COVID19**  
[superloop.com/education](https://superloop.com/education)

## Feedback from the Screenface/Chalkface in one primary school with a high NESB enrolment

Feedback from Leaders on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2020:

1. There is high pressure/demand for both teachers and students with regard to connecting, creating, feeding-back and In many cases some of our teachers also teaching their own kids at home – in their “spare” time.
2. Technology is not a panacea. It is not helpful to all students all the time. if it is not a “tool” it can turn into a “millstone”. In some instances – a minority of cases – Hard copies/learning packs will reduce anxiety on teachers and/or students and/or parents.
3. f learning tasks could be categorized as A Tasks or B Tasks ( “Priority” or “supplementary” ) it might help with student uptake or parent anxiety or teacher sanity ( Pick one ).
4. Telephone calls are the No.1 bugbear! Time spent on trying to make verbal connections can be extremely frustrating when, for all sorts of reasons, there is no response. Every-day telephone contact is not necessary if teachers do not have concerns about the welfare of students.
5. Encapsulating daily programs within power-point presentations has worked well for the Year 4 Team and seems to work to limit confusion among students and parents. ( This is NOT to say approaches by other Teams are to be found wanting! )
6. Teachers need to manage the “feedback expectations”. Expect feedback only on A Tasks or on one Literacy and one numeracy task a day.

### The following websites may be helpful

DET website <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/department/Pages/coronavirus.aspx> DHHS website <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>

### Performance and Development Plans (PDPs)

Principal Class teachers and education support staff will have the option to continue with the ordinary PDP process or opt for a more simplified process. The new process will focus on a common Statement of Expectation that reflects the disruption caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Principals, teachers and education support staff will be able to choose themselves whether to continue with the current process for the remainder of this year or opt in to the new more streamlined process. Further information about options for this year’s PDPs will be available in next week’s School Update.

**The APF strongly advises it’s members to opt for the newly proposed model.**

### ONLINE ETIQUETTE

**Use good lighting** from a light or window in front of you so people can see you.

**Use headphones** with a mic at the right distance from your mouth for clear sound.

**Use a tripod**, a pile of books or a stand to show your whole face and shoulders so people aren’t looking up your nose.

**Mute your mic** unless you are talking, raise your hand to ask a question and don’t interrupt, spam the chat or use inappropriate language.

**Be patient.** Technology is good but not perfect and you will miss many of the non-verbal cues we take for granted.

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