

# Australian Principals Federation

## President's Message—Julie Podbury



### *A difficult time with challenges aplenty.*

Endless contact from members since mid last week report rapidly rising anxiety. We will examine the challenges in this issue.

### *Omission re Specialist Schools*

I sent an email to all members last week, however in my rush to get this to you I omitted part of our membership base who are deeply impacted by recent DET decisions. These are our members in Specialist Schools who are required to have all students on deck from the first day of the term.

It is without doubt that our Specialists School will carry the greatest burden. Specialist School members report deep concern by the divide that has been caused by the Premier's message in regards to Melbourne metropolitan restrictions and schools.

Specialist schools have spent the last decade changing the operating model of these schools to ensure that educating children and young people with disabilities has equal importance to providing care. They are part of the State's education system and not isolated silos. Incredible work has done, some introducing foundation VCAL for all senior students this year and linking in to DET networks and professional learning. This is now being over-ridden by the Premier's message that regardless of the dangers, students with special needs are to be treated differently... and therefore the work that the teachers and staff do is different too? Are the teachers really educators, or is this about care provision? If it is about the minority who require additional care and support, why can't we facilitate that instead?

With the varying needs of students, some with very high needs, social distancing is virtually impossible in Specialist Schools. A high number of students who are medically vulnerable. I can only imagine what families with vulnerable children are feeling in the hot spots. How is it appropriate to expect the most vulnerable young people in our communities to attend school?

The Premier's message is that this is a pandemic not a popularity contest, yet what is the premise for this decision? And, is this based on the needs of the majority or the vocal minority?

As the Principal Class Employees our members are responsible for the well-being of the children and the staff, and have done and will do everything they can to support their well-being during this pandemic. But, how do they explain to their staff that although it is not safe for mainstream teachers it is fine for you... although you work with high-risk students who can't manage social distancing or personal infection control? According to our members, it feels like (the staff) are being sacrificed and not being treated equally as highly valued educators. These people should be more highly valued for their expertise and positive approach to their highly challenging work.

There are other solutions available! There is a sense that Specialist School Principals are too kind and maybe too few to be taken seriously, yet they are such an amazing group of people with outstanding goodwill and high-level expertise and knowledge.

At this time our Regional and Rural Specialist schools are relatively safe from the current outbreaks, however some are in the middle of the hot spots. The Premier's message effects all in schools and this one is heart-breaking for those in special education.

The APF demands that the key messages during this process are carefully considered and that as a system we are aware of creating a larger gulf of inequity where a huge divide already exists.

### In this Issue

Challenges for **Specialist Schools** on this page

The announcement of return to **remote learning and the challenges** that will bring on P2.

**Support for families of students with complex needs** at home from Nancy Sidoti, YarraMe, on P3

**EO Gemma** writes to you on P4

**Sample comms** from schools on P4, 5 and 6. Word version attached for your assistance.

The elephant in the room. **Staff on site.** P6

### **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.

## Premier's announcement yesterday.



My phone ran hot yesterday with concerns being raised over the announcements made at the media conference yesterday. While concern was raised about important information yet again being delivered to the media and community at large before those charged with implementing the changes were advised, again, with late arrival of the guidelines, this was the least of the concerns.

The key anxiety comes from the messages about the inclusion of any students with special learning needs, and it seems, any parent who requests attendance for their child, attending next week. This means that in spite of the messaging about people staying home unless they must work; keeping the flow of people in the community as low as possible, schools will have a higher number of students present than in Remote Learning version 1.

With more students present, the capacity of Principal Class to allow people to work from home will be severely limited. Still, the challenge of trying to run a class with some present and some at home, the demands on teachers will be higher, and the version of learning delivered may be compromised.

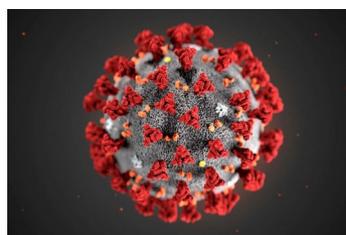
Further, there is concern about a limit to the capacity to socially distance, and cold rooms with windows and doors open. Masks represents yet another problem. While delivering instruction person to person might demand a mask, it is impossible to communicate via technology wearing a mask and be understood. Again the challenge of the 2 competing needs.

Temperature checks represent yet another challenge. One school with over 900 students attending today informed me that it took over one hour with 9 temperature stations. This Principal was unsure how sustainable this will be.

The environment created with yesterday's announcement has set the scene for possible conflict. Members report sub branches flexing their muscles and others report parent demands being difficult to meet. The challenges for making this work in the balancing of caring for the wellbeing of staff and students, the education of children, and meeting the demands of staff and parents has presented a powder keg for some schools. The wellbeing of Principal Class Employees, which is already strained, will be further stretched.

While this is a set of circumstances that none of us wanted, we must work together to make this work, to beat the spread of the virus. Any conflict will be deeply damaging to important relationships in our schools. If you get into a situation where conflict is arising please use our advice or seek advice from your SEILs. While many of you are long term well experienced PCEs, some are very new to the game and will need the support of Network colleagues. It is the newer and less experienced Principals who were desperately waiting on the guidelines, which did finally arrive after 9pm last night. There were 2 versions. One for the Rural and Regional Schools who were returning to normal T3 and another for Schools about to enter Remote Learning Phase 2. Many, waiting for the materials, did not communicate to parents about this week, which created a very confusing start to Term 3 at some schools as I understand it.

However it is worth remembering, no matter how experienced we are, we are all new to the Covid-19 Remote Learning Phase 2 scenario.



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

**See my  
message to  
you on the  
next page!**

*\* 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

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

Join the APF

<https://apf.net.au>

*Forms can be  
completed on-line.*

## Help from a colleague re supporting kids with complex needs at home.



Hi Julie,

In response to the Victorian Government announcement today to revert to remote learning for the schools in the Melbourne metropolitan and Mitchell Shire, Yarra Me School is re-establishing the Parent Help Desk for parents and carers to assist in supporting children with complex needs who are learning from home.

YarraMe's Help Desk <http://www.yarrame.vic.edu.au/help-desk.html> can

assist with:

- understanding a child's behaviour
- providing personalised one to one telephone consultation with a special education teacher
- discussion of a pathway for the family to seek formal diagnosis of learning disabilities
- discussion about behavioural support strategies
- advice on setting up learning environments
- providing targeted resource
- referral to external services.

The purpose of this service is to provide parents and carers with the opportunity to discuss your child's behaviours, which may be impeding their ability to learn at home.

The Help Desk can also help parents and carers to successfully navigate potential intervention pathways for their child.

I know that principals may be looking for PD for their ES to do at the moment. So I've attached a flyer on the ADHD course we have running – if you'd like to include that in your newsletter too.

There's no cost associated with these services.

**Nancy Sidoti, Principal, YarraMe School**

## Message from Executive Officer, Gemma Naylor



This coming November marks 2 years that I have had the honour of being your Executive Officer with the APF. I have been delighted to get to know you all, and thank members for their tireless work to recruit new members. There is a steady flow of new members.

### A few things to know from me:

I am going to remove **Smart Salary** as a payment method for membership for new members. In the last year they have dropped 15 members off payment without advising the member or us. They are fairly uncooperative on the phone, and working with them is problematic. Any member currently successfully paying remains unaffected. A reminder payment by Smart Salary is from pre-tax dollars, so you are not entitled to claim back the tax as other members are.

Having **your details up-to-date in our database** is important. If you change your address, school, phone number or role, then it is important that you let us know. You can now do that easily yourself via our website:

- Log in using the user name and password,
- go to Join APF dropdown box
- Scroll to the last section, Update your details



### 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**

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

- Make the necessary changes and then press SUBMIT

NOTE: You can pay your membership or join easily from the website, using a credit card. You can also submit your resignation from the APF when that time comes.

You still need to contact me if it is a credit card number or date change, as we do not keep this in the system. Remember I am only available Monday, Thursday and Friday. I am a surgical nurse on Tuesday and Wednesday, so ringing many times is of no use if I cannot answer your call as I am up to my elbows in a knee replacement or the like.

Lastly, **our preference for membership payment is by direct deposit.** Credit card payment costs us over \$10,000 per year in bank fees. You can also cease the payment when you advise us that you are retiring. If you use this method, it is vital your full name is in the details for our statement. When members don't include this, I have to turn into a Detective, and it can take ages to solve the puzzle.

FYI—The bank details for monthly payments are **BSB 083 355 Account 04 807 5220**

### **Sample communication to Families in Metro Primary School**

Dear families,

I hope that you are all well and have been spending some quality time with your family, in what can only be described as a strange holiday break! Yesterday the Premier and Minister for Education have announced that, on the advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer, all Victorian Government Schools will transition back to remote learning arrangements for the first five weeks of Term 3 (July 20<sup>th</sup> onwards).

Further to my message last week, **XXX** Primary School and all other Victorian schools will be holding five Student-Free days from 13th-17th July. This means that the start of Term Three will be moved to Monday 20th July for our students. The staff will be working onsite to prepare for whatever the next stages of Term Three may be. In taking this step we are continuing to follow the guidance of the government and the Chief Health Officer. This is obviously an unprecedented step in response to unprecedented circumstances. I greatly appreciate your support as we navigate our way through these ongoing and challenging times.

We are currently still awaiting further advice from the Department of Education and Training (DET) but for now I can provide you with this information:

All students will be learning from home and undertaking the (**Insert school name**) Remote Learning program from Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July.

Students whose parents cannot work from home are able to attend school and will be **supervised** by either a VIT registered teacher or a staff member with a Working with Children Check.

Students who need to attend school will be undertaking the same Remote Learning as students who are learning from home and will be supervised to do this, with strict social distancing guidelines adhered to. Students who attend school will not be taught a different program from those learning at home.

I ask that you please be patient and understanding. Please be assured that our staff are well prepared for this scenario and will spend the next week looking at our next stages in the remote learning journey and responding to student, staff and parent feedback. Through their amazing commitment during last term, teachers were skilled up in online platforms, practised in classrooms, technology was tested and many issues were resolved. I am so incredibly proud of what **XPS** did in Term 2. A term that was unlike any other that Education has ever seen and one in which the staff and students (and parents) of **XPS** have stood up and performed in a way that



#### **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.

many schools can only dream of. Our community have been so positive and supportive about the remote learning experience and what was provided to the children of XPS.

I will be sending further updates and with more detail on how the Remote Learning program will be delivered, along with more information on how on site supervision can be accessed for those in need. I will continue to communicate via **Compass** and encourage you to join the schools Facebook page ([insert link if you have a Facebook page](#)) where we will continue to circulate other information and try and keep some normality for the children as well.

A reminder that students attending school will undergo a daily temperature check on arrival. If over 37.5 the school will be asking parents to collect the child and keep them at home, seek medical advice and not return to school until the temperature is normal and the child is in full health.

If you have any correspondence that is urgent and important, please contact me via **Compass** or email the school ([insert school email address](#)) 'Attn: Principal' and I will respond.

I thank you for your ongoing kindness, understanding, this will most certainly be a time we reflect on for many years to come. Hopefully recalling these challenges we faced allowed for a great deal of quality family time and the maintenance of the health of our family and friends.

Please stay home, stay safe and take care of yourselves and each other.

Regards,

**Principal**

**Note we will include this and the following as a word document in an attachment for your convenience.**

### **Sample Communication to Staff in Metro Secondary School**

Hi everyone,

I sincerely hope you've had time to rest following our adventures in term 2. Term 3 is shaping up as another interesting term, in the last minute I've had to change this email, the Premier has just announced that we will be moving to remote learning again from Monday July 20, with the exception of VCE/VCAL and Year 10 VCE students.

I am yet to receive the Operational Guidelines, **which should indicate the onsite requirements of staff.....so, at this stage**, the program will be as follows:

1. See you in the morning, make sure you are socially distancing and continuing to follow the hygiene guidelines. Please use and check the briefing notes on the Google docs
2. VCE teachers teach their classes, this includes the year 10 VCE classes
3. Other teachers to use the documented curriculum to plan for junior and middle school classes (and sharing it with the VCE teachers). This preparation will be for remote learning
4. Examine the confidential notes for new classes/students– **XXX** is preparing these for everyone
5. Complete reports from semester 1
6. Complete S and N for semester 1 - criteria will be forwarded to you
7. Complete AusVels levels

A communication was sent to parents and students last week, you were all included in what was sent out.

There is a plan for the week that has a number of tasks listed, please have a look at the list



Staff who are **asymptomatic** but choose to get tested will be able to continue to work while they wait for any test results. ( Advice from testing units is that "testees" should remain absent until the results are available. ) The advice out of parenthesis is DET advice.

**If you are crook with flu-like symptoms. Stay away from school.**

Staff who are **symptomatic** will continue to be considered a suspected case and be required to self-isolate until test results are resolved.

**DET Covid-19 hotline: 1800 338 663**

If the Coronavirus has delivered one lesson, it is the enormous benefit of reflecting and taking stock of life.

below which has been prioritised, and plan your week so that everything is completed by Friday... (Detailed plan for the week pertinent to sample school was attached....Insert your own plan)

### Temperature Checks/masks

The media reports are correct, 9 thermometers have been provided for the temperature of all students to be taken on arrival at school. We are yet to work out how this will occur. Although masks are being recommended for the general public when social distancing isn't possible, they are not required in schools. As always, if you feel more comfortable wearing one, please do....

### Buildings and Grounds

You will notice some work has occurred on site over the break . Insert your own report

### PDP – Pivot reflection

There will be more information to you regarding this, it will basically require your reflections to be uploaded into edupay following a conversation with your reviewer.

Enjoy the rest of the day – please know that we will have a robust plan in place and I will provide more information as I receive it

Happy to answer emails or calls 0123 456 789

Regards, **Principal**



### Remote learning Take 2

We have been gifted an opportunity to re-plan, to re-adjust our priorities, devote more time to what matters most and spend a little less time on what does not matter.

Think differently about how remote learning will be. It cannot be face to face teaching delivered on line. That is too hard on students and staff.

We do not want a return to “burnt-out” principals and staff at the end of this remote period; do not try to do too much and “hasten slowly”

A challenge for us all, *on a personal level*, is coping with the lead-up to what we know will be an unpredictable but very different future when we finally contain COVID-19

We need to be good to each other.

### The Elephant in the Room—Staff on site or not!



The biggest question at present is the one about staff being present on site or not. This week and for the remote learning period.

Our understanding is this: Every school is different, serving a different cohort in a different community, and therefore the answer to this question will be different for each school. The

default position is that all staff should be on site for the term. However common sense and fairness must come into play. As Principal Class you need to balance the educational and wellbeing needs of your students, the demands and wellbeing of staff alongside the expectations of parents around the education and wellbeing of the students. The operational needs of the school in respect to the numbers needing to attend and the education of the children sits alongside all this, with a capacity to socially distance, take temperatures, manage infection control and cleaning, alongside the equitable allocation of on-site duties.

The large numbers of students infected at Al-Taqwa College has caused anxiety for many staff.

Your negotiation skills will come into play as you consult with the Consultation Committee. However as the Principal, it is ultimately your decision.

It will be a delicate balancing act, which will require skill and finesse, often in the face of very heavy handed tactics we are hearing about from some sub-branches and parents.

Mark Arkinstall, John Handley or I are available to assist you with this work. Please ring or email if you need our support.

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