

Australian Principals Federation

President's Message—Julie Podbury



First Time Callers

The last few months have shown us many things. How resilient we must be; How as leaders we set the tone and the attitude for our staff; If we are strong and see this as a means to an end, that is generally the view of the staff. However, if we let it be known that we feel overwhelmed and cannot cope then sadly that will be reflected in many of the staff. We have observed that some of you may feel deeply challenged by the circumstances, but put on a brave face and staff are empowered by what you say and how you lead.

While we have had many, many new members, we are also pleased at the number of long time members, first time callers. Sometimes they have an issue, or want a second opinion, however have rung just to touch base. It has been really lovely to meet (by phone) a considerable number of our members. There really is a sense that we are all in this together....and together we can get to the other side of the challenges we face with COVID-19 blighting our lives and the education of our children.

There are some things happening that are upsetting members, such as the changes to cleaning allocations announced by the Cleaning Contract Companies and not by DET. A number of schools contacted me to express their unhappiness about the changes on one hand and how they found out on the other. One school told me their ire at the management meant that a brilliant cleaner who had attended every day was meticulous and thorough in everything he did. He got a few hours notice that he would not be returning. The school staff were mortified as they felt protected by the manner in which this person worked in their school and yet they did not even get the chance to say thank you or goodbye. In education, relationships are everything. Casualisation of the workforce, such as contract cleaning in metro schools, eliminates relationships and has played a role in placing us in the jeopardy we are in right now.



However, there has been some amazing things as well. **Andrew Cock, APF Vice President and Principal, Blackburn Primary School** shared this.

Just thought I'd share with you some work we have been doing at Blackburn Primary to continue to engage with our community. Every Tuesday we have been releasing a video of one of our Teachers sharing a picture storybook with our community through our school Facebook page. We have collated these into the links in the attached PDF which take you directly to the storybook.

Congratulations to the staff at Blackburn for this incredible piece of work.



In this Issue:

We share advice about the **continued rise in new members**.

We report member concerns re changes to **metro cleaning**.

We revel in the report and link from **Blackburn PS** and the work his staff are doing to connect the entire school community. **WOW!**

We also report member feedback re **arrangements re Unit 3/4 students** on P2

We have begun our preparations for the upcoming EBA negotiations. Our report on the recent member survey re **Principal Workload around Facilities** prepared by **John Handley** begins on P3.

Mark McKelson reports on his monitoring of his **staff workload & wellbeing** at this time on P7

APF Website

<https://apf.net.au>

UNITs 3 and 4

This report is from a VTAC briefing held recently. A number of changes for this year's yr12 students were discussed, including the use of a remote learning impact scale. A Careers Coordinator in one school has produced a webinar recording for students to watch, which will explain everything they need to know about the application process.

Typically there are 4 categories where students can claim special consideration for course entry (SEAS); Personal details and location, financial hardship, disability or medical condition and difficult circumstances. They have largely not changed. The only thing that has changed in this section is that the "difficult circumstances" category will be extended to cover students who have experienced significant disadvantage during remote learning.

In regards to the impact of remote learning there are 3 sub categories; baseline, **common remote learning impacts** and impacts beyond remote learning

Baseline: Includes factors that affect all Year 12 students. As all students experienced these there will be no special consideration given for this category. As the ATAR is a rank these factors are included in its calculation. Students don't need to claim or do anything for this category. Examples of baseline factors include social disconnection, too much screen time, isolation from peers, lack of social engagement, online studies harder to engage with, uncertainty, lack of motivation.

Common remote learning impacts; Includes factors that affect some Year 12 students. Students who wish to claim for this category will need to rate their level of impact on a scale. Y12 teams will need to rate every student in Year 12 on a scale, based on the impacts and factors that we know about. These rankings will be cross checked by VTAC. To ensure that this rating is accurate, schools will need to ensure that they collaborate together (Careers, Year level teams, Welfare, Prin team). This will need to be done before mid-September at the latest. The rating scale (tick the box style) is instead of writing a statement of support for every student in year 12. Examples of common impacts include; no internet access, unreliable internet access, no laptop or tablet, having to share device with sibling, no access to practical materials for learning, no desk at home, home too noisy for study.

Impacts beyond remote learning; These impacts will be experience by a few students. These students will need to write an impact statement about their educational impacts and get a supporting statement written by a responsible person (which could be written by someone at school).

Examples include; mental health challenges, family violence due to lockdown, student has to work extra shifts to support parent's lost job, extra caring responsibilities for siblings, exacerbated family dysfunction. We should not forget the bushfire impacted students.

Most schools will already have a good idea of students who have had internet/computer issues, but over the next month Y12 teams need to get staff to think about students who may have been affected in other ways. They can then record these and make a judgement based on their impacts.

This means every year 12 teacher will make a before and after assessment for every Unit 3/4 student. Basically, a kind of derived examination score. This is a huge amount of work for year 12 teachers.

Another thing, a number of Universities and TAFEs will this year select applicants based on school support statements and not by ATAR. Students might approach you to write a letter of support for them.

Currently the release date is set for Dec 30 and the close date for VTAC will be 4 Jan. However, there is a push for the ATAR release to be set for December 26 and close of VTAC set for December 31.



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

**Many new members!
Thank you for advocating for the APF!**

Remember my APF days are Mon, Thurs & Fri



Gemma Naylor
APF Executive Officer

gnaylor@apf.net.au

Join the APF

<https://apf.net.au>

Forms can be completed on-line.

EBA– Developing our Log of Claims



A team of Councillors and members, lead by David Finnerty, is currently meeting weekly (via WEBEX) developing our Log of Claims. We hope to be in a position to provide you with some information very soon, via our members only section of the APF website. Text Julie or Gemma if you have forgotten your login details.

Part of our claim is around workload, and we recently surveyed our members about the load of managing school infrastructure and all associated elements. Thank you to John Handley and Andrew Cock for their work with this. John’s report on the outcome follows.



APF Member Responses to Facilities Management/Implementation Practices Report

In recent times DET introduced a centrally controlled system for School Cleaning. Our members have shared varied opinions of whether the change has been an asset or hindrance to their schools; whether it has increased or decreased their workload, and improved the quality of cleaning or not. Our most vocal members have certainly been unimpressed with the outcome! And the recent COVID-19 situation hasn’t helped.

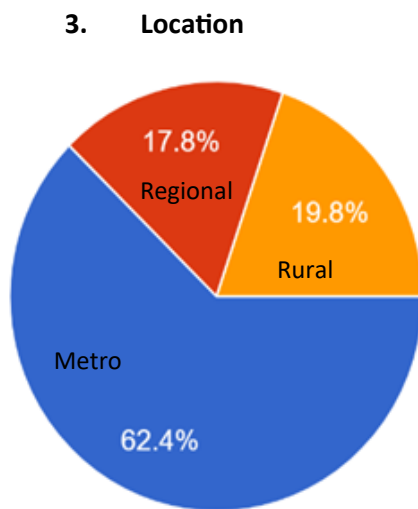
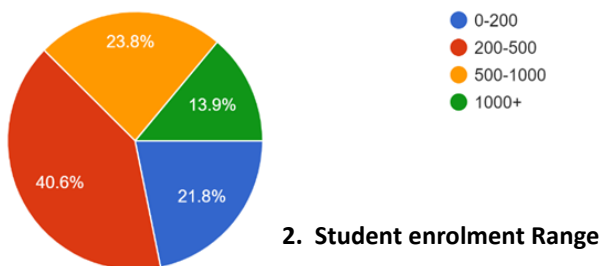
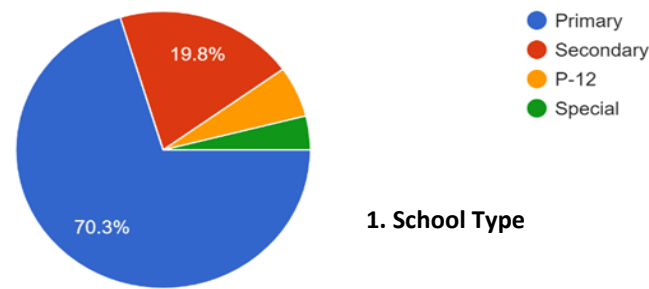
With the many challenges Principals and schools are currently facing with respect to COVID-19, we understand Building & Grounds Maintenance is unlikely to be high on their list of ‘what’s important’.

The reality is that the Minister and DET continue to reflect on the workings of schools, including consideration of Principal workload (or their perceptions of). Currently there is discussion, with input from other unions, as to whether Buildings and Grounds Maintenance responsibility should be returned to a central system. There are a myriad of related responsibilities facing schools including building maintenance, ground works, and compliance areas like asbestos register, OHS, trees, playground equipment, fire safety, emergency management.

The APF has sought our members to share their views with us so as we can genuinely represent members in subsequent discussions with DET on this Buildings and Grounds Maintenance matter.

Suffice to say that there are likely to be benefits and limitations to any change to the status quo, depending on the context of each school.

Analysis of Members Responses



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

Mark - 0418 551 375
industrialofficer@apf.net.au

John—0407 557 862
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 Online 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

4. Do you currently employ personnel for B&G management? 55.4% = No 44.6% =Yes

5. Further analysis -

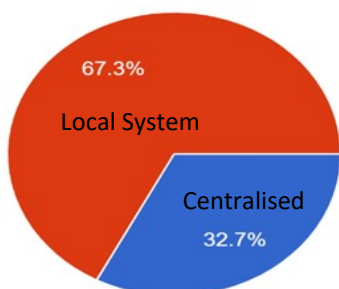
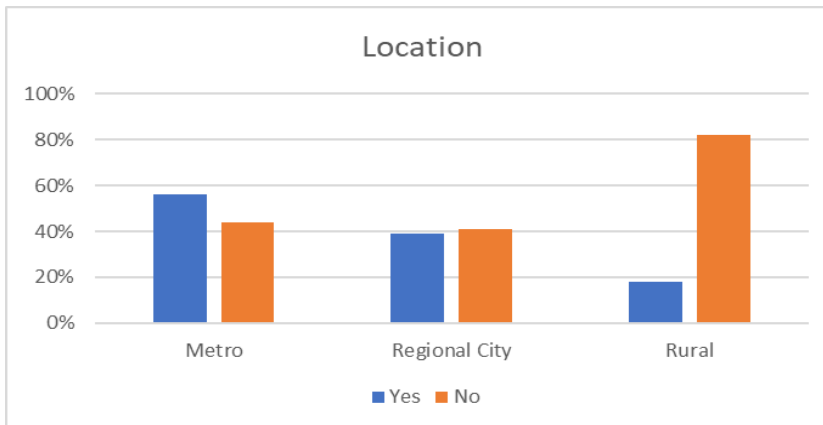
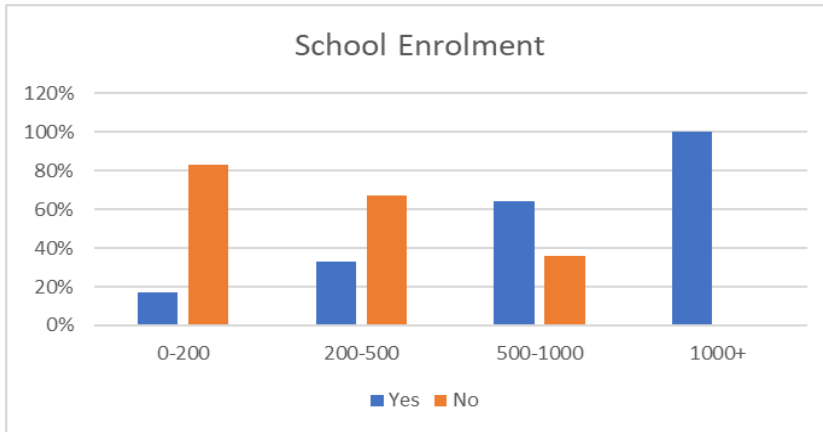
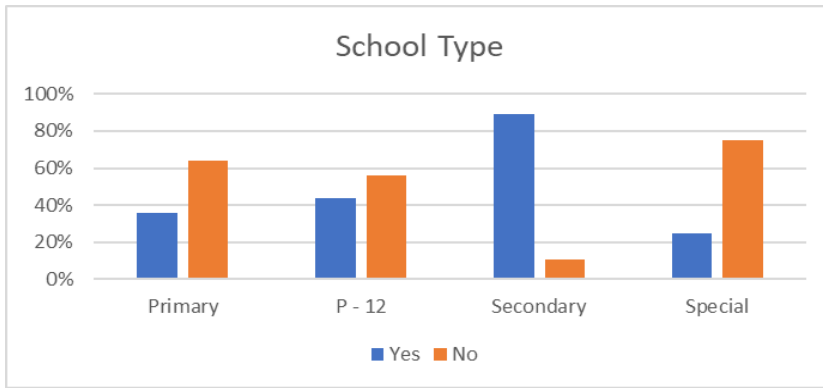
It can be deduced from this data that school type, size and location are relevant to whether or not schools currently choose to employ any buildings and grounds personnel. The common threads are that secondary and P-12 schools are more likely to than primary schools; metropolitan schools are most likely, and as school size increases so does their likelihood of employing such personnel.

The key factor that impacted on Principal's decisions included most commonly financial constraints. However other factors included whether there was ready access to personnel, previous experiences of the Principal, and school culture and expectation with respect to allocation of available funds.

A commonly held view for Principals who did employ such personnel was that it enabled the Principal and others in leadership to focus

on more roles impacting on student outcomes. Overwhelmingly (93%) of those who currently do not employ these personnel would do so with improved funding, and welcomed any prospect of targeted funding.

For issues relating to compliance such as asset management, electrical tagging, and areas such as auditing/monitoring of asbestos, play equipment, chemicals, fire services etc, and OHS management, were commonly considered necessary to have understanding of local context and knowledge of the local environment. Again, the commonly held view is that such responsibilities weigh down on Principals, especially those without the support of other specifically related personnel.



6. A Centralised versus a Local Model of Buildings and Grounds Management and Implementation

A significant proportion of Principals prefer a localised model. Those who supported the Centralised model were typically from small schools, rural schools, with low budgets, and no recent experience of accessing



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.

local personnel. The areas of compliance were again the most stressful areas of responsibility for these schools who would welcome support.

Many detailed comments were provided. **The most typical responses from those in favour of a localised approach included -**

"If something goes wrong you can immediately contact tradespeople etc to fix the problem and being at school it can respond very quickly. I have experienced a centralised system and getting the problem fixed takes a lot longer"

"Every school is unique and anything that becomes centralised still has a component of work for the schools."

"I would prefer funding in the SRP to employ a qualified and competent facilities manager to oversee all aspects. I have local knowledge of my school's requirements, just not the time to fulfill them. It would be an outstanding investment for the school and would provide value in numerous ways - well maintained grounds and facilities, contractor and project management, adherence to all legislated requirements, free educational leaders to concentrate on educational leadership."

"I'm responsible for OHS issues (at the moment). If central office take it over, I'm sure I'll have to be involved in the process anyway, and will have less capability to direct the works and manage the OHS risk."

"Able to employ to meet local context and work within local community."

"Local self-management of these B&G issues is central to our school pride in presentation."

"In consultation with School Council, and based on the belief that the school has a significant role within the school community, we have always sought to contract/source suppliers locally, where possible. My concern with a more centralised system would be that it would lead to a more VSBA-like controlled system; a worse option than currently exists! Experience with the VSBA has been less than impressive...consider school cleaning...VSBA PMSB 'standards' are less than adequate in relation to some basic requirements at the school level. Communication is dreadful. Value for money, according to conversations with colleagues, is questionable...and there appears to be planned exclusion of experienced Regional facilities personnel by the VSBA in relation to school-level maintenance/building plans/work...I'd rather rely on the advice of Regional facilities personnel (although they seem to be less available). From my perspective, it's better the devil I already know than the devil I don't!"

For those who prefer a centralised approach, responses included -

"It's not sustainable in the current model so if it goes to the Central office and there was support then that would be beneficial, otherwise it needs to stay within the school with support."

"In a small town, it is almost impossible to find the required people for maintenance. It takes a lot of time making phone calls, arranging times, completing inductions, etc. Many trades do not want to do a small job. Many do not have WWCC. I am also not qualified in this area."

"Ease the burden - there is so much compliance required in this space that to have more of it taken on centrally by DET would be useful"

"It would be good to have that burden removed from Principals and would allow all schools to be maintained appropriately. At the moment it comes down to the budget available and for some schools it simply isn't a priority. The state of schools is a reflection on the system and there is a huge disparity in the condition of schools across the state."

General advice includes -

"One size definitely does not fit all. It would be financially appropriate to have this catered for in our SRP"



A 'mentally
healthy'
workplace

...

"Is a place where people can work smart, contribute their best effort, be recognised for their work, and go home at the end of the day with energy left over."

Guarding
Minds@Work,
Canada

as a wage component. A centralised system would decrease the flexibility related to these components of a school's operations."

"I think there needs to be a centralized framework and support system with operational delivery at a local level. The local knowledge at each school ensures that delivery is done effectively. However, the local level delivery requires resourcing at a school level so this may make it difficult for smaller schools."

"The centralised cleaning system has been abysmal due to continual changes of management and staff. I met another new coordinator two weeks ago and the onsite cleaners during COVID continue to change putting those onsite at risk. The level of cleaning has deteriorated significantly including overflowing bins in staff areas during the Xmas period and holiday periods. There is less accountability and greater excuses within this centralised system. there is a culture of blaming, when things deteriorate."

"A centralised system would take some of the operational guidelines and overall management workload away from schools particularly in relation to compliance, documentation etc. - positive. Concern though that local perspectives or individual site circumstances wouldn't be considered enough though and there might end up being more work for the people on the ground, in each school, to meet the central expectations and deadlines."

However, perhaps the most salient comment is -

"Each school's context is different. Our experience with the centralised cleaning system has demonstrated that contextual knowledge is important and that using a set of calculations does not make for an efficient system that truly meets schools' needs, and it most certainly did not ease principals' workload. A local system gives flexibility as it can be easily amended at the school level. Amendments centrally will in all likelihood involve lots of red tape and justification of the need for amendment, and be slower to implement as a result. A local system enables a relationship to develop i.e. a locally employed staff member is more likely to own and care for the school through the relationships s/he builds with staff, students and parents. A local system is more cost effective in the long run as schools do not need to pay for 'additional services' to get what they had before."

7. So where to from here?

It is clear that Principals believe funding for accessing support for Buildings and Grounds Maintenance and compliance is essential. A previous comment with respect to "one size not fitting all" is highly relevant when proposing any system changes.

Larger schools with access to suitable personnel would prefer to continue with their current local arrangements, with personnel employed as Educational Support staff on the central payroll.

For smaller schools the funding for school based part-time personnel or Network based personnel that is shared across a group of small schools would be most welcome.

Relevant recommendations from members include –

"Each school with its own Facilities Manager with the T/F linked to school size/building complexity as a defined line item in the Targeted initiatives of the SRP. Smaller primaries can share the Manager. This way it can be trialled, made accountable and the Minister will get considerable credit for his enlightened initiative. Then schools wouldn't have to reduce the number of teachers to find the salary as we do now and hence student outcomes would go up and maintenance dollars would go further as it is more efficient."

"Again, I believe context is important. It may be that clusters of smaller schools may employ someone to manage B&GM for their respective sites providing a person with full-time work, or networks could do something similar. There is something to be said for not duplicating the same tasks e.g. compliance documentation in each site if it can be done once for several schools which a cluster/network person



Article for your parent newsletter.

WHAT IS YOUR CHILD EXPERIENCING DURING COVID-19?

- Seeing global pandemic and worrying.
- Feeling a big change in schedule and normal life.
- Hearing parents, trusted adults and leaders expressing alarm or worry.

HOW DOES THIS IMPACT ON YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR AND HEALTH?

- Increasing worry and stress.
- Acting out or holding feelings inside.
- Expressing fear in the form of anger or arguments.
- Causing sleeping problems.
- Changing eating habits, which can lead to stomach aches and headaches.
- Provoking tears easily in some children.

WHAT DOES YOUR CHILD NEED?

- To feel safe.
- To belong.
- To have a feeling of control.

Continues in the column on Page 7

Principal's Digest,
August 2020

could do.”

Regardless the overwhelming view is for all schools to have access to appropriate personnel (*equity*), with a significant degree of localised decision-making and ready access to such personnel (*flexibility*).



101 Things you need to know about being a principal, Mark McKelson



Blog 22- Workload and Wellbeing in a Pandemic.

My AP and I had a discussion last Friday, worried the staff were feeling tired and flat after a few big weeks. Mind you we had just completed a week of online Fountas and Pinnell assessments followed by parent teacher interviews. That combined with online teaching, managing families at home, supporting colleagues and a nightly curfew there are no shortage of worries to create stress at the minute. From our point of view how do we manage and support that?

The challenge I'm working through this week is do I keep pushing or do I back off a little? We have focussed on collecting some valuable data the past few weeks. I'm looking forward to going through it as I think there are going to be some good news stories to help boost morale. There is a danger in focussing purely on morale and not creating some level of pressure and stress. I really want my staff focussed on student progress in reading and maths and what they are doing to measure and track this. Considering we can't leave the house and set goals in other areas of life I think creating an element of this in teacher work is vital at this point.

That being said, there are some high risk groups you need to be monitoring. You will all have staff who live alone or have small children and working from home could be extremely difficult for them. I think you need to use Principal's discretion here when allocating permits to work. Then there are the elements of anxiety, depression, alcohol abuse and family violence. This is where regular meetings play a vital role in communication and networking in your community. We have weekly SIT, PLC and staff meetings. They all start with a conversation around how everyone is going and what's working well and areas for improvement. You can tell reasonably quickly how people are coping. Sometimes it's tempting to cancel a few meetings to give staff a break but maybe this isn't the time for that. The connections are more important than ever.

Teachers are inherently people people. I never realised how true this was for me until the people were taken away. This term we have organised a social catch up for staff each week. We have had a trivia night, an online yoga class and this week we are having a cooking class with a chef. These are small things, but you need to notice how many staff attend and are maintaining connections. If staff aren't engaging who normally would, you might need to give them a call. Look for clues, you are experts at that.



APF Member, Mark McKelson, has been a member of the principal class at a number of schools across Victoria. He is currently Principal at Camberwell South PS. He is writing these "blogs" based on his experiences, in support of new or acting principal members of the APF, and has endless topics that he will write about which will appear in issues of the Vic Branch, APF Newsletter. From time to time Mark will write opinion pieces for all members. The opinions expressed are his own and do not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the APF.

Cont. from column on P6

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

**Manage moods.
Maintain a consistent routine.
Connect.
Grow.**

- Focus on staying calm.
- Help your child cope in a healthy way - play games, be active, draw, listen to calming music.
- Give your child control by giving choices – clothes, foods, chores.
- Set a regular bedtime and turn off devices one hour before.
- Create a daily schedule with your child.
- Spend time together as a family.
- Help your child chat virtually with friends and family.
- Do something new and different.
- Create a warm, loving environment - use calm voices and share kind words.

Acknowledgement: Steve O'Brien, Psy.D., Anxiety in Children During the Covid-19 Crisis: Targeted Strategies to Create Calm and Build Resilience

Principal's Digest,
August, 2020