

Australian Principals Federation



Acting President's Message—Tina King

It appears that Term 2 has commenced well after a much needed break and respite period. The predicament we faced last year and subsequent challenges showed us how we can put aside unnecessary demands and truly focus on what is important. The system adjusted to ensure our schools and leaders were shielded from unnecessary burdens whilst attending to the key role of leading communities and providing support and optimism. There are lessons and learnings to be gained from this, and we must not forget that whilst we are returning to life as we may know it, we are still facing a global pandemic and the volatility of the situation may have instant adverse impact.

It is most concerning that members are expressing alarm and concern at the rate of forever increasing workloads and demands. Departmental requirements, parent, student and staff issues appear to be presenting at an ever growing rate each requiring immediate attention and subsequent action from our school leaders.

Our leaders are burdened enough and immediate proactive measures need to be taken to address issues pertaining to workload as a result of increasing job assignment. In the recently released **2020 Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey**, one of the key recommendations was *“for employers to reduce job demands or increase job resources to allow school leaders to cope with the increased demands. Better still, do both...”* I ask members to ponder this for a moment and reflect on what this means for you. Additionally, I invite email communication from you outlining your thought and insights in relation to:

- What are the key pressures and challenges currently faced?
- What proactive measures can be undertaken and implemented to reduce workload?

Thank you to members who have already reached out and made contact. An agenda is currently being set for metro and regional visits and I look forward to meeting with you face to face over the course of the next few months. The APFs role is to advocate on your behalf, therefore keeping us abreast of the issues confronting you will ensure purposeful and targeted advocacy and support.

EBA Negotiations

The bargaining team continues to campaign strongly on behalf of the Principal Class in an attempt to reach a new agreement. At the centre of our discussions are matters relating to workload, salary and conditions. As an industrial organisation that is representative of only Principals and Assistant Principals, the APF is not conflicted in its capacity to represent members. Only the APF has capacity to focus solely on Principal Class pay and conditions.

The current agreement expires on 30 April, however current conditions will stay in place until a new agreement is reached. The role of the Principal is unique for, as the employers representative, school leaders are tasked with roles and responsibilities that set them apart from teachers and ES staff. For this reason alone, there needs to be a separate Principal Agreement which acknowledges the distinction between Principals and other school employees.

Disruption, resilience and new possibilities – The Age Schools Summit



Earlier this week, I had opportunity to attend and speak at The Age School Summit. The forum provided opportunity for discussion and debate relating to contentious issues currently faced by educators. Furthermore, discourse relating to the future of education in Victoria and wider Australia was facilitated.

Ministerial addresses were provided by our Acting Premier and Minister for Education Mr James



In this Issue:

Tina reminds all members of the need to manage their workload the best they can to keep the pressure away from boiling point. She seeks your input.

A report on the EBA negotiations is on P1.

A report on the recent School Summit held by The Age also begins on P1.

On P2 we commence the second in the series of three article by Frank Handy, Chair of the Independent Office for School Dispute Resolution

On P5 Dr Ian Sloane passes on a report on a survey about how people feel about their income. It makes interesting reading.

APF Website

<https://apf.net.au>

The Union exclusively for the Principal Class

Merlino in addition to his federal counterpart Minister Alan Tudge, Federal Minister for Education and Youth.



At the local level, Minister Merlino re-iterated the state government's investment and commitment to ensuring excellence and addressing equity. He highlighted responses made and initiatives announced as a result of the COVID impact, and brought attention back to the Education State Agenda.

From a national platform, Minister Tudge re-affirmed his commitment to reach the top of the PISA charts by 2030. The transformational reforms undertaken by the United

Kingdom over the last 10 years appear to be the impetus for the attainment of the Federal Minister's aspirational targets. Central to achieving the announced targets, Minister Tudge has announced a focus on three key reform areas – curriculum review and overhaul, teacher quality (in particular initial teacher education) and attention on indigenous students, particularly those in remote communities.



The APF is seeking opportunity for greater input and engagement in relation to these reforms. With the support from the Victorian and WA branches, APF Federal President Chris Chant has written to Minister Tudge requesting a meeting to discuss opportunity for engagement and future discourse.

One of the panel discussions at the summit, of which I was a speaker, focussed on progressing the profession – skilling teachers, wellbeing and enabling leadership. Preventing burnout and improving wellbeing through reduced workloads were key features of the panel's deliberations.

John Hanley – Industrial Advisor



After 5 years of service in supporting members and working with the executive team, John has advised that he is withdrawing from his service to the APF and stepping back in order to provide opportunity for others to contribute. John has provided wonderful advocacy and support and has been a true champion for APF members. Those who have worked closely with John speak highly of his work and commitment. We are grateful and appreciative of John's representation of the Principal Class with such strong activism and dedication and wish him the very best for his future endeavours.

Vale: Geoff Vezey

It is with great sadness that we learnt of the tragic loss suffered by our esteemed colleague and member Johanna Walker. On Monday 19 April, Johanna's husband, Geoff Vezey passed away unexpectedly following a medical incident. Geoff was a committed educator and the highly admired Assistant Principal of Blackburn High School. His dedication to his family and work as an educator and school leader was exceptional. On behalf of the APF, we extend our deepest sympathy to Johanna, her children, colleagues, friends and family.

T. King



The Independent Office for School Dispute Resolution—A Case Study, Frank Handy, Chair

The following article was the second in a series of three written by Frank for the APF newsletter and was first published in 2018. The first article was reproduced in the last newsletter No 193. The articles are amended only to make them current. Editor

This is the second of three articles about the Independent Office's work. In this one, I



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***If you have
changed school
or home
address, please
let me know so
I can keep our
records up to
date.***



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Join the APF

<https://apf.net.au>

*Forms can be
completed on-line.*

wanted to talk about a particular example, to show how the Office might help you come up with different solutions than might be typical in disputes.

A 13 year old male Student was suspended for four days after a fight in which he knocked out another student. The other student received a two day suspension. The Student who received the greater penalty told his parent that he had been harassed and goaded, and eventually trapped in a situation in which a fight was inevitable. Therefore, he said, after being punched, he had punched the other student, knocking him out. He said he was surprised by the result.

Investigation by the Principal indicated, however, that the opposite had happened: the Student who threw the knockout punch over several weeks had been goading and taunting the other student, who, finally, while he was surrounded by a number of friends of the instigator, all encouraging the fight to take place, responded by punching the instigator. This account was confirmed by interviews with a number of other students, including the instigator's friends, and CCTV footage of previous incidents of taunting and scuffling. No other Students supported the instigator's story of being a victim in any way.

Of course, this story is easy to recount afterwards. At the time the discipline was imposed, a preliminary review had been completed, but the Principal was also dealing with the reaction of parents whose son had been knocked out and taken away by ambulance, the outraged reaction of the instigator's parent based on the alternative story, the Student community's gossip, and all the "normal" emergencies in a Principal's day.



The matter became a complaint because the Parent did not think the punishment was fair. She took the view that her son was being suspended for knocking out the other Student, but the other student should have received at least the same penalty because he had started the fight. She said her son could just have easily have been knocked out. There were some technical deficiencies with the administration of the suspension that resulted in the Parent being more angry and suspicious. The suspension was already over when the complaint was being managed, and in the result one of the days was a Student free day, and one was in school, so the actual suspension was served as two days away from school.

The Principal, directly and through the Assistant Principal (who seemed to have a better relationship with the Parent) made attempts to explain the situation and keep the lines of communication open, but the Parent escalated the complaint. She had a number of additional concerns, and in addition to the initial complaint about penalty, raised the suspension process, the culture at the school, lack of action and delay in handling the matter as issues. The complaint eventually came to our office with this set of live issues.

We started on the telephone, contacting the Parent and hearing her concerns. We then had a telephone conversation with the Principal, who explained more of the background. The suspension had already been served, and he had apologised for the administrative problems with the suspension notice. He did not see that more could or should be done in light of the circumstances, and was concerned that the Parent had not accepted that the investigation result showed that the penalty was appropriate or perhaps even light, and that a differential penalty was clearly warranted. One thing that became clear was that, despite the school's efforts, the Parent had not absorbed or accepted the information about the role of her son in the incident. This was obviously a sticking point in reaching a resolution.

Over the course of a couple more telephone conversations, we all came to the conclusion that a meeting would be useful as a way to air concerns and try to get the complaint resolved. The danger, of course, was that the meeting would simply go over old ground and be a fight over what happened and what was the proper penalty, therefore leading to further acrimony and an impasse.

In our role, however, we try to focus on the present and future, so in my preparatory conversations I asked a number of questions, at first holding the information in confidence with each party, about what was going on for the Student. What was his history, why did this happen, how was he going after the suspension,



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.

what were his Parent's and the school's concerns about what might happen in the future? Out of their responses I was able to develop this picture.

The Student had been acting out recently, rebelling and spending time with older young men, not ones who were doing anything inappropriate, but who were modelling older actions and responses to situations, so that the Student was talking about how boring school was, and how his peers were not worth spending time with and activities were not worth pursuing. He found his peers' skill levels in sport weak, and their interests juvenile. The other student was a year younger and precocious, and socially engaged with the instigator's peer group, especially girls, a situation the instigator found offensive. Since the suspension, the instigator had become overtly rude to or dismissive of staff, and less engaged in school. His Parent had obtained some counselling for him to understand and try to modify his responses and behaviour, counselling which he was not prepared to discuss and had asked not be discussed in the school setting. He did not have strong adult male modelling at home, and had lost or moved away from school based relationships that had previously been built with peers and male teachers through sport or school activities. The Parent was very concerned about his future and social development, did not want his fighting to become a pattern of behaviour, and wanted him to complete his education and stay connected. She had serious concerns about the school's capacity to accomplish these goals. The Principal had concerns about the behaviour, but also about the Student's disengagement, and did not want to see his relationships deteriorating.

I also spent some time preparing the Principal and Parent for the conversation, talking about its structure, goals, and ways to present to each other that could be heard. We met at the school and, although the conversation was difficult at times, went through the concerns about the present and future, resulting in an agreement. The Principal arranged for "soft mentoring" by an adult male role model, a teacher the Student liked and respected. This was not a formal explicit arrangement, but just a way to keep the Student engaged and have a point of contact and feedback. This teacher also managed certain activities that the student enjoyed; the Parent and Principal also agreed to try to find leadership roles for the student in these activities to increase his engagement and participation. Also, there were certain roles and activities that the student had not applied for that the Parent thought he was interested in, so the school agreed to encourage and support his participation in them in the next school year. Next, the Parent indicated that the Student was convinced that he now had a reputation because of this incident, so the Principal first confirmed that this was not true, but also committed to making sure this was clear to the Student through engaging with him and having his class teacher engage with him about this concern. Next, the Parent committed to keeping the school advised of any issues that could be disclosed as a result of the counselling in order to ensure that there was consistent support and management of them at school and at home. Finally, the Principal and Parent agreed to a communication protocol in case of any future incidents to avoid the confusion and problems that had occurred previously.

I followed up with the Parent and Principal to ensure the commitments had been met and to check on progress. The Principal noted that the student was better engaged, less surly and had regained some interest in his school community. There had been no repeat of the negative behaviour. The Parent advised that counselling was continuing, and some progress had been made, although there were still some difficulties. While the relationship between Principal and Parent was not fully restored, there was a mutual recognition of the shared interest in the student's future and engagement and enough of a reduction in negative assumptions that they could work together for the Student's benefit.

The most telling point was that as this conversation continued, the original complaint—about the length and unfairness of the suspension—disappeared as an issue, without a trace. This is really the goal of our work: to reduce negative impacts for students, to re-engage them in the school community, to build relationships among parents and school staff with the student at the centre, and to resolve the real underlying issue—in this case, how can we ensure that a young man struggling to grow up can do so in a way that will guide him into self-regulated positive behaviour, rather than into a pattern of socially negative behaviour and the resulting consequences?



Support for members

We are here to support and offer advice to all members at any time. If you are concerned about a colleague, please let us know.

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Ring us direct

"I have to become better at forgiving myself. As a perfectionist, the unknown nature of the school year scares me, but I have to find ways to allow myself to feel okay about not being the one in control. I am going to make a concerted effort to keep things in perspective...as long as I am doing my best, my best will have to be good enough."

Wendy Price in "Self-Care as a Priority" in *Communi-qué*, December 2020

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

In the next article, I'd like to look at how we are working, after complaints are over, on individual and systemic levels of capacity change, trying to reduce the incidence and severity of them for Principals and the Department as a whole.

Note: the following link is current. <http://www.schoolresolution.vic.gov.au/>



Survey reveals highest earners think they need more money to be 'comfortable'

Dr Ian Sloane, former member of the Council, now retired from DET, continues to be concerned about the fact that many members of the Principal Class are not adequately prepared for retirement financially. He continues in his quest to find articles he thinks might make you think. Editor.

Despite the average Aussie wage being around \$68,000 per year – those who make more than double that still don't think they're rich.

Kara Byers, News.com.au APRIL 12, 2021 5:09PM

The majority of us would consider a \$200,000-a-year salary more than enough to live a comfortable – if not downright luxurious – life.

But that's not the case for many high earning Australians who don't consider themselves to be particularly wealthy, despite earning a lot more than the average person.

According to the most recent figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the average weekly earnings for Australian adults who work full time is \$1711.60 – a figure that equates to \$68,923 per year.

Nonetheless, those who earn double that say they still don't feel well off.

The results from news.com.au latest Cost of Living survey, which asks readers about their biggest household money worries, are in and news.com.au has now kicked off *The Money Project* to help get your finances in shape for 2021.

The survey uncovered how we feel about wealth and money.

The number of respondents earning salaries of more than \$100,000 has declined across the board. Female respondents with salaries of more than \$100k dropped from 17 per cent in 2019 to 8 per cent in 2021 and the amount of male respondents with salaries above \$100,000 also dropped, from 37 per cent in 2019 to 23 per cent in 2021.

As part of the survey, respondents were asked if they felt they were on "Struggle Street", "Barely Coping", "Doing OK" or on "Easy Street" based on how they believed they were faring financially.

It revealed 22 per cent of respondents who identified themselves as living on "Easy Street" had a salary of between \$100,001 and \$150,000 while 10 per cent were on \$150,001 to \$200,000 and 7 per cent were earning more than \$200,000.

Those on "Easy Street" are 70 per cent more likely to be debt free now – but 57 per cent of people in that category believe they will need more than \$1 million to retire.

A surprising 53 per cent of people earning between \$150,000 and \$200,000 reported feeling "frustrated" by Australia's rising cost of living while 10 per cent were "angry" about the situation, compared with 36 per cent of respondents with incomes above \$200,000 who said they were "frustrated" by rising costs and 7 per cent who were "angry".

And even higher income earners indicated they need more money to be "well off", with 12 per cent of those earning more than \$200,000 a year believing they need more than \$20,000 extra per week to feel that way.

Interestingly, the lower the salary, the less the respondent felt they needed in order to be well off, with 39 per cent of those earning under \$45,000 per annum claiming they would need just \$2000 more each week to be well-off.

So why is there such a huge different between people's actual income and their perception of wealth?

Clinical psychologist and owner of The Couch Therapy Group, Donna Cameron, believes stress can rob people of feeling like they have enough.

"There is so much pressure at each end of the bell curve for everything we do and our earnings are no exception," she says.

"In general, the higher the wage, the more stress and responsibility to maintain this wage. (cont in column)

People earning over \$200,000 a year are not home by 5pm each night for that family dinner and the stress that tends to come with these high positions often means that they don't have time to 'stop and smell the roses'.

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It's a sentiment echoed by Dale Gilham, Chief Analyst at Wealth Within, who believes it's also important to distinguish the difference between wealth and what a person earns.

"Wealth is the difference between what you own and what you owe, the bigger the difference between the two, the wealthier you are and the wealthier you will feel," he asserts.

"Historically, statistics show that what we earn has very little to do with how much wealth we might have or can generate over our lifetime. In fact, someone on a lower income is often in a much better position to create wealth in their life."

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The full article can be found here.

[How much money do you need to feel rich? \(news.com.au\)](https://www.news.com.au/how-much-money-do-you-need-to-feel-rich/news.com.au)

The Union exclusively for the Principal Class