

Australian Principals Federation



Acting President's Report—Tina King

Whilst school leaders managed an adequate break from the every day pressures and demands of the job, the school term has commenced with ongoing COVID challenges, providing continued uncertainty and insecurity.

The state government's delayed announcement regarding the snap lockdown last Thursday left many parents wondering and concerned as to care provisions and arrangements for their children. Additionally, as the school bell rang last Thursday, school staff were left wondering as to the platform requirements for lesson delivery – face to face or digital?

Media leaks throughout the day placed additional pressures on principals with many parents contacting schools insistent on the dissemination of information and seeking confirmation of the lockdown. Information that principals simply did not have and did not receive until the Premier's press conference later that evening. Commentary from parents such as 'get your act together,' 'you need to be telling us before school finishes,' followed, with principals fielding anger and angst by members of the community.

As one principal wrote....

My teachers (most who are at school by 8am) are now EXPECTED to somehow plan with their team throughout the evening, ensuring they are ready to teach remotely at 9am tomorrow morning.

As a principal I am now picking up the pieces of broken, tired, exhausted, angry, confused teachers....

I have already had slanderous comments made to me from 2 members of my community due to my communication to my parents about school closures.

Another, experienced principal shared...

There needs to be some acknowledgement of Principal workload through these times. We have led and carried schools, communities and the department through all of this. I know personally I was messaging staff who were sending me nervous messages on Wednesday night between 8-10pm (whilst I was supposed to be enjoying my Father in-laws 80th), I was sending two close colleagues messages at 10-11pm as news was breaking. I was at school at 7am Thursday morning to send out my message to my community and staff to ensure that they were aware of the changes before arrival at school this morning to try and avoid any issues. Every teacher already walking through the front door wants to know what's happening, what I think, what will we do and "Oh no, I don't want remote learning again". I know of a secondary Prin who sent a message to her community at 11.15 Wednesday night. I did not leave school until 6.45pm on Thursday night, a 12 hour day without any extra work at home, almost missing the opportunity to spend time with my family and say goodnight to my young children.

*The sad reality being that whilst all of this is occurring, others would be completely oblivious, whilst tucked up in bed. I will continue to do what I have done for the past two years lead my school in the best way for my staff, students and community **but** with limited support and at what personal cost?*

We know and have seen firsthand the exceptional work our leaders do, particularly in times of need and crisis. The manner in which our schools and respective communities have been lead throughout the COVID crisis demonstrates outstanding leadership and high commitment. Too

APF Annual General Meeting – Save the date

Planning is well underway for the upcoming 2021 AGM scheduled to take place on **Thursday 21 October at Riversdale Golf Club**. More information to follow, however we invite members to save the date.



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APF Website

<https://apf.net.au>

often however, it is at a personal cost and reliant upon the good will and dedication of our school leaders.

Whilst the COVID situation will undoubtedly continue to present with volatility and at times explosiveness, we ask the government and respective decision makers, to be attentive to the level of impact and provide information relating to pending lockdowns in a timely and opportune manner. A simple announcement last Thursday, as soon as leaked media announcements circulated, stating the obvious...*yes there is a pending lockdown with details to be announced later*...would have provided adequate warning and opportunity for schools to prepare accordingly and appease the angst and stress felt by many.

Pleasingly, it seems the government has given this due and appropriate consideration as this week we have been provided with adequate notification of the extension to the current lockdown. Whilst this is not the news we wanted to hear, it does provide opportunity for schools to prepare for the week ahead and possibly beyond.

We are aware that there will be individuals who are facing immense challenges and feeling despondent with the situation and circumstances presented. Please reach out for support if needed as these are indeed challenging and difficult times and no one should be suffering alone and in silence.



COVID lockdown reality for school leaders and teachers – a member shared a photo whilst working from home and supervising his two children during remote learning.

T. King



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I would appreciate your advice to us of any change of address, phone number, school or credit card details.



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Join the APF

<https://apf.net.au>

Forms can be completed on-line.

VALE Mark Moir, Julie Podbury, past President 2015-2021



Many members of the APF attended the funeral for our colleague Mark Moir, Principal, Lyndale Secondary College, last Wednesday. Mark, 62, died in his sleep on Sunday 27th June.

Mark was a school leader who work incredibly hard for his school community. His greatest goal was to give his students and staff a school of the standard they deserved. He was very proud of what they had achieved in the rebuild of the school.

He regarded honesty and loyalty as the most important traits in his leadership team. While things had gone awry due to Mark’s illness and the challenges from a small group of staff, Mark believed that Pam, Brian and he made a great team at Lyndale SC and together they had made substantial progress in improving student outcomes.

When I assumed the role of President in 2015, I asked Mark to join the APF Council to support myself and the members, which he readily did. Later, when I needed him to step up to the Executive and step into the role of Treasurer, he did not need to be asked twice. He wore his heart on his sleeve and led by example influencing many of his friends and colleagues in education, who will miss him sorely.

EBA Negotiations Report

The APF bargaining team continues to meet regularly with the DET representatives and negotiate on key items pertinent to school leaders; specifically workload, remuneration and conditions.

At the core of these negotiations is our determination to ensure that the workload of principals is reasonable and places the principal firmly as the educational leader of the school environment. In order to achieve an appropriate work life balance, some aspects of the role that are of a technical nature (for example aspects of the management of facilities and school infrastructure) should be removed from the role and placed under the responsibilities of a person appointed in each school to undertake such responsibilities.

Attraction to the role of principal continues to diminish, with several staff in the Department passing commentary on how challenging it is to fill leadership roles and expressing alarm at the reduced number of applicants for positions (even as an Expression of Interest). I am aware of one high performing school where the Assistant Principal role was advertised twice, with no subsequent appointments. The principal role in this particular school was also advertised last term, but to no avail. This is most concerning as it is a trend seen across our system. It is imperative that a working environment is created that maintains an appropriate and manageable level of workload.

Additionally, the system must suitably reward skilled and dedicated school leaders. The previous remuneration arrangements through the TRP (Total Remuneration Package) provided incentives and benefits that have simply eroded over time such as salary packaging. Such benefits are now available to other staff (teaching and non-teaching) and there must be clear differentials and rewards which delineate principal class employees from others in the teaching service.

Similarly to principals, Assistant Principals carry a huge workload in the education, operation and developmental work of every school. Importantly, they represent the pipeline for available school principals. With this in mind, it is vital that Assistant Principals are paid at a level that acknowledges the leadership load they carry and one that has more responsibility and assignment than that of Leading Teachers and Learning Specialists.

The APF bargaining team is campaigning hard on these matters in addition to others as submitted in our log of claims. Whilst agreement has not been reached as yet, respective positioning has been determined and we are negotiating and bargaining from our respective stances.

Superannuation Guarantee Update

As published in the last edition of our newsletter, increases to the superannuation guarantee contribution from the current rate of 9:5% to 10% as from 1 July 2021, has resulted in reduction in net pay (take home pay) for some members. This particularly applies to Principal Class Employees (PCEs) who have a Total Remuneration Package (TRP), which is inclusive of salary and super as a total package.

The Department is aware of this issue and PCEs who have been impacted have been notified via email from People Services Division. Further advice in relation to this matter will be communicated from DET as soon as possible. In the meantime, if you have any queries please contact Schools HR on 1800 641 943 or the APF for advice and support.

School Policy Templates Portal

The portal has been a welcomed initiative in reducing workload and supporting school leaders in developing and implementing key policies. From time to time the portal needs to be updated and the team at DET has provided communication advising of the updates as per the email notification on the following page.



Role of the APF

Industrial Relations 101

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

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

Industrial Relations 102

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



“As mentioned in the [School Update](#) at the end of Term 2, over the past weeks we have undertaken a thorough review of the template policies on the [School Policy Templates Portal](#) as it has now been 3 years since we initially launched the Portal. Key points to note:

- We have reviewed all the templates to ensure they continue to meet legal and Department policy requirements, and to respond to feedback from schools and other stakeholders. As a result we have made a number of updates to the templates, outlined in the table below. These changes are also listed in the [Updates](#) page of the School Policy Templates Portal.
- **You do not need to update your own local school policies immediately** as a result of these changes but we recommend that you use the updated templates when your policies are next reviewed.
- Remember to use the [School Policy Templates Portal](#) for local school policy templates and to use [PAL](#) for all Department policies that schools need to comply with.”

If you would like to be notified when these updates occur, go to the School Policy Templates Portal and in the feedback box located at the bottom of the right menu bar type 'send email alert'

**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

“Not surprisingly, schools and school systems that do well under external accountability systems are those that have consensus on norms of instructional practice, strong internal assessments of student learning, and sturdy processes for monitoring instructional practice and for providing feedback to students, teachers, and administrators about the quality of their work. Internal coherence around instructional practice is a prerequisite for strong performance, whatever the requirements of the external accountability system.”

Richard Elmore

From Hippocampus, an email publication of Principal's Digest

Managing Complaints Against Principal Class Officers –



Mark Arkinstall, APF Industrial Officer

One of the most challenging experiences for any principal or assistant principal is to be confronted with a complaint or a series of allegations that questions not only their competence as a school leader, but also their personal integrity and character. For people who have devoted their working lives to their school communities, while working tirelessly for our system of education, it is a crushing experience to be challenged in this way. On occasions, the first a principal hears of the allegations is in the form of a letter from their regional office with the allegations attached. The complaint may well be quite vexatious and completely without any basis, yet the principal is left feeling absolutely flattened by the allegations and the attack on their integrity. While the department has an obligation to treat all complaints seriously and investigate these properly, the fact remains that many principals report feeling absolutely abandoned by their employer when this process begins.

On other occasions the process may begin with a phone call summoning the principal to a meeting with a senior regional officer at which the allegations are presented. The pressure on the principal is enormous and it's no surprise that most people in this situation feel totally overwhelmed and in need of immediate support. Importantly, the APF is able to provide expert **advice, support, advocacy and intervention** in relation to complaints made against Principal Class Employees, from senior DET personnel, staff, parents and other members of the public. The sooner we are contacted the better! (Note you have the right to have a [support person/representative](#) present at meetings with your manager in these matters.) It is also important to note that anyone can find themselves the subject of an attack by a vexatious parent or staff member, regardless of how highly skilled, dedicated or experienced you are.

While the APF strongly believes that a culture that promotes high standards of conduct and encourages performance improvement in school education is critical, we also believe that our principal class officers deserve at the very least the presumption of innocence and a level of support that reflects the duty of care the department has for its employees. We frequently see vexatious complainants who will do anything and everything within their power to discredit the principal and/or the assistant principal. Some demonstrate a relentless obsession with destroying the career of the school leaders involved and rarely conduct themselves with even the slightest bit of decency or integrity. The process in working through this is both time consuming and emotionally draining, however our members have the APF to support and guide them with a high level of experience and expertise. Please don't hesitate to contact us should you find yourself in this space, we're here to help!

Please note the following:

- The Department has a comprehensive policy and guidelines that are followed in these matters. Please see: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/complaints-misconduct-and-unsatisfactory-performance/overview>. Importantly, the complaints processes are not intended to regulate the day-to-day management of ordinary workplace issues and challenges. Rather, they are to be used for dealing with complaints against employees or conduct which has come to the attention of the principal/manager which ought to be dealt with as a complaint.

Complaints against a principal or an employee may arise from:

- ◇ unprofessional conduct and/or [unsatisfactory performance](#)
- ◇ allegations of aggressive, demeaning or uncooperative behaviour
- ◇ a particular incident
- ◇ allegations of unlawful discrimination (for example, discrimination on the ground of a protected attribute such as race, religious belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender, family responsibilities) or racial or religious vilification



Evaluating CVs

Rank how well applicants meet the must-have and preferred criteria.

This is an area where subjectivity and favouritism can be a problem, so it's a good idea to create a matrix and objectively score relevant experience and qualifications.

Use the CV to get insights on the candidate's priorities.

Jobs held, teaching positions, and volunteer work are highly informative.

Gauge candidates' learning curve and career momentum.

In addition to employment history, are there degrees, awards or other recognition that tell a story of progress, goals and aspirations?

Look for synergies with your school.

The goal is to connect the dots between the person – whom you may have yet to meet and don't know anything about – and the ambitions you have for this position. Look for keywords, phrases, areas and concepts that resonate.

Continued in the column on P6

The Union exclusively for the Principal Class



- ◇ allegations of unlawful harassment, including sexual harassment
 - ◇ allegations of bullying, as defined by the Victorian WorkCover Authority
 - ◇ 'reportable conduct' allegations, which are allegations of inappropriate
 - ◇ conduct towards a child, including a sexual offence, sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child, behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm to a child, or significant neglect of a child
 - ◇ decisions made, or not made, by the principal/manager that a complainant believes are unfair, unreasonable or inappropriate.
- The Employee Conduct Branch provides expert advice and assistance on the management of complaints, misconduct and unsatisfactory performance.
 - When an issue arises in the form of a complaint or allegations against a principal, the first step is for the manager / Regional Director or nominee to make an assessment as to the appropriate course of action to take. How this is done will vary considerably depending on the nature and extent of the complaint or allegations. In some instances, the SEIL or Area Executive Director will investigate and make this assessment. In more serious situations, an external person, sometimes a workplace relations consultant/lawyer will undertake an initial assessment of the situation. What happens next is dependent on the outcome of this initial assessment.
 - Possible outcomes at this stage include:
 - ◇ No further action necessary.
 - ◇ Complaints procedures are followed. (Formal or informal actions are taken.)
 - ◇ Misconduct procedures are followed. (Inquiry under Division 10, Part 2.4, Misconduct)
 - ◇ Unsatisfactory performance procedures are followed.
 - In the management of [complaints](#), [misconduct](#) and unsatisfactory performance matters, the principles of natural justice must be observed as necessary. The Guidelines incorporate these principles and also include the following:
 - ◇ the right of an employee to know the allegation(s) being made against him or her
 - ◇ the right of each party to be heard with respect to the allegations
 - ◇ the right of each party to be treated fairly
 - ◇ the right of the employee to have a [support person](#) present during meetings
 - ◇ the right of each party to a decision-maker who acts fairly and in good faith.

Although the principles of natural justice will be provided for, those who have faced an investigation report the experience to be both harrowing and distressing. All report significant added stress by the time taken to see these matters through to an end.

So, if confronted with a complaint or allegations from the Department:

DO:

1. Immediately contact the APF for advice and support. We'll immediately write to your Regional Director and inform them that we are acting on your behalf.
2. Take a deep breath. Allegations are just that and are absolutely not a statement of fact.
3. Keep all documentation relating to the complainant readily available.
4. Observe confidentiality. Widespread debate about a complaints situation helps no-one. (Note that you are entitled to seek personal and professional support and advice from the APF and this obviously involves full disclosure of the allegations, etc.)
5. Continue to behave in a professional manner to all, despite the hurt you may well be feeling.

For example, has the candidate shown interest in the type of student population served by your school?

Look for examples of nimble thought and practice.

In the wake of the pandemic, all organisations see the importance of flexibility and resilience.

Obviously, we want to hire people who have demonstrated their agility in challenging circumstances.

Specifically, what does the CV say about how the candidate handled the shift to virtual instruction?

Read the CV to generate follow-up questions.

You are gauging candidates' knowledge, skills and training, but you're also seeking an intellectual capacity and a set of ideas that will both help and challenge you.

Keep the CV in perspective.

Learn from the document but don't be hypnotised by it. The point is to make fairness, humanity, decency, efficiency and integrity the meta-goals of the hiring process.

Acknowledgement: "How to Read a Job Candidate's CV" by David Perlmutter in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 16, 2021

Principal's Digest, June 2021

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- 6. Send a copy of all relevant documentation through to us. You will get an opportunity to respond to allegations and we will assist you with this.



DON'T:

- 1. Panic.
- 2. Respond to anything at all and certainly not in writing until we have worked with you on the response.
- 3. Approach witnesses or the complainant to discuss the details of the complaint or investigation.



Schools Plus grant applications open 12 July, 2021

Schools seeking funding for strategic projects that improve student outcomes can now apply for a Smart Giving grant through Schools Plus.

Funding from \$20,000 to \$60,000 will be available for schools across Australia. For more information on the types of grants available, visit the Schools Plus [website](#).

Both individual schools and clusters of 4-10 schools can apply to receive funding for projects that run for 12 – 18 months. Until Friday 20 August, schools can submit a simple application to receive funding for their strategic project.

Schools Plus is a national not for profit organisation that helps close the education gap. Schools Plus empowers teachers in disadvantaged communities to implement strategic school projects that will help their students succeed. Since 2015, Schools Plus has funded over 1000 school projects around Australia, benefiting more than 300,000 students and 15,000 teachers.

Schools eligible for support through Schools Plus must have a value below 1000 on the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA).

For more information and to apply, visit www.schoolsplus.org.au/for-schools/smart-giving/

“As the world races to combat a pandemic, slow climate change, and solve many other public health challenges, it’s clear that developing young people’s scientific knowledge should be an urgent priority in schools.”

DISTRACTED BY DISTRACTIONS

The seduction of distraction is it makes you feel important while diluting usefulness at the same time.

Being super-busy with a long to-do list is not conducive to getting big-picture results. The answer to managing your day is you. And here are the four steps to follow:

- 1. **Stop** doing other people’s work.
- 2. **Focus** on high-value, high-return activities, eschewing busywork.
- 3. **Identify** no more than three essential items that you must complete before day’s end.
- 4. **Carve out** chunks of unstructured time to chill out. This really matters to long-range productivity.

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

“With New Science Standards, Coaching Is Key” by Justin Andersson, Daniel Sitzman, Amy Arneson, and Elizabeth Gandhi in *The Learning Professional*, February 2021

Principal’s Digest, June 2021

“Distraction: Defeating the Beast That Contaminates Leadership and Dilutes Effectiveness” by Dan Rockwell in *Leadership Freak*, September 23, 2020

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