

Australian Principals Federation

Acting President's Report—Tina King



The recent transition to onsite learning has been received with excitement but has brought with it some challenges as we continue to be in a state of disruption and unpredictability. After almost two years of COVID challenges, there is no doubt that we are entering a renaissance - a period of recovery, reawakening and revitalisation. It will fall upon our school leaders to lead communities out of the challenges faced and re-focus on core business and mental healing and wellbeing. With this new evolving phase will come the need for the emergence of the renaissance leader – a leader who will help heal, unify, inspire, support and challenge others.

The current landscape and circumstances are forcing us to change and adapt and the **Education State Principals' Conference** presented online yesterday, focused on how school leaders can continue to lead, empower and thrive into the future. Congratulations are extended to the ESPC planning and events teams for providing such an outstanding and considered agenda and program.

The announcement by Dr David Howes, Deputy Secretary, Schools and Regional Services relating to refinements to FISO in shifting the focus to Learning and Wellbeing, is a welcomed priority and acknowledgment of the need to declutter and re-align the reform agenda. The identified 5 core elements will provide opportunity for refinement and precision in the areas of direct impact and we are looking forward to engaging in future discourse around this.

As always, Professor John Hattie provided insight and acumen into learnings from COVID experiences and how these may be applied moving forward. Whilst the experiences of last year may not have been what we had wished for, Professor Hattie presented evidence that remote and flexible schooling did not necessarily transpire to a lack of learning. Whilst the trajectory for learning may not have been as great, the importance of social and emotional learning was certainly highlighted.

Finally, the presentation by Kristen Douglas from Headspace, provided practical strategies and supports for individual health and wellbeing in addition to approaches for leading teams and communities through challenging and difficult times.

We compliment the planning team and facilitators for providing such an engaging and supportive program for our school leaders.

T. King

VALE Janine Blachford



We mourn the passing of our colleague, Janine Blachford, who passed away recently after a long battle with cancer. Janine will be remembered for her for her hard work as a leaders and her bright and positive attitude as well as the ferocious manner in which she confronted this insidious disease.

Janine was Principal at Creekside K-9 College and after retirement she completed an amazing world tour with Rob. She also assisted the APF with our Support Panels, a program which was eventually subsumed by Bastow.

We extend our most sincere sympathies to Janine's husband Rob and their wider family.



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Quiz: What is on
the 21st October
and is this date in
your diary? See
page 6 for the
answer.

APF Website
<https://apf.net.au>

COVID Vaccination for staff

The APF has advocated strongly for school staff to be prioritised for COVID vaccinations. The current outbreak in Queensland, is demonstrative of how the delta strain infects the young and how quickly an outbreak can spread amongst children and respective communities. This is causing increasing alarm and concern for many parents, educators and communities.

The recent DET School Operations Guide, provides clarity and revised eligibility criteria for school staff.

Staff vaccinations

“Currently, Victorian school and early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector employees who are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine at a state-run vaccination centre include:

- people who are 40 years and older
- employees who now meet Phase 1b eligibility criteria, including:
- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) registered nurses and allied health workers in clinical and non-clinical roles in schools and ECEC services
- all teaching, support, and administration employees in specialist schools directly working with students (within 1.5 metres of students for more than 15 minutes)
- any teaching and support employees in schools and ECEC staff working directly with students (within 1.5 metres of students and children for more than 15 minutes) living with a specified underlying medical condition or significant disability requiring frequent assistance with activities of daily living.

A significant disability in the context of vaccination of ‘carers’ in government schools and ECEC services would include:

- staff directly working with students receiving either National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) supports).
 - other targeted inclusion supports (for example the Kindergarten Inclusion Support Program (KIS) or Commonwealth Inclusion Support Program (ISP))
- staff working with a group of children where one child in the group was living with a specified medical condition or significant disability.

Employees listed above are being prioritised for vaccination because they work with vulnerable children and students living with medical conditions and significant disability who need to be protected from COVID-19 infection.

Schools are requested to exercise flexibility to enable staff to access vaccination appointments.”

DET Operations Guide (from and including Wednesday 28 July) Page 4

Member Feedback—Workload

In the last APF newsletter, feedback was shared from two principals relating to the challenges faced whilst leading throughout the pandemic and with reference to excessive workloads.

For the purpose of balanced commentary, opinion and points of view, we are publishing a member’s response that is in contrast to previously expressed perspectives:

I see the ‘extra’ work that I have to do during this time....including fielding late night enquiries and sending emails...as my contribution to our communities fight against the virus. Everyone should be expecting to either pitch in or make sacrifices during these times. School principals are no



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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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Forms can be completed on-line.

different. Embrace the extra effort and pat yourselves on the back.

Currently I have full staffing flexibility to reduce my workload. If I don't want to do a job, I hire someone or delegate. Principals need 'permission' to do this. This permission can come from the APF. We actually already have permission but Principals need reminding. Some school leaders don't realise that whilst we have responsibility for everything, we don't have to do everything. An ES-1 person for 6 hours a week is about 7k. Every school with approximately 150 enrolments and above can afford this. Principals need to budget for this and hire someone and delegate. Under 150 children can afford 3 hours...if principals want to. The bottom line is that principals need to budget for this support FIRST and the rest of the school budget is worked out after this.

Acting President's Comment

Whilst the writer is correct and principals do have flexibility to engage others to undertake certain administrative tasks, what we know about leading schools is that the work is complex and demanding. Of greater concern is that current workloads are not sustainable without interventions and supports. With the correct supports and considerations, the system can alleviate the management and administrative responsibilities which prevent principals from devoting key time to instruction and the development of teachers and students.

A whole system response is required to support principals in lessening management tasks and provide opportunity to refocus on the key areas of educational leadership.

However not all support and intervention needs to be dispensed from the system. Sometimes, principals need encouragement, support and guidance on how to delegate non instructional tasks. This may be achieved by reviewing the school's organisational design and functional model, thus providing opportunity for delegation of responsibilities. The building of leadership capacity and functionality of teams within schools should be a priority, however time poor leaders do not give this due diligence despite good intentions. Furthermore, leaders of small schools simply do not have this as an option.

There are leaders who are known for their wisdom in outsourcing management tasks. For example, it is common practice in some schools to outsource or employ an ES staff member to undertake OHS responsibilities. This is dependent upon financial dispensation however, in some schools, this can be met with opposition from staff as it is a held belief that any extra funding should go towards reducing class sizes and programs for students.

What we do know about the road ahead is that the demand and insistence for student growth and the attainment of school goals will increase significantly. Principals are already heavily burdened with an array of roles and responsibilities with many at breaking point.

To support our principals and encourage the next group of future leaders to promote and aspire to the role, the system has opportunity to consider and act by:

- Reducing job demands and increasing job resources.
- Engaging in trust rather than instructing leaders.
- Providing opportunity for professional support – networks need to be determined locally and contextually.
- Continuing to provide health and wellbeing supports and initiatives.

In turn principals can:

- Review work practices and take ownership for a work-life balance. (Refer to article Obsessive Passion for the job as published in The Educator 16 March 2021) [The Educator](#)
- Delegate roles and responsibilities where



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.

practical and possible – this does not mean letting go but merely engaging, empowering and supporting others to perform the tasks.

- Use individual and collective voice and respectfully rebuff as necessary when demands become excessive and overwhelming.



Managing Complaints Against School Staff – Mark Arkinstall, Industrial Officer



As the reader no doubt fully understands, being a principal or assistant principal is a tough job. We know that school leaders are normally incredibly well prepared for the teaching and learning component of their job. After all, your rise to the principal class was invariably built on a foundation of excellence in teaching and learning built up over many years aided by experience, support and professional learning. Of course, the role of the principal class extends well beyond that of teaching and learning. You are also the workplace manager representing the department and it is in this space that many of our members are learning on the job, without the benefit of that same level of experience, support or professional learning.

The DET Schedule B sets out your core accountabilities as a workplace manager and there's so much more to the role than just leading teaching and learning. Core accountabilities for the principal class are to:

- Ensure the delivery of a comprehensive, high quality education program to all students.
- Be executive officer of the school council.
- Implement decisions of the school council.
- Establish and manage financial systems in accordance with the Department and school council requirements.
- Represent the Department in the school and the local community.
- Contribute to system-wide activities, including policy and strategic planning and development.
- Effectively manage and integrate the resources available to the school.
- Appropriately involve staff, students and the community in the development, implementation and review of school policies, programs and operations.
- Report to the Department, school community, parents and students on the achievements of the school and of individual students as appropriate.
- Comply with regulatory and legislative requirements and Department policies and procedures.



Without doubt, one of the more challenging situations a principal faces is to manage complaints against local school staff. We do this with little preparation in terms of experience or professional learning. We want to support our staff, have often developed very positive, trusting and mutually respectful relationships with them and work collaboratively with them on a daily basis. We eat our lunch together, share a cuppa at recess time and often become very familiar with each other's

personal lives. Sometimes the positive working relationship grows into a personal friendship. Managing a complaint against these same people as the workplace manager is not easy.

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

Nelson Mandela on leadership

**The mark of
great leaders is
the ability to
understand the
context in which
they are
operating and
act accordingly.**

**A leader who
relies on
authority to
solve problems
is bound to come
to grief.**

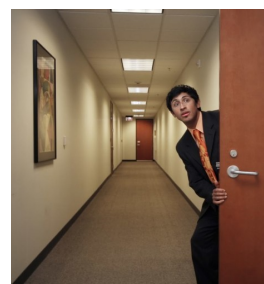
In my years as a principal, I encountered several situations that warranted action in the management of complaints or of unacceptable actions. In most cases, I felt very loyal to the staff involved, yet also understood my role as the principal required action. Some examples I experienced included:

- Underperformance.
- Unacceptable aggression/hostility from one staff member towards another.
- A teacher leaving the school for an early weekend flight without seeking permission or notifying anyone other than the colleagues who covered for him, wrongly believing permission had been given.

In managing these matters it is crucial the department guidelines are followed. Importantly, every employee is entitled to be treated in a fair and reasonable way where the principles of natural justice are applied.

Some tips you might consider include:

- If you're not sure, ask for assistance before taking any action at all. We are here to support you as needed.
- Have a staff Code of Conduct that all staff have read and understood. This often forms the basis for a respectful conversation when things go wrong. I had a relatively simple Code which was distributed to every staff member on the first day of each school year. At that time, I always spoke to the Code, highlighting the need for a collaborative and caring team that worked together in the best interests of our children. Every staff member was fully aware of our expectations. The VIT Staff Code of Conduct is excellent and comprehensive but is of limited value unless teachers have read and understood it. See: https://www.vit.vic.edu.au/sites/default/files/media/pdf/2021-07/Document_VIT_Code_of_Conduct.pdf It is our role as the principal/workplace manager to ensure staff are familiar with this.
- The DET and Public Service values are outstanding and should be on display for all to see in the staffroom.
- Assume nothing. Just because someone tells you something, it doesn't mean it is correct.
- Be scrupulously fair in managing these matters and don't jump to conclusions.
- Where possible, an informal and respectful conversation with a focus on problem solving is the preferred first step. In an informal action, the aim is to resolve an issue and build capacity.
- The Conflict Resolution Support Service is available for Department employees and managers who need support in addressing workplace conflict. The service provided is excellent and well worth exploring. Phone: 1300 687 633
Email: consulting@convergeintl.com.au
- Ongoing performance issues should be documented as part of the performance and development process. This is particularly important if improvement does not occur and further action is needed.
- If you believe an informal action will not be enough, follow the process outlined in the Department's policy and guidelines. The Department's Guidelines for Managing Complaints, Misconduct and Unsatisfactory Performance document is comprehensive and provides an exact process to follow. Please see: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/complaints-misconduct-and-unsatisfactory-performance/overview> . Ensure that each and every step of the process is followed.



MANAGING BY WALKING AROUND

We all applaud the idea of leaders spending time out and about, observing and interacting with colleagues face to face. But if this style of management is to be productive, it must be handled with emotional intelligence.

Suggestions:

- Show up enough that people aren't shocked to see you.
- Show up to connect with people, supporting more than challenging.
- Keep visits short; several mini-observations are better than a long visit.
- Give more than you take; listen more than you talk.
- Smile. You might not feel intimidating, but you probably are.
- Demonstrate humble respect; you're nothing without the people you lead.
- Ask, "What's working?" and "What do you think?" Listen for people's ideas and solutions.

"5 Reasons People Wish Lousy Leaders Would Stay Away" by Dan Rockwell in *Leadership Freak*, July 16, 2021

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

The Union exclusively for the Principal Class

Sticking to the process is essential and assures fairness to all.

- If unsure of how to proceed or if you have any doubts, contact the Employee Conduct Branch who will provide expert advice and assistance. PH: 7022 0005. You can also feel free to contact us for confidential guidance. On some matters, the Employee Conduct Branch must be contacted.
- Do be aware that holding some staff to account for conduct or performance issues is often seen by them as being akin to a declaration of war. It can be a time when emotions run high and mutual trust seems to disappear. Again, meticulously following process and being scrupulously fair will help minimise issues. Do understand though, it is an unfortunate fact of leadership that some staff will never get over being held accountable for their actions.

So, if confronted with a situation involving a complaint or allegations about a staff member in your school that is beyond the every-day challenges schools face:

DO:

- ◆ Feel free to contact the APF for advice and support.
- ◆ Recognise that unprofessional or unlawful behaviour is unacceptable and must be acted on.
- ◆ Take the time to calmly consider the correct approach to take or get further advice.
- ◆ Give staff the benefit of the doubt until you have evidence that proves otherwise.
- ◆ Observe confidentiality. These things are private matters, and we maintain confidentiality at all times.
- ◆ Keep all documentation relating to the matter, even if you take an informal approach to resolving an issue.
- ◆ Follow and implement Department policy exactly as it is written.
- ◆ Contact the Employee Conduct Branch for advice as required.
- ◆ Ensure that whatever action you do take (informal or formal), is transparent and capable of review (Merit Protection Board). If you follow the Department's processes and have the relevant documentation, you will rarely have a problem.

DON'T:

- ◆ Ignore unprofessional or poor behaviour that is unacceptable.
- ◆ Don't attempt to manage a difficult situation without checking Department policy or gaining assistance.
- ◆ Assume anything until you've gathered evidence and listened to both sides.
- ◆ Discuss the matter with uninvolved staff.
- ◆ Get drawn into the emotional side of dealing with these matters. You can't control how others feel and react, but you can control how you let their emotions affect you.



WHY STUDENTS TURNED OFF THEIR CAMERAS

At the beginning of the pandemic, there were concerns that students might be anxious during on-camera classes if they were embarrassed about their homes.

A survey of students who turned off their cameras found:

41% said they were concerned about messy hair, pyjamas, being unshowered.

17% were extremely self-conscious about having other eyes on them.

Students of colour were 12% more likely to cite a weak Internet connection.

10% didn't turn on their cameras because that's what everyone was doing.

"The Camera-On/Camera-Off Dilemma" by Youki Terada in Edutopia, February 5, 2021

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"[A] ten-day increase in teacher absenteeism is associated with the loss of about six to ten days of learning in English language arts and about fifteen to twenty-five days of learning in maths. In other words, kids learn almost nothing – and possibly less than nothing – when their teacher of record isn't there."

David Griffith in "Public Schools' Billion-Hour Teacher Absenteeism Problem" in *The Education Gadfly*, September 20, 2017

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

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.

The Union exclusively for the Principal Class