

Australian Principals Federation



President's Report— Tina King

President's Message

A very warm welcome back to the 2022 school year to all our members and colleagues. We hope the holiday period provided opportunity for some down time and time away from work. The year may not have started as smoothly as we would have liked and hoped, but as always, we continue to be in awe of the incredible work our leaders and schools continue to demonstrate and commit themselves to for the betterment of their school community and wider network.

Similarly, Department staff have been working hard preparing for the new challenges faced and working towards providing the required resources, supports and guidance. We have been impressed and most appreciative of the manner in which the DET has responded to feedback as a result of the challenges faced over the last two years, and in particular the return to onsite learning in Term 4 last year. This was without doubt the most demanding and challenging time for a vast majority of schools and leaders as the work load and demands became simply unsustainable. In response, Department staff have listened earnestly to all of the issues and matters raised and consulted with key stakeholders and groups over the holiday period, including the APF, to ensure the school year started with the required supports, resources and necessary adjustments.

Information via the Operations Guide has been communicated in a timely manner with the operational policy of the DET not only disseminated early but adjusted and adapted accordingly. We congratulate the Department on the timeliness of its delivery and commend the changes to support schools and leaders. The guidelines provide a clear framework and it is important that members stay up to date with information and seek advice and support where necessary. If in doubt, don't assume but ask for clarity and always err on the side of caution.

I read with interest a few days ago a wonderful article in The Educator on how principals can build a culture of resilience in their school. What particularly resonated for me were key statements from Peta Sigley, (Chief Knowledge Officer, Springfox):

'A resilient principal means a resilient school....

The power of resilience in leadership is that it acknowledges things aren't always smooth sailing and prepares you to bounce back from situations with focus, decisiveness and purpose, rather than sending you into a permanent state of distress...'

The Educator: How Principals Can Build a Culture of Resilience in their school by Brett Henebery (28 Jan 2022)

A copy of the full article may be accessed by following this link [The Educator Building Resilience](#). Given the complexities associated with the ongoing pandemic challenges and the return to school, there will be evolving and unforeseen issues and difficulties. At the same time, there will be wonderful achievements and moments of great accomplishments. It truly is an honour and privilege to serve as a leader in a school at the best of times, but in particular in times of need and challenge.

As you navigate the work and challenges of the year ahead, we encourage you to continue focussing on the positives and taking care of your personal health and wellbeing as well as that of others.

We are available to assist you through the provision of advice, support and where necessary, referring matters to the Department, so please do not hesitate to reach out.

Very best wishes for the year ahead.

T. King



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

APF PD – Thriving and Surviving in Challenging times

Covid keeps playing havoc with our rescheduled professional development, which was due to take place at our AGM last year. Whilst we had moved this to a date later this month, due to density limits at the venue, we will need to reschedule once again. The event is best held as an in-person attendance and we will look at alternatives for later in the year...surely covid will have eased by then but maybe this is wishful and optimistic thinking?

This year’s AGM is scheduled for **Thursday 27th October 2022**. We are providing early notification and ask you to mark this date in your diary as we would love to see many of you in attendance.



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EBA Update

The APF negotiations team has been engaged in discussions with the Department’s bargaining representatives over the holiday period. As you would be aware, considerable effort has been put into the work to date with significant progress. Last year, the APF team conducted several webinars for members, providing details on various content items and in keeping with the principles of good faith bargaining.

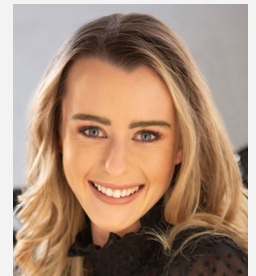
We anticipate that announcements relating to the new agreement are imminent.

Any changes to schools, addresses and credit card details, should be notified to me ASAP, so I can keep my database up to date.

Supporting past principals through the Victorian Aspiring Principal Assessment (VAPA)

New [government policy](#) states that as of 1 January 2022, in order to be eligible for appointment as a principal, a person must either already be a principal or have met the Victorian Aspiring Principal Assessment (VAPA) requirement and be provided with a Statement of Readiness.

A new streamlined assessment process allows past principals to have their experience recognised as part of the Victorian Aspiring Principal Assessment (VAPA). ***This means past principals will not need to undertake the full VAPA process, with the streamlined assessment allowing for recognition of prior experience and expertise.***



Gemma Needs
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This assessment includes the provision of a career map, a 360-degree assessment and evidence of having held a previous principal position.

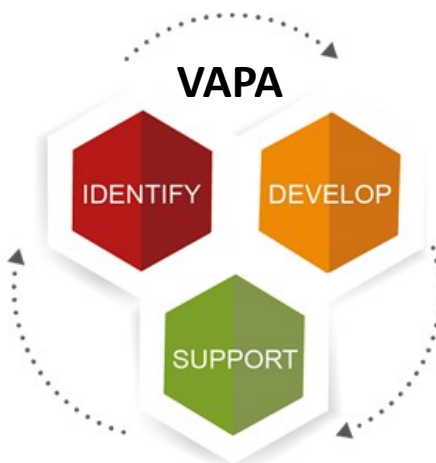
Once the assessment is completed, VAPA candidates will receive constructive, evidence-based feedback in relation to their readiness for appointment to a principal role.

These changes were developed in consultation with representative bodies and principal associations and support the system’s demand for high-quality, capable principals.

Join the APF

<https://apf.net.au>

Forms can be completed on-line.



The Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership will be holding regular [information sessions](#) on the VAPA and the assessment process for past principals. For further information, please refer to the [Victorian Aspiring Principal Assessment](#) page of the Academy website.

The APF, in conjunction with other key associations (VPA and VASSP) have worked diligently with the DET and Bastow over a number of months to develop the changes to the current VAPA policy for past principals and we are most pleased with this favourable and considered outcome.

Air Purifiers delivery concerns, Tina King

As I stated earlier, at times of challenge it is important to remain positive and display resilience however I would be amiss to not share an operational matter that frustrated and aggrieved many principals at the end of last term and throughout the holiday period relating to the delivery of air purifiers.

Air purifiers in schools is one of the key covid management strategies designed to decontaminate the air and help prevent the spread of infections. We commend the government and the DET on the provision of this equipment however the timing of the deliveries by the VSBA was inappropriate and ill considered.

Indeed, we had many members contact us expressing dismay that the VSBA was seeking, if not demanding, school access during the early holiday break for the delivery of the air purifiers. This was extremely concerning, particularly for those schools who did not have staff (eg facilities managers and/or maintenance staff) therefore could not adhere to the request other than opening up themselves or allocation of this responsibility onto another staff member. In such circumstances, it was incumbent upon the principal to grant access especially at a time when leaders and staff needed time away from school to rest and recharge. Several principals stated that the delivery request was not a plea but a demand.

One member from the primary sector in Regional Victoria wrote:

Firstly, I'd like to comment on DET's ongoing mantra to principals about making sure we look after our wellbeing and requesting we take a well-earned break after two very stressful and challenging years. Sadly, once again this has been neglected, with principals being harassed into attending their school onsite during the holidays, or requesting a member of staff attend onsite to accept a delivery of air purifiers. Suddenly, an OHS measure where education support staff are not to be onsite without a qualified teacher or principal became ok. I pity small schools where the principal doesn't have the large pool of staff. But this is beside the point..... I have been a principal for a long time, therefore I've been fortunate to view this position under two vastly different leadership styles. Never have I felt my role so undervalued and undermined, as I have over the last 5 or 6 years. The vast levels of accountability required to be completed, the ongoing demands to prove I'm doing my job has left me and I know others feeling the lack of trust....

Another inner school secondary principal shared their experience awaiting delivery of the items: *Having received a call from the company charged with dispatching the air purifiers for schools on Friday January 14, I was informed that they would be delivered to my school on Monday Jan 17 sometime between 8am and 3pm. Although this was very short notice, I reorganised my schedule to clear the day so that I could be on site to receive them. After waiting until 2.30pm I decided to call the company and confirm an approximate delivery time. I was informed that there had "been an error" and that my delivery was actually scheduled for the following day!!!! Urrgggg!! I was, however, offered the opportunity to wait for another 1.5 hours should I want them delivered immediately...OMG! Here we go...Principal Health and Wellbeing at its best!*



Late last year, I wrote to the VSBA seeking retraction of the request for access during the holiday period and that consideration be given for deliveries to commence at a later date in January. Surely, for such a non-expendable commodity such as air purifiers, delivery could be arranged for when schools (and principals) return in late January? A response from the VSBA was forthcoming indicating



Support for members

We are here to support and offer advice to all members at any time.

However, from time to time you may be concerned about a colleague. Please do not hesitate in making contact with us so we can offer them appropriate support.

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acknowledgement that principals and staff had been under a lot of pressure throughout the pandemic and in need of a well-deserved break and time away from school. Despite this acknowledgement it was stated that deliveries would commence from 4th January. Across the state, there were some regional staff and several SEILs who stepped in offering to receive delivery on behalf of schools (principals), particularly in regional Victoria. We give a big shout out to these individuals who valued and demonstrated respectful consideration to the time leaders needed away from their school and the job.

We also give a big shout out to leaders and school staff, who took time out of their holidays to ensure receipt of the air purifiers -another fine example of how staff and leaders go above and beyond sacrificing themselves for the good of their school. Admirable indeed, but not how it should be and expected.

Footnote: One principal has expressed concern about the workload that will come from the required maintenance of the filters. Given that the instructions suggest they will need to be washed and dried once a fortnight, if operated 24hrs a day, rendering the units ineffective until the filters are reinstalled. The provision of additional filters for exchange will resolve the issue to some extent. Otherwise the only time to do this work will be on weekends, and that needs to be avoided given the load principals are already carrying.

Dandenong North PS School Documentary – Screening on SBS

We congratulate staff, students and parents at Dandenong North PS on the recent screening of their documentary [TALK FOR LIFE English as an Additional Language](#), which was recently shown on SBS. This award-winning documentary shares the experiences and language difficulties newly arrived refugees in Australia face and the proactive and innovative measures the school has taken to ensure language acquisition and communication. It also highlights the extra lengths and measures schools go to in adapting and meeting the needs of their students and local community. Congratulations are extended to APF members and Principal Kevin McKay and Assistant Principals Jenni McKay and Paul Hilton on their commitment, creative approaches and support of their students. The video is available for viewing at [SBS OnDemand](#)

“When you can’t speak the language you are like a bird in a cage. You have wings, but you can’t fly.”

(Ahdia Rasoule, Ex-student Dandenong North PS)

VIT Hearing Panel Pool – expressions of interest

The process is underway to appoint further members to the **VIT Hearing Panel Pool** as the current 17 members’ terms expire on 27 May 2022.

The Minister for Education is inviting expressions of interest from individuals with suitable qualifications to be approved to the VIT hearing panel pool, commencing 28 May 2022 for a term of up to three years.

Applications are now open and will close at 11:59pm, **24 February 2022**.

Applications are to be submitted via www.boards.vic.gov.au. Please visit www.boards.vic.gov.au for more information.



STAFF WIN RIGHT OF NO REPLY

The Age - Wednesday, 2 Feb 2022

Government workers in Belgium can no longer be required to answer work related emails or phone calls after hours, after a “right to disconnect” law came into effect.

The measure will allow 65,000 civil servants to become unavailable at the end of the workday but for “the event of exceptional and unforeseen circumstances requiring action that cannot wait until the next working period”, The Brussels Times reports.

Workers will not be penalised for holding off on responding to emails or phone calls.

Belgium’s Minister for Public Administration, Petra De Sutter, said the measure was necessary to fight a culture in which workers feel they always need to be available, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic as more people transitioned to remote work. Without the right to disconnect, “the result will be stress and burnout and this is the real disease of today”, said De Sutter, according to The Guardian.

Selection Grievances at the Merit Protection Board –



Mark Arkinstall , APF Industrial Officer

The Merit Protection Board is an independent statutory body established under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*. The function of the Board is to advise the Minister for Education about principles of merit and equity to be applied in the teaching service and to hear reviews and appeals of decisions made under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*.

Over the last six months we've represented our members on multiple occasions at the Merit Protection Board with regard to selection grievances.

Please note the following:

1. The aim of the selection process is to select the applicant who will perform successfully in the advertised position and do so better than all other applicants.
2. Teachers, principals, assistant principals, casual relief teachers, education support staff and school council employees may be eligible to lodge a SELECTION or PERSONAL grievance in accordance with the provisions of the current applicable Act or Order:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/employcond/Pages/tso.aspx> .
3. Principal, teacher and education support class employees grievance applications must be lodged within **14 days** of notification of the decision. Applications lodged outside of the 14 day period are considered to be out of time and may not proceed.
4. To be eligible to lodge a SELECTION grievance, a member of the teaching service must:
 - a. Have been an applicant for the position,
 - b. Be eligible and qualified to apply for the position, and
 - c. Have grounds for seeking a review of the selection decision.
5. Grounds for seeking a review of the selection decision include:
 - a. That the selection panel failed to comply with one or more of the procedural requirements and therefore was procedurally deficient and unfair.
 - b. That the selection decision is manifestly inconsistent with the evidence of the nature of the vacant position or the school in which the vacancy occurs or of the qualifications and experience of the applicant and the employee provisionally transferred or promoted.
6. So, the key to avoiding an issue at the MPB with regard to selection decisions is to run a selection process that is procedurally flawless and ensures the selection decision is evidence based. (That is, based on the evidence the panel acquires from the applications, interview, referee checks and prior knowledge statements.)
7. To avoid an issue at the MPB, selection processes must follow those procedural steps outlined in the DET Policy and Guidelines for Recruitment in Schools document found at <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/recruitment-schools/policy-and-guidelines> . Note these processes apply to virtually all selection situations, including advertised vacancies, the allocation of organisational duties or positions of responsibility and higher duties and special payments for assignments or tasks longer than 3 months. A merit-based selection process is required in these selection situations.

(cont.on next page)



Belgium's move is a step in the direction of a growing trend in Europe over the past five years.

In 1998, after a French ambulance driver failed to answer his employer's calls outside of work hours, he was fired, in a case that raised questions about obligations after hours. Within 10 years, France passed its first right to disconnect.

Portugal, Spain, Greece and Ireland, have recently enacted similar measures.

The Washington Post and reprinted in The Age, 2nd February 2022

The real role of leadership in education ... is not and should not be command and control. The real role of leadership is climate control, creating a climate of possibility.

Ken Robinson

A brief summary of the key procedural steps includes:

- The principal is responsible for teacher selection at each school. As part of the selection process the principal must form a selection panel of at least three people, which:
 - 1) includes an employee trained by the Merit Protection Boards in the principles of merit and equity; and
 - 2) makes provision for gender representation.
- **Position description:** A position description is prepared that includes the classification, range, and tenure of the position, the role, and responsibilities of the position.
- **Selection Criteria:** The selection criteria must specify the relevant skills, personal qualities and abilities required for the efficient performance of the position and be in accordance with the DET guidelines. Using the DET supplied criteria is perfect. For organisational duties, positions of responsibility, higher duties or special payment assignments fewer selection criteria are often used but the key is that at least some selection criteria are used in the selection process. All applicants must be assessed against the selection criteria and qualification requirements for a particular position.
- **Applications:** All applications received by the closing date must be carefully considered by the selection panel. Note the principal or panel chair can agree to accept late applications. An agreed ranking system should be used by each member of the panel when considering applications and the rankings and notes made should be retained for review.
- **Short Listing:** Short listing is then used to identify those applicants who, based on the information available, best meet the selection criteria and show evidence that their qualifications and experience are competitive with other suitable applicants. The selection panel may choose to short list and any short listed applicants should be interviewed where possible. Employees with priority or redeployment status must be short listed for interview. Interviews should focus on the selection criteria with the same questions being used for each applicant. Only nominated referees may be contacted at the short listing stage of the selection process.
- **Interviews:** The selection panel should develop a set of questions based on the selection criteria and assess, at interview, each short listed applicant's ability to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and behaviours that best matches the competencies necessary to perform the role. The panel should develop a consistent and fair scoring mechanism to focus attention on the selection criteria and differentiate between applicants' responses. Before closing the interview, the selection panel is advised to provide an opportunity for the applicant to seek or give any relevant additional information that may not have been covered. Again, the notes of panel members should be retained.
- **Referees:** The main purpose of using referees is to elicit information from past employers, employees about the applicant's ability to perform the essential functions of the role and to verify an applicant's claims. A record should be kept of referee comments. Where an applicant nominates a panel member as a referee, any referee comments made by that panel member should be documented in the same way as other referee comments.
- **Prior knowledge:** Members of the selection panel may know or have knowledge of one or more of the applicants. Rather than only disclosing this knowledge as fact in a statement to the panel, members can contribute their perspective in order that the panel develops a richer understanding of a particular applicant's knowledge, skills and behaviours. Prior knowledge statements should be treated on the same basis as referee reports.
- **Selection decision:** The selection panel must assess all short listed applicants against the selection criteria on the basis of their written application, interview, reports provided by referees and any other selection tool used by the panel. At the completion of the assessment, the selection panel must rank all suitable applicants in order of merit.
- **Selection Documentation:** On completion of the selection panel's assessment and ranking

**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.

The Union exclusively for the Principal Class

of applicants, the panel must prepare a selection panel report to the principal. The selection panel report and individual selection panel reports for each short listed applicant can be found at <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/forms-teaching-service-and-hr-administration/resources>. All selection documentation, including copies of applications, interview notes, referee comments and selection reports, must be retained by the school for 2 years after confirmation of the selection decision. This documentation becomes crucial evidence for the principal when responding to a selection grievance.

- **Selection decision:** Under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, the power to employ, transfer or promote has been delegated to principals. Principals have a professional responsibility for ensuring that all parts of the selection process have been undertaken correctly. In considering the recommendation of the selection panel, principals should ensure that the applicant who best demonstrates that they meet the selection criteria and is capable of performing the duties of the position is selected. Where the principal's decision does not concur with the panel's recommendation, reasons for this decision must be recorded.
- **Notification to applicants:** At the completion of the selection process the successful and unsuccessful applicants are to be advised of the outcome of their application.

By following the above procedural steps, you not only ensure the best applicant is employed but also protect yourself from having selection decisions overturned by the MPB. **Note:** while the Board does not have the power to place an appellant into the position over the provisional nominee, or order the employment of a person into the teaching service, they certainly can overturn the selection decision and direct the principal to begin the process again.

If you do receive a selection grievance or have any questions about the selection process or the MPB, please contact us at the APF at your earliest convenience. We are here to support you.

Make it Safe for Staff

What makes staff feel safe? What makes them feel safe to give honest feedback to say what they think?

We can't expect people to share concerns, raise issues, challenge ideas, report behaviour or question colleagues unless it's obvious to all that it is completely safe to do so. It is also not enough to say it's in our culture. The trust that is in place is developed through our previous experiences, practices and the habits leaders display.

Let's make a simple list of places to start building as a leader if we want to receive honest feedback.

Be open (make it safe for others to be honest)

Don't be defensive – be curious
Don't express an opinion if you don't need to – stay open
Don't get too emotionally invested – detach and reflect

Be honest

Don't make excuses – take responsibility
Don't pretend – be authentic
Don't express an opinion as fact – use "I" statements

Talk straight

Don't mutter or mumble – speak clearly and calmly
Don't use sarcasm – say it straight or don't say it
Don't waffle – be considered and concise
Don't gossip – be respectful
Don't use corporate speak – use real words.

Think about the times when we react because of our ego. These simple principles can help us to notice our ego reacting and help us to pause, reflect and choose something else.

Acknowledgement: Andrew Horabin, bullshiff.com

Principal's Digest,
January 2022



"In every school I work in, I tell each of my students individually at some point that I find him or her funny, clever, or creative—a pleasure to have around. I tell students that they have a cool way of thinking, that they make me think about things, that I'm happy to see them walk into my room each day. Very rarely do students ask for evidence. If asked, I'll have it in the form of a story or an observation, because there is something unique and wonderful about every human being. But few have ever asked. I do the same for teachers I work with or lead. They too make me smile, ponder, and grow—and I tell them so."

Jeffrey Benson

Quote
from Hippocampus,
an email publication of
Principal's Digest, 2017

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR PRINCIPAL CLASS EMPLOYEES & Leadership Teams

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