

# Australian Principals Federation



## President's Report— Tina King

As we near the end of term, it cannot come quickly enough for many. The term has simply been draining and exhausting with schools having to face ongoing demands and challenges. Members are continually feeding back how difficult it has been to manage the growing positive COVID-19 cases and impact of staff who have been required to isolate due to being a close contact. This has led to ongoing pressure to cover classes and deliver programs. To add to the woes, CRT agencies cannot fulfil demands and people are just simply holding it together. Reflections from one member relating to the challenges faced, are shared below.

Having had the pleasure of seeing and meeting with many of you at our EBA briefings over the last month, what has become clearly evident is how disconnected and isolated people are feeling. Yes, the pandemic has forced us to work with alternative means and ways, however in doing so, we have lost capacity to connect, meet face to face with a trusted colleague/s and share woes, concerns and solutions. One member of our executive team has written an article in today's newsletter on this very matter with very sound words of advice offered.

Positive and supportive connections with trusted colleagues are conducive to facilitating positive social and emotional well-being in addition to augmenting positive relationships and feelings of connectedness. As such, you are strongly encouraged heading into next term to make the time to meet with other colleagues with whom you can share concerns, discuss problems of practice, share successes and/or to simply voice exasperations and frustrations. Such engagement, undertaken in an environment that is free of judgement and assessment can be very cleansing and cathartic.

As always, our school leaders have continued to lead with conviction, purpose and intent whilst attending to the needs of all. Please ensure that you take the time over the coming break, to practise some self-care and ensure time away from the job.

*T. King*

### Advice to PCOs, Regional Secondary School Principal

Term 1 is (finally) drawing to a close.

But...we still have to survive a few more days and it is not going to be easy.

COVID is still a thing. Isolation means that many schools have staff absent on a daily basis before you even think about 'normal' absences, excursions and camps let alone meetings and professional learning. New variants and colder weather make increases in case numbers more likely.

On top of that, everyone I talk to is experiencing staff shortages in terms of class teachers and/or tutors and CRTs.

Many principal class officers (PCOs) are taking classes and/or extras every day. Many PCOs are not attending external meetings because they are needed in their schools. By definition, many PCOs are quite literally isolated and without the empowering effects of genuine collegiate interaction. Many PCOs (and their school-based colleagues) are feeling frustrated, overwhelmed and very close to exhaustion.

### What should we do?

While having no formal training in welfare, I have been in education and educational leadership positions for a long time. Based on that experience, I have a few suggestions.



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### In this Issue:

The challenges of term one, 2022 are described with considerable thought. Advice about your leadership approach is offered by your colleagues. P1,2 & 3.

The latest on the Draft 2022 VGSA. P3

Detailed information regarding the PD event to be on 3rd June at Riversdale in on P4



**Firstly**, maintain collegiate connections. Reach out, make contact, share your concerns with a trusted colleague who is likely to understand and probably share your concerns. They may have a new idea but more likely they can listen and empathise and sometimes just getting something off your chest has a cathartic effect.

**Secondly**, seek support before things get completely overwhelming. This may include seeing a health professional, accessing one of the departmental supports or seeking advice/support from your professional/industrial organisation such as the APF.

**Thirdly**, take control of what you are doing and asking others to do. Prioritise. We all know that PCOs are expected to do more than they can in a reasonable work week. Rather than try and do everything, choose what are high priorities. In simple terms, put students first. If you have to take a class, then certain administrative tasks will be delayed or dumped.

Second level priority in my mind is your own welfare and the welfare of your staff. Again, prioritise and do what is important. Do not simply make your work week longer and still try and do everything.

A distant third priority in my mind is departmental expectations. We all know that there are “legislative requirements” but we also know that just because something is expected to be done by a certain date, that a delay is a problem in the real world. (Indeed, some things can and should be ignored.) Contact the person and explain your circumstances/context. If necessary, remind them that the department has stated values (responsiveness, integrity, impartiality, accountability, respect, leadership and human rights) and a stated priority of principal health and wellbeing.



**Finally**, (but very importantly) look after yourself. We all know the value of healthy food, good hydration, regular exercise and a good night’s sleep. We all know it is important to have good social and family connections and a balanced lifestyle. Don’t ignore these things – make them a regular part of your life.

### **The reality of life in schools right now...Metro Secondary School Principal**

*There is no doubt that it has been a relief to have students back onsite, however, the reality is that some have returned lacking social skills that they normally would learn as they move through the year levels. They have no filter, have had far too much online activity and exposure to social media and are proving immature for their age. Getting them back into some sort of routine is proving difficult and taking up an inordinate amount of time. Some have had few boundaries over the past two years and have lost motivation to learn.*

*Principals are spending far too much time on student management in between teaching those classes that are not covered due to increased absences and limited CRTs and is leaving the “normal” list of Principals tasks being pushed to the side for the time being to allow them to keep their school afloat.*

*Teachers and Principals are exhausted and impatient, and are finding the idea of any new initiatives too overwhelming to even consider.*

*Principals are spending an excessive amount of time counselling and trying to motivate teachers. Balancing high expectations whilst taking into consideration their mental exhaustion is a constant.*

*The Teacher shortages are causing situations that don’t allow schools to provide the high quality education expected in the Education State, this will only worsen as winter rolls on. Fifty students in*



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***A substantial surge in membership has occurred in the last few weeks.***

***Word that the APF is a waning organisation is fake news.***

***Now who would put such a story about?***



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Join the APF

<https://apf.net.au>

Forms can be  
completed on-line.

a room with one teacher and one integration aide, senior classes being cancelled and cancelling enrichment activities and excursions are a daily occurrence. The portal, through which you are supposed to be able to find and employ teachers, is full of names of those who haven't agreed to their resume being there! Principals are wasting their time looking through the portal and contacting graduate teachers only to discover they'd not agreed to be included.



CRT budgets are out of control adding to the stress of balancing the budget. The re introduction of PPD in term 2 will exacerbate things, more cancelled classes, more principal time in class, more situations where ES are acting as a second teacher with an enormous group of students. Teachers are walking away from the job and job advertisements are going unfilled or with such a small number of applicants that schools are forced to employ someone who may not meet their normal expectations of new staff.

There is pressure on wellbeing teams who are fully booked and exhausted. Their outlook on school life is becoming increasingly negative as their ability to conduct their normal proactive initiatives with small groups and year levels is curtailed by the immediate needs of urgent cases. In many schools the wellbeing role and counsellor role also falls to the principal.

Despite all that is happening on the front lines, there is still a need by those in the department who have their own 'portfolio' to take care of who seem to think that we have time to answer their emails and participate in their activities. It has been demoralising enough having them work from home for the past two years, from the beginning it would have been a much better option for them to have been allocated to a school where resources were in short supply to be a useful part of the team and to give them the real essence of what life in schools is like right now.

Aside from the current day to day situation, the thought of the time in lieu element of the new EBA is causing a great deal of angst. How can this be accommodated without funding? Hundreds of hours of TIL will be owed, teachers will see their students less, camps and activities cancelled, schools will become places where minutes are counted and staff are divided. The government system will become a poor choice for parents as they send their children to schools where camps and other activities are on offer.

Sadly, this is the current reality, the system cannot go on like this, teachers and principals cannot continue to hold things together.

## VGSA 2022 "The Agreement" Update

As mentioned earlier, a welcomed opportunity has been the meetings held with members over the last month, unpacking the proposed VGSA 2022. For those wishing to access the document, it is available on the [APF Website](#) in the member login section. You will also find a copy that highlights the key changes from the current agreement.

The current process for ratification is expected to be undertaken early next term, whereby the DET will commence the formal approval process. All employees in the Teaching Service are eligible to vote with principal guidance on how to conduct the ballot to be distributed. Information regarding the voting process and eligibility has been provided via the DET School's Bulletin released yesterday.

An area of concern (outside the time-in-lieu component) is the requirement for the provision of three professional practice days (PPDs) should the agreement be ratified. Specifically, leaders are seeking clarification as to the need to provide a PPD in Term 2, given that *The Agreement* has not



### 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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been approved. With the current staffing shortages and limitation of CRTs, many are wishing to get a head start and begin planning for the PPD as grave concerns are held in relation to accessing replacement staff to deliver on the PPD commitment.

In consideration of the current staffing challenges and extenuating circumstances continually faced by schools, the APF has proposed to the DET that consideration be given to a state-wide pupil free day next term for the purpose of a PPD. This will ensure delivery of PPD commitments whilst alleviating the very real problem and concern relating to ongoing staff replacement shortages.

Information released by the DET yesterday recommends for principals to begin planning for a common PPD for all teaching staff at their school. Once the date is determined and school council consultation has occurred, parents and carers will need to be provided with notice that student attendance is not required on the nominated day and alternative arrangements will need to be made for the care and supervision of their child/children. Whilst this is not a state-wide day, schools will be able to make their own arrangements by allocating a common day for all staff and advising that students are not required to attend school on the nominated PPD for Term 2.

We commend the DET for taking on board in part the recommendation from the APF and the genuine commitment to addressing concerns and difficulties faced at the school level.



Optimism is a strategy for making a better future. Because unless you believe that the future can be better, you are unlikely to step up and take responsibility for making it so.

Noam Chomsky

All students in our schools should be assured that when they walk into a class that they will be appropriately challenged to improve.

Professor John Hattie

A failure to focus inward leaves you rudderless, a failure to focus on others renders you clueless, and a failure to focus outward may leave you blindsided.

Daniel Goleman

from Hippocampus,  
an email publication of  
Principal's Digest

## APF Professional Learning Opportunity

**Thriving and Surviving in Challenging Times**

**Friday 3 June 2022, from 9:00 am to 3:30 pm**

[Riversdale Golf Club](#)

(200-280 Huntingdale Road, Mount Waverley VIC 3149)

**Presented by - Maria Ruberto**



Maria is the founder and director of [Salutegenics Psychology](#), a strength-based practise that moves people in personal and professional coaching toward mental fitness and life-health. Maria's work is heavily influenced by Positive Psychology theory. The core mission of her work is to transition people towards a state of flourishing, embedding respect, resilience and resolve along the way. Maria has worked extensively for 10 years within the areas of Educational Leadership, Trauma Response and statewide initiatives relating to Student Wellbeing with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. She has worked with Travancore School of Mental Health which is a partnership with the Royal Children's Hospital, Orygen Youth Mental Health and is currently consulting with Beyond Blue to develop training around the new resilience resource Sense Ability.

## Special Presentation by – Dale Sidebottom

Dale is the creator and founder of Jugar Life and Energetic Education, two multidisciplinary business platforms that provide people with the tools to make **play** a focus of their everyday. Dale is a full-time 'play' consultant who taps into his 20+ years working in the education and fitness sectors to educate individuals, schools, sporting clubs and corporate organisations globally on the benefits 'adult play' can have on mental health and wellbeing. Dale is the author of All Work No Play, TEDx speaker and the top rating 'Energetic Radio' podcast. Dale has worked face to face with students, teachers, schools and corporations in over 20 countries.



**Registrations will open next term for both members and non-members and we encourage you and members of your team to attend.**

# The Union exclusively for the Principal Class