



VPA Position Paper

Alternative Settings

The Victorian Principals Association (VPA) aspires for the most suitable learning environment for each student in a Victorian school.

Purpose

The VPA advocates for improved resources communication management processes to support students with behavioural issues who are not able to be supported in a mainstream school setting.

Background to the VPA Position

The VPA position has been determined in the following context:

- Some students within Government mainstream primary and secondary schools regularly display extreme behaviours that disrupt the safety and learning of peers and impact negatively on staff workload and school climate.
- When major behavioural concerns exist, schools frequently report a lack of resources to resolve these concerns.
- Government schools appear to have a proportionately higher number of students with challenging behaviours overall compared to other sectors.
- The current resourcing level of schools provides insufficient capacity to meet the full needs of these students, even with co-operative ventures between schools and other service providers.
- Staff working with these students require expert training and the time to manage the complex demands such students present in order to meet their needs.
- Alternative settings are necessary to provide this service.
- Alternate settings in existence are too few and unevenly distributed.

VPA Position

- Student learning and behavioural management pathways should be expanded to provide an alternative to suspensions as the only choice of schools.
- A state-wide network of 'Student Development Centres' (SDCs) be created cater for the needs of students with extreme behaviours.
- SDCs are to be independently staffed on a notional enrolment and the VPA expects that an agreed level of student funding will follow students as they move between settings.
- The new entities to be flexible in their co-operation with mainstream schools - students need to be able to transfer easily between programs according to need.
- Referrals need to be streamlined and transparent. Guidelines are to be developed and focus on behavioural and academic benefits to students.
- Transfers of students to SDCs are always with a view to a student returning to a mainstream setting.
- Primary Welfare Officers funding should be in every school to reduce the necessity for SDC referral.

The VPA *Alternative settings position* paper was initiated by VPA Council Members Geelong Network. Further work on this document was undertaken by VPA Board, President and Executive Officer.