

## Use and Misuse of Data

### **Context:**

The Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals (VASSP) and the Victorian Principals Association (VPA) note the Federal Government is mandating the publication of a variety of school performance data under its “transparency” agenda. This position paper addresses the balance between the community’s right to be informed about school performance and the presentation of school data in a meaningful and constructive way.

### **Background to the VASSP/VPA position:**

- Accountability and technology have enabled more and more data to be gathered on multiple aspects of school performance.
- Much of this data is valuable and assists in the improvement of school performance.
- The accumulation of data has led to a tendency, particularly in the media, to list and label.
- Governments are using data to justify their investment in education.
- This can lead to short term thinking as the electoral cycle may not provide enough time for real improvement in student outcomes to be identified through data.

### **VASSP/VPA position:**

#### Network Data

- VPA/VASSP supports the use of a wide range of performance data, so that each school and networks context is fully understood within the Government school system.
- VPA/VASSP expects its members to use network data in a professional and principled manner: NB. Individual school’s data should be shared only in digital form between agreed principal class officers (PCO).
- VPA/VASSP expects that RNLs will develop tight protocols in relation to network and school data. Until trust is assured, data is displayed in digital presentation *only* in group discussions.
- VPA/VASSP expects that regional network leaders will intervene if network data is used inappropriately e.g. for marketing purposes

#### Published Data

- Data league tables are based on a deficit model and do not measure prevention.
- The media should be required to publish all school data or nothing, they can’t be allowed to selectively pick and rank.
- An education campaign should be instigated to inform the public on how to interpret school data in context and thus remove the notion of winners and losers.
- Data on school performance should include student achievement and retention in tertiary education.
- Value added measures should be the only basis of school comparison.
- Comparison of “like schools” should be treated very cautiously and there should be no comparison of neighbourhood schools.