



Context:

At the VASSP/VPA Workshop on 3 May, 2011, representatives considered and responded to both a 2010 VPA Provisional Position Paper on Networks and a recently developed VASSP position paper. The following joint position paper was drafted.

Background to the VASSP/VPA position:

Regional networks as currently conceived were developed and imposed during the period of the Labor state government. Following the change of government in November, 2010, it is opportune to reconsider their purpose and composition to better meet the needs of primary and secondary school principals.

Concerns about the current operation of networks include:

- The excessive amount of time principals spend out of schools at regional network meetings;
- A focus on drafting and implementing Network Annual Implementation Plans
- Inconsistency in the leadership capacity and ways of operating amongst Regional Network Leaders;
- Failure of some RNLs to understand and appreciate both primary and secondary school perspectives;
- The imbalance in school sector representation in network composition;
- Differing interpretations/application of DEECD policies and procedures across the networks/regions;
- A perception that many networks have operated to meet regional and central priorities without any thought to school priorities, contexts and needs, and
- Insufficient input by principals into network agendas.

VASSP/VPA Position:

- Principals value the opportunities provided by 'networking' to meet with others who are doing the same work.
- Meeting across sectors enhances understanding of both primary and secondary education sectors.
- There are benefits both for principals' own professional development, for the sharing of best pedagogical practices, approaches to school leadership and school issues and for the achievement of system-wide priorities.
- Principals value the collegiate support and sense of unity principal class networks foster.

What Do VASSP/VPA Advocate?

- The primary focus of networks should be on supporting principals to achieve their individual school's or the network's priorities rather than central or regional priorities.
- Principals need to define network agendas and have greater input into the implementation of agreed network priorities. Processes should be consultative, rather than the "top-down" processes that currently exist within many networks.
- Networks should have flexibility to respond to Centre initiatives according to their context.
- The title of the RNL needs to change and the role should be one of support for schools with the focus on assisting, coaching and mentoring principals.
- The roles and responsibilities of the new RNL role should be more clearly defined to ensure greater consistency, especially with regard to complaints procedures, policies and protocols.
- The purpose of networks and the composition of networks that would best meet school and system needs, should be reviewed and options investigated. Geographic proximity should not be the sole determinant of membership.
- The amount of time devoted to network meetings and priorities should be determined by the network group to reflect principals' primary commitment to their schools and their students.