



# Victorian Principals Association

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## VPA Position Paper

### School Governance

#### Purpose

The Victorian Principals Association (VPA) represents stakeholders who may be greatly impacted upon by changes to school governance structures and provision for government schools in Victoria. The view of the VPA is that the present system of School Councils of varying compositions, agreed at a local level, is working well. The majority of School Councils are working efficiently and provide an excellent communication and policy development conduit between parents, communities and schools; however there are potential benefits from improved support and development.

#### Background to the VPA Position

The VPA position has been determined in the following context:

- Statements in the 'Towards Victoria as a Learning Community' document which indicate – 'There is a clear opportunity for government schools to learn from the approaches used in non- government schools'.
- In the TVLC it is also proposed that there is to be a governance review to explore the potential of a governing body to
  - Employ principals
  - Manage principal performance and
  - Be more flexible in determining teacher career structure within the school'. (p 18)
- In another statement in the TVLC it is cited that there could be: 'More corporate approaches to governance including expert membership on councils.' The VPA is concerned that there is a lack of understanding by bureaucratic policy-makers that the School Council structure already in place has the ability and, in many cases, the proven track record to enact and deliver this process.
- There seems to be an erroneous assumption that School Councils are not operating effectively in Victorian government schools.
- There seems to be an over emphasis on the "power" of a School Council in the TVLC, rather than the notion of a partnership arrangement between governing bodies and school leaders.

#### VPA Position

The VPA advocates for:

- Retention of existing School Council structures, albeit in conjunction with a continual improvement strategy.
- Increased training and support for School Councillors.
- Improved training opportunities for Principals to support them in their roles as executive officers.
- A clear process of early intervention and support where it becomes necessary i.e. DEECD to help manage School Councils that appear to require role clarification or procedural advice.

- A documented process for transition in the unlikely event that a School Council becomes dysfunctional and is unable to operate within good governance guidelines for an extended period of time.