



Victorian Principals Association

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VPA Position Paper

Social Media Guidelines

Purpose

The Victorian Principals Association (VPA) acknowledges the growing range of social media tools which people utilize to build communication links in their everyday lives. It is vital that these communication links remain positive and constructive in order to enhance the work and tone of government schools. The VPA supports and acknowledges the recent launch of the '*Learning On Line*' website, which presents the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's (DEECD) advice for schools on cyber safety and educating young people to be safe and responsible users of digital technologies and social media tools.

Background to the VPA Position

The VPA position has been determined in the following context:

- Concern over the incidence of social media being used to defame or undermine school leaders, teachers and students
- A lack of professional learning in regard to defined protocols, information, strategies and support for school leaders and teachers from DEECD, regarding the issues around social media in schools
- There is a need for professional learning outlining the use of guidelines around the variety of commonly used social media such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs and wikis
- Inadequate wider community awareness of identity security issues inherent in social media
- Limited wider community understanding of the legal responsibilities inherent in the use of social media

VPA Position

The VPA advocates for:

- The DEECD to have in place a central response in order to provide ready advice for school leaders regarding issues around the use of social media
- The DEECD to continually update and have in place a range of suitable written response materials to assist school leaders in promoting sound social media practices in their communities
- Professional learning on the protocols to be made available to schools to ensure that schools' social media guidelines and responses to issues, remain consistent in all government schools
- Continuous development of communication links between schools and their communities
- DEECD to acknowledge the significant role that social media plays in everyday lives and therefore support schools to manage this safely and fairly

- DEECD to provide legal support to their employees when they have been defamed through social media regarding their work in schools
- The government to legislate for harsher penalties to be imposed on those community members who blatantly defame others via social media outlets