



Victorian Principals Association

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VPA Position Paper

Teaching Principals' Issues

Purpose

The Victorian Principals Association (VPA) is concerned that 46% of Victorian government primary schools have fewer than 200 students. Many principals at these smaller schools need to take on a teaching component due to funding constraints. This means that as teaching principals they face real issues in managing the competing demands of their work as school leaders.

Background to the VPA Position

The VPA position has been determined in the following context:

- The safety and security implications for schools and duty of care for students when only one authorised person is present.
- The health and wellbeing implications for teaching principals. A continuous increase to principal workload has a high impact on wellbeing. The workload is expanding without corresponding resourcing.
- Concerns over workload and DET timelines being onerous and inflexible for teaching principals.
- Expectations of principals' with a full time teaching load to produce the same quantity of administration as a principal with no teaching load.
- Difficulty for teaching principals to attend meetings and professional learning without CRT support.
- The ongoing issue of getting CRT replacement.
- Resources and support needed for network activities such as developing Communities of Practice to ensure effective implementation.
- The lack of difference in pay between small school principals and assistant principals. The incentive is limited for an incredibly challenging job.
- Leadership pathways are needed for teaching principals to gain experience in other settings.
- The need for effective strategies to attract teachers to smaller schools.
- Ongoing maintenance issues depleting resources and requiring expert management skills.
- The issue of procuring tradespeople in rural areas.
- The need for a facilities contingency fund for small schools to manage ongoing maintenance concerns.

VPA Position

The VPA advocates for:

- The minimum number of staff allocated in every school to ensure that there are 2 people who are legally able to supervise students in terms of the Child Safe Standard. The principal being outside the budget would address this issue.

- One fulltime equivalent ES staff member to be assigned to smaller schools to assist in the managerial role.
- Teaching principals to always be reimbursed for the cost of a CRT to replace them to attend meetings and professional learning including travel time. If a principal is attending a meeting/ professional learning via polycom then the cost of a CRT is included as well.
- Development of Communities of Practice to ensure that experts are available and professional development is provided to assist regional groups with their focus area.
- Encouragement of collaboration within networks to support each other with CRT availability.
- The new enhanced regional structure to be especially cognisant of the needs of smaller schools and provide much additional support.
- Timelines for DET to be clear and planned well in advance. Small school principals need to know of all the key management tasks required over the year in order to structure activities carefully with their teaching commitments.
- Differentiation and understanding of expectations, between teaching principals and principals with no teaching load, around administration tasks and requirements for teaching principals e.g. Annual implementation plans, financial audits, and strategic plans.
- DET to develop a leadership pathway for teaching principals when they want to have experience in larger settings.
- New principal positions to be advertised in week 2/3 of each term in order to allow proper handover and community knowledge which is especially applicable for smaller schools.
- For succession planning plus CRT replacement purposes AP's to be encouraged by DET, possibly through Bastow, to have experience in small schools on a short term basis. Regions could help broker this process.
- VIT fast track the registration requirements of graduates in their final term and to publicise the opportunity for them to assist with filling CRT positions in small schools.
- Smaller schools' lack of funds for maintenance to be reviewed. When local people cannot be sourced DET to either supply the school with the workers or provide a travel fund to encourage workers to be available for more remote schools.
- A line in the budget for schools prone to risks, such as bushfire vulnerability, that would provide the necessary equipment i.e. water tanks and provide for the continual maintenance costs associated with this equipment.
- DET to centrally manage the growing ageing tree problem in schools that are an OH&S issue. DET to manage arborist reports and resource the consequent costs associated with meeting the recommendations of the ensuing report.
- Earmarked contingency funds for small schools to retain an amount in their bank accounts for teaching and learning purposes. These funds should not be used for maintenance.
- SEIL's to check in with small schools more often to monitor principal's health and wellbeing.
- That acting teaching principal positions need to be made substantive within three months.
- DET to offer targeted professional learning opportunities, provision and funding for teaching campus principals/leaders.