



Victorian Principals Association

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VPA Position Paper

Response to Emergency Situations in Schools

Purpose

Following the recent spate of threatening hoax phone calls to Victorian schools, the Victorian Principals Association calls for consistent guidelines and support to be established by the Department of Education and Training to assist schools to manage emergency situations such as evacuations and lockdowns.

Background to the VPA Position

The VPA position has been determined in the following context:

- There is lack of clarity around protocols and procedures, particularly related to being offsite and returning to site
- There is a lack of training for how to manage these challenging situations
- There is the potential for traumatised staff, students and families
- The vulnerability of schools to terrorism and outside threats
- IRIS alerts have been inconsistent and untimely and neighbouring schools have not been aware of local incidents
- Social media has distributed conflicting and inaccurate information regarding emergency responses
- The media is receiving information prior to Principals
- There is a lack of knowledge across the system in relation to ongoing threats
- The Emergency Management process is lengthy and not sufficiently succinct.
- No information is now given out regarding continuing threats to schools
- There has been no consistent process for informing families
- Schools are feeling isolated and not receiving practical support
- In some instances the response time by police has been slow and teachers have been requested to assist police in inappropriate ways.

VPA Position

The VPA advocates for:

- Clear and consistent guidelines and a common plan for all schools to demonstrate best practice when managing emergency situations.
- Expert advice and examples for communicating with parents, during and post events.
- DET to provide the tools to properly and quickly inform communities of emergency responses in an offsite capacity.
- DET to provide adequate remote access to schools.

- One trial of the SMS service to ensure it works effectively in emergency situations and offsite.
- Support for SMS training including how to SMS when offsite.
- Reimbursement from DET for emergency use of SMS service.
- DET to provide templates for SMS messages and sample statements for social media usage for all types of emergency situations.
- DET to provide protocols for schools and the police for clear communication when managing emergency situations.
- Staff to be solely responsible for the care of students in emergency situations.
- Communication to Principals from SEILs/Emergency Management about current events occurring in local schools to enable school communities to offer support.
- Media response to be provided by DET media unit within a reasonable timeframe.
- Regional departmental personnel to attend schools following a serious event.
- The SEIL to organise support for schools and counselling where appropriate.
- Appropriate resourcing so all schools have the same emergency management resources across the state eg. Display posters/warden packs/signage.