



Victorian Principals Association

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VPA Position Paper

Emergency Procedures Including SMS

The Victorian Principals Association (VPA) is concerned that there is consistency in the communication strategy particularly SMS availability across Victorian government schools in emergency situations.

Purpose

To clarify the communication procedure to be available in our schools in the near future and to enhance the communication process of schools within their communities in emergency situations.

Background to the VPA Position

There has been a trial about SMS communication for schools. The VPA position has been determined in the following context:

- No feedback has been provided to Principals on the outcome of the practice SMS to Principals – did it work and how effective was it?
- Principals are concerned about having the responsibility of making “stay or go” decisions and haven’t been informed of who will make those decision in bushfire situations
- There has been no community education about the need for schools to close, and there is a widely held sentiment that it is just a ‘day off’ for teachers
- It has not been made clear who will be responsible for the cost of sending an SMS to all families in emergencies
- Some schools and families are located outside mobile phone service areas
- There needs to be a consistent state-wide response, not left to individual schools

VPA Position

- That there should be feedback to principals about the effectiveness of practice emergency procedures.
- That clear and explicit instructions be distributed to principals detailing who and how a decision to ‘stay or go’ would be made.
- That government media campaigns leading into the bushfire season include information to the community about the possible closure of schools and the redeployment of staff.
- That the system of phone contact from principals to their community proposed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development be fully funded by the Department.
- If no mobile service is available in certain rural areas there needs to be a recommended back up parental contact procedure e.g. telephone tree with personnel to assist.