



VPA Position Paper

Educational Provision/Regeneration

'As a professional organisation the VPA helps shape education policies and programs in government schools and plays a central role in developing the professional capacities of its members.' (VPA "What We Aspire To")

Purpose

As a key stakeholder in the government school system, the VPA strives to influence government policy, DEECD processes, and budget allocations to achieve acceptable outcomes for its members.

Background to VPA Position

The VPA envisages educational provision activities such as 'school regeneration' programs, school refurbishment programs and green field developments as opportunities to:

- Create improved learning opportunities for students in the schools involved.
- Enhance member welfare through improved capacity to build school leadership profiles, levels of administrative support and better physical working conditions.
- Opportunities for members to enhance community and system level leadership skills.
- Raise the perception of members as effective community leaders committed to improve educational services to students.

VPA Position

The VPA believes that stakeholders are in the best position to determine the vision of the outcomes from provision/regeneration activities. Benefits to students can be expected from the synergies new entities create for leadership and teacher development, economies of scale and provision of improved facilities.

The VPA has identified a number of systemic pressure points from past and current educational provision exercises that must be addressed to achieve these opportunities.

- (a) Loyalty of principals to the provision planning. The VPA expects its members to meet their systemic obligations and to demonstrate ethical behaviour at all times, particularly confidentiality. However DEECD must address each principal's 'what's in it for me' question satisfactorily before expecting principals to convincingly address the same questions within their respective school communities. RNLs and DEECD representatives should act ethically and be aware of the huge personal impact the process has on individuals. Sensitivity, negotiation and care need to be applied. During negotiations:
 - i. Principal class contracts and future employment options, especially the timing and process of principal class appointments to the new entity
 - ii. Administrative and financial support for schools in provision exercises
- (b) Clarity of the role of the principal in educational provision. Local selection of principals, the passion of school communities for their school and many other factors can create uncertainty about the role of principals in educational provision planning. The VPA expects DEECD to engage extensively with principals and school communities before and during provision planning to shape and develop the vision. DEECD must do more than just support principals in communicating and obtaining 'buy-in' for the vision at the school level. Department officers must also be active in this process. Matters to be addressed include:

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- a. Building the business case for regeneration including the sustainability of new models for the locality
 - i. Data to indicate why particular schools are grouped
 - ii. DEECD to provide a range of options for working groups to consider

 - b. Benefits to students from the provision exercise
 - i. Educational offerings and depth of student support programs
 - ii. Opportunities for improved teacher capacity building in larger teams
 - iii. Additional/improved facilities

 - c. Certainty of time frames
 - i. Schools should be informed immediately when provision exercises are approved by DEECD to inform internal decisions such as building and maintenance programs
 - ii. DEECD should take advice from principals on the time frame for the local context
 - iii. The timeframe should be as realistic as possible

 - d. Ameliorating the impact of transition for students, staff, principals, school councils, school council funds, where school sites are no longer required. (Reference: DEECD HR *'School Merger or Closure – Staffing'*)
 - i. DEECD to monitor, manage and acknowledge the Principal workload throughout this process, as principals involved often find they are working two jobs; running their school and managing the merger/regeneration - a project that requires countless complex processes
 - ii. In some cases there needs to be a Project Manager to assist with the administration. Any adverse publicity should be handled by the DEECD, and not by local principals.
 - iii. Affected principals to be appropriately compensated for the increase in the complexity of their role during provision planning- this should be substantial
 - iv. Expert facilitators provided for the process, especially to align stakeholders to the final outcome, which is to provide benefits to students
 - v. Project director appointed to oversee facilities design and development
 - vi. The capital value of existing schools be reinvested into the new entity
 - vii. DEECD to fund parallel shaping of the curriculum for the new entity, especially pedagogical approaches and new AIP

 - e. Support of other DEECD activities within educational provision planning localities
 - i. The VPA has noted that wider DEECD decisions have sometimes impacted negatively on educational provision planning e.g. principal class appointments should be frozen and approval for school funded building programs withheld for the duration of the decision-making period.