



VICTORIAN
PRINCIPALS
ASSOCIATION

CONNECT & CELEBRATE



VPA ANNUAL
JOURNAL

2023

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Connect and Celebrate 2023 VPA Annual Journal

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CONNECTED

UNITED

EMPOWERED



2023 has continued to deliver a range of challenges to our committed and talented school leaders. The challenges faced by all schools due to staffing shortages have been most significant and difficult to manage.

The breadth of complexities as a result of these challenges is often difficult to comprehend by those not engaged in the work. These range from navigating a moving feast of organisational issues to doing your best to ensure there are quality teachers available daily in your schools, to supporting anxious students who often struggle with change and cannot understand why they do not have the same teacher every day. Supporting inexperienced teachers has also been a critical part of the work of leadership teams across the state.

This has certainly been no small feat and many of you, along with your staff, have felt frustrated by so many things which continue to be out of your control.

You have continued to undertake all of this while supporting the wellbeing of students, staff and often community members, with a focus on ensuring the best possible academic outcomes for all students. Congratulations on giving your best once more!

VPA has a loyal membership of almost 1,000 school leaders across the state.

The statement “from principals, for principals”, holds as true in 2023 as it did when the VPA was founded 52 years ago!

We have a strong and sustainable strategic plan that has been redesigned to be a “plan on a page” and early this year was adopted by Board and State Council. State Council is comprised of 60 members, representing all areas of the state, with the councillors working with the Board to establish the VPA’s position on relevant issues while representing the views of all members. Board Members represent the VPA at many forums and stakeholder groups throughout the year, amplifying the voice of each of our members.

I take this opportunity to thank all Board and State Councillors for their dedication and commitment to government education throughout the ongoing and significant challenges we have continued to face in 2023.

Members have continued to have access to highly valued supports such as Member Advisors, regular regional meetings and professional learning workshops as well as access to study awards. Importantly, members are connected through services such as our fortnightly e-letter, website information for members, and the collegiality provided at meetings and forums.



You have continued to undertake all of this while supporting the wellbeing of students, staff and, often, community members, with a focus on ensuring the best possible academic outcomes for all students. Congratulations on giving your best once more!

The VPA continues to be in a strong position to assist members as we move towards the ongoing challenges in education.

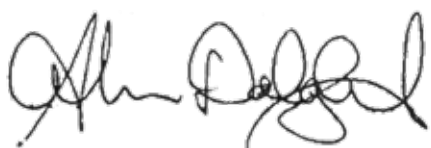
Our connection with each other has remained positive, as members regularly collaborate and connect in face-to-face meetings and, most importantly, at our annual VPA Conference.

At each level we have been able to share our successes along with the ongoing challenges you have faced. Most importantly, we continue to champion public education in Victoria.

This year has seen us once more celebrate Principals' Day locally in our schools across our state as we continue to encourage all members of our communities to acknowledge the commitment of our educational leaders.

As a profession, we face ongoing challenges with optimism.

These are by no means insignificant challenges; they centre around working to ensure there are high-quality teachers in front of students each day. We understand that staff shortages is not just a short-term problem: it is Australia-wide.



Andrew Dalglish
VPA President

Andrew Dalglish is the President of the Victorian Principals Association, Treasurer and Executive Member of AGPPA, and a member of the board for APPA.



**VICTORIAN
PRINCIPALS
ASSOCIATION**

The VPA journal celebrates the achievements and value of the work of our wonderful association, its Board, VPA State Councillors, Office Staff, Business Partners, and wider membership in helping to continue shape Victoria as the Education State.

We hope you reflect on the incredible work you continue to do as 2023 comes to an end. I thank you all for being courageous, optimistic and resilient leaders and wish you all a well-earned break.



How to Improve

Primary Schools

Pasi Sahlberg

Educator, Author and Scholar

Australian children receive more instruction time in primary school compared to their international peers. They undergo numerous standardised assessments and are exposed to an abundance of data-driven initiatives.

However, despite these efforts, student performance in both national and international assessments over the past decade has remained stagnant or even declined.

This raises the perplexing question: Why is it so challenging to enhance the quality of our schools?

The traditional approaches to improving primary schools are proving insufficient. Experienced educators understand that the key to quality education lies in fostering strong relationships between teachers and students, along with granting students a sense of agency in their learning journey.

While waiting for government primary schools to be adequately funded, there are several effective

and low-cost ideas that any school can adopt to transform teaching and learning in primary schools.

Idea 1:

A New Timetable for Student Wellbeing

One contributing factor to the excessive formal instruction in primary schools is the uniformity of the school day, with all students, regardless of age, following a six-hour, or 300-minute, schedule. In many other countries, the length of the children's school day varies depending on their age.

For example, in Finland school children have only about 180 minutes instruction scheduled in four 45-minute lessons each day. The rest of the day is for children to have a longer lunch break, a 15-minute recess after every class, and to play after the school day.

Most Australian primary schools follow a similar daily schedule: three teaching blocks with morning tea and lunch in between. There is no good educational or developmental reason for this. Primary schools in Victoria and around the country are beginning to experiment with more child-friendly daily schedules to improve student wellbeing, active engagement, and learning in school.

Based on research and recommendations from paediatricians, the proposed alternative daily schedule is:

- Limit each lesson to no more than 50 minutes. Children's attention spans for productive learning in primary school ranges from 10 minutes to 25 minutes.
- Allocate 15-minute recess breaks after each lesson for free outdoor play promoting refreshment, socialisation, and building relationships.
- Schedule lunch around midday, providing children and teachers time to eat, relax, and engage with one another.

This daily schedule aligns with practices in many other countries. Child health experts advocate for at least an hour of daily outdoor play for primary school children. A recent study by Peter Gray and colleagues¹ argues that a primary cause of the decline in children's mental health is that there are less opportunities today for them to play independent of direct oversight by adults. Better balance between instruction and free play can positively affect student wellbeing and learning.



¹ Peter Gray, David Lancy & David Bjorklund (2023). Decline in Independent Activity as a Cause of Decline in Children's Mental Wellbeing: Summary of the Evidence. The Journal of Pediatrics. 260. 10.1016/j.jpeds.2023.02.004.

Idea 2:

Teacher Looping for Stronger Relationships

Another distinctive feature of Australian primary schools is the way teaching is organised. In most cases, teachers teach a new group of students each year. At the beginning of each school year, the teachers get to know their students, explain rules for behaviour, set the expectations for the school year, and other important things. It is a week of getting started and building personal relationships.

This practice lacks a clear educational rationale and is often justified as "the way it has always been." However, alternative models can be found in Montessori or Steiner schools where children typically stay with the same teacher for several years.

Teacher looping, or simply, "looping", is a century-old educational practice in which a teacher remains with the same group of students for several consecutive years. Instead of changing students each year, the teacher advances with the same group of students as they progress through their educational journey.

Here's how teacher looping typically works:

- A teacher begins with a group of students in a specific year level, e.g., Year 1.
- Instead of transitioning to a new group of Year 1 students the following year, the teacher progresses with the same students as they move up to Year 2.

This arrangement can extend for multiple years, allowing the same teacher and group of students to progress together multiple years in primary school.

The primary goal of looping is to build stronger teacher-student relationships and enhance the continuity of learning in school and at home. When teachers spend several years with the same students, they can develop a deeper understanding of their students' individual interests, strengths, and weaknesses.

This understanding leads to more personalised learning and timely support. Additionally, students benefit from a more stable and consistent classroom culture that can enhance academic and socio-emotional outcomes.

Looping is becoming increasingly common in primary schools worldwide, including in the United States, Germany, China, Japan, and Finland, where it is the standard practice. It is a cost-effective method to cultivate better relationships and a positive school culture, benefiting both students and teachers. But looping is not a silver bullet to enhance primary schools. Making it work requires responsive leadership, flexible teachers, and supportive parents.

In conclusion, enhancing primary schools may seem like a daunting task. Schools connecting better with parents and their children now that public confidence in government schools is at risk is a good reason for policymakers and school leaders to consider encouraging looping in primary schools as an easy way to making school a happy place for everyone.

Implementing innovative ideas such as restructuring daily timetables and adopting looping can significantly improve learning and wellbeing in primary schools and make our education system a little bit fairer and better for all.

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Implementing innovative ideas such as restructuring daily timetables and adopting looping can significantly improve learning and wellbeing in primary schools and make our education system a little bit fairer and better for all.



Pasi Sahlberg is a former schoolteacher in Finland and currently Professor of Educational Leadership at the University of Melbourne. His two sons go to public primary school in South Melbourne.

Harvard Leadership Development for Principals

Damien Keel

Principal of Yarrawonga P-12 College

Damien Keel recently took part in the Harvard Graduate School for Education in Cambridge, Boston – Achieving Excellence: Leadership Development for Principals.

In his own words:

For just over one week, I learnt from highly experienced leaders, very impressive researchers and practitioners as part of the program. I also got to learn from 188 other school leaders from across 22 countries around the world who were also participating in the Achieving Excellence program.

The 2023 the topics included:

- Adaptive, Strategic and Instructional Leadership in Schools
- School Culture
- Engaging with Parents and Families
- Leading Teams in Times of Uncertainty
- Childhood Trauma
- Transformational Learning
- Consultancy Protocols
- Movement Education
- Demography isn't Destiny – Leadership Matters.

To Apply

If you are interested in applying for this high-level learning experience at Harvard University and have had between three and 15 years' experience as a principal, the link to the scholarships is <https://www.publiceducationfoundation.org.au/principals-scholarship/>.

Scholarships open on 31 July.



All presenters were first class and exceptionally engaging.

The high-level relevance and quality of the learning alone was worthwhile. The opportunity to debrief and learn from other amazing and inspirational educational leaders from across the globe in a home-group style each day topped off the experience.

The learning, and the connections that I have made with many education leaders with rich experiences and knowledge from across the globe as part of the experience will stay with me for ever.

I am extremely grateful to the Public Education Foundation and Teachers Mutual Bank for providing the scholarship for me to be able to participate in the learning at Harvard University.



Damien Keel has been a Principal Class member for more than 22 years. He is Principal of Yarrawonga P-12 College and a member of the VPA Board.



MAD Under

Pressure

Dan Haesler

Leadership Coach and Author

In the fast-paced and high-stakes world of educational leadership, school principals and leaders are faced with the enormous responsibilities of overseeing institutions, shaping academic environments, and managing stakeholders. Performance under pressure becomes not just a skill but a necessity.

Your ability to get MAD (mindful and deliberate) can be transformative, especially when navigating challenges that demand your best.

The Red/Blue Framework

by Ceri Evans

Let's draw upon the work of Sports Psychologist, Ceri Evans. His Red/Blue Framework posits that our minds function in two key zones: the Red Mind (emotional, reactive, and quick to act) and the Blue Mind (calm, rational, and deliberate thinking).

Under pressure, many default to the Red Mind, making hurried decisions that can lead to significant errors. The Blue Mind, on the other hand, enables us to approach situations with a balanced and strategic perspective.

Being Mindful

Mindfulness serves as a pivot, helping us shift from the Red Mind to the Blue Mind. It's about being present in the moment and identifying the mental state from which we're operating. In the bustling corridors of a school, where situations ranging from disciplinary issues to sensitive parental complaints can escalate rapidly, mindfulness becomes crucial. It allows you to create the mental space needed for balanced, reasoned decision-making.

The simple act of asking ourselves, "Am I red or blue here?" can serve to bring your awareness back to the moment.

Being Deliberate

Once you're operating from a Blue Mind, the next crucial step is deliberation. This involves consciously selecting your next action based on a thorough evaluation of its potential outcomes. Deliberation lets you not only make better choices but also fully own them, providing a sense of responsibility and accountability that is essential in leadership roles.

One strategy I encourage the people I work with to embrace is journaling and to reflect each day, week or whenever feels appropriate, on this question:

"If I could have my time again, what could I do differently?"

By journaling around this question, you can start identifying moments in your day or your week where you went red. To be clear, "going red" in and of itself is not a negative. Perhaps it was completely appropriate; however, if we come up with answers to "What could I do differently?" then it's likely that we might not have handled the situation as well as we might have liked.

By recording alternate strategies to handle that moment might seem futile given we can't go back in time and make amends, but I firmly believe that you will in all likelihood have your time again, over and over. The reason being, the same kind of people or situations tend to send us red. If you've ever found yourself thinking to yourself or saying out loud, "Seriously! How many times do I have to tell you?!" then you get the picture.

By practising this MAD technique in "low-stakes" environments, such as before you sit down for dinner or before you pick up the phone to speak to a relative, then you'll be able to deploy it in the higher-stakes moments.

Think of it like an athlete: We start low and slow when training strength, fitness or skills, in low-stakes environments. And we practise it over and over so that in the heat of the moment, the grand final, we're able to execute.

You need to find your equivalent. Don't wait until you're in the heat of the moment to see if you can be mindful and deliberate. Chances are you won't be.

Building a MAD Team Culture

Another dimension to consider is the impact of your leadership style on the broader school community. By regularly embodying mindfulness and deliberation you set a tone that your staff can mirror.

Offering training sessions on mindfulness or establishing frameworks for thoughtful decision-making can enhance the school environment, making it a place not just for student learning but also for adult growth.

As you know, educational leadership isn't merely about academic prowess or managerial skills; it's a nuanced balance of cognitive and emotional attributes.

Mindfulness enables the essential switch from a reactive Red Mind to a rational Blue Mind, while deliberation assures that decisions springing from this state are both strategic and impactful. By fostering these qualities in yourself and your team, you're making a crucial investment in your personal leadership capabilities and the long-term success of your institution.



Dan Haesler is a performance and leadership coach who focuses on creating happier, healthier and higher performance. Since its release in 2021, Dan's book, The Act of Leadership, has been the best-selling Australian-authored business title.

Check out www.theprincipalcircle.com for Dan's monthly group coaching exclusively for school principals. His website is www.danhaesler.com.

The AGPPA Perspective

Pat Murphy
AGPPA President

The announcement following the Education Ministers Meeting in December 2022 that there would be a 12-month extension to the current National School Reform Agreement was exceedingly disappointing. This decision delays the Commonwealth Government's commitment to work with state and territory governments to deliver fair funding to every Australian school. Government schools in Australia will continue to be underfunded, and more students, including our most disadvantaged, will leave school having never received the benefit of the minimum recommended resourcing level.

Since this announcement, the Australian Government Primary Principals Association (AGPPA) has been harnessing the collective reach of its membership to advocate to ensure that when bilateral funding agreements are renegotiated, the voices of government primary school leaders in all parts of the country are heard.

AGPPA is the peak professional association for public primary school principals in Australia. The association represents over 7,000 school leaders in 5,300 government primary schools in the six states and two territories. As a member of VPA you are also a member of AGPPA. Together, we impact the futures of more than 1.6 million students.

Our shared commitment is to highlight the importance of the primary school years and to promote excellence in public primary education in Australia. AGPPA's advocacy is based on the vision of every child attending a school with healthy, high-performing leaders, and quality staff, along with the knowledge that primary schools are where children acquire the necessary foundational academic, social, and emotional skills to lead fulfilled and enriched lives. It is imperative that education policy and associated resourcing enables this moral purpose to be fulfilled so that every Australian child can experience success, both at school and throughout their life.



The lack of importance placed on the government school sector is highlighted by the fact that the current Bilateral Funding Agreements for every state and territory limit the funding to government schools to less than 95% of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS). Every state and territory in Australia, in their agreements with the former Commonwealth Government, determined that no student attending a government school would receive what Gonski outlined was the minimum standard required. The current bilateral funding agreements underfund government schools in Australia by \$6.5 billion per year.

The 12-month extension to the current National School Reform Agreement has continued to exacerbate the inequities in the Australian education system. While exceptionally disappointed with the decision to extend the NSRA for a further 12 months, every primary educational leader around Australia should use this time to highlight the current funding disparity between primary and secondary students, which is currently \$3,105 per student.

Imagine the difference we, as government primary school leaders, could make to the lives of our students if we received the full funding of SRS and there was little-to-no funding disparity between primary and secondary sectors. As a VPA member you can help AGPPA amplify the message that funding for government primary schools needs to change, and change urgently. The next generation of Australia's workforce, who are the public school students of today, can no longer continue to be grossly disadvantaged or we as a nation will never realise our potential.

Sources for this article available on page 39.



Pat Murphy,
AGPPA President

Loneliness in Leadership

Angela Falkenberg

APPA President

Many leaders report feeling lonely in the job; they have busy lives surrounded by people but are not necessarily connected in ways that matter.

This can be because the buck stops with the principal, because non-leaders may not appreciate the cognitive and emotional challenges that can go with the job, or because in leadership we must internalise our thinking as it may not be appropriate to share with others.

A *Harvard Business Review* 2017 study found that half of all CEOs reported feeling lonely in their roles and 61% believed this negatively impacted their performance.

If you are feeling lonely in the job, seek help, as loneliness is not just a performance and mental health challenge, it can also harm your physical health.

In a recently published report, *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation* (2023), the US Surgeon General wrote that loneliness “is associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety and premature death. ... Given the profound consequences of loneliness and isolation we have an obligation ... to make investments in addressing social connection.”

So, what would it mean to strengthen school leader social connections?

- **Associate:** Belonging to an association such as VPA and APPA can help in buffering challenges and distress and in advocating for support. Association colleagues understand your work and can assist in identifying ways to improve things.
- **Attend professional learning events:** While you may not be transformed by a training, your attendance may be transformative for someone else. Sharing how you tackle tricky issues or sharing a resource you have found useful builds the capability of others. And your friendly conversation creates a supportive connection for someone else.

- **The annual APPA conference** is such a worthwhile event, and the recent one in Hobart was abuzz with connections, the sharing of ideas, and the broadening of personal and professional networks. APPA celebrates 50 years as the national voice for primary leaders in 2024 and an APPA conference has been held every year since 1974 (except for two years during COVID). Friendships developed at the conference are renewed each year and everyone can make new connections.

The 2024 APPA conference is the Trans-Tasman, a collaboration with our Aotearoa New Zealand principal colleagues and takes place from 18–20 September 2024 in Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand. It will deliver on its commitment to provide both quality learning and foster collegial connections among leaders.

- **Broaden your professional and personal networks:** These can provide an exchange of ideas and information, outside perspectives, a point of common ground and career advice. Belonging to a professional network is opportunity to give back by contributing your wisdom.

When you are fulfilled, connected and happy you are good to be around, and you are more likely to compassionately respond to others. It's a virtuous spiral. It is ironic then that when we are struggling to keep up with job demands, we cut out the relationships that are good for us and that help us to feel connected.

APPA is advocating for leaders to be and lead well: for job resources to match job demands and to be physically, psychologically, and reputationally safe. We don't sway from the collective importance of this task.

But for you personally, make time to be with those who care for and nourish you and turn leader loneliness into collegial connectedness.



Angela Falkenberg is the President of APPA, past principal of three primary schools in South Australia, and has held corporate roles in education and in health. She views advocating for leaders as a privilege.



President's **Reflections 2023**

Andrew Dalglish
VPA President

As I reflect on 2023, I continue to be inspired by the courage, optimism, and resilience that school leaders across Victoria display each and every day.

As school leaders, we face a range of challenges in the work we do; however, there remains an intense pride in the outcomes we achieve every day in our schools that make a difference for the young people and the communities we serve.

We are seeing the impact in our schools of the often-negative narrative from sections of our community as this plays out in the shortage of educators within the education sector. We can all speak with pride about why we entered education and school leadership as a profession of choice, inspired by those who taught us as well as led, nurtured, coached, and mentored us along the way. This, however, does not occur all the time as some of these challenges feel overwhelming.

Often our profession itself expresses our frustrations in a negative manner, and, while

these frustrations are real, the VPA, along with other professional associations, continues to advocate and amplify your collective voices on your behalf, seeking to co-design with the Department of Education to achieve our shared goals of improved life outcomes for all young people. This takes the form of striving to ensure the structures and resources are available for school leaders to flourish.

I believe that as school leaders, we all have a responsibility to continue to promote teaching and school leadership as the wonderful career choice it is for future teachers and leaders. Continue to share with pride the work you do daily. You change lives for so many young people.

Our association's strength is that we continue to hold the mantra "from principals, for principals"

and for this I thank each and every one of you for your service to education and for being members of our wonderful professional association. It is the strength that we gain from being connected, united and empowered that makes a difference for us all. I also acknowledge the many VPA members who have retired over the past 12 months. The VPA and your communities and students are indebted to each of you.

I continue to be incredibly humbled and privileged to have the opportunity to lead the VPA and work with school leaders across the state as we remain connected, united, and empowered. This has occurred in our network meetings, professional learning activities and also through VPA State Council and Board meetings. There has been a genuine joy shown by all participants as they come together and renew old friendships and develop new ones. Collegiality has always been one of the key pillars of the VPA.

The VPA State Council and Board came together for the first time for the annual planning conference in Torquay since 2019. Minister for Education, Minister for Women, the Hon Natalie Hutchins MP, Deputy Secretary, Schools and Regional Services, Dr David Howes and Deputy Secretary, Schools Workforce, Andrea Del Monaco were in attendance as key speakers. It is always pleasing to hear from, and have conversations with, our minister and key department leaders.

The broader community focus on the health and wellbeing of all members of our school communities continues to be developed with a wide range of strategies implemented to address increased mental health issues and disengagement experienced in our schools.

The government continues to invest in the importance of mental health in our young people through the Mental Health in Schools program and an increase in the number of schools in the Mental Health in Primary Schools Pilot program to be implemented in 2022. These significant reforms recognise the ongoing importance of supporting our students and school communities.

Proactive mental health support for school leaders will continue to be a focus of the VPA's advocacy work. While we have seen significant improvement in the support offered and provided for school leaders, we believe that more work will ensure all school leaders can thrive. This ongoing VPA work was acknowledged in the *Principal Health and Wellbeing* report tabled by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office in June this year.

The VPA continues to advocate on your behalf and seeks to work closely with the Department to co-design strategies and supports that make a difference for all school leaders. This year the VPA was proud to offer the Flourish Program for school leaders, led by Dr Adam Fraser. This program involves preparing and supporting school leaders in developing the tools and strategies to thrive in their work before issues occur which impact on their wellbeing, and not after. We aim to continue this work into the future.

The VPA will continue to engage with the Department of Education (DE) as the voice of the profession, actively advocating on your behalf and contributing to this critical work as we seek to influence government and the DE in meeting our joint aims of outstanding education for all young people.

Professional Services

I must thank our Member Advisors, Geoff Agnew, Meenah Marchbank, and Deborah Patterson, who have continued to provide outstanding service and support to our members regarding the wide range of issues faced on a daily basis.

The ability to support our members continues to be one of the strengths of our association. I am incredibly proud of the feedback I receive from members about this service, along with the capacity of Geoff, Meenah, and Deborah to be able to connect with principals, listen, and understand the issues, and then provide the support required is nothing short of outstanding. We are incredibly fortunate to have their experience and knowledge.

Professional Advocacy

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, we, as principals, find ourselves continuously navigating a multitude of systemic changes that are impacting our schools' staffing, budgets, and daily operations.

Balancing these challenges while ensuring the education of our students remains our central focus and is a challenge that we all share. Amid these complexities, it is essential to remind ourselves that these challenges are not just for others to solve; as school and system leaders, we all play a crucial part in developing solutions.

Our collective voices have never been more important than they are now. We stand connected, united, and empowered, drawing strength from one another's experiences and insights. The VPA is committed to fostering collaboration with our members. Together, we can amplify our responses and ensure that the collective voices of school leaders are not only heard and but also responded to.

At the heart of this collaboration is the recognition of the importance of strong representation and the shared wisdom of you, the experts who are doing the work to make a difference in the lives of students every single day. As we face various issues, from curriculum changes to recruitment and retention challenges, our voice becomes the driving force behind innovative solutions. We strive to work towards co-design solutions with the DE and government to the challenges that cannot be solved in isolation.

The VPA Board is actively engaged, representing us at every table and working diligently to address issues head-on with meaningful solutions and a willingness to co-design these solutions. We continue to advocate strongly for the things that you have told us matter at a state and national level.

2023 has been dominated by challenges caused by staff shortages in our schools. This has placed a range of pressures directly on school leaders, including increased time to undertake daily organisation, along with recurring recruitment efforts. School leaders, and those with leadership

teams, have reported an increase in their own teaching allotments out of necessity. As a result, they are concerned about being unable to provide the significant teaching and mentoring, particularly for early career teachers, that they would have previously.

The large number of groups that the VPA represents our members on, and advocates for on their behalf, continues to be one of VPA's most significant roles. There are more than 40 key Department of Education stakeholder groups, along with national stakeholder reference groups that the VPA represents school leaders on. All Board Members and a number of our State Councillors also represent the VPA on regular key stakeholder reference groups.

Much of our advocacy work has continued to focus on workload-related matters. However, we have also continued to advocate on many topics, including:

- Disability inclusion implementation
- Principal workload, including school workforce planning and organisational design
- Mental Health in Primary Schools Initiative
- Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership
- School Resource Package
- Career Start Initiative
- Teacher supply and demand
- Initial Teacher Education Reviews
- Proactive Mental Health and Wellbeing Support for School Leaders
- Time in lieu implementation.

The VPA continues to strongly represent the profession and our collective voice; input is sought after and respected locally and nationally.





Professional Learning

Our strong commitment to the provision of high-quality professional learning tailored to meet the needs of our members continues. We regularly seek member feedback about professional learning preferences and the utilisation of VPA experience and knowledge across our state.

A range of professional learning activities were delivered onsite at our Vale Street offices. We continue to investigate and deliver hybrid-style professional learning to meet members' needs statewide.

The 2023 VPA Conference – themed Future Schools, Future Leaders – was held at the Pullman, Albert Park, from 24–25 August. The conference delivered an outstanding program where school leaders were challenged to think more deeply about the potential impact of generative artificial intelligence on education now and into the future, as well as on our lives. Our speakers understand the challenges faced, along with the outstanding work of school leaders every day to make a difference for young people. They also acknowledged the critical responsibility we have in ensuring our personal wellbeing, along with that of our colleagues. Once more, it was incredibly rewarding for the VPA Board and staff to bring together a wonderful group of presenters along with over 300 VPA members and delegates in the provision of topical, high-quality professional learning, creating valuable opportunities for collegiality between school leaders from across Victoria.

I wish to thank the incredible office team, Gaye Aldridge, Theodoula Vorenas, Sue O'Connor, Sonia Novak, Joanna Feely, Juliet Cerolini, and Breanna Dooley-Axup, for their dedication and in providing excellent support to our members. They rose to the incredibly challenging task of balancing remote and office work. Much of their work goes on in the background but has been critical to the smooth operation of the VPA and I cannot thank them enough.

Finally, I give my heartfelt thanks to the VPA Board and State Council who give of their time to come together and work through the issues, represent and amplify the voice of our members on many stakeholder reference groups and provide timely advice to myself. The collective leadership of our members, along with the passion for an outstanding government school system and expertise to lead at the local level, with a strong system focus is to be applauded.

Thank you all once again for your tireless work and for being **connected, united, and empowered**.



VPA Vision for Education

The VPA aspires to enable government school principals and government schools to demonstrate the following qualities or attributes:



A successful government school system:

- listens to the voice of professional educators and values their contribution to education policy
- provides maximum resources for all schools thus enabling high-performing teachers and the best possible learning outcomes for students, regardless of their background
- has a clear vision for government education and has open, transparent and efficient communication and delivery.

In a successful government school:

- the community works together to successfully achieve its goals, based on a broad and engaging curriculum embracing all aspects of school life
- all members of the community work collaboratively to build a successful school
- improvement is continuous and supported, with a focus on learning for everyone and successful outcomes for all students
- differences are accepted and embraced
- success is celebrated
- equity is provided for all.

A successful government school leader:

- supports the positive wellbeing of students, staff, and self
- encourages personalised learning and enables teachers to thrive in a supportive and positive environment
- focuses on improvement in student learning and achievement, school facilities, and staff performance
- is passionate, active, and informed as they work within their networks
- concentrates on capacity building, including school culture and high performing teams
- possesses strong, ethical interpersonal skills, and relationship building capabilities
- recognises the importance of team creation, team-building, transparent communication, and management strategies.



2023 VPA

Conference

Deborah Patterson
VPA Member Advisor

What is the collective noun for a group of principals? I am going to be bold and call them a “hive” of principals because of the VPA 2023 Conference.

2023 was the second time I had been invited to be the MC (Master of Ceremonies) of the VPA Annual conference, the first being last year.

Even before I stood on the stage, I heard a familiar sound that I had heard last year. It was a frenzied buzzing.

There is something to be said about principal teams being able to escape their schools for a day or two and take time to breathe, reflect, be inspired and challenged with like-minded leaders and thought-provoking speakers. This year's conference started with a gradual buzzing that slowly built to a feverish flutter of hive-like activity. Lots of busy verbal exchanging of words and chitter-chatter and excited arm-waving body language. The hive of principals was glad to be in an environment surrounded by like-minded colleagues and able, for a couple of days, to forget the hectic pace of daily organisational rituals and CRT replacements in their schools.

My job as an MC was to keep to the tight running sheet, introduce speakers and intertwine thank you speeches with a meaningful thread to the theme. “Future Schools, Future Leaders” was an easy theme to connect with the speakers, sponsors, and attendees.

The team coordinating the conference included VPA President Andrew Dalgleish, VPA Executive Officer Gaye Aldridge, Jacqui Bates of The Conference Manager and myself. We met briefly on Zoom with each speaker beforehand to discuss the organisational requirements for each presenter, their individual needs, technical support, accommodation and travel arrangements.



As the MC, my questions to each presenter were: What do you want me to read from your biography when introducing you? Is there anything else you want the audience to know about you? And can I have a little banter with you on stage? Humour, fun, and bantering with speakers and presenters is as important to me as an MC as it was when I was a principal for 22 years because it makes my job a lot easier – not to mention the audience loves it as well.

Even with the best of speakers, the MC must foster the connections between them and the audience. Being able to have a laugh means that you are real, can see the funny side of life and it allows you to relax and reflect, not to mention the positive impact on your body and mental wellbeing.



Deborah Patterson is an author, mentor, coach, and VPA Members Advisor. Her book is Passion, Guts and Leadership.



Louka Parry was the first speaker I introduced when he got up to present “The Learning Future”. During our debrief he spoke in Italian because he was ordering a coffee in a café. That accent! I asked him if I could banter with him on stage and he said, go for it! He was a delight to introduce, listen to and thank. He was very personable with the audience and spoke about practical ways that leaders could apply new knowledge to promote engagement across cultures, domains, and languages.



Dr Catriona Wallace presented “AI and the Metaverse: The Pivotal Role of Principals”. Catriona is an amazing woman, so knowledgeable and such a great role model. Presenting the status of AI and the metaverse, including the rise of generative AI and ChatGPT into our lives and schools and the risks involved, certainly got the audience’s attention. Catriona was able to upskill our knowledge and understanding of AI and how we need to prepare ourselves, staff, students, and school communities for the future.



Next up was **Pasi Sahlberg’s** presentation “Rethink – Intrigue – Co-create: Next Agenda for Leading and Learning”. As a former principal for 22 years, I have heard Pasi speak several times. The presentations may have changed throughout the years, but the relevance to our schools and their future is always on point! He delivers a strong message for all leaders to look at the current state of education and emphasises the need to rethink public policy and school reforms. We also saw another side of Pasi during his presentation, the rock and roll guitar player and singer accompanied by support act Ricky, which was a nice surprise for the audience and enjoyed by all!

“Time to Get MAD (mindful and deliberate)”, presented by **Dan Haesler**, was a favourite with the audience. His message was clear for all school leaders to take a moment to think about themselves for a change. By touching on aspects of mindset, emotional intelligence, and habits, school leaders will be able to view wellbeing as an individual and collective responsibility. He left us with some insights, techniques, and tools to use that could enhance our quality of life and relationships.



APPA President **Angela Falkenberg** first gave an APPA update and then presented “Leading in the Now with an Eye on the Future”, relaying an impressive and important message to all. APPA supports all primary principals and Angela’s APPA message was for all principal class officers to complete the relevant surveys that are used to support change in our system. There is currently a lot happening within the APPA scene and Angela’s passion and no-nonsense approach is just the voice we need at the helm. Angela’s message in her keynote presentation was that our everyday leadership actions ripple outwards into the future, so making good decisions is important. Be careful what you spend your time focusing on in schools.



Dale Sidebottom’s “You Must Be Well to Lead Well” presentation got the audience’s blood pumping, body moving and heart rate soaring. If someone in the audience thought that they could sit still, hide, and veg out, they were wrong. You couldn’t escape the enthusiasm, motivation, and message in Dale’s presentation. He was like an Eveready battery and gave everyone the support resources needed to deliver the message to look after yourself, be grateful, have fun and lead well. A nice little take-home pack, including a book, was a welcome gift for everyone.





VICTORIAN PRINCIPALS ASSOCIATION

CONNECTED UNITED EMPOWERED

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES:

The Victorian Principals Association aspires to:

- **Positively impact** the education agenda for primary educators in Victorian Government Schools
- **Promote** the profession of teaching and school leadership, and government education
- **Advocate** on behalf of government primary school leaders and students
- **Formulate** appropriate position statements relating to government primary education and communicate these to the wider education community
- **Provide a structure** for the exchange of ideas and initiatives between government school leaders in Victoria
- **Network** with other organisations and individuals sharing a commitment to government primary education

The VPA works with the following organisations in representing school leaders:

PASS -Principals' Association of Specialist Schools; **VASSP** – Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals; **CEP** – Country Education Project; **AEU** – Australian Education Union; **APF** – Australian Principals' Federation; **AGPPA** – Australian Government Primary Principals Association; **APPA** – Australian Primary Principals Association

OUR VISION

Outstanding & Courageous leadership; Exemplary inclusive schools.

OUR MISSION

To influence Victorian state education through inspiring and progressive school leadership, ensuring all students receive the highest quality education.

WE VALUE

Collegiality, Integrity, Learning, Commitment & Representation.

VPA STRATEGI

The VPA is the professional association by school leaders who educate primary leaders and actively advocates for them Education, Government and key stakeh

PROFESS LEARNING

Objective:

To provide access quality and relev learning for scho

Actions:

- Seek input from professional le relevant and co learning oppo their needs.
- Work with Dep and external p of leadership a health and wel building for all journey.
- Provide valued professional le leaders through conference.
- Promote and st Awards Progra members.
- Facilitate VPA I

Outcome:

VPA professional leaders' capacity complexities of the focus on self-care

C DIRECTION 2023 - 2024

that recognises the opportunities and challenges that are faced
y school students. The VPA represents government school
n through amplifying their voice with the Department of
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and wellbeing.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES & SUPPORT

Objective:

To provide high quality professional
services and support to school leaders.

Actions:

- Ensure member advisors are available to support and assist school leaders
- Identify and contact newly appointed and acting principals.
- Mentor and coach individuals and visit schools as required.
- Establish regular VPA network meetings with an additional focus on unserved and growth areas of Victoria.
- Utilise virtual tools to ensure inclusiveness for all members, regardless of their geographic location.

Outcomes:

Members receive timely collegiate and professional support and advice.
Leaders will continue to develop the tools and resources to effectively support them in their role.

PROFESSIONAL ADVOCACY

Objectives:

To advocate for, and on behalf of
school leaders.
To enhance and promote the wellbeing
of school leaders.

Actions:

- Provide ongoing communication with, and feedback to members regarding current issues and the VPA's position and advocacy role on their behalf.
- Develop and implement a media and marketing strategy to promote the work of the VPA and our positions on key topics.
- Identify and work with Department of Education to resource the appropriate support that enhances the wellbeing of school leaders.
- Liaise with other professional peak bodies on issues i.e., PASS, VASSP, CEP, APF.
- Represent the VPA on AGPPA and APPA, ensuring a Victorian perspective is added to the Federal agenda.

Outcomes:

The voice of Victorian school leaders is heard and responded to through dialogue between members, the Department of Education, Government and key stakeholders.
The wellbeing of Victorian primary school leaders is significantly improved.



VPA Alumni Revitalisation

Esther Wood
Principal,
Burwood Heights PS

We are all extremely proud of the VPA's accomplishments over the last 52 years and it is indeed an honour, as a current VPA Board member, to lead the VPA Alumni Working Party. This is comprised of principal class members, recently retired principals, current Alumni members and VPA staff. The aim and purpose of the VPA Alumni is to promote activities, events and valued contributions to the VPA and to grow its membership base as well as have a strong collegiate focus.

A well-attended lunch gathering of Alumni and potential members was held in July. It was clear from this event that interest in the VPA Alumni was strong. Throughout the year we have encouraged and invited Alumni members to attend the VPA conference sessions, submit articles for publication in VPA e-letters and journals, become involved in Principals Day celebrations, join the Alumni Facebook group, attend VPA regional meetings and take up opportunities to contribute to the education community. Further Alumni events are planned for later in 2023.

Connection is the key. Becoming a VPA Alumni member is the start of a new chapter in one's life. I am confident that we can become a wonderful group of educators who continue to engage as individuals and as a community in the educational arena and who remain connected for years to come.

Join the VPA Alumni group and experience all that it has to offer. Reminisce, reunite, and reignite your educational fervour as you connect with colleagues, old and new.

VPA Alumni membership is open to former Department of Education employees who have held principal class positions.

Further information and membership applications can be found on the VPA website:
<https://www.vpa.org.au/>



Esther Wood has been a member of the VPA for over 20 years and is currently an active member of the VPA Board.



Member Advisors' Report

**Geoff Agnew,
Deborah Patterson,
and Meenah Marchbank**
VPA Member Advisors

Much of the education dialogue in recent months has focused on teacher shortages, workload concerns and staff and school morale. While endeavouring to manage these ongoing concerns and maintain the “good order” of the school and community, leaders have consistently put their own wellbeing on hold and prioritised others over themselves. While this is admirable, and it’s what dedicated leaders regularly do, unfortunately it comes at a cost and as such, we see many principals and assistant principals reaching a point where strategic action is required to ensure they don’t succumb to these additional pressures. If school leaders’ health and wellness is impacted then their ability to lead well is seriously compromised. When principals are mentally and emotionally well, they are more likely to make effective decisions, communicate better and lead their schools more efficiently.

We continue to highlight the evidence from principal health and wellbeing surveys that show how the ever-increasing workload impacts significantly on school leaders, leaving little, if any, time to be educational leaders focusing on teaching and learning.

We urge all school leaders to consider requests to complete surveys, particularly those directly related to health and wellbeing. These surveys

and the evidence obtained from them are crucial in further reinforcing the message of an overwhelming workload, all too often with unrealistic timelines and its physical and emotional toll.

Staff shortages have impacted many programs, with over 2,000 vacancies advertised in August 2023. The subsequent overload has also resulted in an increasing number of teachers leaving their schools, exacerbating this situation. While the media continues to tell us “how to do the job” despite having little or no experience, the federal government has set up a consultation process to develop strategies to support schools and teachers as we navigate the current complex educational environment. They are also consulting with universities regarding initial teacher education – another area fraught with criticism. The VPA is well represented in these consultations by our President, Andrew Dalgleish and Board Members.

Member Advisors have been able to support our members in adapting to the changing face of human resourcing. The Department’s increased initiatives to help staff our schools include streamlining advertising and hiring processes as well as allowing those who are in their final year of study to obtain Permission to Teach (PTT), so that

they can fill some of the vacancies. The additional advantage of this is that schools can be involved in training teachers on the job, which could be considered the best way to prepare pre-service teachers to learn their craft. It also gives schools the opportunity to invest in the professional learning and mentoring of these PTT staff and select capable teachers for their school. Other initiatives include advertising graduate teaching positions as ongoing and the Teacher Re-engagement program. We can only hope that the Victorian Government's scholarship program being offered to secondary trainees becomes available in other sectors.

Following several years of restricted involvement, it has been encouraging to hear that throughout 2023, schools have been "fully open" to their communities as they welcome parents and community members to participate in learning expos, school presentations, productions, assemblies and day-to-day activities. Not only does this involvement provide an opportunity for parents and community members to be more engaged in their children's educational journey, but it also contributes to creating a more vibrant and connected school environment.

Throughout the year member advisors have seen firsthand the impact that the implementation of the Victorian Government Schools Agreement has had on principal-staff relationships. There have been local disputes about interpretation, especially regarding the allocation of teacher work and the 30 + 8 regulation. Despite these challenges, we have been able to assure our members that they are working well within the parameters of the agreement, following department policy and protocol.

Many schools have severely slashed camps as the ability to manage, staff and provide an acceptable camping program has become increasingly more difficult. The Fair Work Commission's determination in relation to the time in lieu arrangements for camps has created some interesting commentary and will hopefully assist schools to better plan and operate appropriate camping programs – at least in the short term!

The year has not been without other hot topics that have kept us extremely busy, assisting members to resolve concerns and navigate their way through difficult times. Some of the major issues have been:

- Workforce management – family leave, face-to-face hours for staff, temporary transfers, translation to ongoing process, managing complaints process
- School management – finance/SRP, time in lieu funding, process and allocation
- Wellbeing/welfare checks – including follow-up from previous contacts
- Providing guidance through misconduct/performance-management process
- Merit Board support – preparation for MPB hearings
- Support for VAPA process and applying for principal class positions
- Placement policy – school zones and enrolment information for 2024, new statewide Foundation Enrolment timeline.

As a professional organisation, the VPA has continued its support and advocacy for our members as they have dealt with the challenges of 2023, providing information, clarity, and referral where necessary to better understand policy, processes, and initiatives.

Membership

Our membership data is looking very positive as we edge ever so close to welcoming our 1,000th member. At the time of writing we have 990 members and are hopeful that the magical 1,000 will be reached in the next few weeks.

As of 31 August 2023, we have welcomed 123 new members – a 46% increase compared with the same time in 2022 (84).



Deborah Patterson

Deborah Patterson has been a principal for 22 years and joined the VPA team this year as a Member Advisor.

Geoff Agnew

Geoff Agnew has more than 20 years' experience as a principal. He has been with the VPA for seven years as a Member Advisor.

Meenah Marchbank

Meenah Marchbank was a principal for 22 years and has been a VPA Member Advisor for 10 years.



VPA President Andrew Dalglish leading a Regional Meeting in the Grampians

The year that was 2023 – overview from the Executive Officer

Gaye Aldridge
VPA Executive Officer

2023 VPA Board

We thank the hardworking VPA Board and State Council members acknowledged below for their commitment and passion in supporting all VPA members.



From left: Matt Borg, Vicki Miles, Damien Keel, Gaye Aldridge, Andrew Dalglish, Cheryle Osborne, Michelle Nunn, Kathie Arnold, and Deborah Grossek

Absent: Anne-Maree Kliman, Board Member; Jo Menzel, Board Member; Esther Wood, Board Member

2023 State Council Members and Convenors

Simon Anderson, **Kathie Arnold**, Leon Bell, Ruth Biddle, Michael Block, Matthew Borg, Jodie Bray, **Robyn Brooks**, Glenn Butler, Jennifer Cox, Deb Crane, **Lachlan Day**, **Megan Dell**, Darry Diment, **Adam Downes**, Robert French, Julie Gilbert, **Maria Giordano**, Deborah Grossek, Andrew Harrison, Glenda Harry, **Deb Humphries**, Mandy Jones, **Damien Keel**, Senka King, Anne-Maree Kliman, Jason Lee, **Steven Leed**, **Sue Leighton-Janse**, Justin Marshman, Kirshy McAinch, **Michael McLean**, Jo Menzel, Vicki Miles, Michelle Nunn, Lynn Ordish, Cheryle Osborne, **Robert Parker**, Cameron Peverett, Corey Pohlner, Oliver Reeve, Tami-Jo Richter, **Christian Smith**, Melanie Stewart, Wendy Truett, Frank Vetere, **Daniel Watson**, Esther Wood, Donna Wright.

*Convenors in bold

2023 VPA Office

The VPA has a small but talented office staff committed to providing the best possible service for its members.

Our Member Advisors, Geoff Agnew, Meenah Marchbank and Deborah Patterson, are responsible for providing confidential information and support to members on all matters and are able to provide timely and accurate information or direct members to where this information can be found. Member Advisor services are only a phone call or email away.

Our administration staff, Sue O'Connor, Sonia Novak, Theodoula Vorenas, Joanna Feely, Juliet Cerolini and Breanna Dooley-Axup, have varied roles covering everything from processing membership applications; developing VPA communications, including the website, social media and e-letters; organising regional meeting assisting with events; answering queries; working with Business Partners; and managing the plethora of financial, legal and regulatory requirements of running an association.





2023 Events

Joanna Feely
Communications and
Digital Officer, VPA

The team at the VPA has been busy running a wide variety of events this year to support our members and improve the working lives of the principal class members at Victorian government schools.

VPA State Council and Board Planning Session

2-3 March 2023

Our 2023 State Council and Board Planning Session was held at RACV Torquay.

Speakers:

- The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP – Minister for Education and Minister for Women
- Chris Egan – Positive Psychology practitioner
- David Howes – Deputy Secretary, Schools and Regional Services, Department of Education
- Andrea Del Monaco – Deputy Secretary, Schools Workforce, Department of Education
- John Hendry – Director of Student Welfare, Geelong Grammar School
- Linda Blakis – Professional Practice Manager, Victorian Institute of Teaching

Board and Business Partner Lunch

31 March 2023

In late March, VPA's Board and our valued Business Partners, whose generosity allows us to support primary school leaders to improve student education, gathered at Bistro Guillaume in Southbank. This was a wonderful opportunity for the VPA to show appreciation to our business partners and for Board Members to network with guests.



State Council Meetings

May and July 2023

VPA Councillors and Board Members meet several times a year to collaborate, discuss current DE policies, provide feedback to educational stakeholders, and ensure the ongoing interconnectedness of VPA representatives from around the state.

In 2023, we had the opportunity to hear from some wonderful speakers such as:

- Representatives from Apple, Ed Wittich, Joshua Levy and Simon Shaw, with an update about the Apple Project Shield Pilot
- Mohammad Zahran and Jarrod Sutton from Disability Inclusion Program, DE
- Justin McDonnell from the DE Mental Health in Primary Schools Program and Mental Health Menu
- Department of Education Regional Directors, Chris Thompson and Angela Singh
- Michelle Wilson, Principal of Sebastopol Primary School and winner of the 2019 Study Award for the category Developing Others – Building Capacity
- School leaders, Joanna Stafford, Phil Coloca, Frank Vetere and Charles Branciforte, in a panel discussion about opening a new school

Alumni and Friends Lunch

July 2023

The VPA held a special lunch event for our Alumni members and friends on Friday 11 July. It was great to see so many familiar faces. We had a wonderful afternoon catching up with school leaders who still have a passion for the work of the VPA and school principals across our state.

Regional Network Meetings

VPA President Andrew Dalglish dedicates time each term to visit educational regions around Victoria to meet with local convenors and stakeholders to hear firsthand the current issues and concerns facing principals. These meetings are an opportunity for members and non-members alike to have their voices heard, enjoy regional collegiality, engage with VPA Business Partners and meet directly with representatives from the Department of Education.



Principals' Day 2023

August 2023

Victorian government school principal class leaders work incredibly hard to support their teachers, students and the wider school community. Principals' Day is a day to celebrate their leadership and educational successes.

In 2023, the day fell on Friday 4 August, and it was such a joy to see the fun and unique ways it was celebrated. From special assemblies and fresh flowers to creative art displays and heartfelt messages, each school community had their own way of showing thanks and appreciation.

Since the VPA initiated the day more than 20 years ago, the day has spread nationwide and is celebrated as far away as Perth.

Virtual Network Meetings

In addition to our regular Network Meetings, we also run two Virtual Network meetings each term. Virtual Network Meetings were born out of necessity during COVID but have proven so successful that we've continued to run them even after the world reopened. Principals are busy people. It isn't always possible for them to attend an in-person Network Meeting, but we still want to hear what they have to say. These Virtual Network Meetings are another measure to enable the interconnectedness of our members and ensure that our stakeholders are given the opportunity to contribute to our conversations.



VPA Annual Conference

August 2023

The 2023 Annual Conference was a highly successful event held over two days at the Pullman Hotel in Albert Park, just south of the Melbourne CBD.

The event kicked off with pre-conference networking drinks for delegates and Business Partners, followed by an action-packed day of key speakers and a gala dinner and study awards ceremony on Thursday evening. Friday continued with some inspirational key speakers and wrapped up with everyone enjoying lunch together.

The 2023 conference theme was Future Schools, Future Leaders. This event was a fantastic opportunity to explore the rapidly evolving landscape of education and hear from speakers who lead us in a range of ways to consider how we can prepare our schools and ourselves as leaders to meet the challenges not just of today but into the future.

Delegates heard from Dr Catriona Wallace, Pasi Sahlberg, Angela Falkenberg, Louka Parry and Dale Sidebottom, all of whom shared valuable knowledge with the cohort. Deborah Patterson was the MC again in 2023, and she did a fabulous job of keeping the crowd engaged and on schedule.

VPA Study Award

August 2023

Congratulations to the recipients of the 2023 VPA Study Award: Susan Knight, Principal of Canadian Lead Primary School, and Kate Robinson Principal of Mount Pleasant Primary School, whose joint submission proposed the two principals visit Challis Community Public School in southeastern Perth to uncover how to maximise community resources and build strong, sustainable, thriving schools.



Life Members Luncheon

October 2023

Our 2023 Life Members Luncheon was held on 20 October at the No. 35 Restaurant at the Sofitel on Collins Street in the Melbourne CBD. This opportunity provides life members and their partners the chance to come together and celebrate their lifetime of achievements and collegiality through their time in the VPA.

Joanna Feely is Communications and Digital Officer at the VPA.

VPA Business

Partners

The VPA appreciates the support and ongoing relationships with our valued Business Partners.

Not only do they provide financial support so that we can continue providing our membership with professional services and support, they also keep us up to date with industry developments in their areas of expertise.

This year our Platinum Partners are Athas Concepts, Camp Australia, Compass Education and MSP Photography.,

Our Gold partners are Bank First and Woods Furniture.

Our Silver Partners are Aware Super, Elastik, Learning With Technologies, PSW School Uniform, Teachers Health, and Teeth on Wheels.

To show our appreciation of their generous support, we ask that you contact our VPA Business Partners directly when you or your school community are looking for quality education services and products.

We envisage 2024 as another busy year with our Business Partners being actively involved and integral to the success of our member events and programs.

Thank you from all at the VPA.

Please read our VPA Business Partners' advertisements on the following pages to learn more about the services that they offer.

Platinum



Gold



Silver





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We embrace what we like to call, the LIT ideology:

LISTEN – to understand

IDEATE – to imagine and conceive that idea

TARGET – to define achievable KPI's

Some of our key disciplines:

Research, Strategy & Planning,
Branding, Visual Assets,
Sensory Branding & Digital

George Athas
Creative Director
0407.160.273

Athas Concepts
48 Nicholson St.
Abbotsford Vic 3067
Australia

showroom@athasconcepts.com.au
athasconcepts.com.au

School Leader Wellbeing & Parental Dysregulation

Australian principals are facing unprecedented challenges, highlighting the pressing need for support with a 64% increase in “red flag” alerts triggered by principals in 2022, which indicate the serious impact on their quality of life. On top of this, the rise in parental dysregulation towards school teams is a growing concern, impacting the wellbeing of school leaders and staff in 2023.

Camp Australia's latest Insight Series webinar was held in September, with the topic of *Enhancing Wellbeing – Empowering School Leaders*, featuring an expert panel that included Kristen Douglas, Head of School at headspace, Shelley Diamond, Principal at Chipping North Public School, and Warren Jacobson, CEO of from Camp Australia.

The session focused on leadership, mental health, and wellbeing within the education sector with many school leaders gaining valuable insights they can relate to.



Insight Series



You can watch the full recording of the session here

5 key takeaways from the session

1. The importance of Collegiality

Given the isolation that comes with leadership roles in educational settings, it's vital to establish networks among principals for mutual support. By building strong peer connections and having someone dependable to confide in can significantly reduce the stress and isolation often felt by principals and other educational leaders.

2. Every Face Has a Place

In this strategy, school teams convene weekly to discuss and better understand individual students, extending beyond just their classroom teachers. The team answers questions like “Who is this child?” and “Where do they like to play?” to foster a more inclusive and emotionally supportive school environment. This initiative enriches relationships among students, staff, and the community to promote emotional wellbeing for everyone.

3. The Need to Slow Down and Set Boundaries

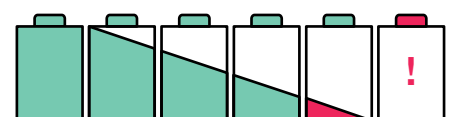
In a culture that often equates busyness with productivity, slowing down may seem counterintuitive. However, taking the time to reflect and set boundaries can improve decision-making and emotional resilience. Implementing reflective practices and mentoring can offer structured environments for safe, candid conversations about challenges and opportunities, allowing leaders to recharge mentally and emotionally.

4. The “Skiing through the Trees and Snow” Metaphor

The “trees and snow” metaphor illustrates the idea that leaders often get bogged down discussing problems (“trees”) they can't control. Instead, the focus should be on actionable areas (“the snow”), creating a more productive and optimistic environment. Striking a balance between addressing problems and spotting opportunities is key for maintaining an optimistic work atmosphere.

5. Balanced Stress Management and Adequate Sleep

While occasional stress (the “red zone”) is normal, it's crucial to avoid constant stress. Being aware of where you are on the stress continuum is essential for effective leadership and wellbeing. Getting adequate sleep is a necessity for effective leadership, emotional regulation, and general wellbeing. It contributes to a balanced mood and energy level, making it easier to manage stress sustainably.



Flourishing Going OK Struggling

“It is okay to visit the red zone. It's totally normal... What is not okay is if you start building a house and you end up living in the red zone.”
- Kristen Douglas



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