**Report from Education Summit 2023**

**Background**

Excessive workload presents as a critical risk to not only school leaders but our public education system. Managing and dealing with principal workload is crucial for maintaining the health and wellbeing of school leaders as well as for ensuring that they are able to fulfill their roles and responsibilities effectively.

Two recent reports highlight the extend and impact of the problem relating to excessive workload:

1. The Australian Principal Occupational Health & Wellbeing Survey 2022 Data Report identified that the two top stressors on school leaders were the sheer quantity of work and lack of time to focus on teaching and learning.
2. The 2022 Review of the National School Reform Agreement by the Australian Productivity Commission reports that principalsspend a great share of their time on administration, along with leadership tasks and meetings, while on average spending just five per cent on the professional learning for school staff.

**Education Summit**

On the 17th March 2023 Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals (VASSP), Victorian Principals Association (VPA), Principals Association of Specialist Schools (PASS), Country Education Partnership (CEP), and Australian Principals Federation (APF), held an Education Summit in response to a growing concern of Principal workload issues and the data relating to Health and Wellbeing of school leaders.

Sixty experienced Principals from across Victoria and cross sector (Primary, Secondary and Special School) were invited. They represented the various organisations that coordinated this event. The focus of the discussion centred on the challenges that are faced daily by school leadersin the role of leading their teaching and learning communities, and what areas of accountability and compliance take them away from their core business.

From the outset of the discussions held, strong direction was given that this was not to be a negative discussion but the opportunity to be creative and positive in thinking differently for shaping the future support needed for school leaders.

The discussionat the tables focussed on the following areas-

* What the core functions of schools are and what they should be responsible for.
* What the role of a contemporary school leaders comprises.
* The resources schools require to achieve this.
* Evidence which demonstrates the unrelenting work experience.

**As a result of the round table discussions the information gathered presented strong themes related to the following areas.**

1. **Compliance and administrative tasks impact significantly on time and Principal wellbeing**.

* Must explore avenues to negate.
* Where possible look to centralise tasks.
* Support the funding of staff at the school level to have responsibility for key administrative and compliance tasks - e.g., operations or facilities manager.

1. **Impact of staff shortages and development.**

* Availability, cost and quality of new staff impacts on school functioning.
* Process for thedevelopment and support of staff.
* Greater engagement between principals and ITE providers to engage staff that are work ready.
* Process to recruit and retain staff.

Address matters and provide flexible options to address attainment, development, and retention of effective teachers.

* Structures to ensure quality of new graduates- working closely with Universities to better prepare pre-service teachers.
* Adapt and reform education system to meet purpose of schooling.

1. **Principal supports to build ability to focus on core business.**

* Department of Education (DE), and Senior Education Improvement Leaders (SEILs) look to provide support rather than ensure compliance.
* Networks and clusters- Principals to have greater influence on composition and direction.
* Complex matters externally managed and supported by key organisations (e.g.: Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, (FFH Services).

Principals needing greater whole of government cooperation.

* Connections with relevant organisations- APF, CEP, PASS, VASSP, VPA and collegiate networks.
* Realistic timelines and expectations (Schedule B to be reviewed) which are differentiated to consider individual school context.
* Consultative process with principals as per VGSA 2022.
* System must adjust expectations for principals, particularly regarding administrative tasks and the number of responsibilities they are expected to manage.
* System must recognise and adjust expectations to take account of individual school context (e.g., primary, secondary, special, metro, rural).

1. **Review regional office structures.**

* Redeploy teaching qualified staff into schools, particularly in light of current staff shortages.
* Review SEILs role to support not to be compliance officers, time to be on the ground.
* What current roles are most effective, how to structure staffing to better support schools.
* Consider review and re-structure of regions in order to better meet needs of schools and wider system.

It was strongly expressed that if the above focus areas were considered, then there may be a direct impact on improving Principals ability to give explicit focus to the following work-

* Focus on Teaching and Learning.
* Ensuring structure are in place to support Wellbeing of staff and students.
* Development and leadershipof school culture.
* Building and enhancingcommunity connections and relationships with key stakeholders.

Excessive workload is a system-based problem and if conditions are to be improved, our system must advocate for policy and operational changes that facilitate the reduction and re-distribution of the workload for school leaders.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss any of the areas identified and provide additional supportive information if needed.

**Signed**

Colin Axup, President, **Victorian Association of State Secondary Principal**

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Andrew Dalgleish, President, **Victorian Principals Association**

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Tina King, President, **Victorian Branch Australian Principals Federation**

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Mark McLay, Chief Executive Officer, **Country Education Partnership**

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Cameron Peverett, President, **Principals Association of Specialist Schools**

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------