

2021

DISCUSSION PAPER



VICTORIAN
CATHOLIC
PRIMARY
PRINCIPAL TERMS
AND CONDITIONS

PROPOSED TO:

Catholic Education Community Victoria

ORGANISED BY:

Victorian Association of Catholic Primary School
Principals Inc

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Victorian Association of Catholic Primary School Principals (VACPSP) acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, sea country and waterways across Victoria on which we proudly gather and commit ourselves to the pursuit of educational excellence and opportunity for young people. We honour and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS DISCUSSION PAPER

Please contact VACPSP Inc President, Michael Gray

president@vacsp.org.au

0408 527 728

THE VACPSP

The Victorian Association of Catholic Primary School Principals (VACPSP) is the peak professional body for Catholic primary school Principals in Victoria.

Since formal establishment in 2007, the VACPSP has supported the role of all Principals in Catholic primary schools across Victoria, focusing on the professional and personal wellbeing of its members. The VACPSP delivers strong advocacy for, support of and representation of its Principal members on matters associated with their role within the Catholic system and education generally.

Boasting membership of 80% of Catholic primary Principals in Victoria, the VACPSP is formally connected to the Australian Catholic Primary Principals Association (ACPPA) and the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA).

The Association is primarily focused on supporting Principals to lead with a strong courageous voice, promoting educational excellence in a contemporary Catholic primary school context.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Ahead of the forthcoming enterprise bargaining agreement discussions, the VACPSP is seeking to proffer information and guidance about the necessary support and conditions for Victorian Catholic primary school Principals to ensure their ongoing success and value in their role.

This discussion paper seeks to identify and discuss elements of the role of Catholic primary school Principals which drive positive student outcomes to ensure the relevant discussions are informed by appropriate information and considerations.

PURPOSES

01

Identify the elements of the Principal role that drive improved student outcomes

03

Analyse the available options for improving the quality of Catholic primary Principals in Victoria

02

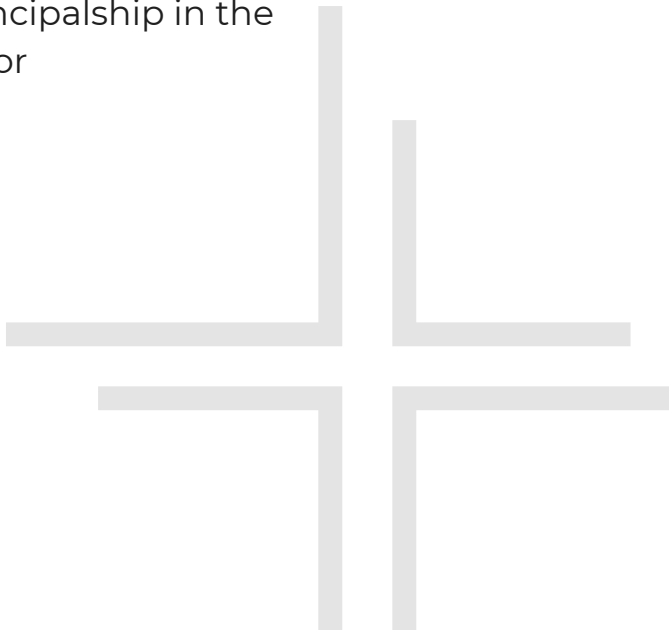
Explore the link between quality principalship and improved student outcomes

04

Make recommendations for conditions and support that will enhance the role of Catholic primary Principals.



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FOREWORD

The role of the school Principal in the 21st century is one of the most exciting and significant undertaken by any person in our society. Across Victoria, committed, resourceful and creative Catholic school principals have helped create learning communities of achievement and faith; built on respectful relationships, student safety, and engagement with communities. Importantly, Principal leadership in our state has been future focused and committed to high levels of learning for all.

The commitment and dedication of Principals has been highlighted during the global pandemic. The defining global event of this generation has been managed through constructive partnership between parish, education offices, government health departments and educational authorities. There have been regular public statements by education directors and government supporting school leadership in the crisis; the comments have affirmed constructive partnerships with parents, engagement of students and the outstanding professional support of staff to supporting all students.

The social, political and regulatory landscape of schools and school leadership in recent years have experienced major shifts. Higher level accountability, heightened policy attention and greater scrutiny on educational outcomes have altered expectations for what leaders need to know, how they undertake their role and the educational outcomes that they produce in their schools.

As a result, a stronger spotlight has been placed on the relationship between quality school leaders and higher student outcomes. Causal links between student performance and the quality of the Principal of a school are being identified and strengthened, emphasising the need for constant progression of leadership quality in Victorian schools to ensure ongoing enhancement of student performance and wellbeing.

Longitudinal studies exploring the link between quality principalship and student outcomes have determined that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school[1]. Principals who lead a school-wide commitment to seeing every student learning successfully and working toward their potential are highly effective. [2]

As the scope of the educational leader's role and functions have broadened and become more complex, so too has the profile of the Australian student diversified and community expectations raised. The trend of greater pressure on schools, and school leaders, is evident not only in Australia, but internationally. There has been a global societal shift that has placed greater pressure on Principals to cater to every child's needs. [3] There has also been greater pressure for administrative and regulatory compliance and transparency of all educational institutions. All of these changes have created a highly-charged landscape for all stakeholders with principals at the centre and has resulted in increased stress and demands and even violence toward teachers and Principals.[4]

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Educational leadership researcher, Michael Fullan, writing in his article, 'The Principalship has Changed, 2020 Here We Come', makes a salient point, "Principalship is definitely one of the most critical roles imaginable for society." Pope Benedict XVI, in his address to Catholic Educators in 2008, encapsulated the importance of education and teaching to the Mission of the Church; he said "Education is integral to the Mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News". Benedict also said that the "task of a teacher is not simply to impart information or to provide training in skills intended to deliver some economic benefit to society, education is not and must never be considered purely utilitarian. It is about forming the human person, equipping people to live life to the full."

Dr Jillian de Araugo, Research Assistant (HALT) – Leadership and Development (Melbourne Archdiocesan Catholic Education), writing in her publication 'Learning Directions' recently shared research findings; "that for sustained improvement to occur at a system and school level, evidence indicates that leadership has to be developed over time. Attracting, recruiting and retaining school leaders, as well as clear succession planning and the development of future leaders, are all critical to organisational success." [5]

Noting the undoubted importance of the role of the Principal and the fact that the Catholic education sector in Victoria has a new Enterprise Bargaining Award to consider; and on behalf of the Catholic Primary School profession and working Principals across Victoria, I share the following:

- Principalship as a social institution has changed gradually over time, but within the last few years this change has gathered at a 'galloping' pace. [6]
- Catholic primary school education in Victoria is driven by Principal leaders committed to excellence, creativity, evidence, a sense of hope, and the Mission of the Church.
- Principals place young people at the centre of learning.
- To meet the growing needs, demands, hope and aspirations of the Church and the Catholic primary school educational community; high quality leadership is critical.
- Diocesan leadership support Principals to drive higher student outcomes through appropriate support and conditions, ultimately resulting in Victorian Catholic primary schools continuing to be the cornerstone of pastoral, highly successful learning, care of young people and their communities.
- Dialogue and engagement with the school's sponsoring parish community and parish priest is important to the Catholic identity and life of the school.

It is the view of the VACPSP that it is now timely to elevate a special focus on the terms and conditions of Principalship in the Victorian Catholic education award to ensure Principalship vitality, professional growth and the leadership skills to lead Catholic primary schools into the future.

As we are all aware, the current educational landscape pressures and demands on Principals are growing and this is taking a toll on their health and wellbeing. Informed discussions about the conditions of Catholic primary school principals must take place at a diocesan, state and federal level.

On behalf of Catholic primary school Principals of Victoria, I thank all those involved in the preparation of this paper. I trust that continued reflection and dialogue between Principals, schools, employers and the community will ensure leadership of Catholic primary schools remains central to the Church's mission in education and the aspiration for dedicated vocational educators.

Michael Gray

President, VACPSP Inc

INTRODUCTION

The role of the Principal of a school in the 21st century is one of the most exciting and significant undertaken by any person in our society. Principals help to create the future. Principals are responsible and accountable for the development of children and young people so that they can become 'successful learners, confident creative individuals and active informed citizens'

SCHOOLING, AUSTRALIA

Over the last three decades, the Australian Education Council has led the publication of the Education Declaration for the Australian community. This Declaration outlines the key goals for schooling in Australia. Past declarations have been signed in Hobart, Adelaide and Melbourne. The educational goals for Australia, as articulated in the document, are excellence & equity for all; young learners being successful, confident, creative, and as they continue to grow to develop into active informed citizens. In 2019, and updated in 2020, The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration confirmed the Australian goals and also recognised the challenge for young people to thrive in a time of rapid social and technological change, and complex environmental, social and economic challenges.

SCHOOLING, CATHOLIC AUTHORITY

In Victoria, Catholic Primary Schools are established under the authority of the Bishop in their diocese and registered with the Victorian Qualifications and Registration Authority (VRQA). In Victoria, there are four dioceses – Melbourne, Ballarat, Sandhurst (Bendigo) and Sale. The Victorian Catholic schools comprise the sixth largest education system in Australia and are characterised by a diverse range of settings in terms of size, type and student educational need. The schools serve families from a wide socio-economic background, various geographical locations (both metropolitan and regional) and are highly attentive to the needs of their community.

The Catholic primary school in Victoria is funded by a combination of government and parent income. The CECV document "Allocating Government Grants to Catholic Schools in Victoria June 2020" reports the funding, which includes both recurrent and capital; as Commonwealth contribution as approximately 55%, Victorian State Government approximately 15% and private income (fees, donations and other) 30%. [7]

As outlined by the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) document 'The Framework for Formation for Mission in Catholic Education,' it is well known that Catholic schools in Australia educate one in five Australian young people; in Victoria in 2019 the sector share was 20.3%. [8]

Nationally, and in Victoria, Catholic primary schools have been part of the Australian education story for over 200 years. Catholic schools welcome students from disadvantaged backgrounds and have a growing proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with disabilities. Many schools are outside major cities and regional centres. In Victoria, the full-time staff workforce head count, based on the August school census was 13,882.

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Fundamentally, for a Catholic primary school education, schools must strive “for the complete formation of the human person”[9] and ensure the Catholic ethos underpins all operations of the school and school community. Principals must proactively demonstrate a commitment to creating and maintaining an inclusive school environment that is welcoming, respectful, safe, fair and equitable. In doing so, Principals place a high priority on the development of the whole person; connecting with community and ensuring the religious dimension of the Catholic school is central to the school identity, the school's vision, mission and values. To enact the religious dimension in their school, Principals are required to found their actions, decisions and communications in the person of Jesus Christ as it comes to us through the Good News.

It was Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB and Chair of the Bishops Commission for Catholic Education, who succinctly summarized this school endeavour. In 2016, he articulated the impact of Catholic schools as “an extraordinary contribution to the social fabric of our society and one of the primary ways in which the Catholic Church seeks to play a constructive role in Australian society.” Principals are central to this endeavour.

SCHOOLING, LEADERSHIP

Successful schools require quality leadership. Schools led by highly effective Principals demonstrate a passionate and consistent drive for identifying and meeting the needs of all students. The Principal in these schools leads a community-wide appreciation and motivation for, and a commitment to a single, deep-seated moral purpose to see every student learning successfully and working toward their potential.

As leadership is second only to teaching in driving strengthened student outcomes,[10] it is imperative that Principals are empowered to deliver consistently high outcomes in their leadership roles. As the scope of the educational leader's role and functions have broadened and become more complex, the requirements and conditions of current serving Principals has become disparate with their role, resulting in compromised environments for effective Principal functioning.

The ability of Principals to engage and lead the school to higher levels of effectiveness in meeting individual student needs has been imperilled by ever-increasing red-tape and administrative burden. Considerations that, whilst essential to the proper functioning of a safe and effective educational institution, are taking valuable time away from the capacity of Principals to directly impact student outcomes.

In order for Catholic education in Victoria to continue to improve and grow, and in turn, the furtherance of the commitment to renewing religious education across Australia, Principals must be empowered and supported to thrive in their role.

SCHOOLING, AN EFFECTIVE PRINCIPAL

This discussion paper, and the recommendations that are informed by it, are driven by the Australian Professional Standard for Principals (The Standard), as developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AISTL). The Standard sets out what school

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VICTORIAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY EDUCATION AT A GLANCE



1 in 5 students attend Catholic school



397 Primary Schools in Victoria



112,254 Primary School Students
in Victoria



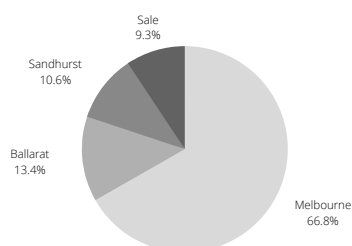
4 Dioceses



13,882 FTE staff



Language background
other than English



Breakdown of number of schools

Principals are expected to know, understand and do to succeed in their work. The Standard recognises three Leadership Requirements that a principal will draw upon, within five areas of Professional Practice. The Standard takes full account of the crucial role played by Principals in raising student achievement, creating learning environments that foster and promote equity and excellence, community engagement and the development of an education system that effectively responds to the demands of 21st century society.

The most effective leaders see learning as central to their professional lives. This discussion paper is aimed at guiding discussions relevant to the Catholic education enterprise and the employment terms and conditions for Catholic primary school Principals that will support them to foster and implement a desire for continued learning, development and excellence. Appropriately supported Principals will be empowered to develop and support teaching and learning cultures within their schools that maximise impacts on student learning and ultimately drive enhanced student outcomes.

Importantly, this discussion paper and the guiding principles of the Standard emphasise the need for a balanced approach to leadership support. The varied practices and requirements of Principals to effectively undertake their role are, at all times, fully interdependent, integrated and with no hierarchy implied. Absence or deficiency in one of the requirements of Principalship will impact on the other areas and their wholistic effectiveness of their performance. Accordingly, only when conditions afforded to Principals address, support and enhance each of the pillars of successful leadership, can the capacity and quality of leadership across the state be enhanced.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLING VICTORIA, IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORKS

Across the four Victorian Catholic educational jurisdictions the work of a Principal is particularly outlined in each dioceses' continuous school improvement frameworks and role descriptions. These documents are embedded in school improvement research, the context of the values and beliefs of the local Catholic church, and the role and Mission of Catholic schools in their communities.

PRINCIPALSHIP - ENERGIZE FOR IMPACT (STUDENT OUTCOMES)



Catholic primary schools must be places where people feel free, safe and supported. The Catholic primary school must also achieve learning for all and demonstrate, as central to its purpose, the integrity of its Catholicity in inspiration and in nature.

Educational leadership continues to play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians. In the Catholic primary school setting Principals are responding to God's call to bring to life the Gospel vision.

The funnel graphic highlights the professional role of leadership and the subsequent impact that is achieved on long term improvement to student outcomes when leadership is research based (ATSIL), aligned across the greater Catholic education system through School Improvement Plans, and Principals have clarity in their role.

Loving and generous God,
Awaken us to your presence as we continue to discern what is life-giving, empowering and sustainable for the good of all in the communities we serve.

May our inspiration and commitment deepen as we reflect on and respond to the vision of the Gospel and the voice of the Spirit.

Transform us in and through our sacred work so that we radiate for others the compassion of God leaning down into the frailty of life and the daily realities of our service for others.

Amen.

- Mission Discernment, 'A resource for decision making the Catholic Tradition, August 2012.



PRINCIPALSHIP: ENERGIZE FOR IMPACT (STUDENT OUTCOMES)



Great leaders make great schools.

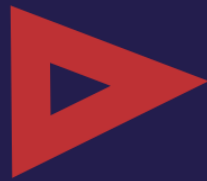
Effective and high-impact school leadership draws on a range of leadership practice and factors to raise student achievement at all levels and stages. The practice of leadership involves a pursuit of positive impact, drawing on a range of roles. Ensuring the ongoing betterment of student outcomes for Victorian Catholic primary schools requires ongoing support for principals to enhance their skills and capacity in each of the elements of their role.



ENHANCING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY WILL LEAD TO

- Stronger operational skills optimising stewardship and management of resources
- Greater relational skills through modelling, cultural development, values and behaviour
- Building and leading school leadership teams
- Enhanced Strategic planning and decision making

THE GOAL



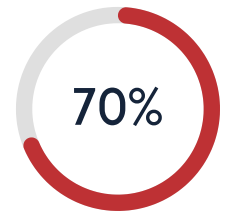
IMPROVED STUDENT OUTCOMES



Continuing the mission of Catholic education to proclaim the Good News and equip our young people with the knowledge, skills and hope to live meaningful lives and enrich the world around them.

CATHOLICITY AND COMMUNITY

The Catholic school has a significant role in the life of the Church. School leaders are more than just managers of an organization. They are true educational leaders responding to God's call to bring alive the Gospel vision. Principals are the first in the institution of the school to take on this responsibility, which is also an ecclesial and pastoral mission rooted in a relationship with the Church's pastors.[11] To enact the religious dimension in their school, Principals are required to found their actions, decisions and communications in the person of Jesus Christ as it comes to us through the Good News.



Students who identify as Catholic

The fundamental task of the Catholic school is:

A synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life: the first is reached by integrating all different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel; the second in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian.[12]

Fundamentally, to ensure the Catholic ethos underpins all operations of the school and school community, Principals must proactively demonstrate a commitment to creating and maintaining an inclusive school environment that is welcoming, fair and equitable. In doing so, Principals place a high priority on respectful relationships, the health and wellbeing of all students and staff, and invite all members of the community to hold themselves to the same standard. Principals are committed to shaping a school community in which teachers are valued as the immediate witnesses in the learning environment and are irreplaceable in their role as faith guides for students.

Practically, Principals must provide opportunities for liturgy, spiritual learning and reflection and play an active role in the planning and development of curriculum, to ensure that Catholicity and the teachings of the Gospel feature prominently in the classroom. To ensure this is effectively implemented, Principals must lead and embed coaching, mentoring, appraisal and professional development on the issues of theology, spirituality and faith formation in their management of staff and educational programs at their school.

Catholic schools in Victoria continue to grow in their importance to the maintenance of the faith within the community. Principals, accordingly, must not only embed Catholic Teaching in their curriculum, but entrench it in the school's policies, procedures and communications to ensure invitational engagement and dialogue with the journey of faith. Catholic schools and, in turn, their Principals foster and enhance meaningful partnerships between parents, parish and school and provide guidance, inspiration and engagement for members of the community and the Church.

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In fact, in the Solidarity Association Atlanta, Georgia document 'The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools' by Archbishop J. Michael Miller points out that papal interventions and Roman documents repeatedly emphasize that certain characteristics must be present for a school to be considered authentically Catholic. "An authentic Catholic school should be inspired by a vision of the supernatural, founded on Christian anthropology, animated by communion and community, imbued with a Catholic world view throughout its curriculum and sustained by the gospel." Principals are required to know this, understand this and then lead this Mission. In Victoria the Principal is supported by their parish, the pastor, the staff, the parent community, and importantly the Catholic education system to do this important work.

The development of new school governance structures in Victoria has changed the formal relationships between schools sponsoring parishes and has impacted the availability of the parish priest. Accordingly, educational communities will need to proactively redefine the partnership between Educators and the Parish Priest to ensure an enriching faith experience at their schools. Diocesan authorities must build specific programs to build and promote this partnership and support Principals to engage appropriately with the parish. The time commitment in pursuing this objective must be recognised.

Over the last few years, the Victorian Catholic educational community recognised the growing challenges for schools to maintain our identity, relevance and impact. Via the Enhancing Catholic School Identity project, researchers identified that Principals are facing "challenging questions regarding the prominence and salience of the living Catholic faith tradition in a context of advancing social secularisation, increasing personal disaffiliation and disengagement with religious traditions, and expanding religious and philosophical diversity."

As the significance of the Principal's role in the Mission of the Church, supporting the faith formation for their community grows, their skills and knowledge to effectively accommodate this must be grown. In the absence of appropriate skills and strategies, the confidence and, in turn, the effectiveness of Principals to provide this guidance lessens.

Further, the increased geographical reach of parishes and the increased demand on Parish Priests delivering masses, sacraments and pastoral care across greater geographical areas is limiting the opportunities for Principals to engage those Priests to provide liturgical opportunities within their school community. More limited opportunities for faith celebrations is increasing the challenges for Principals to continue the engagement of the broader school community in their faith formation and connection with the Church.

Education is integral to the Mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News.

A task of a teacher is not simply to impart information or to provide training in skills intended to deliver some economic benefit to society, education is not and must never be considered purely utilitarian. It is about forming the human person, equipping people to live life to the full.

- Pope Benedict XVI, in his address to Catholic Educators in 2008

RECOMMENDATIONS

Incentivising Principals to prioritise their scripture and theological qualifications and skills will enhance their capacity as community faith leaders. The greater their skill set, the greater the guidance for the community. If Principals are supported, encouraged and rewarded for upskilling on their spiritual journey, this will grow the lived experience in faith for members of their school communities.

To ameliorate the challenges for Principals to provide effective faith leadership in their communities, Principals must be provided with greater ongoing support from their diocesan offices. Greater time, support and access to faith based professional development and resources will enable the Principal to deliver more frequent and more engaging faith based programs at their schools.

Formally entrenched enrichment leave for Principals, and greater flexibility in its application, will also greatly enhance the spiritual and leadership competences for Principals. Great learnings can be had from appropriate spiritual experiences, comprehensive study support with a particularly focus on those that reflect and build upon a Principal's own faith journey.

Increase internal social capital. This can be achieved by identifying schools leading well in Catholic identity, the Mission on the Church in primary school settings and religious education curriculum that is characterised by student engagement, student voice and home/church/parent connection. Formal programs implemented by diocesan education communities to support Principal shadowing and networking to lighthouse schools which are supported with appropriate resourcing.



Incentivise
prioritisation of
scripture and
theological
upskilling



Greater Diocesan
support and
resources



Formally
entrenched
enrichment
leave



Increase
internal social
capital

The "duty of the local Church is to support education"

Cannon law (806) articulates the diocesan Bishop's role as to: "watch over schools in their territory".

- The Congregation for Catholic Education, in the publication 'The Catholic School'

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Leadership matters, but the right kind of leadership matters more. Viviane Robinson, "Teaching and Learning as the Key Domain" and her colleagues conducted a large-scale "best evidence synthesis" of research on the impact of school principals on student achievement. Robinson found five leadership domains that had significant effect sizes (shown in parentheses) on student achievement[13]:

1. Establishing goals and expectations (0.42)
2. Resourcing strategically (0.31)
3. Ensuring quality teaching (0.42)
4. Leading teacher learning and development (0.84)
5. Ensuring an orderly and safe environment (0.27)

There are specific dos and don'ts within each category, but the message they carry as a set is quite clear. The most significant factor—twice as powerful as any other—is "leading teacher learning and development," which is essentially learning leader. Within item 4, Robinson found that the Principal who makes the biggest impact on learning is the one who attends to other matters as well, but, most important, "participates as a learner" with teachers in helping move the school forward. Leading teacher learning means being proactively involved with teachers such that Principal and teachers alike are learning.

For well over 40 years, scholars have built an extensive body of evidence that supports the important role Principals play in helping students learn. Well known and often cited researchers Fullan and Hattie also attest to the importance of school leadership.[14] Hattie's work particularly extended this understanding and identified that some forms of leadership are more impactful than others.

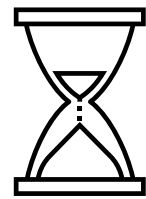
The Principal is a key to the school based responsibility for developing a culture of effective teaching. Creating and driving a culture of quality teaching and learning requires the design and management of systems that ensure student learning outcomes are at the core of all activities. In order to cultivate this high-level culture, Principals must keep up-to-date with, and share, current developments in pedagogy and student engagement with all staff. They must lead staff, students and the community in identifying and planning high-quality teaching and learning.

Importantly Principals need to focus on practices that build student learning; that is helping teachers build technical teaching skills, understand the curriculum, build focused learning, cognisant of a young person's developmental stages and then delivered in support of the school mission with clarity, respect, compassion and accountability.

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This high-level commitment requires daily application of the Principal's function in various forms; self-driven research, effective planning with key staff, driving educational culture through appropriate communications and efforts to gain an understanding of the ground-level effect of their higher-level decision making. Principals must also work closely with other schools and education leaders to share knowledge and experiences that enhance outcomes for students.[14] This will typically involve regular meetings with colleagues within their local area and relevant networks.

Principals have a key responsibility for developing a culture, and the conditions of effective teaching. Effective Principal leadership will provide for strategic direction, with a strong focus on designing and managing quality teaching and learning environments to provide for students' achievement in all aspects of their development. Principals must set high expectations for the whole school through careful collaborative planning, monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of learning. They must implement coaching and mentoring arrangements, observations of classroom teaching, feedback through student surveys, and one-on-one conversations with teachers about their teaching.



Principals must also be open to receiving ideas on education and pedagogical approaches from staff, and take time to understand those ideas to make a determination on their application within their school setting. This, almost invariably, involves hours of self-driven research and review using their own understanding and resources as well as the tools made available to them by their relevant education office.

Once a decision is made about the implementation of an aspect of the curriculum or pedagogical approach, effective management requires a thorough review of that practice. To ensure its effectiveness, Principals must develop a robust approach to reviewing the curriculum and pedagogy to ensure a consistently high-quality environment for learning. For this, they use a variety of evidence, including student achievement and wellbeing data, surveys of parents, students, teachers and the community, informal observations, and anecdotal feedback. This will typically involve personal classroom observation, countless meetings with relevant leaders, review of planning tools and resources, implementing practices for the collection of data to analyse the teaching and learning practices and communication back to all staff on a regular basis. They must then, once appropriate data is available, systematically monitor and report on student progress and have interventions in place to reduce gaps in attainment.

Helpfully, teaching and learning comes second nature to most Principals. As experienced classroom educators turned leaders, their passion for high-level learning outcomes and teaching practices often renders this aspect of the role most effective and most enjoyable. Despite not having sufficient resources and time in their day to balance all aspects and requirements of their role, the additional time, often personal time, taken to avail themselves of current educational practice and research commonly takes priority over other matters.

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OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING LEADERSHIP

The most significant hurdle to the effectiveness of this pillar of Principalship is a lack of time and resources available to enable them to dedicate their efforts to the educational requirements of their school. Whilst Principals commonly consider that the support from their educational offices with respect to tools for educational research and implementation is strong, the lack of appropriate funding to support them in the application of this function results in a compromised performance environment. The Principal's workload is too great, with insufficient support around them to ensure that their educational practice is optimal.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Additional resources to remove other administrative burdens from their role, as well as greater funding for lower level leadership to dedicate greater time and efforts to the educational culture and practices, would assist in enhancing the educational capacity of Catholic primary schools in Victoria.



Greater professional development opportunities and funding, as well as financial recognition for formal study qualifications would also assist to grow the capacity of Principals to deliver high quality outcomes under this leadership pillar. By providing dedicated funding and recognition of the time and need for training on teaching and learning, Principals will be able to appropriately prioritise this function within their leadership application and continue to drive up educational outcomes across the state.



Principals would also benefit from better supported localised professional networks, building the collegiality, knowledge sharing and experience that a team approach can bring. By providing better access to localised support networks, Principals will have focused support that is better able to address local needs and continue to enhance their knowledge, understanding and effective implementation of educational programs, initiatives and cultures.



IMPROVEMENT, INNOVATION AND CHANGE

Highly effective Principals understand that the pursuit of the school's mission depends on a willingness to introduce and lead major change when change is desirable. The principal initiates and leads change in the purposeful pursuit of better outcomes for students.

A crucial part of the Principal's role is to effectively lead and manage innovation and change to ensure the vision and strategic plan is put into action across the school and that its goals and intentions are realised. Principals must be pioneers for improvement, establishing and championing a culture of educational excellence. Principals must develop a system for involving others in shaping the school's strategic direction, on an on-going basis, and articulate a vision that engenders hope and invites others to participate in communicating and implementing it in the day-to-day activities of the school.

In order to do this, Principals must effectively communicate the need for change to the whole-school community in an inspirational and logical way. They must inspire and expect staff to commit to evidence-based improvement, change and innovation that has a positive impact on student learning. They must ensure staff engagement in professional learning that is informed by research-based best practice.

Practically, Principals must develop a process and common language for change and communicate this consistently with staff and other key stakeholders to encourage staff to build consensus and to take individual responsibility for implementing change. Communication of the school's vision with moral purpose and influence is vital. The school culture must be embedded with a commitment to continuous improvement, ensuring research, innovation and creativity are core characteristics of the school.

In order to effectively and consistently drive this high-level educational setting, Principals must make communication with staff an everyday occurrence, constantly reinforcing the school's vision and purpose whilst maintaining the motivation of all staff to commit wholeheartedly to that purpose. Principals must also ensure the message is presented to students, parents, members of the board and other stakeholders in the School community. Practically, this involves fostering, maintaining and delivering information and motivation through a range of mediums to all key stakeholders. Staff meetings, morning briefings, family newsletters, board presentations and proposals as well as advertising material and commentary must be created and delivered by the Principal on a very regular basis.

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To ensure that any change implemented has a positive impact on student learning, Principals must also develop systems to evaluate the outcomes and respond appropriately to those evaluations to refine actions as change is implemented. Building on their curriculum knowledge and teaching experience, Principals must review and monitor all educational programs and activities conducted within the school, assessing them against evidence-based teaching practices to achieve progress toward the articulated vision. This assessment is conducted through a range of personal and group coaching and mentoring arrangements, observations of classroom teaching, feedback through student surveys, and one-on-one conversations with teachers about their teaching. Without trust and of frank two-way conversations with staff in which current practices are reviewed and improved, the best laid plans fall away. All of these undertakings require regular planning, preparation, implementation and review as well as highly tuned communication and conflict management skills to be conducted effectively.

Effective change and innovation must also have regard to social, political and local circumstances. Principals, therefore, must remain connected to the community and up-to-date with trends and factors that impact on student engagement and learning. They must work with senior colleagues, the school councils and other members of the school community to build understanding of, and support for, best practice and proposed innovations throughout the school community.

OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING LEADERSHIP

Administrative burdens and bureaucratic 'red tape' have adverse impacts on Principals' ability to drive this cultural requirement. When under-resourced and under-staffed, Principals can experience difficulty dedicating due time to this aspect of the role over the minutiae of daily schooling. In the absence of sufficiently staffed and resourced teams around them, Principals are left to hold the baton to champion this requirement on their own. Planning, preparing, implementing and reviewing all necessary communications, meetings, programs, reviews and practices without sufficient time and resources in support can result in ineffective practice.

Additionally, slow decision-making processes caused by red tape and bureaucratic hierarchies also adversely impact on the effectiveness of Principals to properly champion and drive improvement, innovation and change. Hampering local level decision making results in significant loss of agility and responsiveness, rendering many change and innovation initiatives sub-optimal and, at times, obsolete prior to their implementation.

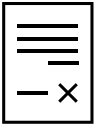


RECOMMENDATIONS

As Principals are acting as a delegated employee, guide, coach and mentor to staff and colleagues, building their capacity to effectively undertake this aspect of their role requires dedicated training and support. Ensuring that Principals are skilled in strategic planning, effective communication and leadership qualities is an absolute must to ensure ongoing improvement underlies Catholic education in Victoria.

Providing consistency and an achievable strategic approach via review of role descriptions for all Principals throughout Victoria would also assist in providing clarity around the role and expectations of them. The reviewed role description would consider the system and school goals. When reviewing the role of a Principal, governing bodies should ensure clarification of the strategic, relationship, operational and systemic obligations of Principals to ensure clarity and consistency across the sector. Recognition of the requirement for Principals to set direction for their schools through connection with the system and local community, develop and model school culture, values and behaviour, provide quality stewardship of schools resources and further the system objectives through faith leadership, professional improvement of teaching staff and the enhancement of curriculum within their schools will grow the understanding of, and appreciation for, the role of a Principal.

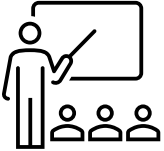
Strengthening Principal connected autonomy, particularly regarding local-level curriculum decision making, would also assist in ensuring that schools are able to respond to their local needs and community requirements in an efficient and effective manner. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recently completed paper 'Towards an Inclusive Curriculum Adapting Curriculum to Bridge Equity Gaps' highlights this very point; that trusting rather than ruling educators drives greater educational outcomes. The OECD paper argues that local flexibility in content, pedagogies and assessment ensures effective schools. Empowered, with diocesan support to make decisions for the benefit of their school in a prompt and considered manner, Principals will grow in their ability and confidence to undertake improvement, innovation and change programs and decision-making.



Clarity for Principal employment contracts and role description



Greater Principal autonomy



Professional development of Principals and aspirant leaders

Significant investment in professional development of aspirant leaders and beginning and middle-career Principals is also required. As the role of the Principal becomes more challenging, the gaps in knowledge and skills between aspirant and experienced leaders grows wider. Accordingly, appropriate and comprehensive support programs must be delivered to aspirant leaders to ensure the enhancement of the system on a broader scale.

Support programs ought to enhance the traditional methods of professional development and deliver a strong focus on alternative approaches. The programs should deliver content and skill development in a range of areas including:

- action research
- action learning
- formal mentoring and coaching
- professional standards/certification (mandatory, voluntary)
- professional learning modules
- learning communities
- institutes, centres and other bodies.



MANAGEMENT

Arguably the most important aspect of the Principal's role is the effective management of school resources to implement the school's vision and mission. Indeed, it is the most diverse pillar of leadership in its application and skills requirements. Principals must manage all available resources (people, financial, time, facilities, technologies, reputation) to ensure effective operations at their school. If resources are not managed effectively, programs cannot be conceived, developed, implemented and reviewed successfully, eradicating the possibility for value adding to the school community. Even the best pedagogical and curriculum approach would be ineffective if not managed properly. Accordingly, Principals must be able to create adaptable and flexible organisational structures and processes to allow the school to meet all aspects of its functions which result in quality learning experiences and high-quality performance and outcomes.

Highly effective principals understand that the successful pursuit of the school's mission depends on a team effort, which in turn depends on strong, purposeful relationships between all members of the school community as well as with external stakeholders. They understand that the range of resources available to them are key determinants of how well the school achieves its mission. They foster a cohesive culture in which the whole school collaborates around the common objective of meeting every student's learning needs and seeing all students learning successfully.

Effective management of the school's resources requires highly tuned strategic vision, strong financial understanding and administration, high-level communication skills with a broad range of stakeholders, in-depth understanding of current trends, technologies and resources, quality time management and an ability to build a culture that achieves buy in from all staff. Principals must apply these skills and actions to ensure that they create and maintain an inclusive school environment that is welcoming, fair and equitable, and that places a high priority on the health and wellbeing of all students and staff, including themselves.

Given the scope of a school's educational program, Principals must steward the use of people, time, space and technologies to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of all. From a practical perspective, effective management involves:

- Playing a hands-on role in the planning, recruitment, development and deployment of school staff;
- Engaging teachers and students in planning and delivering high-level educational programs;
- Regularly meeting with, communicating with and building the capacity of staff, including performance appraisals, professional development programs and regular discussions to build and promote staff relationships that are based on high levels of trust and respect;

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- Drafting, reviewing and enacting policies and procedures that meet system and legislative compliance and accountability such as a safe work and learning environment;
- Establishing and maintaining effective partnerships with local businesses, community groups, health organisations and other educational institutions through regular meetings, correspondence, information dissemination and business proposals;
- Planning, designing, proposing, financing, building and maintaining flexible, adaptable and technologically-smart physical learning spaces that promote and support effective learning environments;
- Building and developing their skills in financial management to apply discretionary funds to initiatives to improve outcomes for students.

OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

Administrative burdens and lack of resources have adverse impacts on Principals' ability to effectively manage their school. Without adequate staffing support and resources below them, Principals are left to carry a significant management load alone. The requirement to be deeply involved in the planning, decision-making and implementation of all management actions takes time that Principals do not have the luxury of applying. As a result of the broad nature of their role, Principals are being required to undertake a multitude of tasks that impact on their capacity for high-order planning and decision making. Principals are undertaking, often alone, the role of HR manager, Finance Officer, Compliance Officer, Business Development Manager, Chief Operations Officer as well as all other requirements of the role that are specific to the role of a Principal.

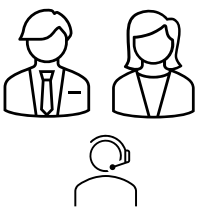
The broad and encompassing role of a Principal also means that they are experiencing greater difficulty transitioning to retirement. Without adequate middle-management support, Principals are unable to effectively reduce their workload without stopping entirely. Insufficient staff leadership resources limit the ability of Principals to delegate significant functions within their role, leaving them to hold the baton too often.

Slow decision-making processes caused by red tape and bureaucratic hierarchies can also reduce the effectiveness of a Principal's management efforts. Having to involve external parties in local level decision making results in cumbersome decision making processes, creating a situation whereby less strategic tasks are given priority over management level decisions.

Many Principals also are impacted by their lack of formal training and experience in the organisational management requirements. Under-developed management skills commonly result in a lack of confidence for Principals to implement high-order strategies which would develop their educational environments in a meaningful and effective way. Having to build skills whilst in the role creates significant stress, results in sub-optimal decision-making and adversely impacts on organisational outcomes for students, staff and other key stakeholders.



RECOMMENDATIONS



Fundamentally, Principals require additional human resources and support to delegate specific lower-order functions of their role. The implementation of dedicated deputy principals, compliance officers, business managers and human resource managers, or a combination thereof, would enable Principals to better balance their time and the application of the fundamental aspects of their role. Stronger supported middle level managers will also assist Principals with their transition to retirement.

An administrative assistant would also assist to reduce the administrative burden on Principals, freeing up their time to dedicate to strategic planning and decision-making.



DRIVING SELF AND OTHERS - PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING

Leaders are learners. And they must instil this culture in their schools too. Principals must work to create a professional learning culture by modelling ongoing learning themselves and by designing and participating in professional learning activities for staff that effectively drive the pursuit of the school's vision, mission and moral purpose. The role of a Catholic primary Principal has an added layer of faith and theology that must underpin all development and decision-making.

Highly effective principals place a very high priority on improving student outcomes by improving the effectiveness of classroom teaching. They pursue this priority by building teachers' commitment and capacity to make sustainable improvements in their day-to-day teaching practices.

Fundamentally, improvement plans and professional development programs within a school must focus on improving teaching, learning and student wellbeing through school-wide engagement and innovation in the areas of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting.

Of course, ongoing development must not only be achieved through formal training days and seminars. Principals must create an environment that embraces collaborative planning, mentoring arrangements, regular classroom observations and the open, honest and multi-level provision of feedback on the effectiveness of teaching and learning and broader school operations.

On a personal level, Principals are required to model a personal commitment to ongoing learning, regularly participate in professional learning activities, challenge and support the professional learning of colleagues, and create and support teams and peer-to-peer collaborations. Principals must also engage in opportunities to further scriptural and theological understandings with attendance to further study and personal enrichment.

OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Almost universally, Principals display significant competence in this area, particularly for their staff. As passionate educators turned educational leaders, Principals thrive on ensuring the educational programs, initiatives and pedagogies under their purview are founded in up-to-date research and training and model best practice.

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Commonly, however, the personal development and training of principals is de-prioritised over that of their staff, as well as not sufficiently meeting the broader requirements of their role. As alluded to above, Principals commonly feel that their management skills are under-developed and that they would benefit from career-specific training to appropriately undertake these requirements of their role.

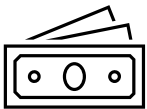
As faith leaders within their communities, Principals are often called upon to provide the people around them with guidance and leadership on faith based matters. Confidence may, at times, lack for Principals in this area, particularly those who have not been availed of the opportunity to place a significant focus on their faith and theological development.

RECOMMENDATIONS



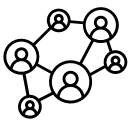
Access to professional supervision

Greater professional development support and funding for Principals is crucial. Principals would benefit from funded access to flexible professional supervision and support in a form that suits them, be it a spiritual director, psychologist, coach, or mentor.



Formalised PD budget

A formalised and standard personal professional development budget for Principals, linked directly to AITSL standards, would benefit them in managing the specific requirements of their role. Given the role of a Principal is so vast and different to any other role in the school setting, training and development that focuses on the features of their role would benefit them immensely.



Support for local professional networks

Greater support for localised professional networks or Principal clusters would also build the collegiality of the profession and the ability of Principals to share knowledge, experience and information to lift the capacity, confidence and competence of the cohort.

WELLBEING

From a Victorian Catholic education system perspective, the discussions and recommendations in this position paper also reflect the themes arising from the NOUS study, commissioned by the Catholic Education Commission Victoria (CECV) on better management for Principals and schools.[15] The recommendations made in this discussion paper regarding the conditions of Principals are aimed at making compliance and administration easier, assisting in the development of Principals, enhancing leadership at all levels and allowing leaders to thrive. Implementation of those recommendations and, in turn, achieving those outcomes will address the key issues and strategies identified in the NOUS study. The overall strategic aims of the Victorian Catholic education system will be also directly addressed and strengthened.

Under-resourced, mistreated and overburdened with red tape, principals report



2.2 x

more difficulty
sleeping



1.3 x

more depressive
symptoms



1.7 x

more stress

*Professor Herb Marsh

The Philip Riley study, 'The Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey 2020 Data'[16] has been an extensive longitudinal evidence based research study conducted across Australia and across educational jurisdictions. Relevantly, it provides valuable insight to the Wellbeing and Occupational issues around Principalship and informs the recommendations in this paper. Professor Phil Riley, a former school principal, spent 16 years in schools before moving to the tertiary sector. He researches the interplay and impact of psychology, education and leadership in the performance of a Principal's role. Professor Riley's work draws funding from Universities, professional bodies and the private sector and shines a light on the main sources of stress for Principals. The results of the study are intended to alert system leadership, professional associations, government and school Principals to these trends and indicators so that they can be ameliorated where appropriate.

Wellbeing and resilience are vital to developing efficient problem-solving skills, building and maintaining interpersonal relationships and realistic goal setting, all of which greatly enhance an individual's ability to perform.

The four main sources of stress in the role of a Principal, as identified by Professor Riley are:

1. Quantity of work;
2. Lack of time to focus on teaching and learning;
3. Mental health and wellbeing of students; and
4. Expectations of their employer.

Addressing these factors through the adoption of the recommendations in this paper will positively impact on Principal wellbeing and, in turn, improve the performance and outcomes of Catholic education in Victoria.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Governing authorities and diocesan offices need to make the moral choice to reduce job demands and increase the available resources to allow Principals to better cope with the increased complexity and demands of the role. The primary focus of those decisions ought to be reducing or removing administrative 'red tape' providing for more supported and easier decision making capacity for Principals.

Greater security in the tenure of their roles would also assist Principals to confidently tackle their job requirements and make informed strategic decisions for their schools. Amending Principal's employment to provide for ongoing roles will enable Principals to feel secure in their employment and commit fully and flexibly to the system's educational objectives whilst serving their specific communities.

With appropriate and formal support from the system, Principals will feel empowered to take responsibility for their personal and professional wellbeing and their work-life balance. The negative impact of poor work-life balance highlights that establishing one's own balance is far too important to be left in someone else's control. Educators must seek professional help where necessary and must be encouraged and supported to do so by their employer.

Principals are best placed to identify strategies and initiatives that will support this and improve their long-term health and wellbeing. Indeed, it is incumbent on individual Principals to find and maintain a healthy work-life balance in a manner that works for them. Providing flexible and tailored wellbeing solutions and initiatives for Principals, including appropriate Employee Assistance Programs, connection with formal professional supervision, spiritual guidance and faith development, as well as personal options would provide immense value to the system by creating happier, healthier and more balanced leaders.

Greater resources
and reduced job
demands



Job security



Formal and flexible
wellbeing support



SUMMARY OF THEMES FOR IMPROVED TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP IN THE VICTORIAN CATHOLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

Supporting current Principals, attracting, developing and retaining top leadership talent is an ongoing challenge for all Victorian Catholic schools.

This 'Terms and Conditions Discussion Paper' summarises, from a practicing Principal perspective, recommendations that Principals and the VACPSP consider will support improving student learning outcomes and help to ensure our system and schools are leading employment enterprises for staff, and communities of faith and learning for families and young people. The recommendations, for discussion and consideration, are presented in key areas deemed critical to a positive employee experience, including high levels of employee engagement and, most importantly, improved student outcomes.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING - WORK LIFE BALANCE

1. Recognition of the significant extra hours that Principals are working.
2. Significant focus on the reduction of 'red tape'.
3. Reviewing sector specific regulations from the perspective of innovation.
4. Build a culture of local decision making at the school level; connected autonomy (trust educators rather than rule educators).
5. Significant focus on building and valuing the profession of principalship and teaching.
6. Continue to develop job resources and programs that encourage principals to better manage health with the increased demands of the job.
7. Utilize the on-line environment for low-level management tasks and system information sharing.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Increased professional development funds for Principals.
2. Investigate Catholic Principal Certification programs and supporting Master of Business Administration programs that focus on next-generation problems; management practice, global orientation and leadership development.
3. Contract renewal and appraisal. supported by well funded principal growth, formation and development plans.
4. Focus on closing principal knowledge gaps, particularly with respect to building capacity of them and their staff to develop learning cultures for sustained high-level learning.
5. Strong support of Principal Networks and communities of practice focusing on sharing amongst peers and engagement with learnings from other educational systems. (Exemplars of best practice identified, accurately measure the determinants of success and utilize the knowledge gained to support leader development. (Riley)

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CAREER PROGRESSION

1. Establish a separate 'Terms and Conditions for Principalship, Victoria Award', as part of improving the current Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, including salary scale and state-wide employment arrangements.
2. Reduce disparity in pay scales for Principals; a starting point for principal pay should be greater than any other senior leadership roles within the Catholic school system, including deputy principal's salary.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

1. Support to a system-wide inclusive and diverse body, operating as a 'Stewardship Council', to deliver a consistent strategic agenda and overall framework and direction for Catholic Education in Victoria.
2. Renewal of, and greater encouragement, support and training for future aspirant leaders, considering targeting programs of support to women in leadership, cultural diversity, talent identification and later career opportunity.

ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY AND RESOURCES

1. Introduction of 'School Innovation' grants with a focus on enhancing employment innovation and creativity.
2. Significantly improved Principal Human Resourcing Support; consider either: Principal professional supervision, access to spiritual guidance/support, Personal Assistant, Compliance Officer or Business Manager allocation.
3. Making new technologies available as a necessity, with personal provision of a wide range of leading ICT resources to ensure Principals remain at the forefront of technology innovation.
4. Advocacy to the Commonwealth Government for equality in per student funding, increase the primary level to at least equal to that of the secondary education sector.

REMUNERATION

1. Sustainable, and in-line with community expectations, reasonable annual Principal salary increases over the life of the next EBA agreement.
2. Formal recognition, and salary compensation, for significant approved postgraduate study with a priority for Catholic leadership, formation for Mission or theology studies.

DISCUSSION PAPER

REWARD AND RECOGNITION

1. On-going employment of Principals by the governing employer.
2. A fundamental characteristic of the Catholic school sector in Victoria (and Catholic systems interstate) is 'block funding'. While government recurrent grants for systemic Catholic schools are calculated individually for each school, the grants payable to Catholic schools are aggregated and provided to the CECV. The CECV then allocates this funding according to its own processes and funding models (while complying with all government requirements). The rationale of the policy is to ensure student and family access and equity; funding justice across schools, financial transparency and effectiveness and importantly the recognition of student and family additional needs. Catholic social teachings underpin this policy; including, preferential option for the poor, dignity of the human person, subsidiarity and participation, solidarity and the common good. This paper presents for discussion the notion that individual school complexity and local needs should be recognized in Principal leadership resourcing allocations and salary; the current salary based solely on enrolment overlooks the nature of a Principal's role in managing the the complex needs of all schools. Examples of complexity recognised in school funding but not in principal resourcing or salary include Health Care Card, Education Maintenance Allowance, Assistance to new schools, Educational disadvantage – student family occupation, Low English language proficiency, Socio-Size loading, Educational Disadvantage, Location loading, Students at risk and Student wellbeing



RESPONSE TO IEU AMBIT CLAIMS

The Independent Education Union (Vic/Tas) has produced for its members a 'Log of Claims' detailing the wage and condition amendments that are being sought for members of the Catholic education profession in Victoria.

To help shape and guide consideration of those claims, the VACPSP presents a principal Catholic Primary Schooling point of view. The VACPSP and its members have provided their response to those claims and the impact they will have on schooling. Confirmed responses are indicated as conditions to keep, move for change and or deleted from the new award.

KEEP

- General award arrangements and structure.
- Consultative Committee.

Fundamentally, Principals consider that the current enterprise agreement is clear and logical. Accordingly, they do not seek significant overhaul or amendment, just minor adjustments to provide greater support and capacity for the functioning of their schools.

REVIEW

- CRT - minimum number of hours and costs.
- 24.5 hours for teachers does not work, go back to 25 hours per week.
- Taking LSL at half rate - clarity required.
- Mandating formal professional development days is costly to schools and creates concerns for parents – allow greater flexibility for schools to manage the professional development of staff in a way that best reflects the needs and circumstances of the school.
- Clarification on the Long Service Leave provisions with averaging currently used with regards to staff who now work full time and ensuring that no disadvantage is experienced by teachers/principal who have returned to the workforce / part time employment.
- Provision for additional time to meet accreditation requirements.
- Scheduled class time reductions make very big demands on school budgets and allocations for specialist teachers - not enough money in the funding to manage this.
- Clarification (or eradication) of additional 4 days of release for teachers needs.
- CRT price and time fraction is too expensive.

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- The current award Clause 13 needs to be reviewed.
- Clarification and necessary adjustment to staff employment contracts for fixed term basically become ongoing after 3 years even if they are LSO's positions dependent on funding from enrolments.
- One day per term for teaching for professional practice (teacher choice for professional learning 30 mins per week, 5 hours per term)



DELIVERING ON OUR PRIORITIES

The VACPSP will bring forward the discussion and recommendations in this report to the Catholic educational community in a respectful and purposeful manner.

The key focus of this discussion is improving school based, professional leadership to support students learning well in a faith environment and enable Catholic schools to provide a service which is truly civic and apostolic.

The Association will work in accordance with the spirit, values and policies of the Association and Catholic Education in Victoria to cultivate this dialogue, discussion and action.

CONCLUSION

Principals play a pivotal role in the success of Catholic education in Victoria. As leaders of their communities, Principals are charged with the responsibility of effectively managing a range of stakeholders, assets and outcomes to promote and enhance the value of Catholic education. Committed, resourceful and creative Catholic school Principals have helped create learning communities of achievement and faith; built on respectful relationships, student safety, and engagement with communities, but require further support to continue their excellent work.

Recent trends in Catholic education and the education sector more broadly have increased the complexity of a Principals' role, resulting in increased pressure, reduced capacity and adverse wellbeing outcomes. Accordingly, to avoid compromised Principal performance and, in turn, reduced student outcomes, Principals must be supported to thrive in their role.

The recommendations included in this discussion paper aim to foster that support and build the capacity of current and emerging education leaders to guide the Catholic education sector through its most successful period moving forward. The VACPSP welcomes discussions with diocesan leaders and the development of initiatives and programs to build the capacity of Principals to deliver a world class Catholic education system in Victoria.

"Every school to be a place of encounter."

- Pope Francis

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With additional support provided by Principals across the state working in small and large schools and at various stages of career progression.