

BACK TO BALANCE:

HOW POLICY AND PRACTICE CAN MAKE
PRIMARY PRINCIPALS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE

This report – *Back to Balance: How Policy and Practice can make Primary Principals Highly Effective* – is based on a national survey completed by primary school leaders. It will identify key elements of practice for improving the health and wellbeing of principals. The findings are significant and I recommend them to all, so we can have healthy, well and highly effective primary school principals.

Concerned by the growing complexity and intensification of the role, the challenges of attracting and retaining primary school leaders, and the personal toll wrought upon too many primary principals, APPA believes this is an issue that must be addressed.

Growing concern about Australian principal health and wellbeing, fuelled by disturbing media reports of verbal and physical abuse of school leaders and statistics from studies such as Dr Philip Riley's, *The Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey*, now in its sixth year, moved APPA to investigate the links between policy and practice, and primary principal health and wellbeing.

APPA was very interested in undertaking this study into policy and practice for three reasons:

- 1. Highly effective school leaders must be healthy and well in the broad sense.
- 2. Australian school leaders are not as healthy and well as other Australians.
- 3. There is a need to explore possible links between workload, workplace stress, and compliance and accountability expectations on school leader health and wellbeing.

The resulting report will make a significant contribution to a rapidly developing dialogue between employers, systems, governments and the profession about how best to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of primary school leaders while simultaneously providing the policy and practice resources to make them highly effective.

I am extremely grateful to the 929 primary school leaders whose insights into their health and wellbeing, school contexts and professional roles have given this study both weight and substance. I pay tribute to the work they do, perhaps at the expense of their longer-term health and wellbeing. They have also given thoughtful feedback about the supportive policies and practices that enable them to be effective leaders. The survey responses have identified key elements for growing and sustaining primary school leaders.

I sincerely thank Norm Hart, our project leader, for his commitment, diligence and work in completing this report. The support of Dr Philip Riley in this work has been invaluable and we warmly acknowledge his interest and guidance. We acknowledge, too, the work of Michael Nuttall, APPA's Executive Officer, in editing and coordinating the publication of this report.

Design and publication of the Report, Preliminary Report and Infographic would not have been possible without the support and expertise of Camp Australia. I thank them for their contribution.

Representing principals in government, Catholic and independent primary schools across Australia, the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) is the 'voice' of primary school leaders at a national level. It is through our member associations – the national, state and territory primary principals associations – that we instigated this study and so take a lead role in addressing the issue of principal health and wellbeing.

We look for this report – *Back to Balance: How Policy and Practice can make Primary Principals Highly Effective* – to make a difference.

Dennis Yarrington
APPA President

12 September 2017

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PURPOSE

The Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) is interested in the connections between employer and system policy and practice, and its relationship to primary principals' health and wellbeing. APPA identified policies and practices available to, used by and valued by primary school principals and explored this through a national survey. Analysis of the survey data shows there are correlations between policy and practice settings and primary principals self-assessed health and wellbeing.

The health and wellbeing of Australian principals has been the subject of a six-year longitudinal study led by Dr Philip Riley of the Australian Catholic University (and formerly of Monash University). Both Dr Riley's work and that outlined in this report are of critical concern to primary principals and their professional associations.

Primary principal professional associations, including APPA, will use the results of this survey to advocate for policies and practices that are connected to improved primary principal health and wellbeing.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

All Australian primary school leaders were invited, through sector professional associations in each jurisdiction, to participate. The 929 principals and associate principals who responded are representative of the profession. Their responses, including 3,246 written comments, were analysed using the tools available on Survey Monkey. Dr Riley added value to the analysis of data and provided insights into the statistically significant correlations therein.

Steering and Reference Committees contributed to survey development and interpretation of results. The APPA Board endorsed this report.

KEY FINDINGS

Health and Wellbeing

Overall, the health and wellbeing status of primary principals is lower than the general population and declining over time.

Four out of ten primary principals have used their employer provided employee assistance service, three out of ten have used an external employee assistance scheme. It appears high numbers of primary principals are seeking support to manage their health and wellbeing.

The connections between context and self-assessed health and wellbeing are significant. The indirect correlations between increasing role complexity and responsibility, and self-assessed health and wellbeing could be explained by several factors. This survey suggests inadequate role support would be one. The direct correlation between school size and self-assessed health and wellbeing is more difficult to explain. Perhaps the role of leadership in small schools is more complex and challenging than is widely recognised.

None of the connections discussed in this report can be assumed to be cause and effect. However, principals who work in supportive policy environments, can influence and change policies, and have effective policies with employer and systemic support in implementing them report higher levels of health and wellbeing than their colleagues without those conditions in their schools.

Increasing Accountability Workload

Almost all (96%) Australian primary principals strongly agree or agree with the statement, “*Employer and government accountability requirements*

are an increasing proportion of my workload.” The ubiquitous nature of excessive accountability and compliance workloads identified in this survey and associated commentary, indicates all primary principals are constrained, frustrated and less healthy as a result. Primary school principals say they are unable to apply personnel and resources to lighten this workload.

Role Change Priorities

Primary principals are not recommending fundamental changes to their role. However, they are concerned:

- Their role continues to expand in both quantity and complexity; and,
- They provide effective leadership, particularly of teaching and learning, at the expense of their personal health and wellbeing; and,
- As their health and wellbeing deteriorates the primary principalship becomes less attractive to themselves and others.

To address these concerns, they have prioritised changes to the role. They say employers and systems should:

- Wind back the accountability and compliance burden currently thrust upon schools
- Avoid duplication and outsource data collection
- Slow the rate of change
- Support new policy implementation
- Provide personal or executive assistants and/or business managers (pro-rata for small schools)
- Review staffing models
- Focus on teaching and learning.

While they continue to express job satisfaction, respondents look for the recognition and support of employers and systems.

IMPLICATIONS

For Principals

Primary principals are committed to making healthy lifestyle choices. Indeed, Dr Riley's data suggests they are doing so in increasing numbers. This trend should be supported by changes in principals' approach to their professional role.

Principals may identify their leadership as the single most powerful resource available to the school. If principals' workload can be lightened by delegating responsibility for administrative tasks so their time is freed to focus on leading teaching and learning, surely it is ethically right to do so.

To ensure maximised health and wellbeing status principals should consider utilising all supportive practices provided by their employers and systems.

For Principals' Associations

The strongest response in this survey highlighted that employer and government accountability was an increasing proportion of principals' workload.

While pushing back against accountability and compliance workload can easily, even wilfully, be misinterpreted as a desire to be unaccountable, it is necessary for associations to heed the voices from the field. Primary

principals are unequivocal that the increases in their workload are untenable. Associations advocating for and promoting highly effective school leadership for every student and teacher must also advocate for realistic workloads for their members.

Another area of concern is the connection between principals' health and wellbeing and the effectiveness of policies and procedures for managing students, staff and parents. The support of employers and systems in these matters is also connected to principals' health and wellbeing. Respondents' comments tell associations that members believe effective policies and procedures and the support of employers and systems in this area would boost their health and wellbeing.

For Employers and Systems

There is an obvious benefit of school principals being healthy and well for maximum efficacy in their critical role. For employers and systems, the cost involved when principals are absent due to sickness or stress, retire early or take extended leave, access workers' compensation or have low productivity due to 'presenteeism' and the like is considerable.

A more concerning aspect is the cost to employers, systems, school communities and families of rehabilitation when principals suffer depression or self-harm. According to Dr Phil Riley's research such events are more likely to occur than commonly appreciated.

The Cost of Recruitment Versus Retention of Principals

There is another, albeit pragmatic, argument for those in charge of schools and school systems to value the health and wellbeing of principals – the high cost of recruitment compared to the cost of retention.

Estimates of replacement costs widely vary. However, even the most conservative estimate (25% of annual salary) should concern the education profession. School leadership churn exacerbates this situation. The cumulative cost of consequential vacancies would be very difficult to calculate, but no doubt it would be considerable.

A supportive and developmental leadership culture pervading the operations of employers and systems would reap school leadership efficacy dividends well beyond its monetary cost. This survey gives employers and systems who wish to establish or maintain such a culture a unique insight into the policies and practices school leaders know make them well and strong in the broad sense.

Small Selection Pools for Principal Positions

Anecdotally, APPA members report that lead teachers, deputies, assistant principals, heads of program and others who might aspire to be principals, look at their principal's workload and consider the role too arduous. Additionally, there is often a relatively small differential in remuneration. They also believe that the negative effects on health and wellbeing outweigh the job satisfaction of leading a school.

For Governments

Primary principals responding to this survey believed the increasing workload of employer and government accountability was having a negative effect on their health and wellbeing.

Governments might consider carefully the special nature of schools when compliance report schedules are developed and utilise data available elsewhere in systems or outside agencies when compiling compliance reports.

Recommendation One

The profession of school leadership must insist and demonstrate it deserves trust and support so that principals can lead teaching and learning for all Australian students and teachers.

Recommendation Two

Australian primary principals' associations must advocate for adequate support aimed at meaningful accountability and compliance reporting.

Recommendation Three

Australian primary principals' associations must advocate for well-supported policies, procedures and practices that ensure primary school leaders can manage staff, students and parents effectively.

Recommendation Four

Australian primary principals must utilise school personnel and resources to ensure the school operates highly effectively.

Recommendation Five

Australian primary principals must actively manage their workload.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRINCIPAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Every student in Australia deserves to attend a school where learning is personalised, teaching is effective and the environment is supportive. This situation can only be achieved or enhanced where school leaders have the three leadership requirements articulated in the Australian Standard for Principals:

- Vision and values
- Knowledge and understanding
- Personal qualities and social and interpersonal skills.

The Standard also defines the five professional practices highly effective principals must display:

- Leading teaching and learning
- Developing self and others
- Leading improvement innovation and change
- Leading the management of the school
- Engaging and working with the community.

The role of the primary principal in Australia today is, by this Standard, high level and extremely complex. All aspects of the Standard are necessary components in a principal’s capacity to do the work.

There is another factor which is significant in the capacity of primary school principals to perform the high level complex leadership role demanded of them; their state of health and wellbeing. Deloitte chief executive Cindy Hook, speaking at a Business Council of Australia Forum in October 2016 and reported in The Australian said:

“This is about driving performance and I believe strongly that if the 6000 individuals within Deloitte are well and are strong in the broader sense, they are going to perform at their best, personally and professionally, and that’s going to drive organisational performance.”

It seems clear that Ms Hook would counsel those who employ school principals to make sure they, **“are well and are strong in the broader sense”** to ensure the effectiveness of schooling is maximised for every student.

THE STATE OF AUSTRALIAN PRINCIPALS’ HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey is an academically rigorous longitudinal study in its sixth year. Survey Chief Investigator, Dr Philip Riley, provides trend data on the health and wellbeing of principals in all sectors and every state and territory. The data is not normally separated into primary and secondary cohorts. However, 59% of the 5,247 respondents to the survey thus far, have identified as primary school leaders (includes deputies and assistant principals).

The Executive Summary of 2016 Data had this to say about principals’ health and wellbeing

- On average, quantitative job demands have remained very high or increased slightly in the last five years.
- Sources of stress that increased included resourcing needs and student and parent related issues. However, the largest increases in stress were reported for mental health issues of both staff and students.

- Sources of stress that remained stable were sheer quantity of work, not enough time for teaching and learning and expectations of the employer.
- Sources of stress that decreased were union or industrial disputes, critical incidents, financial management issues and lack of autonomy.
- Job resources such as formal leadership education, job satisfaction, degree to which individuals can influence their work, possibilities for development, variation of work tasks, meaning of work, commitment to the workplace and level of self-efficacy have all increased. These resources help individuals cope with increased demands. However, the job demands and work-family conflict measure indicates a significant and sustained threat to participant wellbeing.
- Positive trends include the fact participants are reducing their working hours during holiday periods, which indicates a more appropriate balance between work and life.
- Negative trends include the high offensive behaviour rates and decreasing social support are very concerning.
- Health and wellbeing outcomes as measured in the survey by a self-rated health item have declined. This item is an accurate predictor of long term health outcomes including mortality, cardiovascular diseases, hospitalisations, use of medicine, absences and early retirement. Its decline over time is of great concern.

Australian school principals have 1.5 times higher job demands than the general population. They suffer stress symptoms at 1.7 times the rate of the general population and have just over twice the difficulty sleeping. Approximately 10% of survey participants provided ‘red flag’ responses (thoughts of self-harm or quality of life scores >2 standard deviations below the mean for principals). This is a result that should seriously concern the profession.

The survey results in 2016 reinforce the belief that the general health and wellbeing of Australian school principals is declining when compared to other Australians. This should be of concern to all Australians, particularly those in charge of our schools and school systems.

EMPLOYER AND SYSTEMIC SUPPORT FOR PRINCIPAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Employers and systems are aware of these implications and have developed policies to support principal health and wellbeing. These policies might well be gaining traction in schools. Respondents in the 2016 Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey reported the resources of formal leadership education, job satisfaction, degree to which individuals can influence their work, possibilities for development, variation of work tasks, meaning of work, commitment to the workplace and level of self-efficacy have all increased. Many, if not all these resources, are either directly or indirectly affected by the policies and procedures of employers and systems.

A desk top audit (see Appendix One), shows there are initiatives in all states and territories focused on improving school leaders’ health and wellbeing. However, when asked to comment on the question, “In what ways does your employer encourage you to work on your own health and wellbeing?” Half the respondents in this survey mentioned lip service, tokenistic initiatives or no employer or systemic encouragement for principals to work on their health and wellbeing. Clearly, there is some way to go in this area.

This Research Project explores the role of employers in enhancing the health and wellbeing of principals and associate principals. The survey identifies the current range of supportive policies and practices used and valued by primary principals. Recommendations for enhancing those policies and practices, and for additional strategies and actions have been formulated.

The research findings will facilitate focussed advocacy by principals’ associations for those employer or system policies and practices that are rated as effective by their members. (Survey details can be found in Appendix 4.)

BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

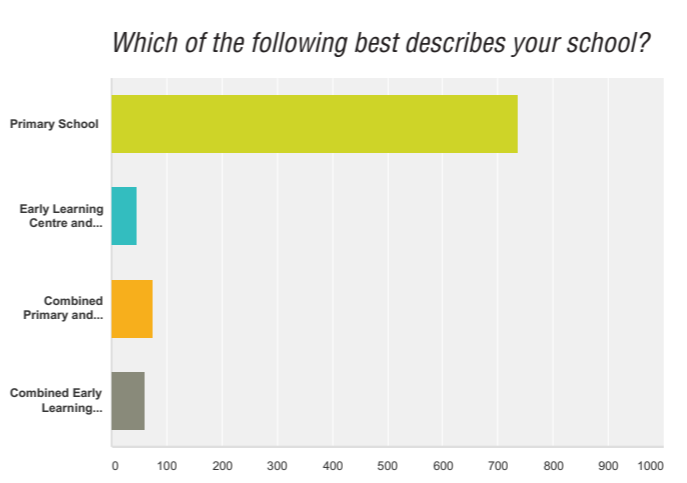
The 929 respondents to the survey were 38% male and 62% female.

The largest age group were the 51 to 60-year-olds (43.84%), closely followed by the 36 to 50 age group (40.71%). 12.85% were 61 or over while only 2.59% were aged 35 or younger.

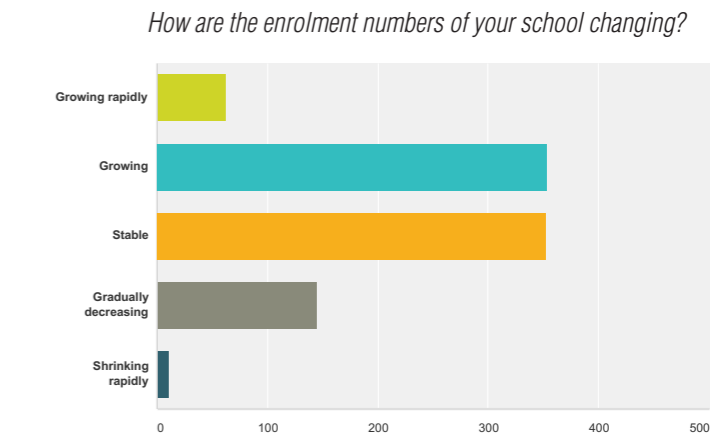
PROFESSIONAL DETAILS

Most respondents were non-teaching principals with full responsibility for a school (64.90%). Teaching principals with full responsibility for a school were the next largest cohort (16.41%). 6.37% were non-teaching principals of primary schools within a larger school and 3.89% were teaching principals in the same situation. 8.42% of respondents were associate, assistant or deputy principals.

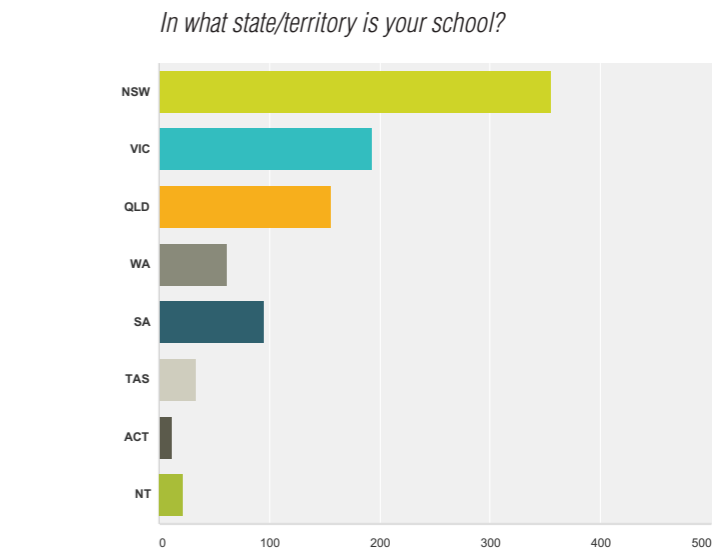
Most respondents work in stand-alone primary schools



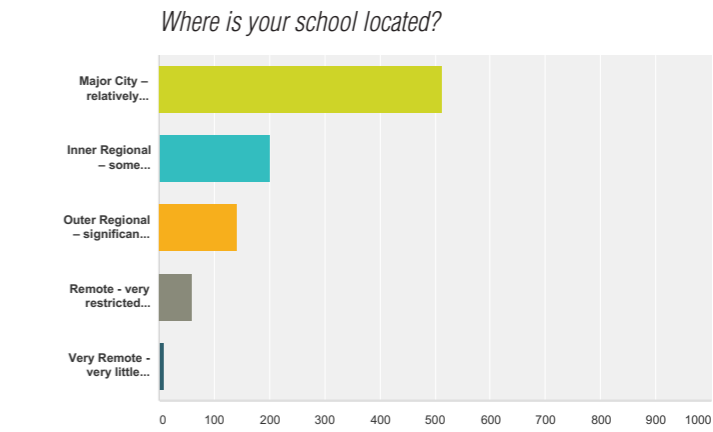
Their schools ranged in size from under 150 to more than 500 students in four roughly similar cohorts. 150 or fewer students 22.25%, 151 to 300 students 24.08%, 301 to 500 students 29.37% and 501 or more students 24.39%. The following graph indicates how enrolment numbers are changing in primary schools.



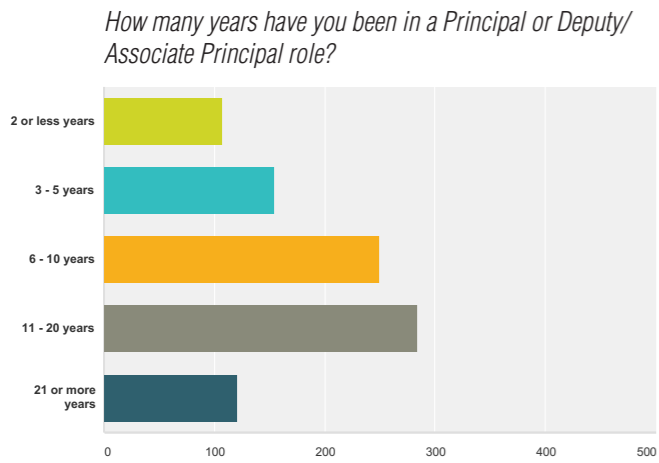
The respondents from each sector were representative of the Australian primary principalship. Government 72.45%, Catholic 17.03% and Independent 10.52%. Similarly, the spread of respondents across states and territories was representative.



The locations of schools, according to Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) definitions, mirrored the distribution of Australia’s population.



When time in the role is considered, respondents are very experienced.



Most primary principals (87.50%) have full time permanent employment. 10.34% are employed on contract and 2.15% have part time or shared role employment conditions.

REFLECTIONS

The 929 respondents to this survey comprise more than 10% of the primary principals practicing their profession in Australia. In terms of both personal and professional attributes, they are representative of the profession.

PART THREE: SELF-ASSESSED HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The survey asked respondents to rate their health and wellbeing at three stages; in the current or most recent school term, over the time of their current position and in five years if they continued in their current position. These are valid measures of the health status of primary principals.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) regularly publish Australian health status statistics based on self-assessment. In its 2011 Census Report, the Bureau notes:

“Self-assessed health status is a commonly used measure of overall health and aims to reflect a person’s perception of his or her own health at a given point in time. It is a useful and valid measure of a person’s current health status, as well as providing a broad picture of a population’s overall health.

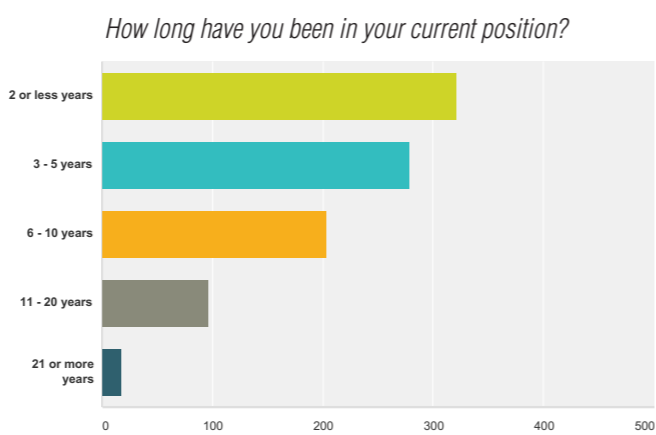
“In 2011-12, over half of all Australians aged 15 years and over considered themselves to be in very good or excellent health (55.1%), while 4.0% rated their health as poor. There was no significant change in the way Australians rated their overall health between 2007-08 and 2011-12.

“Men and women showed no differences in the way they assessed their overall health in 2011-12.”

Because their five-point scales are labelled differently, direct comparisons between the ABS and this survey's data are not possible. However, 55% of the Australian population indicate they have very good or excellent health while 29% of survey respondents rate their health and wellbeing as above average or well above average. In Australia, 4% of people rate their health as poor. Comparatively, 10% of respondents rate their health and wellbeing as well below average.

Respondents rated their self-assessed health and wellbeing on a five-point scale (1 – 5) where 1 is well below average, 2 is below average, 3 is average, 4 is above average and 5 is well above average. The mean score

However, many respondents have accepted a new position in the recent past.

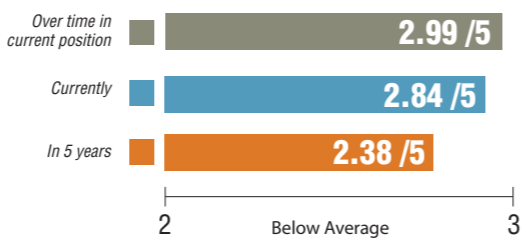


for this 5-point scale is 3 equating to average health and wellbeing. The mean score is a good measure of the average for these data because it identifies a single value as representative of the entire group and includes every response.

Overall, the health and wellbeing status of primary principals is lower than the general population and declining over time. During the current or most recent school term respondents had a mean self-assessed health and wellbeing score of 2.84. This is lower than the arithmetic mean (3.00). Given the ABS data above, it may be much lower than the mean for the Australian population.

It is also lower than the mean score (2.99) which participants indicated applied over time in their current position. If respondents remain in their current position for five more years they predict they will have a self-assessed health and wellbeing score of 2.38.

The chart below illustrates this decline.



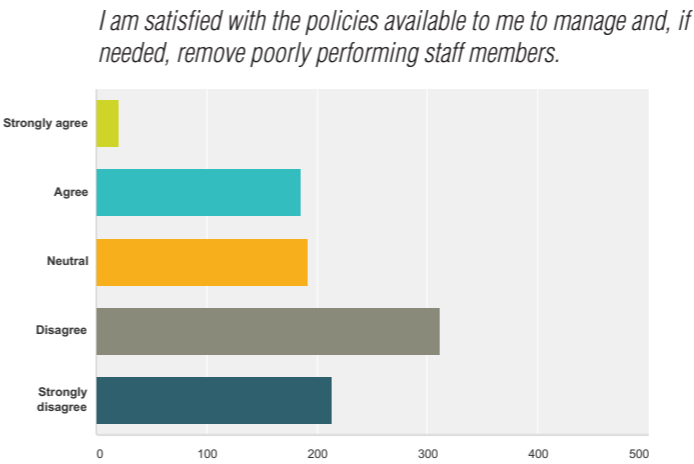
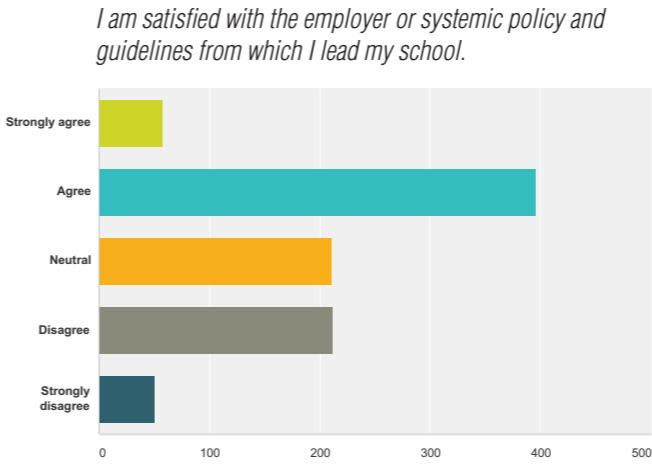
REFLECTIONS

If one considers primary school leaders know the actions they can take to improve their health and wellbeing, their pessimistic outlook is gravely concerning.

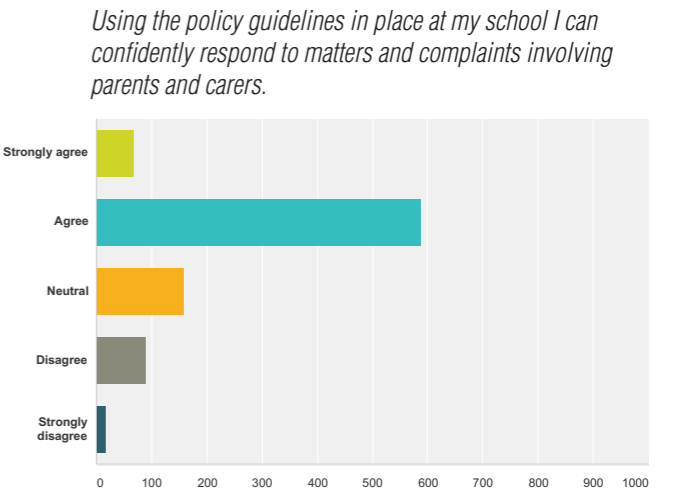
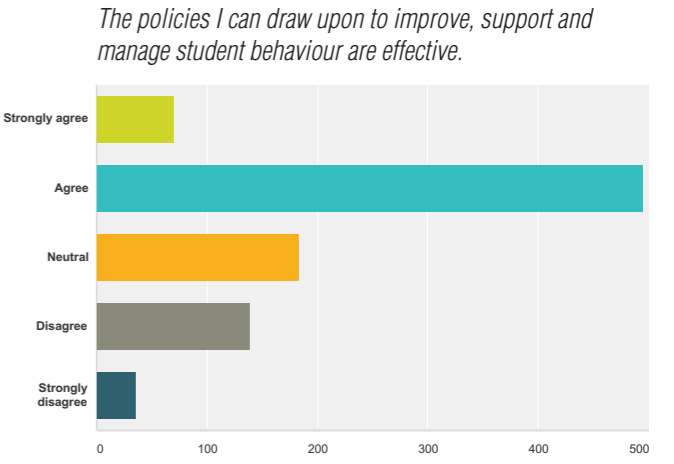
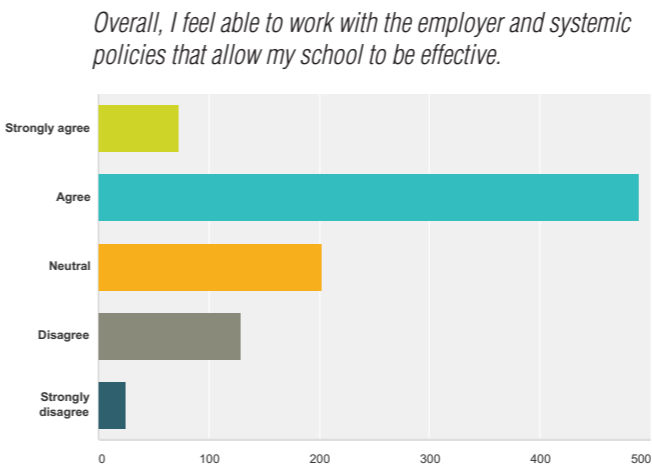
Question: What can be done to improve this outlook?

POLICY SATISFACTION

The graphs below indicate primary principals' level of satisfaction with various employer and systemic policies they implement to ensure the effective operation of their schools.



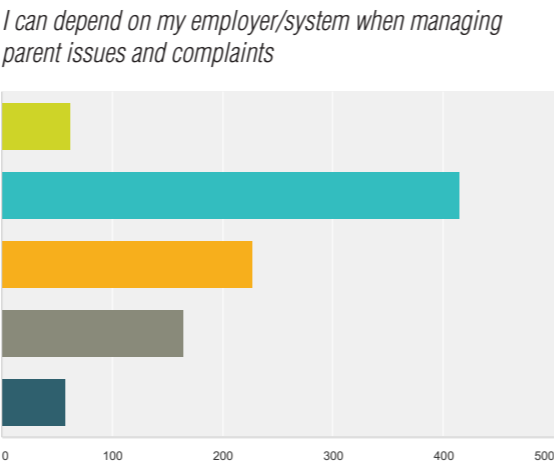
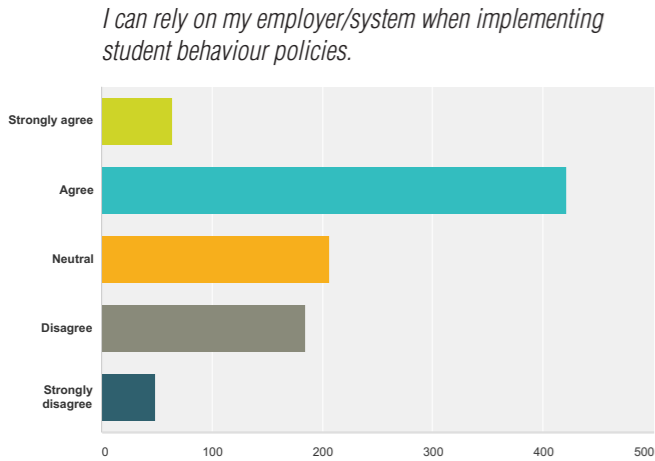
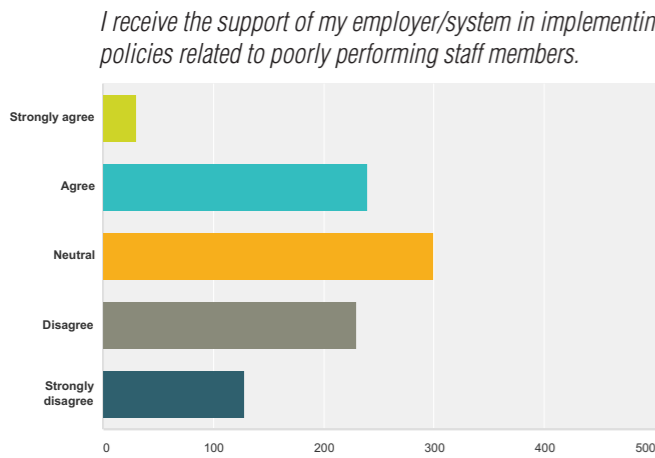
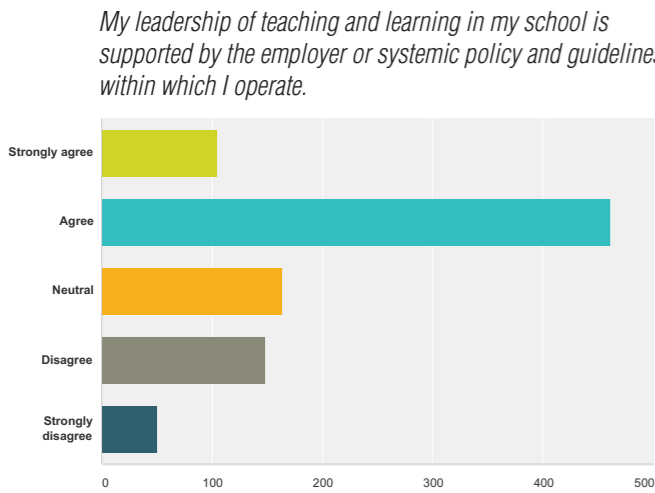
The percentage of primary principals satisfied with the policies they work with to lead their schools and resolve emergent issues is, in the case of most policy areas, higher than the percentage of principals who are dissatisfied. The only policy area where there are more dissatisfied than satisfied is the management of staff performance.



Overall, 61% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they could work with employer or systemic policies which allowed their school to be effective. Just 17% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

EMPLOYER OR SYSTEMIC SUPPORT FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

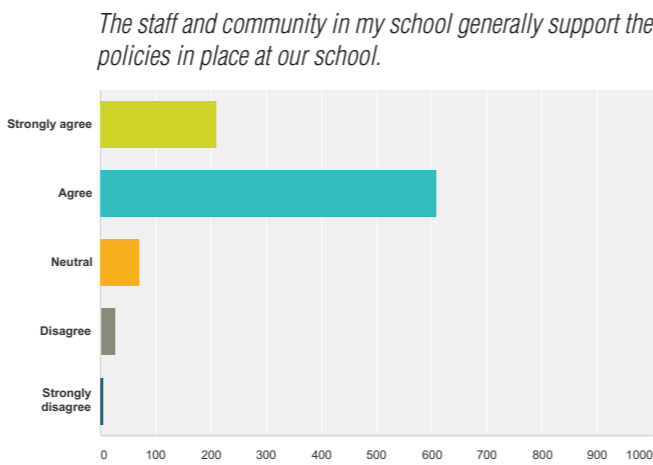
The graphs and tables below provide clear evidence that primary principals do not believe their employers or systems are sufficiently supportive.



In all bar one area, just above half the respondents felt supported by employers or systems while just under a quarter disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposition. The exception was managing staff performance where 29% felt supported while a greater number (39%) did not.

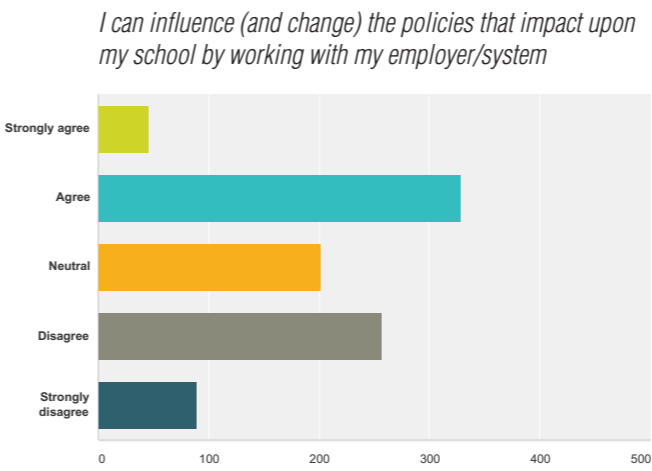
STAFF AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL POLICIES

The graph below shows most primary school principals believe there are very high levels of staff and community support for policies in place at their schools.



CAPACITY TO INFLUENCE AND CHANGE POLICIES BY WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS AND SYSTEMS

There were roughly even numbers of respondents who stated they could influence and change policies (41%) and who said they could not influence or change them (38%).



REFLECTIONS

Just over 60% of primary principals see themselves as operating in a supportive policy environment. Interestingly, there is a stark comparison between Government schools and non-Government contexts. Just over half (53%) of Government school principals reported their policy environment was supportive while the figure was over 80% for Independent and Catholic principals.

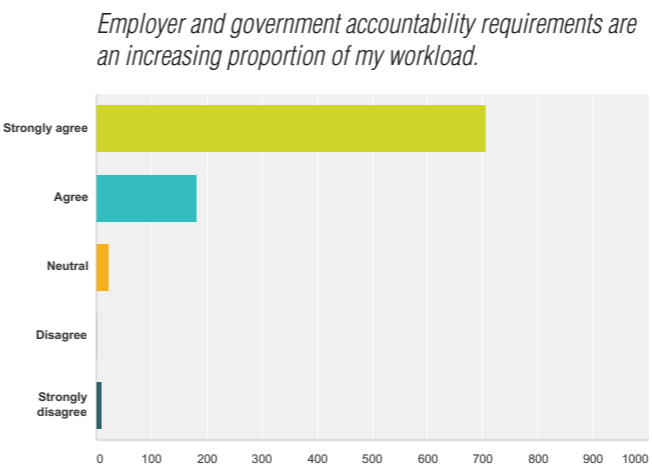
Question: What are the factors that contribute to a supportive policy environment?

The group with the smallest number reporting a supportive policy environment were principals who had been in the position more than twenty years (44%). However, more in this group believed they had an ability to influence and change policy (53%) than their less experienced colleagues. (See Appendix Two)

Question: How can the policy environment be changed to support all principals?

PART FIVE: THE ACCOUNTABILITY WORKLOAD

There are no cohorts of Australian primary principals who do not strongly agree or agree with the statement, “Employer and government accountability requirements are an increasing proportion of my workload.” This graph highlights the strength of this view.



The fact that fewer than 5% of principals are neutral, disagree or strongly disagree is a powerful indication that across Australia the ‘accountability’ workload is increasing. Many comments such as this explain the situation:

“I spend most of my time meeting compliance requirements and accountability responsibilities which now means I spend so much time in front of two computer screens. My eyes hurt, my head hurts and the joy has gone from my role as principal.”

It seems possible that many of the ten respondents who strongly disagreed that accountability workload is increasing are indicating they have been overloaded in this area for a considerable time. One respondent mentions the last seven years as particularly difficult.

This comment is indicative of the widespread concern regarding increased accountability workload in the principalship:

“The principal role is becoming increasingly unmanageable with rising accountability requirements and workload without increasing support or resources. This year in particular has been stressful and I have often felt I could just walk out and quit!”

REFLECTIONS

Primary principals recognise they are accountable and should embrace opportunities to display and celebrate the achievements of teachers and students in their schools. They know that standardised test results, comparative data and transparent practice are necessary and valuable. Yet, they are so overwhelmed by extra-curricular accountability; tree audits and the like, they suffer personally and professionally.

Question: Put simply, is the light worth the candle?

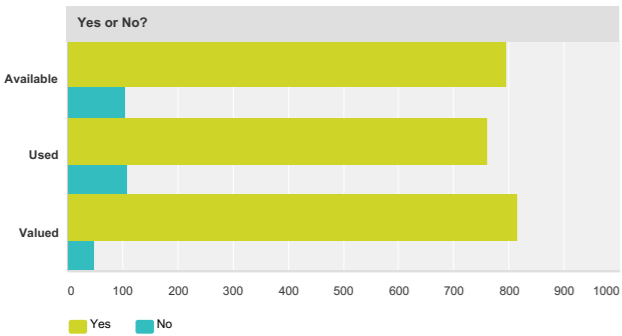
Respondents were asked to consider nineteen practices that provided personal and professional role support, then indicate the availability, use and value of each. A practice which was ‘not available’ could still be rated as ‘valued’. A practice which was ‘used’ could also be rated as ‘not valued’. (It should be noted that a definition of each practice was not always provided in the survey. Some differences in respondents’ interpretation of those questions may result.)

There are five practices which rank highly (85% or more) for all conditions, availability, use and value. Namely;

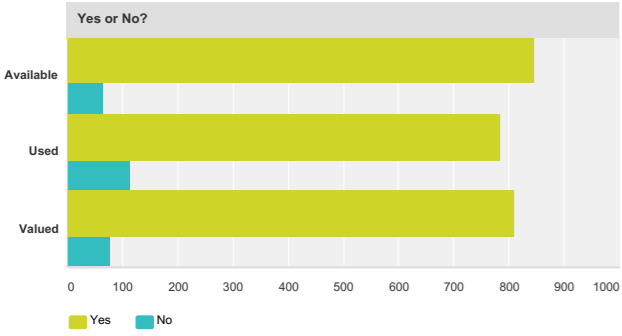
- School based allocation of teachers to classes or other roles
- Professional development in leading teaching and learning
- School-based decisions and processes in employing staff
- School based decisions and processes in managing staff
- Employer or system supported access to school leadership networks.

These practices are widely available, used by most principals and highly valued as indicated by these graphs.

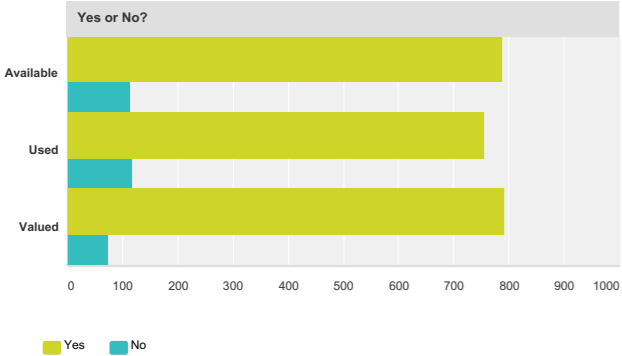
School based allocation of teachers to classes or other roles



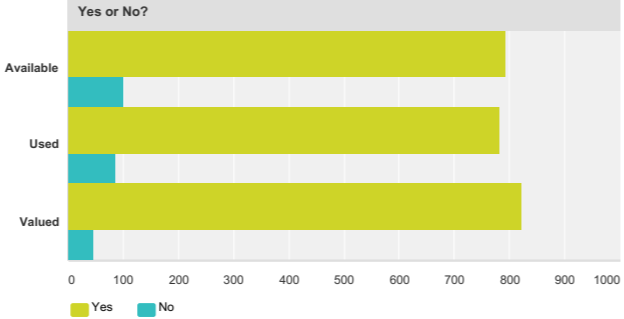
Professional development in leading teaching and learning



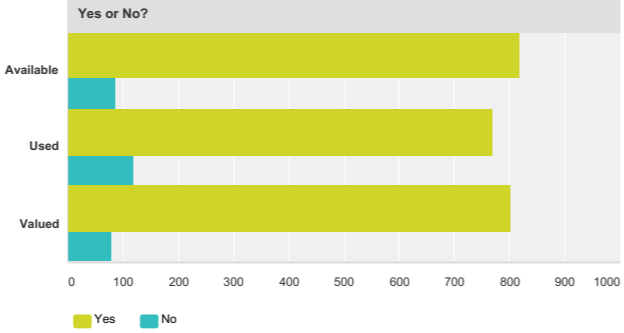
School-based decisions and processes in managing staff



School-based decisions and processes in employing staff



Employer or system supported access to school leadership networks



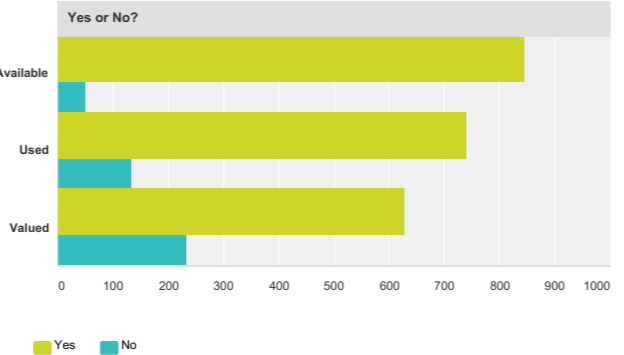
There are two other widely available practices (85% or more). Namely;

- Employer provided employee assistance services
- School review and improvement processes managed by employer / system.

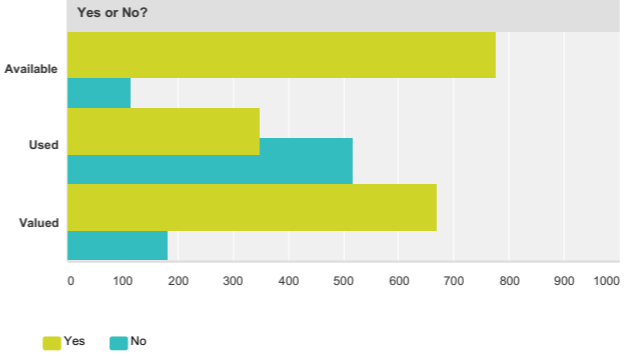
The employer provided employee assistance services are known by various names in jurisdictions and sectors. They offer an internal confidential counselling and advice service. Almost half the respondents (40%) who answered this question said they had used the service. Given the access to employee assistance service data published in departmental annual reports, it is likely many of these principals have used the service to refer staff members. Nevertheless, the service was valued by 79% of respondents.

School review and improvement processes managed by employers or systems was the most available of all practices (94%). However, it was not the most utilised, ranking 6th with an 85% uptake. It was ranked 17th most valued practice at 73%.

School review and improvement processes managed by employer / system



Employer provided employee assistance services



Other than those above, there were no practices used by 85% or more respondents.

There were four additional practices valued by 85% or more respondents. Namely;

- Non-teaching executive support
- Employer or system supported access to professional associations
- School finance training
- Employer or systemic curriculum and pedagogical support

Non-teaching executive support was ranked 7th most valued practice (90%). It was available and used by just under 60% of respondents. Comments such as this indicate more principals would use this supportive practice if they invested in their role as the most powerful resource available to their school.

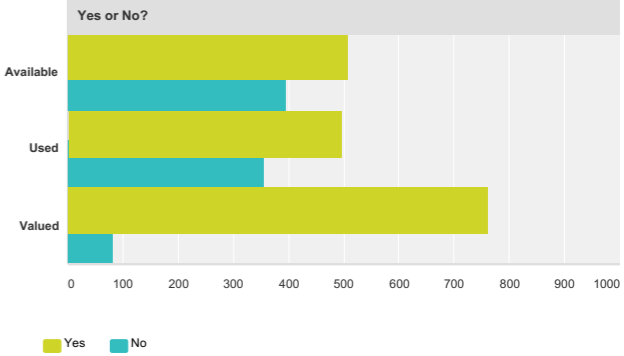
“I have to prioritise constantly because of the overwhelming volume of the work. I haven’t even had time to do the 2.5-hour survey on workload from the Department - which is in itself a ridiculous statement. I need admin support and the advice from my association was to pay for an assistant. I’m sorry but in a school of 130, every dollar I get goes to the students. There is insufficient funds for special needs children so to pay an assistant to do my paperwork can’t ethically be justified.”

Employer or system support for professional associations takes many forms. These include payment of membership subscriptions from school funds, payment of conference registration as part of school leader professional development and leave to attend association activities. This support is highly valued (91%) and frequently used (83%) and freely available (83%).

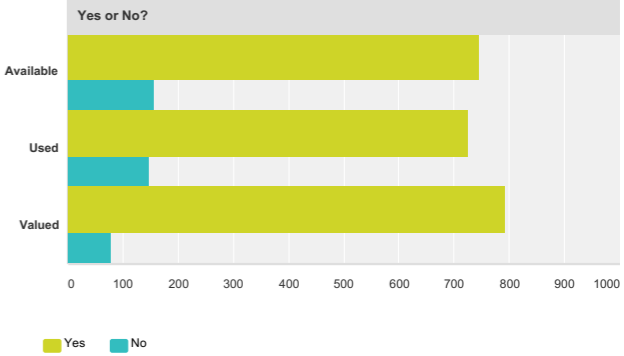
School finance training is valued by 85% of respondents, available to 83% and used by 77%.

Employer or systemic curriculum and pedagogical support is both highly valued (88%) and freely available (83%). Yet it is utilised by only 76% of respondents. There may be ‘blocking’ forces preventing principals accessing employer or systemic curriculum and pedagogical support.

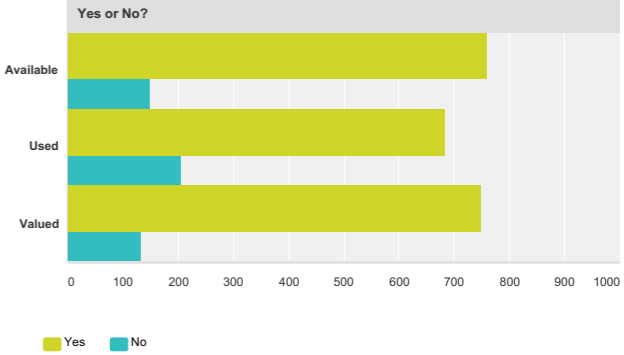
Non-teaching executive support



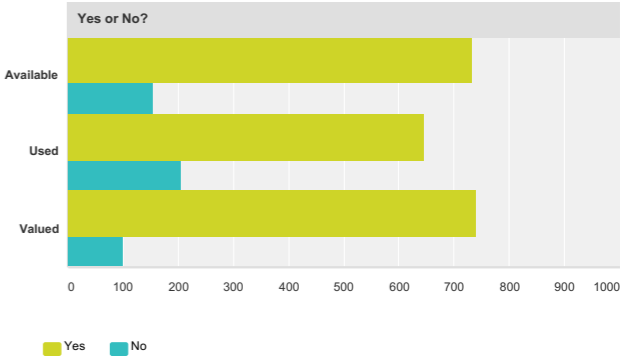
Employer or system supported access to professional associations



School finance training



Employer or systemic curriculum and pedagogical support



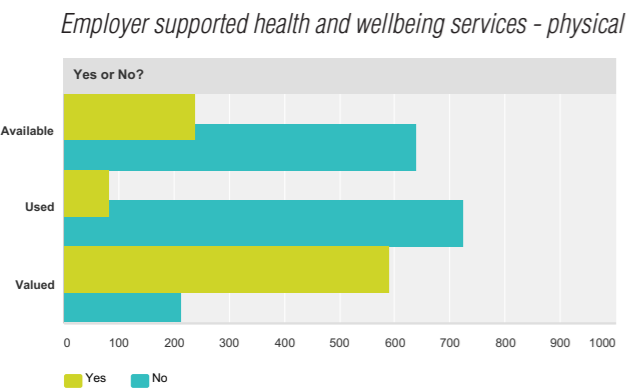
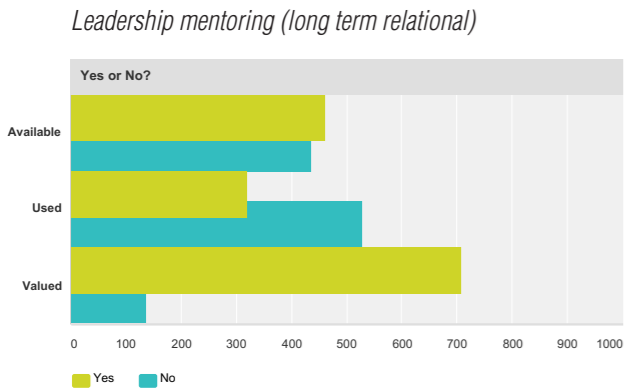
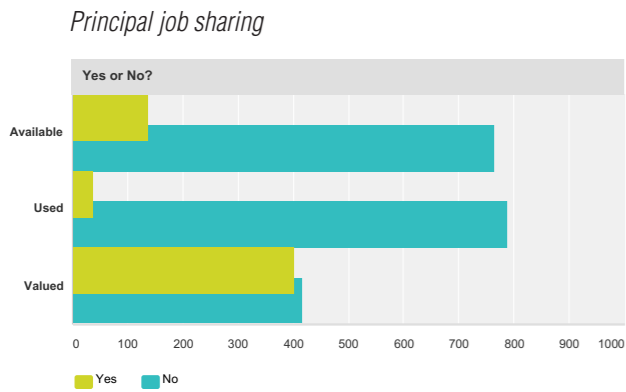
Three practices with lower availability (between 15% and 51%) had higher values placed on them:

- Principal job sharing;
- Leadership mentoring (long term relational); and,
- Employer supported health and wellbeing services – physical.

Principal job sharing was the least available (15%) of the 19 practices included in this survey. It was also the least used (4%). However, almost half of respondents (49%) valued the possibility of job sharing.

Leadership mentoring, as defined in the survey, was available to 51% of respondents and used by 38%. Correspondingly, the benefits of mentoring were valued by 84% of principals. There may be some nuanced understanding of the term ‘mentoring’ that influences the difference between availability and use.

Employer supported physical health and wellbeing services were not widely available (27%) or frequently used (10%). Principals appreciate the positive impact such programs may have on their health and wellbeing, with 74% valuing the practice.



The remaining five practices are all valued by more than 70% of respondents. They are available to more than 65% and used by more than 26%. Interestingly, each practice is more highly valued than its availability and usage might suggest. These practices are;

- Extended leave (sabbatical or the like)
- Leadership coaching (short term task based)
- Line management practices focussed on support and development
- External employee assistance services
- Employer supported health and wellbeing services – psychological.

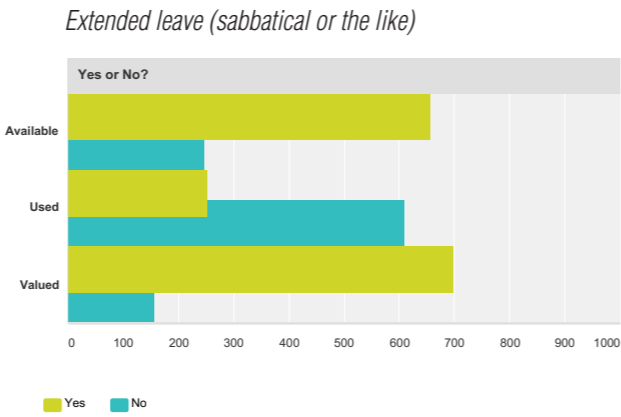
Extended leave, such as sabbaticals, is available to 73% of principals. As this type of leave is not freely available in the government school sector, this percentage is far greater than expected. Perhaps respondents included long service leave and leave without pay in their answers. Just under one third of principals (29%) indicated they had made use of extended leave. It was valued by 82% of respondents.

Leadership coaching was available to 67% of primary principals. It was used by just over half (52%) and valued by considerably more (84%).

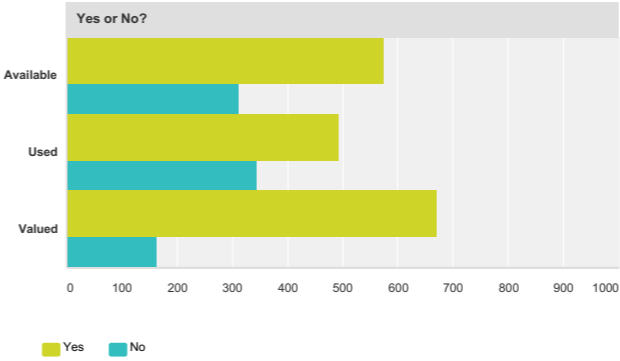
Line management practices which support and develop principals were available to 65% of respondents. A similar number (59%) had made use of that support and development. It was valued by 81% of principals.

External employee assistance services were less available (66%) than employer provided assistance services (87%) and they were used less often (27% compared to 40%). External services were also valued by slightly fewer respondents than ‘in-house’ options (70% compared to 79%).

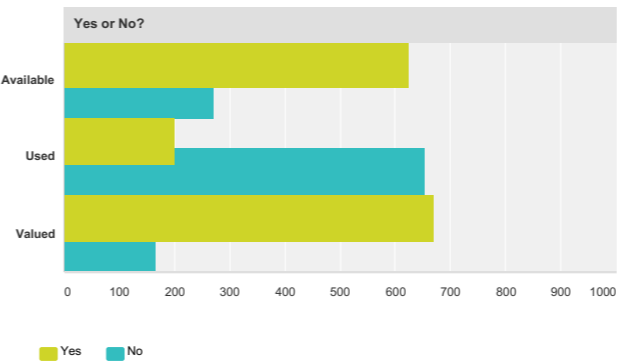
Employer supported psychological health and wellbeing services were much more readily available than physical health and wellbeing services (70% to 27%), used by slightly more principals (26% to 11%) and valued by a relatively high number of respondents (80%).



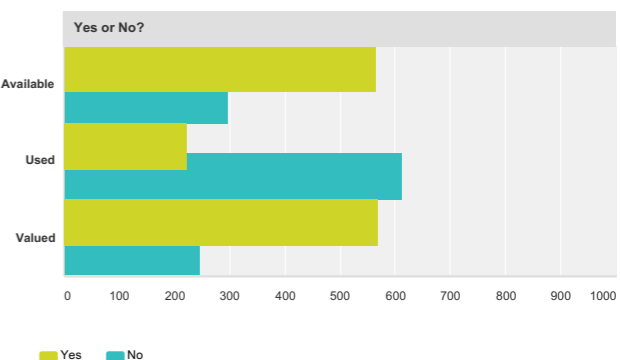
Line management practices focussed on support and development



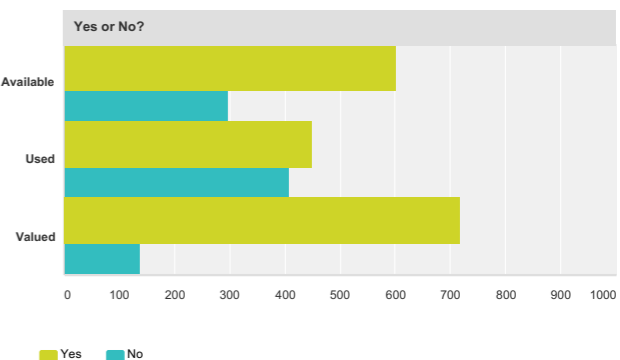
Employer supported health and wellbeing services - psychological



External employee assistance services



Leadership coaching (short term task based)



The table below ranks the availability, use and value of all nineteen practices according to the percentage of respondents who answered ‘yes’ to each condition. Note, the percentage of respondents for each condition at a ranking varies.

Ranking of Practice Availability, Use and Value			
Rank	Available (%)	Used (%)	Valued (%)
1	Systemic School Improvement Processes (94)	School Based Staff Employment Processes (90)	School Based Staff Employment Processes (95)
2	Professional Development in Teaching and Learning (93)	School Based Teacher Allocation (88)	School Based Teacher Allocation (94)
3	Support for School Leader Networks (90)	Professional Development in Teaching and Learning (88)	School Based Staff Management (91)
4	School Based Staff Employment Processes (89)	Support for School Leader Networks (87)	Professional Development in Teaching and Learning (91)
5	School Based Teacher Allocation (88)	School Based Staff Management (87)	Support for School Leader Networks (91)
6	School Based Staff Management (88)	Systemic School Improvement Processes (85)	Support for Professional Associations (91)
7	Employer Employee Assistance Scheme (87)	Support for Professional Associations (83)	Non-Teaching Executive Support (90)
8	Finance Training (83)	Finance Training (77)	Curriculum and pedagogical Support (88)
9	Support for Professional Associations (83)	Curriculum and Pedagogical Support (76)	Finance Training (85)
10	Curriculum and Pedagogical Support (83)	Line Managers' Support (59)	Coaching (84)
11	Extended Leave (73)	Non-Teaching Executive Support (58)	Mentoring (84)
12	Employer Psychological Health Programs (70)	Coaching (52)	Extended Leave (82)
13	Coaching (67)	Employer Employee Assistance Scheme (40)	Line Managers' Support (81)
14	External Employee Assistance Scheme (66)	Mentoring (38)	Employer Psychological Health Programs (80)
15	Line Managers' Support (65)	Extended Leave (29)	Employer Employee Assistance Scheme (79)
16	Non-Teaching Executive Support (56)	External Employee Assistance Scheme (27)	Employer Physical Health Programs (74)
17	Mentoring (51)	Employer Psychological Health Programs (26)	Systemic School Improvement Processes (73)
18	Employer Physical Health Programs (27)	Employer Physical Health Programs (11)	External Employee Assistance Scheme (70)
19	Job Sharing (15)	Job Sharing (4)	Job Sharing (49)

REFLECTIONS

Primary school principals say they are unable to direct resources in support of their role. They also state pedagogical and curriculum support offered by employers and systems cannot be accessed.

There are other noteworthy findings in these data:

- While employer or systemic school review processes are almost universally available, they are not valued by as many principals as might

be expected. There may be value in investigating the reasons for this difference.

- The number of primary principals who job share is very low (4%) compared with the rest of the workforce in their schools. However, many primary principals indicate interest in job sharing.
- Leadership coaching and mentoring while highly valued, are used by no more than half of primary principals. There is a need to investigate why

these practices are not more freely available nor widely used.

Question: What are the impediments to primary principals using these supportive practices?

Effective line managers in education would probably claim their role was in large part supportive and developmental. Given this, it is disturbing to find four out of ten primary principals do not experience the leadership and management practices described by this respondent.

“I feel super supported and trusted by my boss. This has a massive impact on my sense of wellbeing. She has shown in words and deeds that she values my contribution, trusts my decisions (although does not abandon me to make them in isolation and is always, always, happy to consult), and is interested in my career development (giving me opportunities beyond my role definition). I have been able to employ a teaching and support staff who love the direction of the school and the trust culture therein, appreciate

their jobs, and appreciate the opportunities to lead and be led, and the recognition they receive. This really makes my job a joy. Most days!!”

The widely available, frequently used and highly valued practices of staff employment and management are probably the result of increased school autonomy. However, there are concerns raised in other sections of this survey regarding the adequacy of support for principals in this area.

Four out of ten primary principals have used their employer provided employee assistance service; three out of ten have used an external employee assistance scheme. Considering there may be doubling up and referral of others in these responses, it still appears high numbers of principals are seeking support to manage their health and wellbeing.

Question: How can primary principals work with employers and systems to identify practices that work effectively for them? How can those practices be resourced?

PART SEVEN: ANALYSING THE DATA

CONTEXT / POLICY AND PRACTICE

When asked to respond to the questions, “I am satisfied with the policies available to me to manage and, if needed, remove poorly performing staff members” and “I receive the support of my employer / system in implementing policies related to poorly performing staff members,” these were the levels of strong agreement combined with agreement by sector:

- Government sector 17% (satisfied) and 22% (supported)
- Catholic sector 24% (satisfied) and 35% (supported)
- Independent sector 59% (satisfied) and 72% (supported)

This level of differentiation is not found in all policy areas. For example, when asked about working with the policies and guidelines for responding to parent matters and complaints, these were the percentage who strongly agreed or agreed they could confidently respond:

- Government sector 68%
- Catholic sector 78%
- Independent sector 83%

Across Australia, there are uniformly above average (57.5%) levels of strong agreement or agreement for the proposition that ‘staff and

community generally support the policies in place at the school’. The case is similar, except for the Northern Territory, with ‘confidence about responding to parent matters or complaints’. Again, except for New South Wales, there are above average levels of strong agreement or agreement that ‘leadership of teaching and learning is supported by policy and guidelines’.

There is below average (57.5%) strong agreement or agreement with the proposition that, “I am satisfied with the policies available to me to manage and, if needed, remove poorly performing staff members” in every state and territory.

In all jurisdictions except Western Australia, the situation is also below average for this proposition, “I can influence (and change) the policies that impact upon my school by working with my employer / system.”

The proposition, “I receive the support of my employer / system in implementing policies related to poorly performing staff members,” received below average support everywhere except the Australian Capital Territory.

The table below contains the data on the policy environment of primary principals according to some contextual factors (Gender, Sector and Jurisdiction)

The table below displays above average agreement (green) and below average agreement (red) for the policy questions indicated.

		Q 16	Q 17	Q 18	Q 19	Q 20	Q 21	Q 22	Q 23	Q 24	Q 25	Q 26
Respondents		Supportive Policy.	Sat. Pol.	Eff. Pol.	Staff & Com.	Influ. & Change	Eff. Stud. Beh.	Supp. Stud. Beh.	Sat. Staff Man.	Supp. Staff Man.	Sat. Parent Man.	Supp. Parent Man.
All	All	60.95	60.95	60.95	60.95	60.95	60.95	60.95	60.95	60.95	60.95	51.46
Gender	Female	60.71	50.26	61.77	87.87	40.57	57.74	52.37	23.11	28.94	71.2	53.68
Gender	Male	62.36	47.56	60.4	90.23	41.49	67.82	52.88	21.04	29.51	71.38	48.56
Sector	Government	52.56	40.45	53.57	86.63	31.33	55.34	46.09	16.99	21.74	68.13	45.88
Sector	Catholic	79.61	66.25	77.07	94.93	51.29	70.51	57.05	23.71	35.03	78.35	56.69
Sector	Independent	87.63	78.35	86.6	94.85	88.54	87.63	86.6	58.76	72.17	83.16	83.33
Jurisdiction	NSW	46.89	35.98	48.29	87	29.55	54.55	48.59	23.3	29.94	68.46	48.59
Jurisdiction	Vic	61.65	48.44	65.44	91.71	51.56	59.38	45.02	25.52	23.32	73.02	43.01
Jurisdiction	QLD	79.49	69.87	74.67	88.38	48.05	72.43	67.95	18.71	26.29	74.2	58.33
Jurisdiction	WA	82.25	74.19	82.25	95.16	58.06	83.87	62.91	22.58	50	74.19	67.74
Jurisdiction	SA	61.05	42.11	55.79	82.1	36.84	51.58	45.26	15.79	25.27	79.78	58.51
Jurisdiction	Tas	63.64	57.58	75.76	90.63	30.3	57.58	51.51	30.3	36.36	63.64	42.42
Jurisdiction	ACT	100	83.34	83.33	100	50	91.66	58.34	25	66.67	83.34	66.67
Jurisdiction	NT	66.67	40.91	68.18	90.91	50	72.73	68.18	22.73	13.64	45.46	54.54

CONTEXT / ACCOUNTABILITY WORKLOAD

The contexts in which primary principals operate have no influence on their responses to the question, “Employer and government accountability requirements are an increasing proportion of my workload.” Overall, 96% of primary principals strongly agree or agree with the proposition. There is a little sectorial variation:

- Government sector 97%
- Catholic sector 97%
- Independent sector 88%

The responses from each jurisdiction are all above 90% strong agreement or agreement. Actual figures range from the ACT with 92% to Tasmania with 100%. More populous states are closer to the average national response rate. This is compelling evidence that primary principals, regardless of the context in which they work, are carrying increasing accountability workloads.

CONTEXT / HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The table below shows mean scores for self-assessed health and wellbeing of various cohorts of respondents.

Respondents		Current School	Current Term	IN 5 Years
All	All	2.99	2.84	2.38
Gender	Female	2.98	2.78	2.34
Gender	Male	3.01	2.95	2.47
Age	20 - 35	3	2.71	2.52
Age	36 - 50	2.84	2.78	2.44
Age	51 - 60	3.02	2.85	2.32
Age	>60	3.34	3.03	2.79
Sector	Government	2.94	2.7	2.22
Sector	Catholic	2.97	3.08	2.6
Sector	Independent	3.34	3.41	3.08
Location	Major City	3.01	2.94	2.49
Location	Regional	2.94	2.73	2.22
Location	Remote	3.06	2.69	2.31
Jurisdiction	NSW	2.87	2.6	2.09
Jurisdiction	Vic	3.17	2.96	2.47
Jurisdiction	QLD	2.99	2.98	2.51
Jurisdiction	WA	3.1	3.2	2.93
Jurisdiction	SA	2.94	2.87	2.49
Jurisdiction	Tas	3.06	3.06	2.48
Jurisdiction	ACT	3.08	3.5	2.83
Jurisdiction	NT	3.05	2.86	2.73

There are differences in self-assessed health and wellbeing status between the sectors. Independent primary principals have the highest rating (3.41), followed by those in the Catholic sector (3.08) with government sector principals indicating the lowest score (2.70).

The correlation table below indicates the strength of relationships between the various context elements and the strength of their relationship with respondents’ self-assessed health and wellbeing. No conclusions about causality can be drawn from these data.

Correlations		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1	Role														
2	School Type	.359**													
3	Student N	-0.013	-0.022												
4	Enrolment changing?	0.051	0.032	-.328**											
5	Sector	.302**	.534**	.087**	.083*										
6	State	.084*	.153**	0.02	.066*	.185**									
7	Location	0.01	0.048	-.517**	.240**	-.153**	0.042								
8	Age	-.098**	-.069*	.123**	-0.035	-0.049	-0.057	-.069*							
9	Gender	0.051	-0.003	-.161**	0.047	-.109**	-0.004	.145**	.102**						
10	Yrs in Role	-.150**	-0.049	.255**	-.111**	0.008	-0.028	-.158**	.471**	-.170**					
11	Yrs in curr Sch	0.012	0.009	.082*	-0.045	0.044	-.128**	-.088**	.405**	-0.055	.533**				
12	Employment Terms	0.039	.169**	-0.018	0.024	.191**	.269**	0.057	-0.02	0.01	-0.062	-.066*			
13	H&WB Curr Term	.132**	.157**	.075*	0.003	.230**	.136**	-.096**	.073*	-.081*	0.064	0.04	.106**		
14	H&WB Curr Sch	.078*	.100**	.067*	-0.014	.108**	0.04	-0.007	.148**	-0.014	.103**	.132**	.084*	.557**	
15	H&WB Future	.176**	.166**	.082*	0.012	.233**	.157**	-.085**	-0.037	-0.056	-0.008	-.086**	.128**	.623**	.513**

Key to correlations
Range -1 (perfect negative correlation) to +1 (perfect positive correlation).
0 = no correlation at all
0-.29 = small
.3 -.5 = medium
>.5 large

Significance * means 95% confidence; ** means 99% confidence correlation is not due to chance

The positive correlations between role and school type (as listed on the survey) and self-assessed health and wellbeing shows all aspects of health and wellbeing surveyed deteriorate with increasing role complexity and responsibility. Role complexity and responsibility are elements of primary principal autonomy.

A counter-intuitive correlation is the positive relationship between increasing student numbers and improvement in all aspects of health and wellbeing. An implication of this finding is that school leadership in small schools has elements more likely to damage health and wellbeing than the challenges faced by principals in larger schools. The more remote the school, the lower is the self-assessed health and wellbeing of principals in the current term and in the future.

Health and wellbeing self-assessments in the current school and the current term improved with the age of respondents. Female principals are less experienced and report slightly lower health and wellbeing in the current term than their male colleagues.

There is a strong positive correlation between length of service in current school and health and wellbeing during that time. There is a strong negative correlation between longevity in current position and self-assessed health in the future.

The respondents with working conditions other than full time permanent, for example, contract or part time employment, self-assess higher levels for all aspects of health and wellbeing.

POLICY AND PRACTICE / HEALTH AND WELLBEING

There were differences in principals' self-assessed health and wellbeing depending on the policies and support with which they worked.

Using results of Question 16, the self-assessed health and wellbeing status of principals in supportive policy environments was compared to the self-assessed health and wellbeing status of those in non-supportive policy environments. The respondents in supportive policy environments had a self-assessed health and wellbeing rating of 3.09 compared to 2.34 for those in a non-supportive environment.

Also, principals who can influence and change their policy environment (Q 20) scored their health at 3.12 while those identifying themselves as not having that lever gave themselves a lower score (2.53).

Analysis of responses to Questions 22, 24 and 26 was informative. Here principals reported whether they could rely on system or employer support in relation to student behaviour, staff performance and parental issues. The slightly less than 20% of principals who could rely on such support in all three areas reported a mean score of 3.29 for their health and wellbeing. This compared to a mean score of 2.52 for the 10% of respondents who reported they couldn’t rely on such support in any area. When commenting on those issues a principal confronts each day, one respondent said:

“Clearly, the stress of managing relationships within the school – parents, staff and students – is a huge impact. Poor performing staff, high and sometimes unreasonable expectations from parents / carers, and poor behaviour from students all have a huge impact.”

Also significant was the situation for around 40% of respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they received support for implementing policies related to poorly performing staff members. A comparison between those agreeing they received this support with those disagreeing showed a mean difference of 0.59 in self-assessed health and wellbeing (3.22 as compared to 2.63) Many comments about this situation highlight the need for effective staff performance management policies and processes. For example:

“Management of unsatisfactory performance of staff is a huge burden on principals and support is ‘weak’. We are asked to hold teachers to account (re professional standards and performance) yet actually doing so is incredibly difficult.”

There were also differences in respondents' self-assessed health and wellbeing scores; between those who used practices available to them and those who did not.

In most practices (Questions 29 to 47), those principals who used available practices reported higher levels of self-assessed health and wellbeing compared to their colleagues who did not make use of the practices available to them. The two practices which had the greatest variation were ‘School based decisions and processes in managing staff’ (-0.31) and ‘Employer supported health and wellbeing services – physical’ (-0.30).

The exceptions were ‘Extended leave – sabbatical or the like,’ where there was no difference; and, ‘School finance training’ and ‘Employer provided employee assistance services’, where there were minimal improvements in health and wellbeing status for those not using the available practice.

ACCOUNTABILITY WORKLOAD / HEALTH AND WELLBEING

When asked to provide personal reflections on how their role impacts upon their health and wellbeing, 29% of the 623 comments mentioned accountability while 8% mentioned workload.

This comment is typical:

“Due to current workload, I am usually awake at 4am with thoughts of work in my head. I am finding that it is impossible to keep on top of all the tasks I need to complete in the time available. A major hurdle is having to deal with many new DoE initiatives that require time and accountability from me. As a teaching principal ... I have few staff to help complete these tasks.”

Question 50 asked, “What change/s to the role of principal would you prioritise?” Over 70% of respondents (664) provided comments. A text analysis identified 28 words or phrases which were repeated five times or more. Support was mentioned by 161 respondents (24%), management was mentioned by 123 respondents (19%) and teaching and learning and workload were mentioned 7% and 6% of respondents respectively. Other words or phrases mentioned five or more times included:

- Paperwork, Red Tape, Administrative, Tasks, Rid, Amount, Ability, Instructional Leadership, Process, and Balance (2%)

Over recent years, a number of programs aimed at cutting red tape have been rolled out in various jurisdictions. It appears from the responses to this survey those efforts, thus far, have not achieved the goal of freeing up principals to concentrate on leading teaching and learning. Furthermore, comments from respondents show the health and wellbeing of primary principals is deteriorating, in part at least, because of the unmanageable accountability and compliance workload.

REFLECTIONS

There are clear connections between the school context and the employer or system policy and practice environment. However, for this report, it is the connections between context and self-assessed health and wellbeing which are significant. The indirect correlations between increasing role complexity and responsibility and self-assessed health and wellbeing could be explained by several factors. This survey suggests inadequate role support would be one. The direct correlation between school size and self-assessed health and wellbeing is more difficult to explain. Perhaps the role of leadership in small schools is more complex and challenging than is widely recognised.

None of the connections discussed in this report can be assumed to be cause and effect. However, principals who:

- Work in supportive policy environments;
- Can influence and change policies; and,
- Have effective student, staff and parent policies and employer or systemic support in implementing same,

report higher levels of health and wellbeing than their colleagues without those conditions in their schools.

Finally, the ubiquitous nature of excessive accountability and compliance workloads identified in this survey and associated commentary, indicates all primary principals are constrained, frustrated and less healthy as a result.

Question: What can be done to ensure all primary principals receive the support required for good health and wellbeing?

- Development, Facilities, Health and Wellbeing, Administrative Requirements, LMBR, ‘Administrivia’, Emails, Greater Autonomy, managerial and Tools (1%).

This text analysis does not provide information about the respondent's change priority. For example, ‘support’ could refer to funding, staffing, policy and practice or leadership and governance arrangements.

A more qualitative analysis identified the six categories in the table below.

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage
Lightened Workload	245	37%
Increased support from Employers or Systems	194	29%
Additional Staffing Support	186	28%
More Time for Leading Teaching and Learning	97	15%
None	16	2%
Uncategorised	14	2%

The largest identifiable priority for change (37% of respondents) was for lightened workloads for principals. Many principals believe there are responsibilities placed upon them which should be eliminated. Respondents say:

“Get rid of all the mundane, pointless compliance rubbish that should be managed by DoE and let us actually lead learning.”

Duplication of work frustrates and tires many respondents. This is an indicative comment:

“Simplify the role. I’m all for accountability, however not when we report the SAM data set in so many different ways. It is soul destroying.”

Other respondents state many tasks should be outsourced or delegated to others. This comment represents this prevalent view.

“I would outsource the administrative tasks that cause us to lose focus on the important aspects of our work and should be consistently managed across all schools.”

Many principals expressed concern about the workload when they are forced to operate outside their skill set. For example:

“Less administrative, insignificant duties that have nothing to do with teaching and learning. I accept that WHS is important but I am not an arborist - why should I have to do a tree audit? Specialist WHS officers attached to schools - accountants - more ‘specialist’ teaching staff - more counsellors attached to schools.”

The increased support from employers and systems prioritised by 194 respondents (29%) included 19 references to slowing the rate of change. This comment is from a principal with this priority:

“Being able to take the time to consolidate a few changes at a time rather than constant change after change.”

An equal number of respondents (19) prioritised their health and wellbeing. Their comments included:

“Work life balance, looking after yourself before you look after others. Not putting yourself last. I think we should be able to reserve gym membership, health clubs and wellbeing activities.”

The option of job sharing was prioritised as a change by some respondents (14). They said:

“I would like to job share. I love my job but would like to work a bit less and enjoy my grandchildren.”

Other priorities included policy changes and support in the areas already canvassed in this survey. This is an illustrative comment:

“So many firstly I’d get rid of LMBR and get a system that saves time and does what we need to do efficiently. I’d have all

schools with one exec off class in addition to the principal. I’d let principals hire their own staff. I get rid of unnecessary validation processes that stress principals and staff and use up school money as they try to pull it all together. I’d have DEC back principals in being able to tell parents (and teachers) what some of them don’t want to hear.”

28% of respondents (186) prioritised additional staffing as a necessary change. Provision of an executive or personal assistant was chosen as a priority by many respondents (50). Comments such as this indicates primary principals have given this matter careful consideration:

“I would like all principals to have an administrative assistant (outside the current budget allocation - and deemed to be used for that purpose only). It could be pro rota and cap out for larger schools whose budget allows for executive support. Anything under 200 students at least, requires additional executive support.”

The second largest group prioritising increased staffing suggested the provision of business managers. This comment articulates the rationale for the change:

“Finance is becoming ridiculous. I know schools have choice to employ a business manager but difficult to dedicate this money to a business manager salary when the needs of kids are so great. Ethically most of us in disadvantaged school areas find this hard. WHS is over the top and keeps us awake at night. Principals hate being treated like we are stupid. Some of our assistance personnel such as EPAC and Legal Branch need some work with their customer service approach. Sometimes policy does not match the advice you get from EPAC etc.”

Most respondents focussed on provision of additional administrative or office staff. Those who prioritised support for students or reviews of staffing allocative models made comments such as this:

“Increase leadership density in primary schools. Provide a counsellor allocation based on enrolment rather than a standard allocation which doesn’t acknowledge enrolment numbers. Re-think or re-culture the expectations around night time meetings e.g. Introduce TOIL or change parent/teacher interviews and governance meetings to the school day. I don’t need ‘consultants’ to build my capacity or tell me what to do, I need more people to do the doing.”

15% of respondents (97) prioritised changes to increase the time available for leading teaching and learning. They said:

“It’s hard being everything to everybody. I would like to be able to prioritize things happening at my campus, rather than spending time on issues related to other parts of the school. I would like to make my staff and students the priority.”

REFLECTIONS

Analysis of the 634 substantive comments prioritising changes to the role of principal clearly demonstrates the following findings. Primary principals are concerned:

- Their role continues to expand in both quantity and complexity; and,
- They provide effective leadership, particularly of teaching and learning, at the expense of their personal health and wellbeing.

To address these concerns, they have prioritised changes to the role. They say employers and systems should:

- Wind back the accountability and compliance burden currently thrust upon schools;
- Avoid duplication and outsource data collection;
- Slow the rate of change;
- Support new policy implementation;
- Provide personal / executive assistants and/or business managers (pro-rata for small schools);

- Review staffing models; and,
- Focus on teaching and learning.

Primary principals are not recommending fundamental changes to their role. They want to attend to the aspects of their role for which they have the training, skills and disposition. However, they believe this can only be achieved if there is a ‘root and branch’ review of the workload of the primary principalship.

If workload shedding is not possible, primary principals require appropriate resources to ensure leading of teaching and learning does not suffer. This respondent speaks for all:

“I don’t need ‘consultants’ to build my capacity or tell me what to do. I need more people to do the doing.”

Question: Where do we begin the task of lessening the burden of unnecessary and onerous compliance and accountability requirements? Who determines what’s necessary or unnecessary?

PART NINE: INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

Question 51 asked, “Are you aware of any policies or practices from other countries or other professions that might be beneficial to the health and wellbeing of Australian school leaders?” 407 respondents provided comments with just over half (52%) saying they were unaware of any beneficial policies or practices and just over a quarter (26%) providing general comments. The remaining comments are tabulated below.

Category	Percentage	Number
Finland and Europe	8%	32
Australian Education Sectors	3%	12
Singapore and Asia	2%	9
Ontario, Canada and USA	2%	8
Australian States and Territories	2%	8
Other Professions	2%	8
New Zealand	0.75%	3
Uncategorised	1%	5

Those who refer to Finland for beneficial policies and practices mention:

- Low levels of politicisation of education;
- High levels of equity;
- School autonomy;
- Low emphasis on national testing;
- Slow rate of policy change;
- High respect for teachers and principals; and,
- High value placed on the work of teachers and principals.

One respondent expressed reservations about the wisdom of transposing Finland’s unitary system on to the complex education landscape in

Australia.

Other European initiatives mentioned were:

- Wellbeing vouchers for employees (Netherlands);
- Smaller classes (Switzerland and Portugal); and,
- The 4C mental toughness program (United Kingdom).

The Catholic sector’s interstate and international principals’ conferences were mentioned along with sabbaticals, also available in the independent sector. The independent sector’s employment of bursars or registrars was favourably viewed. The Flourish program in the New South Wales government sector was mentioned by five respondents.

In Singapore, these programs and practices were recommended:

- Leadership training, before and after appointment;
- Principal networks; and,
- Annual performance bonuses for teachers.

Other Asian initiatives mentioned were:

- Five level master teacher appointments (Shanghai);
- Executive assistants for all principals (South Korea);
- International School Council programs (Japan); and,
- Respect for teachers (Thailand).

Ontario provided these examples respondents believed beneficial:

- Professional development programs for emerging and practicing principals;
- Outsourcing of facilities management;
- Single salary for all principals; and,

- Principal support programs.

The SAM4Schools process for managing risk and compliance in the United States of America was mentioned as worthwhile.

These practices and programs from different Australian jurisdictions were mentioned:

- Independent support referrals (Western Australia);
- Minimum of two staff in small schools (Victoria);
- Principal relief days (Australian Capital Territory); and,
- SAHMRI mental toughness program (South Australia).

Respondents had noted these examples of health and wellbeing support in other professions:

- Formalised structure of counselling (Victorian OHS System);
- Critical incident follow-up (Health and Emergency Services industries);
- Staff management and proactive programs (Google);
- Gym-based programs (New South Wales Police);
- Staff lunch together (Queensland Health); and,
- Rural and remote officer professional development support (South Australia Police)

New Zealand schools collaborate nationally to improve education and principals have sabbaticals universally available according to respondents. In fact, 21 or 5% of respondents mentioned the availability and use of sabbaticals as beneficial for primary principals’ health and wellbeing.

REFLECTIONS

One respondent who had no suggested initiatives explained his or her situation thus:

“No time to research. This job consumes all of your time including most personal time.”

Another respondent pointed out:

“LOL, no. Funny thing but I don’t have time to read much anymore.”

Those who have invested time in researching how other systems and professions support leader health and wellbeing have identified many practices worthy of further investigation. For example, the practices and procedures which support police, health and emergency services personnel might be transferable to other departments including education.

Internationally, Australian principals’ associations have worked closely with the Ontario Principals Council (OPC) on this topic for some time. A paper from an OPC hosted 2016 international symposium will be published soon. It will offer strategic approaches for associations interested in promoting the health and wellbeing of principals.

Question: How might international or other profession initiatives be tailored to the Australian primary school context? What involvement should principals’ associations have in investigating, selecting, adapting and implementing initiatives and programs?

PART TEN: THE GENERAL COMMENTS

Question 52 asked respondents to provide general comments they wished to make. There were 327 comments in total covering a wide range of issues. The Survey Monkey text analysis identified 28 words or phrases which were repeated in the responses.

‘School’ was mentioned by 98 respondents (30%); ‘role’ was mentioned by 61 respondents (19%); ‘support’ by 59 (18%); and, ‘job’ by 55 (17%). Other words or phrases mentioned ten or more times included:

- Staff, workload, health and wellbeing, survey, responsibility.

This text analysis does not provide information about the nature of the respondent’s comment.

For example, ‘school’ could refer to relationships, role or context.

A more qualitative analysis identified the six categories in the table below.

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage
Increasing Workload	122	37%
Health and Wellbeing	97	30%
Managing People	55	17%
Aspirants and Retirement	36	11%
Survey	22	8%
Affirmation	12	4%
No comment	19	6%
Uncategorised	33	10%

The largest number of categorised general comments referred to increasing workload (37% of respondents). There was a noticeable sense of frustration accompanied by the concerns many principals had about the growing demands placed upon their time by excessive and onerous accountability and compliance. This comment captures both these elements:

“I have never worked so many hours in my life. I am tired of people telling me I should delegate when in fact everyone is experiencing the same challenges. The emphasis on documentation of practice, evidence of impact, rigid performance and development requirements, external validation are some examples of practices which take me away from students and staff. I accept we have to be accountable but when accountability becomes an end in itself, I question its purpose.”

There was also a palpable sense that unless the unsustainable workload was lightened there was a bleak outlook for primary principalship.

“The expectations and workload being placed on principals is increasing rapidly, along with the expectations and demands of the communities we serve. Is it sustainable, or even realistic, to think we can meet all expectations placed upon us? I think not.”

The general comments about health and wellbeing were of three types – personal and colleague health; means to improve health; and, the health of staff and students. All the comments about personal and colleague health in this category were negative.

“Since becoming an executive almost 30 years ago the demands and hours have increased dramatically in the last few years. More and more time is required at schools not just to cater for the greater number of students with special needs but also to meet the increasing accountability and compliance required. Parents in general are more demanding but from a system point of view so many things have been added and little if anything taken away. My family suffers and my health and I know this is true for a number of my colleagues. We need to support principals with extra time and this means additional funds to release others to help share the burden and workload. As a primary principal we always put our students first so any additional funds we get go into supporting students.....we need an allocation specifically for release of executive support.”

Other respondents focussed their comments on necessary support for improving the health and wellbeing of primary principals.

“Line Managers need to be checking in with Principals to see how they are going from time to time - not just a school visit. Taking the time to pick up the phone and ask, “How are you going? Is there anything I can do to support?” would be a start for Principal wellbeing. Needs to start at the grass roots. Principals are expected to manage the wellbeing of their staff. Who manages the wellbeing of Principals?”

The health and of staff and students elicited a much smaller number of comments. However, the points they made have much wider application.

“Additional workload requirements impacting Principal health and wellbeing is the employer demand for Principals to work with increasing social mental health matters and be the initial point of contact for families to reach out for support. This issue is a large community and society based problem and schools are being expected to pick up the load - without additional training in psychology or funding to enable schools to be better equipped to support families. When such a situation arises, it is mentally and physically draining on the Principal and teaching staff.”

Numerous comments in other open-ended survey questions addressed managing staff, students and parents. Many general comments also added insights into the situation for primary principals.

“I managed a teacher who was not fit to be in front of children. It turned into a grievance with union support, etc. The grievance wasn't substantiated nevertheless the ordeal impacted me greatly - sleepless nights, etc. I don't believe I could do this again.”

“I have spoken to many Principals in my networks who are all feeling very negative in regard to the workloads and expectations heaped upon them currently. This is especially relevant for teaching principals, and those working in very difficult schools where the behaviour of students and parents particularly is threatening and intimidating. It is physically dangerous to go to work for some principals, let alone psychologically damaging.”

“Principals spend considerable amount of time dealing with issues which other agencies should be attending to! The unrealistic expectation (is) that schools can fix/remedy family/community issues unrelated to education. Parents/carers have an unrealistic expectation of what non-educational services can be provided by the local schools.”

There were many comments about the growing unwillingness of teachers and executive staff to move towards the principalship.

“The people at the top in their silos of power do not understand the avalanche that falls to the Principals in schools. I tried very hard to be a ‘filter’ for my staff to say what we stood for and what we would prioritise, so the unnecessary demands could be put aside, however the avalanche made this almost impossible. I have tried very hard to encourage quality young teachers to undertake leadership roles and look to promotion. They see the excessive workload of the school leaders and they are very open that they will not be taking that path. 20 years ago it was a different story. Just look at the limited applications for Principal jobs. The expectations and demands must be rationalised. Speak to any Principal who has stepped out of the school to undertake a different role. They say they can't believe the difference and many have no wish to return to their schools. Being burnt out is not fun. I always loved teaching and leadership, and I thought I would enjoy my job until retirement”.

“It's a challenging job and it's a great pity that in Victoria very few people are applying for principal roles.”

Several other respondents indicated clear intentions of retiring or leaving the profession early.

“I absolutely love the role of the principal and all that is possible to achieve better outcomes for our students but I'm not sure I will be able to sustain my mental and physical health and wellbeing at the current rate for the next 20 years.”

“I am one day off retiring so I expect my general wellbeing and health to drastically improve. Whilst I would love to stay in the role the system supports are such that I do not choose to put my health and wellbeing in jeopardy. Future leaders require and DESERVE genuine, on the ground support.”

“Actively looking for other work.”

Some who commented on the survey were pessimistic that it would lead to changes that would make a difference to their health and wellbeing. However, others were grateful for the opportunity to influence the provision of support for primary principals.

“I am very interested in finding out the results of this survey and potential future directions to support staff in school leadership positions.”

“This is an invaluable survey and informs the decision-making processes of our association.”

“Thank you for your interest in this area - I hope you are able to influence policies from above with your results.”

There were respondents who used a general comment to affirm their satisfaction with the role of primary school leader. No doubt other primary school principals would have echoed these remarks though it is likely few would claim there are no difficulties in the role.

“I have a fantastic school with a large and very capable staff but we will never achieve the priorities that are set externally with the complexity of our school community and the high levels of poverty and associated disadvantage. We make a huge difference in the lives of our students but this would not be recognised within our system.”

“I feel very valued within my school community and grateful for the job that I have.”

A significant number of respondents made no comment or comments that were not categorised.

REFLECTIONS

Analysis of the 308 substantive general comments reveals the following findings. Primary principals are concerned:

- Their role continues to expand in both quantity and complexity;
- They are not supported; and,
- As their health and wellbeing deteriorates the primary principalship becomes less attractive to themselves and others.

They say:

“I worry for my colleagues and myself at times. I carry too much stress and try to laugh or shrug it off. I am worried about taking a break or giving myself a day as I feel I let the team down. Someone has to get the message across that there is far too much change affecting schools and that the individual silos putting out their pet projects are forming a tsunami of work for the principals and therefore their schools. It distracts from teaching and affects wellbeing.”

“No wonder principals drop off the perch early. I love my job (being in education), but the further up the food chain I travel, the further removed I seem to travel from the whole reason I went into the profession... working with students, making a direct difference to students. And you know the scary part? I'm not anti-DoE, or anti the establishment. So, I feel overwhelmed by some of this, what are my disengaged colleagues feeling? I still have the desire and stamina to lead my school really well, but I'm having to turn a ship around slowly...and that takes time.”

The general comments are not random in intent. Respondents are frustrated by the web of accountability and compliance reporting which they see unrelated to teaching and learning. They are challenged by the relational complexities in a school; complexities which have increased in line with rapid changes in society and growing expectations of schools and education.

While they continue to express job satisfaction, respondents look for the recognition and support of employers and systems.

Question: How can primary principals be supported in a practical and effective way?

THE IMPLICATIONS OF PRINCIPAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOR PRINCIPALS

It is obvious to primary principals, from reflections on their personal health and wellbeing status and collective data from studies such as the Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey by Dr Philip Riley and this survey, that their health and wellbeing is deteriorating when compared to other Australians.

Primary principals are committed to making healthy lifestyle choices. Indeed, Dr Riley's data suggests they are doing so in increasing numbers. This trend must be supported by changes in principals' approach to their professional role.

For example, open-ended responses in this survey give a clear indication that while principals may understand their leadership is the single most powerful resource available to the school, they are unwilling to apply other resources at their disposal to support and enhance it. This tension, described by some respondents as an ethical dilemma, adds to many principals' emotional and physical depletion. So their time is freed to focus on leading teaching and learning, surely it is ethically right for principals to delegate administrative responsibility to other staff where possible.

The connections between policy and practice environments and principals' self-assessed health and wellbeing illuminated by this survey, indicate that principals using the supporting practices available to them generally have higher health and wellbeing than those colleagues who do not. To ensure maximised health and wellbeing status principals should consider utilising all supportive practices provided by their employers and systems.

An audit of the times at which surveys were submitted indicates 18% of principals completed the survey between 7:00pm and 8:00am. Given completing the survey was voluntary, the comment is made that many principals may well be working unsustainable hours. Primary principals should reduce the amount of discretionary effort they expend each day. That said, APPA is grateful so many members placed a high priority on this survey.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF PRINCIPAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOR PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATIONS

The strongest response in this survey highlighted that employer and government accountability was an increasing proportion of principals' workload regardless of personal attributes or professional context of the respondents.

While pushing back against accountability and compliance workload can easily, even wilfully, be misinterpreted as a desire to be unaccountable, it is necessary for associations to heed the voices from the field in this survey. Primary principals are unequivocal that the increases in their workload are untenable. Associations advocating and promoting the position that a highly effective school leader is in every school must also work towards more realistic workloads for their members.

Another area of concern, highlighted in the policy, practice and open-ended response sections of the survey, is the connection between principals' health and wellbeing and the effectiveness of policies and procedures for managing students, staff and parents. The support of employers and systems in these matters is also connected to principals' health and wellbeing. Respondents' comments tell associations that members believe effective policies and procedures, and the support of employers and systems, would boost their health and wellbeing. This comment is typical:

“Lack of resources to manage underperforming staff and high needs students have a significant impact on my health and wellbeing. I worry that my work is compromised by this and I am not able to do the very best I can for my students and my staff. This worry does not only occur during work time but at all hours of the day. I think there needs to be better support for students that are violent and trash classrooms and for the management of staff.”

Principals' associations must continue to advocate strongly for effective policies, programs and procedures together with adequate timely support from employers and systems for principals in their role of leading and developing students, teachers and parents every day.

APPA's work in this area must continue to be informed by the data and stories contained in this survey.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF PRINCIPAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOR EMPLOYERS AND SYSTEMS

Apart from the obvious benefit of school principals being healthy and well for maximum efficacy in their critical role there are implications for employers and systems; the cost involved when principals are absent due to sickness or stress, retire early or take extended leave, access workers' compensation or have low productivity due to 'presenteeism' and the like are considerable.

A far more troubling concern is the real and personal cost to employers, systems, school communities and families when principals suffer breakdown or self-harm. According to Dr Phil Riley's research such events are more likely to occur than commonly appreciated. Comments and ratings from this survey raise concerns that too many primary principals are experiencing enormous stress as a result of unsustainable workload and pressure.

THE COST OF RECRUITMENT VERSUS RETENTION OF PRINCIPALS

Besides highly effective leadership there is another, albeit pragmatic, argument for those in charge of schools and school systems to value the health and wellbeing of principals – the high cost of recruitment compared to the cost of retention.

Estimates of replacement costs vary widely. However, even the most conservative estimate (25% of annual salary) should concern the education profession because principals are often replaced by a person in the system who is, in turn, replaced by another school leader or teacher, too often in a long-term acting capacity. School leadership churn exacerbates this situation. The cumulative cost of consequential vacancies would be very difficult to calculate but would, no doubt, be considerable.

The cost of retention is not negligible. Ongoing professional development, supportive school improvement processes, administrative support, and health and wellbeing programs must be adequately resourced. However, a supportive and developmental leadership culture pervading the operations of employers and systems would reap school leadership efficacy dividends well beyond its monetary cost. This survey gives employers and systems who wish to establish or maintain such a culture a unique insight into the policies and practices school leaders know make them well and strong in the broadest sense.

SMALL SELECTION POOLS FOR PRINCIPAL POSITIONS

There are equally significant implications arising from the perceptions of teachers and others who might aspire to become principals. Potential school leaders see the workload and demands in the professional life of

principals and their effect on health and wellbeing.

In 2009, the OECD warned in its International Report on Improving School Leadership that, *“Many countries are facing decreasing numbers of applications for principals' positions.”* The Australian principalship also suffers from this lack of interest in the role from associate principals and lead teachers.

Anecdotally, APPA members report that lead teachers, deputies, assistant principals, heads of program and others who might aspire to be principals, look at their principal's workload and consider the role too arduous. Additionally, there is often a relatively small differential in remuneration. They also believe that the negative effects on health and wellbeing outweigh the job satisfaction of leading a school.

Over time, this situation has led to an ageing principalship. Many principals are past the age where they can access their superannuation and embark upon retirement or another career. If significant numbers of these older school leaders leave or retire en masse, employers and systems will face a critical shortage of qualified aspirants with the motivational fit to fill the ensuing vacancies.

PART TWELVE: APPA'S RESPONSE

The Australian Primary Principals Association knows that for principals to be highly effective they must be healthy and have high levels of wellbeing. Also, fit for purpose policy and practice resources must be available, used and valued. Principals accept responsibility for the lifestyle and professional choices they make. However, APPA understands that their health and wellbeing can be affected by their role as a school leader and the policy and practice environment in which they work.

APPA recognises employers and systems are aware of the importance of principal health and wellbeing, and are taking steps to improve the situation through a range of initiatives and programs. This comment articulates the concerns of primary principals:

“Our system has become so focused on student performance that it has lost sight of looking after principals and those who work in schools. A lack of trust and support makes dealing with the complex issues of leading schools very isolating, adding significantly to stress levels and having a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of principals. Principals are struggling in the role and leaving in increasing numbers.”

This respondent brings to the fore the attention being given to student performance data without consideration for the welfare of those who work in schools.

It does not need to be so. Systemic and employer trust and support are not too much for any professional, para-professional or volunteer working in primary schools to expect. APPA stands ready to play its part in making 'trust and support' the new reality.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF PRINCIPAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOR GOVERNMENTS

Primary principals responding to this survey believed the increasing workload of employer and government accountability was having a negative effect on their health and wellbeing. Research clearly demonstrates that efficacy and productivity have a direct correlation with health and wellbeing.

Two of the concerns about accountability workload expressed by primary principals were:

- The amount of compliance data, unrelated to teaching and learning, they were expected to collect; and,
- The amount of duplication occurring in data collection.

Governments might consider carefully the special nature of schools when compliance report schedules are originally developed and investigate whether the 'required' data are available elsewhere or can be gained by other means.

These recommendations are targeted at primary principals, their professional associations and the profession of school leadership. Recommending action by these groups is deliberate. Employers, systems and governments will be interested in the data presented in this report and the stories behind them. APPA believes the data and stories are compelling; those in charge of Australian education, our schools and school systems will make changes in light of them. However, it is Australia's primary school leaders who must take ownership of these research findings and use them to make their work healthy, fulfilling, effective and attractive to aspirants.

RECOMMENDATION ONE

The profession of school leadership must insist and demonstrate it deserves trust and support so that principals can lead teaching and learning for all Australian students and teachers.

The trust of line managers, employers and systems is highly valued by primary principals. Individually and collectively principals foster that trust and support. They must accept every opportunity to articulate their role, establish its collaborative nature and push back against those who argue primary schools are over resourced or not effective.

RECOMMENDATION TWO

Australian primary principals' associations must advocate for adequate support aimed at meaningful accountability and compliance reporting.

Many of the accountability and compliance activities undertaken by primary principals have little or no bearing on the teaching and learning in schools and classrooms. Documentation around risk assessment, facilities maintenance and outside agency use of grounds are just three examples. Professional associations should vigorously question why principals are tasked with this work.

RECOMMENDATION THREE

Australian primary principals' associations must advocate for well-supported policies, procedures and practices that ensure primary school leaders can manage staff, students and parents effectively.

The devolution of autonomy to schools has been occurring for many years. Changes to, and support for, policy, procedures and practices have not kept pace with increasing autonomy. When effective and supported policies, procedures and practices are in place and used, primary principals' health and wellbeing will improve.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR

Australian primary principals must utilise school personnel and resources to ensure the school operates highly effectively.

There is no ethical or moral dilemma about enhancing school leadership through deployment of personnel and resources. Primary principals, regardless of school context, must not resile from providing the necessary support for leadership. Their schools' effectiveness depends upon it.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE

Australian primary principals must actively manage their workload.

The workload of most primary principals is unsustainable. Rather than more skilling, advice on how to work smarter or additional unskilled staff, if primary principals are to improve their deteriorating health and wellbeing and continue in the role which they still find satisfying, what is required is less work. Successful action on the recommendations above notwithstanding, they must at times say no to discretionary effort not directly related to leading teaching and learning.

This survey is a tribute to Australian primary school principals. These highly skilled, dedicated and effective leaders put their health and wellbeing at risk to lead schools in every far-flung corner of Australia. The fact so many of them have dedicated significant time and effort to complete this survey is indicative of their desire to be more effective. Sadly, others may not have found that time. APPA thanks them for the work they do each day and the extra effort in responding so comprehensively to this survey. APPA believes their efforts will bear fruit.

One of the purposes driving this research was to develop focussed advocacy by principals' associations for those employer or system policies and practices which are rated as effective by respondents. This and much more has been achieved. Analysis of primary principals' personal attributes, professional context, policy and practice environments and health and wellbeing reveal many highly correlated connections.

This report will be widely circulated, allowing anyone with access to the data to understand the need for urgent action to lighten the unconscionable workload currently placed upon Australian primary principals. Those who manage schools and school systems will be able to see which of their policies and practices are used and valued by primary principals, and the way those policies and practices are connected to school leader health and wellbeing.

This and other research in this area has the potential to change the face of primary school leadership in ways which will benefit every Australian student.

APPA wholeheartedly expresses its gratitude to respondents for their wisdom and advice.

APPA recommends careful and respectful reading of the report in consideration of the contribution made to Australian education by respondents and those they represent.

The production of this research report would not have been possible without the assistance of the following:

- Camp Australia – infographics, presentation and publication
- Teachers Health Fund – advice and symposium support
- Dr Philip Riley – statistical analysis and expert advice.

APPA is grateful for their contribution.

Employers and systems are aware of these implications and have developed policies to support principal health and wellbeing. These policies might well be gaining traction in schools. Respondents in the 2016 Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey reported the resources of formal leadership education, job satisfaction, degree to which individuals can influence their work, possibilities for development, variation of work tasks, meaning of work, commitment to the workplace and level of self-efficacy have all increased. Many, if not all these resources, are either directly or indirectly affected by the policies and procedures of employers and systems.

A desktop audit of annual reports reveals the types of supportive policies departments of education in each state and territory are implementing. This method of investigation is superficial and will overlook regional, district and local programs. However, it does have the advantage of identifying those policies which systems believe are important in addressing principal health and wellbeing. Unless otherwise mentioned the annual reports are for the 2014 – 2015 financial year.

The Australian Capital Territory Department of Education and Training conducted two seminars on Managing Psychological Illness in the Workplace for principals and deputies. The Employee Assistance Program, an independent, confidential, short-term solutions-focused counselling service for all staff was continued. The average utilisation rate dropped from 6.21% in the previous year to 5.77% in 2015 – 2016. Principals' utilisation was not reported separately.

The New South Wales Department of Education did not mention policies which supported principals as a discrete section of the workforce. However, the 2015 Annual Report highlighted a significant number of flexible work practices. These included part-time work, job sharing, leave without pay and various flexible hour arrangements. During 2015, 58,480 staff accessed flexible work options.

The Northern Territory Department of Education focused on a range of initiatives to improve staff retention. Some of these such as developing career pathways through systemic succession planning, encouraging emerging leaders to attend leadership programs, staff development, mentoring and coaching would clearly benefit the health and wellbeing of principals.

The Queensland Department of Education and Training established a contract for all departmental employees to have access to external employee assistance counselling, manager assistance and on-site trauma services. The 2015 – 2016 Annual Report highlighted two programs to support school leaders. Future Leaders is a leadership talent development initiative which aims to identify and develop current school leaders who demonstrate significant potential for next-level leadership. Take the Lead is a leadership and development program to develop the skills and capabilities of selected participants as high performing school leaders.

The South Australia Department for Education and Child Development reported in the 2015 Annual Report that a whole-of-DECD leadership strategy would be released in 2016. While principal health and wellbeing is not directly mentioned in the strategy, the planned approach to leadership development, recruiting the best leaders, communicating clear leadership career pathways, identifying and developing future leadership talent and succession planning indicate a supportive approach.

The Tasmania Department of Education's Healthy@Work Plan focuses on activities targeted at improving the health, happiness and productivity of all employees. The aims of the plan are to improve physical activity, improve

nutrition and reduce psychological distress. There is no information about the rate at which principals accessed the program. Positive Solutions, an external employee assistance program provider provided an independent confidential counselling service to all employees and on-site counselling in response to the occurrence of serious incidents.

The Victoria Department of Education and Training provides a comprehensive counselling service through OPTUM (formerly known as PPC Worldwide). This service is available 24/7 to all employees and covers any work related or personal issue. A conflict resolution service is also available to all employees. A Medical Advisory Service is available to assist principals with the management of employees experiencing (psychological and physical) health related difficulties that impact on their ability to perform the duties associated with their employment.

The Western Australia Department of Education provided a comprehensive training program to inform and skill principals in the operation and management of one-line budgets. Advice and services are also provided by experienced principals to support their colleagues. During the year 4255 counselling sessions were provided by the external employee assistance program provider. The number of principals who accessed the service is not provided.

From this summary of principal support services, one might conclude there is an emphasis in the government sector on reactive programs to support leaders who have health or wellbeing issues. This is not the complete picture. For example, under the auspices of departments of education, leadership institutes have been established in most states and territories. The Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership in Melbourne offers programs for aspiring, emerging and experienced principals. Many of these programs, such as "Coaching for Leadership Teams", have a connection to principal health and wellbeing.

For several years, the Queensland Department of Education and Training funded a program of collegial support operated by the Queensland Association of State School Principals (QASSP) through a Leadership Services Officer. One stated aim of the program was to strengthen principals' resilience.

The Association of Independent Schools Leadership Centre in New South Wales has an exemplary suite of programs and services for 2017. In the "You come to us" offerings there are programs such as Principal Induction, Wellbeing and Resilience for Leaders and Transforming Conflict. The "We come to you" programs include Professional Companionship and Critical Friend Services. Assuming other independent school state and territory associations are offering similarly proactive programs, there is both awareness and action around principal health and wellbeing in the independent sector.

Besides many of the programs mentioned above, Catholic Education Offices offer principals a range of sabbatical leave arrangements which are widely accessed and highly valued.

- The table below compares the responses strongly agree and agree with strongly disagree and disagree (the neutral response excluded) for these questions:
- *My leadership of teaching and learning in my school is supported by the employer or systemic policy and guidelines within which I operate. (Q 16)*
 - *The staff and community in my school generally support the policies in place at our school. (Q19)*
 - *I can influence (and change) the policies that impact upon my school by working with my employer / system. (Q20)*

DESCRIPTOR	CATEGORY	Q16	Q16	Q19	Q19	Q20	Q20
		Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
ALL		60.95	21.36	88.66	3.67	40.62	37.59
GENDER	Female	60.71	21.39	87.87	4.04	40.57	37.92
	Male	62.36	20.11	90.32	3.16	41.49	36.32
AGE	20 - 35	75	8.33	75	8.34	45.84	16.66
	36 - 50	65.07	18.13	88.53	4	41.33	34.4
	51 - 60	56.4	22.91	89.13	3.21	38.96	41.69
	>60	60.5	28.57	91.6	2.52	43.22	37.29
SECTOR	Gov't	52.56	27.48	86.63	4.65	31.33	46.38
	Catholic	79.61	6.37	94.39	0.64	51.29	21.79
	Indep't	87.63	3.09	94.85	2.06	88.54	4.17
LOCATION	Major City	62.18	20.85	89.26	2.93	42.38	37.89
	Regional	58.89	22.74	88.02	4.38	37.46	37.75
	Remote	62.69	19.4	86.77	5.88	41.17	35.29
ROLE	Non-Teach	56.33	23.67	88.19	3.49	33.83	43.56
	Teaching	57.62	24.5	80.07	3.97	39.47	35.76
	Non-Exec	81.84	9.47	91.58	3.16	78.73	10.64
SCHOOL SIZE	Associate	76.92	11.45	85.53	5.26	46.15	29.49
	0 - 150	58.54	24.39	87.32	4.87	38.54	39.03
	151 - 500	61.34	19.63	89.47	3.04	40.65	36.38
JURISDICTION	500 Plus	61.78	22.66	88.39	4.02	42.15	39.46
	NSW	46.89	31.35	87	5.08	29.55	49.72
	Vic	61.65	21.76	91.71	1.55	51.56	32.82
	Qld	79.49	8.97	88.38	3.23	48.05	27.92
	WA	82.25	3.23	95.16	0	58.06	19.36
	SA	61.05	21.06	82.1	7.37	36.84	37.89
	Tas	63.64	15.15	90.63	0	30.3	30.3
	ACT	100	0	100	0	50	33.33
	NT	66.67	14.29	90.91	4.55	50	18.18
EXPERIENCE	0 - 10 Yrs	62.43	18.59	88.65	3.92	42.08	35.03
IN ROLE	11- 20 Yrs	58.09	25.35	88.34	2.82	37.72	43.41
	21 Plus yrs	61.98	22.31	88.43	4.96	40.83	34.17
EXPERIENCE	0 - 10 Yrs	62.39	19.68	88.42	3.99	41	36.88
IN POSITION	11 - 20 Yrs	53.61	28.87	90.62	1.04	37.12	44.33
	21 Plus Yrs	44.45	38.89	100	0	52.94	29.41

The group with the smallest number reporting a supportive policy environment were principals who had been in the position more than twenty years (44%). However, this group believed they had a greater ability to influence and change policy (53%) than their less experienced colleagues.

More Independent principals (89%) and campus heads (79%) believed they had the ability to influence and change policy than those in any other cohort. It should be noted that there was a wide range of view between sectors and jurisdictions on this issue.

- Ten percent of the responses to each open-ended question in the survey have been randomly selected for this sample. The selection process randomly identified a comment in the first ten and then additional comments with an interval of eleven. This process ensured every comment was equally likely to be sampled regardless of position on the report. Null responses were skipped as were those which raised privacy concerns. The number of comments skipped is reported. Some small editing of 'typos' only occurred.
- QUESTION 28 “PLEASE PROVIDE ANY PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON HOW YOUR ROLE IMPACTS UPON YOUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING.” (623 COMMENTS)**
1. I don't need any help just let me do my job
 2. Working 70 plus hours per week, doing more and more accountability documentation and a sense that te wooden stick will be brought out does not have a positive impact on staff health and wellbeing.
 3. HUGE welfare
 4. Lonely being in small school with little support. SEILs seem to have other priorities than support and wellbeing of Prins and many 'projects' are not practical at all and time consuming. This is very frustrating and causes stress.
 5. Working over 65 hours every week leaves little time for work life balance
 6. Increasing anxiety causes mental distress.
 7. Time to complete all required tasks takes leaves just little time for looking after health and wellbeing
 8. The impact of IBAC has meant an ever increasing workload and focus on adminitrivia. As such, my workday often lacks opportunities to link in to the moral purpose that drove me to apply for the position. A top down model with a lack of transparency can lead to frustration.
 9. my day can often manly be about dealing with things. education leadership is often pushed aside due to the management and issue related components of my job.
 10. I am now spending many more hours at school to meet the expectations placed upon me by my employer which results in less family time and less time for healthy activities.
 11. To get through everything that is required of me in my role, my private life can at times suffer. I have to allocate a large amount of time over weekends to get things completed. I get in to school at 7:30am each morning and do not leave (usually) until no earlier than 6pm, just to keep on top of my obligations.
 12. Too much too soon. Little time to complete accountability requirements without regard to whole school position. Increasing accountability requirements distract from being able to work alongside staff and students which is impacting on relationships and therefore impacts on own health as staff complaints increase.
 13. The amount of time that is spent on compliance effects my ability to complete my role and it definitely effects my personal life.
 14. Since commencing in the role the hours required to the job at a high standard have increased. There has been significant reforms and changes to operating procedures and compliance matters that have increased the workload and essentially subtracted from the time to be an instructional leader
 15. Continual push down through the system to school level is completed

- in isolation without an understanding of what is actually happening to schools. Things are done to schools instead of with. People perceive that what they are giving to schools is going to make it easier but that is not usually true. Little support given to provide adequate implementation.
16. As a leader of learning the impact of system accountabilities erodes time on the real role.60 hour weeks are exhausting
 17. My family time is impacted. Working at night on weekends and go into work during holidays to catch up.
 18. Since becoming a Principal I have put on 20kg. The system requirements and tools to help with reforms have become ridiculous. I feel more and more like a clerk and less like a school leader. I am very concerned that we are not making the role of a school leader attractive for our middle managers and teachers. We need to rebrand the role.
 19. Time on job due to workload
 20. 24/7 positive and negative issues are constant and affect mental health and also physical health from stress, sleep deprivation
 21. Principals are teachers and passionate about doing whatever they can to improve student outcomes and their time at school. As such, whatever administration tasks are presented will be done on top of what is normally done. With the changes in education over the last 5 years in particular I find that I am working longer hours each day at school and then still doing work at home. this obviously takes away from personal time which impacts on family, exercise, diet and sleep - all factors that affect well-being. There is basically no time during the day or at night where I am not thinking about some aspect of school, there is no longer any downtime.
 22. Continuous changes, reforms, restructuring often require large amounts of extra work, especially accountability responsibilities. This consumes my time that would have otherwise been spent working with families, staff and students. The extra workload seems to be building year by year without any space to get on with the business of running our schools. The effects of principal workload limits my capacity to engage in the more meaningful, interpersonal tasks that make the school a nurturing and engaging environment. recently the workload is so large that there is little room for self-care and very little job satisfaction.
 23. The workload and stress have contributed to ill health and I have had to take time off work due to this workload.
 24. It's getting harder. .
 25. Extended hours
 26. It is only that I am strongly committed to my health and fitness that I happen to be in good health. The PPA and our Department is in no way committed to our wellbeing. The poor treatment of principals and teachers by parents and broader community is not being addressed and, frankly, we feel like we're being left out in the cold. I have resigned from the PPA as the many issues I've raised at my local PPC have been ignored. The elephant in the room. . . . Dr Mark Thompson, the tragic incident in Victoria. Where is the shift? I haven't seen one in NSW.
 27. No work life balance workload not sustainable
 28. The level of compliance work required by my employer has significantly impacted on my desire to work as an instructional leader and impact the learning of students in a positive way.
 29. I have previously been bullied and had no support from my previous Director, dispute the fact that I have been a principal whose integrity has

- never before been questioned and who has won awards for reforms in schools.
30. It is difficult to maintain (or even have) a work/family balance due to the pressures of increasing enrolments, system accountability, and day to day operations.
31. Very hard to get a work/life balance. the increasing demands of the job mean longer working days.
32. Support Services and addressing the needs of student with Disabilities or challenging behaviours is a huge workload and the system is creating more blocks than opportunities. I feel as though I have to fight too hard within the system to access support for these students and this is increasing in the time and energy required.
33. The hours required to do the job are huge. It impacts your personal time. The salary between principal and other leaders and teachers is not greet enough. The responsibilities around management effect your ability to lead the learning and teaching.
34. I took over a school that had been run down over a period of years and had many issues. It has been a terrible journey with enormous difficulty with the BSM/financial management/staff. etc. by the end of the first year of Principalship I was completely unwell. I am never going to be as unwell as that again. The issues with the school were well known and it was/is very difficult to remove poor staff such as the BSM and underperforming teachers.
35. The role can involve a great deal of emotional labour – and this really does begin to impact your own health and well being
36. The level of distress in this role peaks when dealing with threatening and abusive parents. Drug and alcohol effected parents / adults is ever increasing. Personal attacks focussed on the Principal and the school (social media) is definitely effecting the Wellbeing of self and staff. Management of unsatisfactory performing staff is a huge burden on principals and support is “weak”. We are asked to hold teachers to account (re professional standards and performance) yet actually doing so is incredibly difficult.
37. long hours - increasing email trails & One school documentation - parent communications
38. Long days required to get through everything that's required.
39. That continued story...work/life balance! It is never easy to achieve.
40. Time poor due to teaching Principal expectations
41. . The demands driven by the Education Department are nothing but misfiring attempts to validate their own positions. Sadly this is slowly killing any passion and enthusiasm generated in the school. High stress levels are the norm rather than the exemption.
42. The stress of dealing with complaints regarding staff and students is increasing. Parents are more ready to blame school rather than look at solutions to improving child's behaviour
43. The locality and socio-economic factors of the school, experience and disposition of staff can have a major impact on the well being of the leadership team, especially Principal. Extra-curricula demands, parent behaviour and student behaviour and general lack of respect for educators from the community and media can mean extraordinary stress on the Principal.
44. little time for personal life during working week.
45. Expectations from different areas of the system keep being added with no support in terms of personnel, finances or resources given to address them
46. I work on average 15 hours a day, Monday to Friday and approx 14 hours each weekend, just to keep on top of things! I do a good job, I work 'smart', but the expectations are never ending. I am under staffed in terms of admin support. System leaders have lost touch with the reality of school leadership. We are heading in a great directions with teaching and learning, system wise, but it is coming at a great personal cost.
47. Factors that impact: parent demands, public tabling of NAPLAN, WHS policy and responsibility, lack of time to focus on curriculum, enrolment, staff wellbeing,
48. The principal's time is taken up with administration, compliance issues and matters to do with parents and children. No time to be lead learner
49. A greater percentage of my time is now spent on school related actions. eg reports, emails, accountability documentation WHS etc
50. Supporting the mental health of staff, students & parents can be extremely time consuming and difficult
51. Increasing breadth and depth of workload
52. There is a massive workload and administrative requirements that can usually only be done out of school hours due to the nature of schools being 'people' orientated during the day. This results in average 12 hour days and even then i never feel on top of everything. It leaves little time for rest, exercise, medical check-ups etc. I also work during holidays. Leadership density in primary schools is no where near enough to meet the demands.
53. The time issue is the worst, I still have a relatively young family and increasingly see less of them and al am tired when I do.
54. Time management and email requirements are very demanding.
55. You require strength of character and have the ability to have a healthy self esteem from the constant personal criticisms.
56. When you work a 12 hour day work day week (often without regular breaks), as well as most of one day of the weekend, there is little time left for work-life balance, including fitness activities.
57. I spend the vast majority of my time on wellbeing issues of students, families and staff to the detriment of the student learning focus.
58. I really am very TIRED of fighting with the region to gain support for my school dealing with an incredible increase of students presenting with complex issues.
59. There is an element of bullying through public social media sites which I cannot respond to
60. I work well beyond the 40 hrs - wellbeing issues are overtaking my teaching and learning role - more and more children and parents each year, present with family violence issues, violence towards staff and the violent children. It's often difficult to gain support from parents, there is little or no funding to support students, protect staff and students and adequately support parents of these violent children. The gap between children with severe behaviour and funding requirements for eligibility is very poor, meeting criteria for any funding is difficult - schools are expected to fix the problems with tight budgets and our business is educating children not counselling which is becoming the bigger role. If a parent abuses or threatens a person in public, it's newsworthy yet

- it happens daily in schools and nothing is said or done about it. It's acceptable to abuse teachers and principals it seems.
61. We are currently building a new school. The added workload without any additional assistance competing with day to day demands is huge. At this rate I will go under.
62. Dealing with an increased number of students with severe challenging behaviour, more trauma affected students, more family separations, and difficulty finding high performing teachers mean greater demands on me personally.

These comments have not been edited. Two null comments were skipped. One comment was skipped for privacy reasons.

Q 48 “ARE THERE ANY COMMENTS YOU WISH TO MAKE ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYER / SYSTEM POLICIES AND YOUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING?” (579 COMMENTS)

1. My employer is doing a very poor job with an utter focus of compliance and not allowing principals to focus on educational leadership.
2. I consider employer wears two hats - a servant of the government (which is always precarious) and those at the coal-face.
3. very little support. a phone call to tick boxes but that is all. have no idea of schools with high SFO wellbeing issues
4. Assistant Principals are often overlooked for the work they do in schools. APs run the school when the Principal is away, as well as doing their job to keep everything operational. Assistant Principals have a multitude of portfolios to be over and are the first port of call for teachers for all matters regarding curriculum, reporting, student wellbeing, behaviour management, personal issues, dealing with parents, staff issues, maintenance, graffiti, the list goes on. It is difficult to feel job satisfaction when you work 50-60 hours a week and feel your role is not acknowledged or remunerated. The opportunities to access ongoing Principal positions is limited.
5. Lack of communication from the system at all levels needs a ,major overhaul.
6. No relationship
7. My senior leader is supportive
8. No support even when you ASK. Have been on personal leave and still needed to deal with all the issues occurring at the school.
9. There is much 'available' but not time to access much of it without being out of the school then time to implement within very tight and unreasonable deadlines
10. NSW Reforms are overbearing. Stress levels are on the increase.
11. Too much accountability work that takes us away from core business. No funding of executive release support for special settings that allows us to be able to cover the workload.
12. Too much new policy and compliance policies being introduced with poor quality software systems
13. Minimal support. Usually a download of a quick reference guide is all that is available. The stress of working out a new program, system, format and still keeping to a timeframe to complete expected documents add to stress and wellbeing.
14. I don't believe that well being of Principals is a system priority

15. The work load is unbelievable and it continues to escalate.
16. Workload for a teaching principal is now insurmountable for 1 person
17. A strong relationship
18. Too many new initiatives rolled out with no support or only e-learning support. Timelines too short.
19. We have policies so why do we need school guidelines. A-Z tool very stressful.
20. overloaded...no time work work/life balance
21. No relationship at all.
22. Reforms and changes introduced with little or no training. Lack of school support from the system for students with behavioural problems. Stressful, drawn out processes to manage underperforming staff. Central appointments of underperforming staff through nominated transfer system
23. The workload since local schools, local decisions has been horrendous with very little in depth training and it has caused great stress out there in principal land.
24. So many new things to learn and implement and too little time for it to happen in.
25. Speed of change made it difficult for teaching principals to keep pace
26. Increased pressure for compliance - too fast and not supported impact on well being of Principals
27. The do not align
28. Laving ability to listen to real concerns
29. The workload is excessive
30. Our system works hard to care for its leaders and teachers. Reduced government funding has forced a good system to struggle.
31. Our system works hard to care for its leaders and teachers. Reduced government funding has forced a good system to struggle.
32. Increasing expectations of workload and being channelled to schools from various departments, without any idea what each other is doing.
33. As always, lots of pressures about admin and compliance - in a small school, with no deputy support, this can be tough.
34. can be inconsistent because of the personnel and /or the number of supervisors over a period of time.
35. My supervisor (ARD) is causing me anxiety and stress.
36. No trust. No depth of support. No differentiated support.
37. It is extremely difficult to perform two very demanding jobs well, one of a Principal and one of a teacher.
38. Services, policies and procedures are in place to provide support however until workloads are reduced through more staff sharing responsibilities then health and wellbeing will continue to suffer. Its like putting a band aid on a tumour.
39. I've transferred to DDSW region and find them far more supportive, friendly and helpful than when I was working in North Coast Region
40. The shift from system to school (and in particular the role of Principal) is just load shedding.

- 41. short timelines increase stress levels; policy compliance & partnership involvement takes away from work in own school
- 42. Increasing demands and complexities of the role do take a toll on mental and physical strengths.
- 43. Strongly determined by relationship with Head of School
- 44. Services are available, however to get services in a timely manner is not that easy! You often have to be demanding and never stop asking- then you get it. I feel I have to chase it!!!
- 45. Decisions are often made then given to us to implement with very little consultation. Some are great, some not so. This puts added pressure on ticking more boxes for the system rather than what is best for my school.
- 46. There is no relationship support or thoughts given by our system that supports me in my wellbeing. In fact quite the opposite including mandating Principals to be in schools during stand down when they live in a remote or regional community
- 47. The system supports us to manage our policies which are a requirement from the legislation in one way or another. The issue though is the requirement of the legislation to report on so many things which does affect workload and therefore our health and wellbeing
- 48. While I think there is a growing awareness and focus on system demands and impacts on health and well being, I believe the vast majority of principal's still struggle to manage the workload and requirements.
- 49. Top down policies without consultation with WAPPA or APF are destined to cause stress and anxiety.
- 50. I am in a small system, so the balance is asking for support, but not looking that I can't manage the situation. There is a sense of making it look like you are coping, even when you are not.
- 51. Work life balance is difficult to achieve particularly early in your career as a principal. Workload is such that on a daily basis I can get tommy emails only at the end of the day and therefore spend evenings catching up on emails.
- 52. increasing demands, particularly in accountability are detrimental to health and wellbeing.
- 53. You seem to need to make a fuss if you want any real support. Mostly Prins just grin and bear it.
- 54. I think most policies are developed by department officers who have no or little school based experience and therefore are not sensitive enough to the needs of students and staff.
- 55. general workload has doubled in the last three years
- 56. No consideration made for the expectations bring placed on principals
- 57. Systemic demands add to workload
- 58. No local face to face service.

These comments have not been edited. Three null comments were skipped. One comment was skipped for privacy reasons.

Q 49 “IN WHAT WAYS DOES YOUR EMPLOYER ENCOURAGE YOU TO WORK ON YOUR OWN HEALTH AND WELLBEING?” (646 COMMENTS)

- 1. No support just more and more demands.

- 2. sends emails - that is all
- 3. It encourages me to complete a pre-determined outcome faux survey that takes two precious hours to complete. Then it tells all of us that we don't delegate enough and that we waste time on “white noise” - their version of working with students and staff to resolve issues and encourage development.
- 4. Not really.
- 5. Tokenistic. Work keeps increasing creating less time for personal health and wellbeing.
- 6. links to available services
- 7. Regular conversations
- 8. Not a great deal but have been noticing this is on the rise
- 9. Director is supportive
- 10. non what so ever
- 11. None that I am aware of
- 12. Unsure
- 13. I am always encouraged to do so - the right messages are communicated, but in practice the demands on principals discourage this. We are told to prioritise wellbeing, but systemic demands expect long hours and high resilience.
- 14. Are you joking????
- 15. Does nothing.
- 16. Seek help
- 17. Provides EAP but work load keeps increasing
- 18. It doesn't.
- 19. it doesn't
- 20. There is very little reference or value portrayed by the employer on Principal wellbeing. The only real encouragement and follow through has been through PPA.
- 21. Nil
- 22. None
- 23. do what I can myself
- 24. Starting to have guest speakers at meetings and setting up coaching partners with colleagues
- 25. doesn't
- 26. None that I am aware of.
- 27. None
- 28. All talk no action
- 29. E publications. Supports my attendance at mental health professional sessions financially and respects my choice if provider as well as my privacy.
- 30. writes policy and procedures; expects self management in an ever demanding role with huge workload
- 31. Prioritise it at leadership meetings. Sharing of ideas about how we look after our WB.

- 32. Not sure that they do apart from suggesting contacting employing services.
- 33. It doesn't
- 34. When PL opportunities arise, they are brought to our attention. However these are not a priority based on other system initiatives.
- 35. Principal Wellbeing Strategy
- 36. sends another email
- 37. There is counselling and mental health support and looking after yourself is mentioned in the newsletters. PD is provided by speakers at conferences and the message is sent to look after yourself. There is no mention of how to fit this into your already overwhelming workload.
- 38. Limited
- 39. Maybe take leave??
- 40. More administrative support if admin tasks are still being added!
- 41. It is becoming more and more important and initiatives are beginning to appear.
- 42. Don't
- 43. Only through Principal association
- 44. Be responsible for yourself - currently it doesn't.
- 45. Encouraging a balanced lifestyle
- 46. All Talk but no time to do this
- 47. 100% It is solely our responsibility! It says get balance in your life then tells you to do tasks that cannot be done in less than 75 hours a week.
- 48. Verbal reminders to do so.
- 49. I have attended a 4 day course
- 50. Reminders but very little action that makes a difference at the Principal level
- 51. I don't know.
- 52. Taking time during holiday breaks
- 53. Not really a focus for them.
- 54. They don't
- 55. Nil
- 56. access to counselling is excellent. care for emotional health and wellbeing is genuine
- 57. It doesn't.
- 58. They don't.
- 59. Approves Long Service Leave when requested.
- 60. Nil
- 61. Nil
- 62. providing support services and resources BUT then overloading us with work so we do not have time to access the support services
- 63. They don't
- 64. It is up to individuals to work on their own health and wellbeing. There is

very little or no support from the employer to assist with this.

- 65. Not at all!-Demands of job makes it increasingly difficult to fit in and sustain external health programs.
- These comments have not been edited. Four null comments were skipped. No comments were skipped for privacy reasons.

Q 50 “WHAT CHANGES TO THE ROLE OF PRINCIPAL WOULD YOU PRIORITISE?” (664 COMMENTS)

- 1. Less low level administrative tasks. More power to hire and fire. Appointment of personal assistants.
- 2. More time spent of leading teaching and learning with staff, less time writing policies, responding to emails, etc
- 3. more support, free coaching & support, followed by regular monthly full day in school support
- 4. Someone to manage OHS, get rid of some of the onerous compliance tasks, support with parents, a dedicated SWB teacher in my school
- 5. More support with OHS, managing poor preforming staff, school reviews
- 6. More support to manage school so that the Principal can be a curriculum leader.
- 7. Instructional leader is what we were trained to be and why we chose this profession. The current focus is the correct priority - hard to get to of.
- 8. buildings & grounds to go back to the central office.
- 9. Provide funding support to employ and OH and S officer
- 10. More support from system
- 11. less admin and accountability and more time to focus on the core business of teaching and learning. Too much time spent on trees, assets and accountability paperwork.
- 12. Make the teaching principal a non teaching position. Streamline basic requirements like school policies, ASR, School Plan with drop down boxes and room for individual if needed. Certainly time that these items became streamlined and time managed. One person cannot do all of these requirements. CANNOT.
- 13. Business managers for the accountability and admin requirements
- 14. More support for beginning and relieving principals
- 15. Get rid of the ridiculous amount of paperwork to prove we are compliant. Have non teaching executive staff in all schools.
- 16. Business Managers are part of a school FTE. This role could manage assets, WHS, etc.
- 17. Get rid of Directors.
- 18. Reduction in accountability measures/paperwork required in short time frames. Many of these could be centralised instead of school based - especially some aspects of WHS, Assets and Policy.
- 19. Lessen paperwork - LSLD has just meant more useless paperwork and data collection that we need to spend hours on rather than on student and teacher learning and educational goals.
- 20. Principals are expected to be leaders, managers, administrators and everything else to their school communities. I don't know how we can effectively perform all of these roles to the level that the employer expects. I don't know how you would prioritise the roles because all

- aspects are equally important.
21. More face to face training on new system and processes, e.g. BPC tool in SAP finance a nightmare.
22. Business manager / WHS manager, and/or significant increase in administrative support.
23. Not managing wages
24. Separate curriculum implementation and school administration roles
25. Principals are not able to be true educational leaders any more due to the enormous increase in administration and management compliance work. SAMs are not able to manage the new finance procedures and this puts an added strain on principals. We must have office managers, trained to manage finance and WHS and paid properly to do the job. Only then will principals be able to spend the time doing their educational job effectively.
26. Less paperwork
27. employ extra admin staff- office staff are also overloaded with LMBR so I can't give them some of my load because they have too much to do.
28. The allocation of an off-class executive to all primary schools with 225+ [?] students.
29. Reduce to onerous tasks
30. Extra support from non-teaching executive to share administrative and bureaucratic requirements.
31. Better coordination delivery of NSW reforms
32. I believe larger schools need someone to manage issues such as WH&S, maintenance etc so the principal can concentrate on Education performance
33. More support from Region and Central office with managing under performance of teachers and other staff (they are quick to manage the performance of Principals).
34. All Principals should not have a teaching load. Even in a small school the systems demands are the same as a larger school.
35. Some allocation of funds provided for health and wellbeing.
36. Less on demand access to the Principal and Deputy by parents - happy to meet but they don't think that we actually do anything at times but wait for them to come in in a reactive way to abuse and demoralise. More time in the school (less demands) by system to attend meetings which are useful (sometimes) so we can spend more time working with teachers and students.
37. Learning to lead change
38. managerial administration so that time can be focussed on being an inspirational leader
39. More admin support - administration is a killer
40. Management -vs- Leadership. SOOOOO much management.
41. Less red tape and replication of work for different departments within the system
42. work overload - inadequate staffing to complete the jobs in school and give me a supervisor who has a clue about my school context
43. Principals should be leaders and have far more resources allocated to their school to help them do this. The principal should not be photocopying, typing their own letters, writing curriculum documents, induction procedures et al in small schools with nobody else to delegate to.
44. less administration and compliance and more focussed on learning and teaching.
45. centralise payment of utilities/ facilities repairs etc.
46. Increased support for personal assistant.
47. With the structure of the role - assistant principals to be allocated to small schools (under 100 students). Ability to have shared Principalship within a school. This would offer immense support for a Principal to know that there is another person to work with. Job sharing would also assist the Principal with the role to undertake and provide some work-life balance.
48. More administration support personal and release time for AP's
49. Supporting learners in the classroom.
50. Fewer night and weekend commitments
51. Get rid of the Partnership structure which has added huge amount of work for no clear advantages
52. Reducing teaching load
53. More specific training, more office support
54. Changing legislation reporting requirements
55. Structural support. Increased administrative opportunities with the Primary School setting allowing for the distribution of tasks. Greater administrative support to cater for the social/emotional needs of students and families.
56. Nil
57. Less administrative tasks. All principals provided with experienced and skilled personal assistant
58. reduce workload. Make it easier to remove poor performing teachers.
59. Greater collaboration
60. Greater links to support from above, regular check ins.
61. Allow principals to get on with the job and less instruction coming from the top.
62. System wide policies and approaches to issues such as OHS would assist greatly. There is a lot of "reinventing the wheel" occurring in schools.
63. Greater support from DET to manage OHS, maintenance, building projects, curriculum support, help removing low performing teachers.
64. Health and Wellbeing, that is supported by the system. Funding to support developing leaders and formal training to help with mental health issues.
65. Remove the responsibility of OHS and allow Principals to act on student behaviour the way they see as appropriate without calls from the Community Liaison Officers questioning our decisions.
66. Let us focus on the real work of improving teaching and learning within our classrooms and provide support for the areas we are not skilled in or takes time away from the most important assets we have - our students!
- These comments have not been edited. No null comments were skipped.

No comments were skipped for privacy reasons.

Q 51 “ARE YOU AWARE OF ANY POLICIES OR PRACTICES FROM OTHER COUNTRIES OR OTHER PROFESSIONS THAT MIGHT BE BENEFICIAL TO THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL LEADERS? PLEASE DETAIL.” (327 COMMENTS)

1. No
2. In the catholic system, principal conferences are frequently interstate or overseas. This allows for mixing professional and personal by providing opportunity for prins to extend the conference into some holiday time. Indicates the respect for our profession and the depth of learning that can be achieved by broadening the parameters
3. No
4. Yes, policies re public education and the assurance of equity of opportunity and inclusive and well resources schooling sites with consistency. Look to Finland but understand the socio political differences to the Australian context.
5. Unfortunately no!
6. The work of Dr. Adam Fraser
7. No
8. Yes, removing data and standardised testing, improving the instructional leadership model with a focus on teacher efficacy. Being able to address teacher and non teacher performance in a simple process.
9. No
10. No
11. No
12. I am very interested in Switzerland and Portugal's value around teachers and smaller classes
13. Time to think, time to process, time to exercise in the work place- European countries
14. No
15. No
16. No
17. Finland - less rules!
18. Systems that work
19. No
20. ACT relief days for principals/ Catholic sabbaticals
21. No.
22. No
23. Format of Principal Networks in Singapore
24. No
25. No
26. Setting protocols around sending and answering of emails - not of an evening, weekends
27. appropriate staffing and PAYING principals well - instead of not even bothering to process the EBA review requirement - disgusted.
28. Health and wellbeing services support, individual coaching, physical

- health services.
29. Nordic countries value educators highly. I wish our society/media also did.
30. I heard about the leadership training in Singapore where you attend a leadership course, I think it was 10 weeks, which sounded like a wonderful opportunity to develop your learning and thinking whilst not having to deal with the day to day issues of running a school. Even a one week leadership program would be of benefit to me. I would really appreciate a sabbatical which I have not had access to - I have studies in my own time using my own funds but this makes for a large workload and I have neglected by own wellbeing physically and socially whilst trying to do this.
31. No
32. Sabbatical leave. Part time options, Primary school principals to have Pas
33. No
34. Employers paying for gym memberships etc
35. Regular sabbaticals (every 3-4 years) for a term to pursue relevant research (not compulsory qualifications e.g. Strategic leadership that don't add value to the work of a principal and where no support is provided for the time needed to study).
36. No
37. Sabbatical to inspire rest and learn
38. Finland say no more
39. No
40. The National Educational Leadership Colleges found in other countries. Having one of these in Australia with also state centres.
41. No

These comments have not been edited. No null comments were skipped. No comments were skipped for privacy reasons.

Q 52 “PLEASE PROVIDE ANY GENERAL COMMENTS YOU WISH TO MAKE.” (327 COMMENTS)

1. I need more support to get out of the building and participate in more physical exercise.
2. Principals are like the link holding the two ropes of a tug-of-war. Everybody relies on that link and they all think it is indestructible. Bad luck if they are wrong!
3. I love my job, but given the data around Principal wellbeing, no one wants to aspire to be one, and the likelihood of people burning out is real and a worry is the current state. There seems to be little that is being done by the system and when attempts are made, they are band aid solutions. I am involved in a Principal Wellbeing course through the VPA, which is great and partly funded by the department, these are examples of good things happening, but this was driven by the VPA, not the department.
4. If DET worked together as an organisation instead of as silos workload on Principals could be managed from the centre.
5. No one prepares you for being a Principal and there is not enough support for them when staff want to blame the Principal or be disrespectful to them.

6. In the current school climate with data entry, accreditation, school accountability, managing staff and reporting to parents/carers/ community members I believe it is very important to make health and wellbeing of executive staff/teaching staff a priority. Surveys and further forums are certainly important I believe.
7. Exhausted!
8. The role of the principal is more like a manager not a leader of education. Its true purpose and focus has been lost
9. Directors NSW should be removed.
10. Funding stability rather than erratic federal government changes would be wonderful
11. "The Flourish Project" in NSW is having a significant positive impact on Principal Wellbeing. I believe that it is the best model of Principal support available. I am happy to discuss.
12. Principal workload get s talked about a lot, but not a lot is being done to decrease it. More and More administration tasks get given to principal with little to no training and we are expected to implement them while trying to get a 'years worth of learning for a years worth of schooling' into our classrooms, regardless of teacher capacity. Some schools get extra funding and staffing ie EaFS schools while Bump it Up schools with the same expectations for student growth and learning get nothing.
13. I'm not really sure what some of the things in the questions above really refer to. Finance training was available - I did lots of it - I've still got absolutely no idea how much money I have in the bank.
14. Parental demands, gossip, facebook, rumours are demoralising and very difficult to compete with.
15. Massive funding provided to some schools has served to isolate Principals further - the "have's and the have nots" Equity funding allows some schools to partake in extensive professional development and ensures lots of staff to share the load. Other schools are struggling with the pressure.
16. My system is "collusive and self-protective", and will brutalise Principal's in a heartbeat - as well as breach our National Laws.
17. There are still too many constraints on appointing teachers to positions. We need the best fit. Universities also need to revamp the teaching program. 1 year teaching degrees are not sufficient at all. They also don't wont schools to fail student teachers and put ridiculous pressure on class teachers to pass them. Teachers need significant more time in schools doing pracs. We also need a more consistent approach to policies and documents eg common online reporting format,
18. The role allows flexibility and ability to make changes. It is enjoyable and rewarding to lead a great team. It does require me to be ON at all times.
19. We have installed gates and cameras around the school for the safety and well being of all members of the community
20. the most recent term was challenging and without a focus on visible wellbeing my responses to Q. 13 and 15 would have been much lower
21. I believe with need to offer more support to Principals in the area of wellbeing. I also believe we should be able to reserve gym memberships, yoga etc and look at proactive systems and policies.
22. Principal Performance Appraisal Process (360 degree feedback) etc. needs consideration as mental health can significantly suffer when parents have free forum for unreasonable comments.
23. Assistant Principals in primary schools need to be out of the classroom fulltime in order to provide support to the Principal however this is not financially supported by the system. Assistance is required to enable this to occur as this would definitely assist in the health and well being of Principals.
24. Generally we have top look after our own health and wellbeing....Nobody else does.
25. It's hard now to recommend the job to others
26. The support the department gives to Principals is great especially newly appointed Principals, an additional release time would be great, similar to beginning teachers
27. Additional workload requirements impacting Principal health and wellbeing is the employer demand for Principals to work with increasing social mental health matters and be the initial point of contact for families to reach out for support. This issue is a larger community and society based problem and schools are being expected to pick up the load - without additional training in psychology or funding to enable schools to be better equipped to support families. When such a situation arises it is mentally and physically draining on the Principal and teaching staff.
28. I am a dedicated, efficient and well regarded principal within my regional city who has seen in the role for over a decade, however in the last two years the workload of the work as become unrelenting and I am needed to consistently work 55-60 hour weeks.
29. We should be given money in our budget to outsource OHS or employ someone to deal with it. Principals should be given additional leave for health & wellbeing days
30. i hope this isn't just another survey with nothing to come of it...
31. Principals feel and are not trusted. Where has the value and trust gone.
32. Good luck with your survey. The chant - get a business manager - is not the answer. It is, I believe, an acknowledgement that our administrative workload has been increased but it does not recognise the burden of accountability and responsibility. Most significantly it puts us at a crossroad - as principals, where now should our primary focus lay? Is it time to abandon traditional relationships with staff, students and community and focus on administrative, compliance and evaluative tasks? I can see that the role of principal has changed and that the DoE would argue a provision has been made for me to fulfil that role. That provision being flexible RAM; the issue then being that the expectation is that this is aligned to the school's strategic plan and its incumbent expectations. Perhaps I am an anachronism, I cannot conceive of spending vast sums to ensure DoE compliance and administration is a singular priority. I am still locked into directing funds to teaching and learning. Can we lob the ball back to the DoE and have them articulate, not our role, but the priorities of our role and the systems of work we need to institute in our schools? Oh, and, dare I expect that they will understand the diverse contexts of our schools. It's past midnight for me now. Again, good luck!
33. A mentoring/coach for Principals new to the position would be beneficial.
- These comments have not been edited. Four null comments were skipped. No comments were skipped for privacy reasons.*

GOVERNANCE

The governance of the project was four tiered – the APPA Board had general oversight and ultimate responsibility for the project. The National Advisory Council responded to each draft of the survey and influenced the scope of the research project. A Steering Committee and a Reference Group had different responsibilities as outlined below.

Steering Committee Terms of Reference

The Steering Committee was responsible for:

- The strategic direction of the Project
- The scope of the Project
- *Monitoring the implementation of the Project*
- Evaluation of the Project's outcomes.

Reference Group Terms of Reference

The Reference Group provided advice, direction and feedback to the Project Steering Committee in relation to:

- The aims and scope of the project
- Current HR and IR policies and practices that have a positive impact on principal wellbeing
- Survey questions and distribution
- Survey findings and interpretation
- Formulation of recommendations
- The Research Report
- Advocacy resulting from the research

SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

The survey instrument was developed through an iterative process. The Steering Committee defined the scope of the survey and provided advice on the framing of questions. The Reference Group tested the instrument and provided feedback on content, clarity and time required to complete the survey. The Research Leader and Executive Officer, with input from the National Advisory Council, reviewed and reworded the survey through a series of nine drafts. The APPA Board approved the final draft for distribution.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

The survey was loaded on Survey Monkey and distributed to the twenty-four state and territory sector primary principals' associations. These associations then circulated the survey to their members. The survey was open between 4 April and 12 June 2017 including the mid-semester (Easter) break in all jurisdictions.

RESPONSE RATE

The survey was completed and submitted by 929 primary school principals and assistant, associate and deputy principals. The respondents were from all states and territories and all sectors of schools.

SURVEY COMMENTS

A significant number of respondents, at least 668, made over 3,200 comments totalling more than 50,000 words.

INTERPRETATION METHODOLOGY

The Survey Monkey analyse results program was used extensively to calculate the range and strength of responses and compare data from different cohorts. No complex statistical analysis of the data was undertaken. All findings were reviewed by the Reference Committee and the NAC. The project report was endorsed by the APPA Board.

RECOGNITION OF ASSISTANCE

The statistical skill of Dr Philip Riley and staff at Camp Australia and Teachers Health Fund provided the valuable insights into the accuracy of conclusions drawn from the survey findings. Their assistance with the production qualities of the research report is also gratefully acknowledged.

