



TASMANIAN
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Principals' Health Survey Sparks Concern

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Tasmania's state school leaders' body, the Tasmanian Principals Association, has expressed concern following the release of the 2017 Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey, which reveals steadily increasing pressures on school principals and deputies, in all sectors, across all states.

TPA President Malcolm Elliott said "This is the sixth consecutive annual report highlighting significant concerns in the area of school leader wellbeing. Principals report their stress is mainly caused by the 'sheer quantity of administrative work' they are required to perform, leaving little time available to focus on teaching and learning."

Workplace demands on principals are 1.5 times higher than the general population. That makes them subject to higher levels of burnout (1.6 times higher), stress symptoms (1.7 times higher), difficulty sleeping (2.2 times higher), and depressive symptoms (1.3 times higher).

Mr Elliott said "The TPA has welcomed additional senior staff support in public primary schools. This is making a difference. We have also sought a four-year resource guarantee through our state budget submission. This would greatly reduce the challenging variability in human and financial resources with which principals struggle each year. It would provide vital continuity of staffing and programmes." The report also shows that some parents and students are resorting to threats of violence, bullying and offensive behaviour toward schools' frontline staff. Mr Elliott said "This type of behaviour is totally unacceptable and simply must stop."

Report author Associate Professor Philip Riley from the Australian Catholic University's Institute for Positive Psychology and Education, said school leaders needed more support because in many cases their health was suffering due to the pressure of work. "As principals are retiring, other senior teachers at the top of their game are saying they are not prepared to take on the role of school leader because of the punishing workload," Associate Prof Philip Riley said. "What every school system in Australia needs to urgently address are the levels of burnout, stress and additional responsibility being loaded onto principals." TPA President, Malcolm Elliott said "This is a whole of community issue. Our principals are at the very forefront of Tasmania's social and economic development. They are an individual and collective resource of enormous knowledge and commitment who should, and must be, valued and supported. The role should be one to which many educators aspire. "

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