

Principals' health and wellbeing paints a confronting national picture

The results of the *2016 Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey* present a confronting national picture that challenges our schools, our school systems and our governments says Australian Primary Principals Association President, Dennis Yarrington.

In commenting on the survey report Mr Yarrington said,

“Managing any school is a complex and demanding task that naturally brings with it a certain level of stress. Principals accept that. However, when the stresses are so great that they impact adversely on personal health it cannot be good for principals, staff, students or parents, and could well see serious consequences down the track.”

The survey data and report, released today, makes it clear that when school leaders are having to deal with increased levels of stress, excessive work demands and offensive behaviour the result is less time to focus on what is core business – the education of students within their school.

As a national association representing primary principals, APPA draws on the experiences of its members from Government, Catholic and Independent schools. The message is that the role has intensified and the resources available to support the principal have not kept pace.

Mr Yarrington said,

“Principals are passionate people who love their work but increasingly face stress, burnout and poor health. We know that social capital – school community support, resources to manage the workload and employer practices that deliver trust and assistance – means better health, lower stress and greater job satisfaction.

“We also need to reverse any trend that being a principal means abuse, threats or assaults. It’s simply unacceptable. Measures must be in place to give a clear message of what is acceptable and what is not. APPA calls on all Education Ministers and employers to lead this message and then back their principals through action.”

Mr Yarrington said that the Australian Primary Principals Association welcomed the report’s recommendation for a national strategy and collective response.

“APPA is committed to bringing together principals’ associations, system representatives and education bodies at a national symposium on principal health and wellbeing. This symposium aims to identify what must be in place to support school leaders.

“APPA is also investigating what policies and practices work and are currently in place across schools and jurisdictions. In another piece of work, we are developing a program that will strengthen a principal’s leadership skills and build a school’s social capital.”

APPA is the national professional association representing over 7,200 Government, Catholic and Independent primary school principals across Australia.

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