

PFWA Position Paper - Principal and Deputy Principal Classification

Preamble

The current classification model which identifies the various categories of school leader was formulated and enacted in 1993. It is clear, that in the ensuing 27 years, the role of Principal and Deputy Principal, and the nature of public schools across WA, has changed immeasurably. We have seen positions such as Program Coordinator, Level 3 Classroom Teacher and Level 5 Deputy Principal added to the model without adequate investigation of ramifications for other positions at the same level. With the increased autonomy that accompanied the Independent Public-School strategy came increased accountability, and in many instances, the threat of personal liability. The school environment itself creates a complexity that is insufficiently acknowledged. It is an environment like no other – the school is the interface of many points of stress. The environment itself breeds task variation, the need for rapid response, the necessity for the co-ordination of resources, the need for review of a range of processes to optimise resource efficacy and achieving organisational goals. This is the ongoing work of Principals and Deputies and an expectation of the employer.

Under the current model Level 3 Classroom Teachers, Program Coordinators, Heads of Learning Areas, Deputy Principals (Primary and DHS) and Principals of small rural schools are all classified at the same level, yet their roles differ greatly, and the complexity of the leadership roles of the Principal and Deputy Principal is neither recognised nor understood.

The current model is antiquated and does not address the differences in the levels of leadership required for a school to be effective. Nor does it reward those who aspire to the highest levels of school leadership, as salary and remuneration of school leaders in WA lags far behind our eastern states colleagues, and the WA classification model is a major factor in this.

PFWA Position

The classification of Principals and Deputy Principals must be based on an evaluation of work value. The Director-General has made her own assessment of the value of the work Principals perform when she refers to them as “the most important leaders in our public education system”. A new classification model should:

- Be equitable – differentiate school types according to a recognised range of complexities applying to all sectors.
- Establish a clear, immediate and significant salary separation between entry level Principals and Deputy Principals, and other leadership and teacher categories currently classified at Level 3.
- More clearly articulate a pathway for those embarking on a career in school leadership.
- Recognise the uniqueness of the district high school and agricultural college settings.
- Recognise that schools in rural and remote locations are the social and commercial hub of a community as well as a place of education, and as such, the role of the school leader embraces much more than leading a school as a place of learning.

Finally, changes to classifications of positions, or the introduction of new positions, eg introduction of Level 5 Deputy Principals, cannot be permitted to be made outside of established industrial processes.