

PFWA Position Paper - Conditions of Work

Preamble

Over the last decade there has been significant reform in education and changes in the work of principals and schools. These changes have contributed to increased delegations and responsibility for principals; greater accountability; increased administrative responsibilities and workloads; the need for greater availability out of hours; the gradual erosion of annual holidays; and greater expectations for the development and maintenance of interagency and community partnerships. During the same period, several research papers have been released raising concerns about Principals' health and wellbeing. Schools and school leaders are regularly challenged in leading and responding to crisis situations including mental and other serious health events, while also managing growing negative social media activity. Technology has also enabled more access to principals and deputy principals well beyond the school day and school terms. There has also been an increase in physical violence, verbal abuse and bullying of principals and deputy principals recorded in recent years.

PFWA's Position

The conditions of work for principals requires improvement and necessitates appropriate response and action. Specifically:

- Executive Leave up to 3 days per term to acknowledge and compensate for the increased amount of work undertaken by principals out of hours and during holidays (e.g. School Boards, school performances; interagency meetings; community support and work; crisis management).
- Targeted system strategies to improve the Health & Wellbeing for principals and deputy principals beyond wellness programs and professional learning. Anticipating and preventing stressors as opposed to waiting for principals to show signs of physical and mental ill-health e.g. reductions in general workloads; clarifying "responsible" out of hours work expectations; assessing workload implications of implementing new or changed policies; more efficient staffing and recruitment; compensation for principals who respond to critical events and staffing requirements during their leave periods including weekends.
- Introduce funding for a designated Principal's PA, ie return of equivalent IPS funding.
- Greater support and protections for principals being bullied, threatened or experiencing violence. A no tolerance approach is required. When a principal is subject to aggression, abuse or violence greater support beyond a phone call is necessary (even if the principal says they are okay). Another DoE person should do an OIN where the principal is recovering from an incident. Department level communications with police to protect and support principals and deputy principals (currently left to the principal to negotiate).
- Increased resourcing for managing complex medical and mental health issues with students and staff. Review of the current workforce policies and procedures for supporting principals to manage staff with complex medical and mental health issues or concerns. Greater supports available to principals in directly managing students with complex medical and mental health plans including increased funding for psychologists and paraprofessionals; review of disability funding access for students with mental health issues, but not engaging in the health system.

- Proper debrief process for principals who have led a trauma or crisis response (psychologists and other professionals who deal with trauma and violence and in their daily work are provided with this strategy - principals are not unless requested) by trained staff who have experience with the scope of a Principals work.
- Recognition for the extra responsibility and workload for regional principals and schools expected to be the lead person and agency for many community events and issues in regional centres.
- Clarify section 16 (6) of the Award regarding “ .. the requirement to undertake duties and responsibilities outside the normal school day or normal operating hours, either at school or off site.” Principals have experienced substantial increases in actual hours of work and expectations regarding their availability out of hours.
- Refer GROH position paper.