

## **About APPA**

The Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) is the national professional association for primary school principals in Australia, representing over 7200 principals from affiliated Government, Catholic and Independent primary schools in every state and territory.

APPA's advocacy is founded on:

- Every child attending a good school with high-performing leaders and quality staff;
- Initiatives, actions and projects that are research-informed and encourage contemporary professional learning and growth; and,
- The knowledge that primary schools are where Australian children have the opportunity to acquire the necessary foundational academic, social and emotional skills to lead full and rewarding lives.

## **THE CONTEXT OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

APPA supports a strong focus on quality primary school education, whereby there is an alliance between societal goals of building connections with, and contributing to, the wider community through family, work and citizenship, and the educational opportunities, intellectual growth and sense of wellbeing experienced by the individual. The Productivity Commission (2012) stated that,

***Australia's future depends on how well it develops the 'human capital' of its population. A well-performing schooling system is fundamental. It benefits individuals, the functioning and cohesion of society and the performance of the economy.***

APPA maintains that primary schooling sets the strongest platform for a child's future and that primary schools require the necessary funding and resources to ensure all children receive a comprehensive education, and have gained the literacy and numeracy foundations needed to continue further education and, ultimately, be gainfully employed. APPA would also argue that initiatives, programs and projects must be evidence-based and focused on best practice.

## **RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY THE AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY PRINCIPALS ASSOCIATION**

The reality of providing the 'best school, leaders and teachers for each child' is underpinned by high-level commitment and priority at a national level. Over many years, APPA, as a national association covering primary principals across Australia and across all three sectors, has undertaken research, conducted national principals' surveys and provided submissions aimed at giving direction to, and supporting, national policy and practice affecting primary schools and their school communities.

APPA works in a small team, consisting of an elected president, part-time executive officer and part-time operations manager, which co-ordinates contributions and input from state and territory primary principals' associations. The association meets with key stakeholders including the Australian

Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), principals' and other associations, federal parliamentarians, and the Shadow Education Minister and Minister for Education.

APPA's formal contributions to the education landscape over recent years have included:

- Australian Curriculum and Professional Development
  - Principals as Literacy Leaders: Confident, Credible and Connected (2012)
  - Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (2013)
  - Principals as Literacy Leaders with Indigenous Communities: Leadership for Learning to Read (2014)
  - The Overcrowded Curriculum: a way forward (2014)
  - Regular and detailed submissions to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) on the development and implementation phases of the Australian Curriculum
  - Submissions to the Review of the Australian Curriculum (2015)
  - Productivity Commission Education Evidence Base (2016)
  - Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools (2017)
  - Optimising STEM Industry-School Partnerships: Inspiring Australia's Next Generation (2018)
- Teachers and Teacher Education
  - Senate Inquiry into Teaching and Learning: Maximising Our Investment in Australian Schools (2012)
  - Initial Teacher Education: Teacher Preparation, Course Content and Specialisation at all levels but particularly in Primary Schools (2015)
  - National Review of Teacher Registration (2018)
  - House of Representatives Inquiry: Status of the Teaching Profession 2018
- School Leadership and School Autonomy
  - Productivity Commission Schools Workforce Research Report (2012)
  - School Autonomy in Primary Education (2014)
  - Back to Balance: How Policy and Practice can make Primary Principals Highly Effective (2017)
  - ASIC Review of School Banking Programs (2019)
- School Funding
  - Review of Funding for Schooling (2011)
  - Senate Select Committee on School Funding Investment (2016)
  - Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment: Inquiry into the Australian Education Amendment Bill (2017)
  - Review of the loading for students with disability (2019)
- School Outcomes
  - In the Balance: The future of Australia's primary schools (2007)
  - Targeting Support for High Needs Students in Primary Schools (2011)
  - Obstacles to Success: Indigenous Students in Primary Schools (2012)

- Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2015)
- Senate Inquiry into access and attainment for Students with Disability in the school system (2015)
- Inquiry into educational opportunities for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Students (2016)
- Review of the Melbourne Declaration (2019)

There is widespread agreement that Australia’s future is dependent upon an educated population that is responsive to a changing world and the challenges it brings.

## **CONNECTING APPA’S WORK TO TANGIBLE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES**

The Australian Primary Principals Association’s *Charter on Primary Schooling* (2015) states:

***Primary Schools teach our children and contribute to our nation’s future.***

APPA recognises that, in determining school funding, governments must be fiscally responsible while, at the same time, committed to investing in the people and the ideas that will secure our nation’s future. Investing in primary schools and the students within them is central to this task.

APPA is committed to contributing constructively to developing good public policy that is responsive to the needs of children and the school community, and recognises the right of parents to choose the school that will work best for their child. In recent times, the association has been centrally involved in issues related to school funding, the Australian Curriculum, national testing and the My School website, teacher education and the Principal Standard, STEM initiatives, Indigenous education and students with special needs.

Currently, APPA is undertaking work aimed at supporting schools in managing the growing issue of childhood anxiety. This issue is seeing the redirection of limited school resources towards managing children with anxiety so that these children can benefit fully from their school experience, in terms of social, emotional and educational growth.

APPA’s advocacy is focussed on initiatives, actions and projects that are research-informed and encourage contemporary professional learning and growth. The association seeks to promote quality schools, leaders and staff. We desire the best school, and the best leaders and educators for *each* child: the best school for its community, the best leaders for every school and the best educators for each child.

The mission of teaching and school leadership in Australia is widely acknowledged as complex and challenging. This is a socially and geographically diverse nation which faces significant challenges in equity of educational provision and outcomes for children.

In welcoming the recently released Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, APPA believes that this Declaration presents a significant challenge for systems, learners and Australian society, and that there must be clarity about four purposes of school education: individual, democratic, socio-cultural and economic.

## **ACTIONS SUPPORTING PRIMARY SCHOOL IN MEETING THE EDUCATION GOALS FOR YOUNG AUSTRALIANS – ALICE SPRINGS (MPARNTWE) EDUCATION DECLARATION:**

Recognising the Commonwealth as well as state and territory governments have responsibility for school funding, APPA believes that a multi-partite agreement on purposes and goals would underpin long-term planning and strategies, thereby ensuring clarity of focus on the core issues of: teaching and school leadership; curriculum; purposes of, and practices in, assessment and reporting; and research and services in support of these core activities. Consequently, APPA strongly supports open and ongoing consultation with Australia's education professionals regarding the purposes and activities of the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority; the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership; Education Services Australia; and, the proposed Evidence Institute.

- i. APPA sees value in a focussed dialogue on the purposes of primary education and a national 'primary school' statement that supports the revised Declaration.

APPA acknowledges the government's commitment to teacher and principal wellbeing through work being undertaken by AITSL, which includes analysis and response to abuse, as well as reduction in red tape. APPA urges continued exploration of the significant issues arising from the Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey conducted by Associate Professor Philip Riley (ACU). There is also much yet to be done in regard to identifying the causes and understanding the impact of issues in mental health, both amongst Australia's student population and education workforce.

- ii. Redress the disparity of substantive leadership roles between primary and secondary schools;
- iii. Recognise the principal role as separate from staffing allocations in primary schools;
- iv. Commit to a national programme of authentic leadership development that takes account of the complexities of Australia's social and geographic diversity, and recognises and responds to the findings of the Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey.
- v. Develop a national Primary Schools Staffing Standard, through open and ongoing consultation with the profession, ensuring every primary school has the full measure of staffing available (including administrative support) appropriate to its particular needs;
- vi. Develop a national Primary Schools Facility Standard through an open and ongoing consultation with the profession, ensuring every primary school has the facilities available appropriate to its particular needs;
- vii. Ensure sustained, multi-year and multi-partite approaches to school resourcing, aimed at providing stability and continuity in Australian schools;
- viii. Support universal access for 3 and 4-year-olds to early learning at 15 hours per week, including a commitment to ensuring and enabling all teachers in these settings are equipped with an early learning qualification.

APPA acknowledges the work being done on the national education workforce strategy. We respectfully submit that this task of Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations should be supplemented by a powerful refocusing of Australian society on the fundamental importance of education to nation building.

To this end, APPA believes there is exciting scope for school education to become a whole-of-government focus and priority. Each area of Ministerial responsibility represents an opportunity for

educational engagement under one, some or all of the four purposes mentioned above. Such a forward-thinking approach would put Australia in the forefront amongst world education and social leaders.

In relation to primary school students:

- ix. Provide the necessary resources and support for students experiencing mental health issues – including support in schools, at home where possible and through non-school-based therapeutic measures;
- x. Highlight the critical and fundamental role of parents in the raising and educating of children, and the critical importance of community support in this context for primary school education, teachers and school leaders;

In relation to primary school teachers and staff:

- xi. Promote careers in primary school education;
- xii. Enhance the attractiveness of the profession commensurate with its significance and value in the eyes of the community and government;
- xiii. Create and fund an indigenous education reference group to provide advice on training, teaching and school resources;
- xiv. Allocate funding for the ongoing training of indigenous teachers;
- xv. Commit to diversity of provision to match the corresponding diverse needs of students with disability in primary schools;
- xvi. Ensure transparency in funding allocation for students with disability and additional needs, with a strong emphasis on equity; and,
- xvii. Commit to additional staffing for primary schools to enable specialist literacy and numeracy teachers in primary schools who can champion and build teacher capacity in these domains.

Malcolm Elliott  
**APPA President**

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