



## Overwork, burnout and stress highlighted as major concerns for Australian Principals: new survey results.

### ***CALLS FOR THE COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENTS TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL LEADERS AS 'ESSENTIAL WORKERS' AFTER AN UNPRECEDENTED YEAR***

Australian Catholic Primary Principal's Association (ACPPA) is urging the State and Federal Government to invest in more training, resources and support services for school leaders, with the latest wellbeing survey showing alarming levels of overwork, burnout and stress after the COVID pandemic.

*The Australian Principal Occupational, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey 2020* is a longitudinal study tracking trends in the health, wellbeing, and safety of school leaders and making policy recommendations to both government and key stakeholders.

In its 10<sup>th</sup> year the study is jointly conducted by researchers at Australian Catholic University (ACU) and Deakin University, surveying 2,248 school principals in primary and secondary schools across all states and territories.

Brad Gaynor, President of ACPPA, expressed continuing concern over the ever-increasing workload of leaders and the worsening results of burn out, sleeping troubles, stress and depressive symptoms. "COVID-19 has clearly shown us that Principals are quick to respond to the changing demands of schools, but at what cost to their own wellbeing, without the needed support" Mr Gaynor said.

Principal Association groups are warning the long-term fallout from the global pandemic could be felt in schools for generations and are urging the Federal to avoid cutting education funding to make up for the financial costs of COVID rescue packages.

ADVOCACY AND ACTION FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

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## **MAJOR FINDINGS**

Almost all principals (97%) worked overtime and close to 70% worked more than 56 hours a week during school term and 25 hours a week during the holidays. 3 out of 10 leaders showing mental health concerns impacting their quality of life with almost half of all school leaders over 56 years of age and around 7% planning to retire this year. Over 40% of principals have been exposed to threats of violence or abuse. While a major concern, the report also shows that job satisfaction and an increase in positive community attitudes has grown for this essential education profession.

Mr Gaynor was heartened to see improvements in job satisfaction and the positive community response towards schools and school leaders following COVID19. "I would like to congratulate all school leaders for their leadership during the challenges of COVID19. It has highlighted, not only their outstanding leadership, but the important role schools play in our community. It has made many parents appreciate their teachers and schools even more. Let's hope that this improved attitude sees a reduction in any offensive behaviour towards teachers and leaders. It must stop."

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Independent taskforce to investigate offensive behaviours occurring in schools.
- Employers need to take the moral choice of reducing job demands or increase job resources to allow school leaders to cope with the increased workload.
- Federal, state & territory governments should come together to maintain a single education budget in a managerial way. All school funding should be transparent so that anyone, at any level of the system, can confidently know how much money schools have.

"These issues need to be addressed as a matter of urgency, Mr Gaynor said. I completely support the recommendation that employers need to take the moral choice of reducing job demands or increase resources to allow school leaders to cope with the increased workload. The data indicates improved mental health outcomes for leaders who receive professional support. It's time for all employers and all sectors to ask themselves 'What professional support are we offering our school leaders?' and then importantly, do something about it."

## **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

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