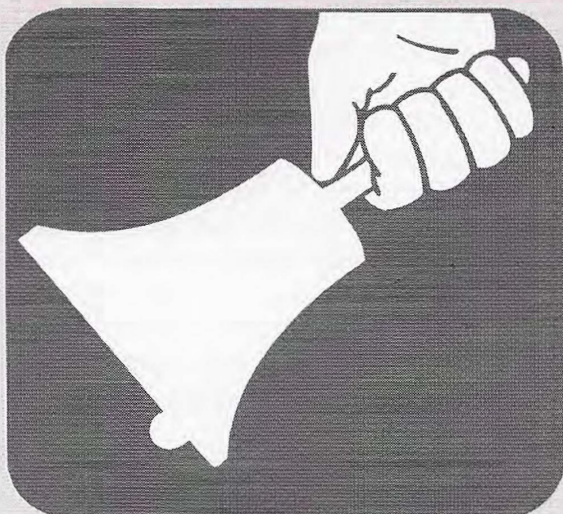


# Association News



## Australasian Principals' Update

### New South Wales

**DURING 2002** the New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council collected information on the expressed needs of principals across the State. Responses were incorporated into the 2002-2003 Principals' Support Package. A taskforce was established to manage the Package. Membership of the taskforce included:

- the Deputy Director-General, Corporate Services, as Chair;
- three members of the Secondary Principals' Council, including the President;
- the President of the Primary Principals' Council and two other members;
- two representatives of the NSW Teachers Federation;
- two from the Principals' Support Service; and,
- five Departmental officers.

The Principals' Support Taskforce liaised with a range of state office directorates, which developed responses and strategies to directly meet the needs of principals. The Taskforce identified the following major outcomes for principals in 2003.

**1. Taskforce Bulletin.** The Bulletin, forwarded to principals each term, has provided updates on the work of the Taskforce, the Principals' Support Service and issues relevant to the work of principals.

**2. Development of a policy website.** The trial has proven to be successful, with a growing number of

policies appearing.

### 3. Specific Areas in the Leadership Strategy

- principals' induction;
- succession planning;
- responding to complaints and allegations training; and,
- consolidated training.

**4. Development of a Dedicated Principals' Support Service.** Deployed principals have been assisting principals across the State in areas of policy implementation, school-based practices and welfare issues.

**5. The School Response Unit.** The unit responds to the security needs of schools and provides an important link between schools and the NSW Police.

**6. Principals' Mentoring Program.** Eighty principals in rural or isolated areas and in western Sydney have been supported in various ways by the Mentor Program.

**7. Casual Teachers.** Strategies have been developed to increase the supply of casual teachers across the State.

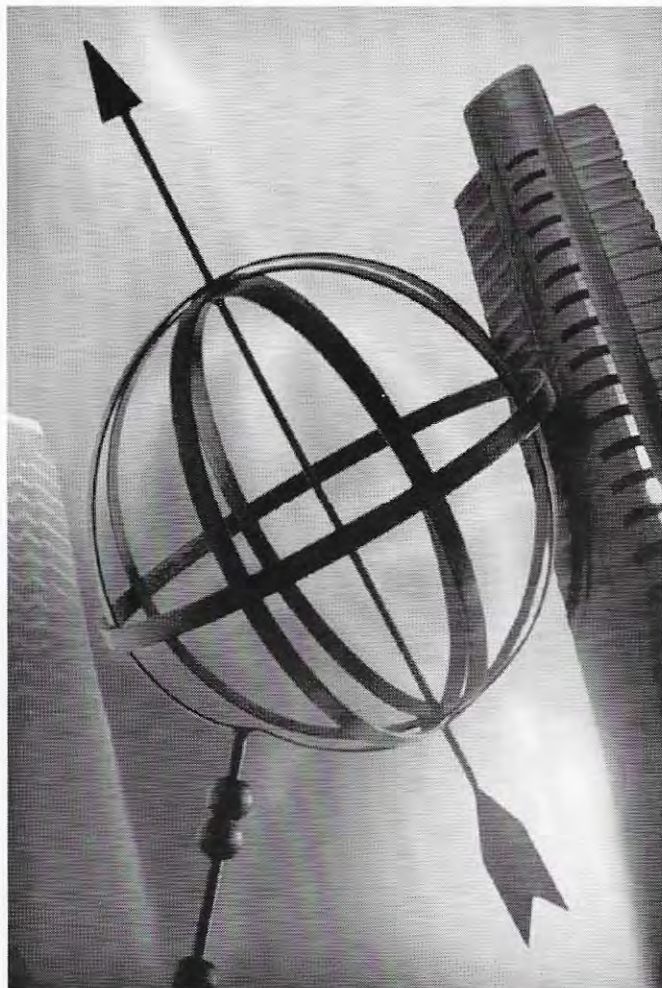
**8. The Teachers Handbook.** Most chapters have been revised and placed on the DET website. In August, the Taskforce appointed a subcommittee to undertake an evaluation of all components of the Principals' Support Package. Meanwhile, the DET re-structure is still in the consultative stage with an indication of what the new structure will look like due just before the Christmas break. The next report should feature the restructure and maybe things will be clear enough by then.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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# NSW Principals: Preparing to Face the Future



**NSW secondary principals have spent nearly a year reflecting on, analysing and defining their professional role in a changing educational landscape.**

*'School principals occupy a unique place in the NSW education system. They link the broader system and society with the effective delivery of quality learning for students at the local level. It is they who, more than any other group, mediate between any call for change and what actually happens in the classroom. It is principals who must lead the process of improvement and innovation.'*

*(NSWSPC 1999:5)*

**WHAT** should be the roles of secondary principals in public education in NSW in the future and what structures

would best support those roles and the students in public education? These two questions have, over the last eight months, engaged secondary principals in a considered professional conversation.

The NSW Secondary Principals' Council (NSWSPC) initiated the conversation in July 2003, even before the initial phases of the restructuring of the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET). The timing was initially coincidental, but it became clear during negotiations about the restructuring that few bureaucrats had taken the opportunity to consider what roles secondary principals would play in a restructured DET.

Traditionally, the role of the principal in NSW has been overwhelmingly prescribed. This prescription reflects the nature of the public education sector in this state - highly centralised and mandated systems apply in curriculum design, student accreditation and resource delivery. At the AGM of the NSWSPC in June, the President of the Council, Chris Bonnor, challenged members to consider their current roles and to debate new roles for secondary principals, in order to meet the changing needs of schools and their communities. Chris also asked members to consider the changes that would be required in management frameworks to support newly defined roles.

## Role of the Principal Project

The result was the Role of the Principal Project (ROPP), which was designed to explore the current roles of secondary principals, consider their roles in the future, and design a framework within which those roles could best operate. The first step was to gather information from within NSW on the roles of secondary principals. Beyond the Council's own *Futures Paper*, there was little written about the roles. There was, however, information on the accountabilities of principals, including the 44 areas listed in the DET document, *Leading and Managing the School* (2000). There was information emerging on the anticipated capabilities of principals in the *DET Leadership Strategy* (2003) and there was considerable anecdotal wisdom passed from more experienced principals to less experienced principals about what to do, and how, and when to do it. A discussion paper was written and circulated to members as a starting point for local conversations. The Council then decided to try to use the information that was available and to link it with the



practical experiences of a range of principals. The Council organised a Think Tank, with 35 principals from across the State. These principals represented a wide range of schools and colleges and a diverse range of ages and backgrounds. Over two days, this group discussed what was already known about roles and school management from within and beyond NSW and developed a set of propositions to go back to local groups for discussion.

During Term 4 2003 principals across the State engaged with the propositions put forward at the Think Tank. The majority of them received strong support; others created more division. The propositions are listed below.

1. Educational leadership (leadership in curriculum, assessment and pedagogy) is the core responsibility of principals and leadership teams.
2. Principals should have more flexibility in the design and use of 'support personnel', systems and services to separate the educational and management functions of the school.
3. Principals should have responsibility for determining teaching and school staffing needs.
4. Principals should have control over core conditions affecting students, teaching and learning and the resources to implement quality educational and equity programs.
5. Principals should work with a representative board or community council to determine school values, purposes and priorities within a centralised system.
6. Principals should have responsibility for accountability and evaluation.
7. Principals should work with colleagues and employers to build leadership capability in public secondary education.

## Further Work Indicated

The feedback from the State's secondary principals indicated that there was a lot more to be done if consensus was to be achieved. Where divisions occurred, they were strongly articulated. For example, there were significant groups of principals who thought they had considerable discretionary power at present; there were others who thought the complex and multi-layered levels of DET decision-making caused frustration and resulted in a considerable waste of time and resources.

In December 2003 the Think Tank representatives met again and, with much more information, were able to formulate specific and explicit directions for the project. By this time, the Council was also able to develop plans for a series of visits to principals in other States, Territories and New Zealand. The DET has funded a number of 'Leadership Fellowships' that will support principals engaging with, and observing, the roles of

colleagues in other contexts across Australia and New Zealand. ASPA delegates have been very helpful in organising for secondary principals from NSW to meet principal colleagues from a diverse range of schools in other jurisdictions. These colleagues received visits in Term 1 2004. So, after eight months, the Council proposes that, by the end of 2004, it will have:

- a clear, concise and explicit definition of the work of the secondary principal in NSW public education, which reconceptualises the roles, function and status of principals as a central professional element in the leadership and development of public education; and,
- a clear, concise and explicit description of the educational framework that would best support those roles.

To do this, the Council is exploring the following three research questions.

1. What is the current role of the secondary principal in: (a) educational leadership (leadership in curriculum, assessment and pedagogy) in and beyond schools; and (b) leading and managing other aspects of the school?
2. What should be the roles of the secondary principal in relation to (a) and (b) in the future?
3. What kinds of educational policies, structures and practices will best support those roles?

The information collected from within and beyond NSW, through literature, interview, observation and online conversations will be used to answer these questions. As new data is collected, it will be 'grounded' against the other data to build categories and themes. It will be the answers to the second and third questions that will present the Council with its own challenges, and Council will report on the project's ongoing development through *Principal Matters* over the next twelve months. The project will certainly attract interest from colleagues in other States and Territories. Not only does the Council expect NSW principals to benefit but it hopes the project will encourage broader reflection on the work principals do. If principals in other sectors and jurisdictions would like to contribute to the project, their ideas and insights would be most welcome. The Council hopes that, by opening this debate in NSW, there will be a willingness to share ideas across traditional boundaries and to position the principalship to respond to the challenges it faces.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## Australasian Principals' Update

### New South Wales

A NEW position has been created within the regional structure of DET, that of a Deployed Principal. There is one secondary and one primary principal deployed in each of the ten regions. The position is a result of the work of the Principal Support Task Force (PSTF) and will be based on the PSTF initiatives and programs' focus areas, namely: principal support; principal development; and systems improvement. According to the 'Statement of Duties', Deployed Principals will:

- lead, coordinate and manage regional educational leadership programs, including effective leadership induction and mentoring programs for principals and school executives;
- provide welfare support for principals and school executives, in consultation with the Principal Support Taskforce;

- support school principals and executives in school planning, management and development;
- assist principals in resolving emergent issues;
- participate in school reviews and state-wide evaluations;
- promote public education in the broad community;
- work with the Regional Director, School Education Directors and principals' organisations in relation to principal needs and support, training and development and systems improvement;
- demonstrate a commitment to implement ethical practices, EEO and OH&S policies and the Ethical Affairs Priorities Statement; and,
- perform other related duties, as required.

As a set of general principles, it was felt that:

- the Deployed Principals, based in regions, form an overall NSW team focusing on principal welfare and support;
- the selection of the Deployed Principals should ideally involve the PPA and SPC Presidents;
- deployment should initially be for one year;
- Teaching Service conditions apply;
- the deployed principal may be located in an Educational Service Centre or the Regional Office; as deemed appropriate by the Regional Director, and in consultation with the Deployed Principal; and,
- the dedicated Principal Support Service in Bridge Street will be retained, to assist Deployed Principals in regional areas to manage support in areas where immediate liaison with Functional Directors in head office would resolve difficult situations more quickly.

The NSWSPC President contacted the recently dismissed Director-General to thank her for her support of public education over many years, and also for her concern and compassion for others. Jan McClelland was also thanked for her genuine consultation process and her willingness to engage with the Council.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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# NSW Principals: Discovering the Road Ahead

**CHRISTINE CAWSEY** provides a further update on the NSWSPC's project to define the future role of public school principals.

**IN THE** last edition of *Principal Matters* the impetus for this project by the New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council (NSWSPC) was described. In this update, the further development of the project is explained. At the start of 2004 the SPC targeted three sources of information to explore a future role for principals in NSW.

- Research teams visited other jurisdictions to examine the role of the principal in other educational frameworks.
- Principals in NSW were interviewed and asked to explore their own perceptions of the current and possible future roles.
- Reference groups were asked to reflect on the role of the principal in specific areas, such as staffing and properties.

During March and April members of the NSWSPC traveled to Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, the ACT and New Zealand. They found their colleagues from those jurisdictions to be very generous with their time and in providing information about the nature of the principalship as they experience it.

Using funds provided through the NSW Department of Education & Training (DET) Leadership Fellowship Program, teams of principals from NSW went to each jurisdiction, spoke to educational officials and visited one or two schools each. The visiting principals used a detailed questionnaire, content analysis of documents provided by systems and schools and observation to gather information. In addition, whenever possible they met with all the principals together to discuss common issues and then, before returning to NSW, collated the information they collected using a reporting matrix developed for the project.

## Links to Other Jurisdictions

The result was a significant amount of information that was compiled into a report for use by both DET and NSWSPC. A secondary and equally critical result of the visits was to establish links to other jurisdictions directly between members of key principal organisations, and not just the leadership. There have been few opportunities in the past for principals from NSW to be involved in a national conversation about their roles and it is hoped that there will be interest from other States in hearing more about the project, at this year's ASPA conference in Darwin.







One significant finding to be reported is that where schools had more devolution of authority (than in NSW), principals were more removed from direct educational leadership and more focused on the management of the school and its resources. This finding needs more exploration and it is expected there will be further conversations with interstate and New Zealand colleagues about their views on this finding. A second important finding related to the sources of control for school decision-making and the sources of funding. In the majority of jurisdictions, there was a greater separation of these functions than in NSW. A third finding related to the strength of the NSWSPC by comparison with organisations in other States. The cohesive and collegial nature of NSWSPC was quite different to that found in some similar organisations. A second aspect of the research was the conversation with principals in NSW. In April the project coordinator interviewed principals in NSW and gave them the opportunity to speak about their view of the current role and their view of a future role. At the same time, the NSWSPC reference groups (groups of principals who focus on one area of school education, such as staffing) considered issues with the current role of principals in relation to that specific area and suggested areas for the future role of the principal to include and exclude.

Three themes dominated both discussions. The NSW principals interviewed considered their most important role to be the building and shaping of the educational culture in the context of their school. The importance of context was affirmed by every principal and the idea of *'establishing and maintaining the school in its community'* was mentioned often. The second theme to emerge was the critical role of the principal (working with deputy principals and executive staff) in shaping

the educational platform of the school and ensuring that educational outcomes were addressed by the best possible adaptation of curriculum, assessment and pedagogy. Whether principals currently took a direct role in this area or not, there was a strong perception that this role should be more valued by DET than it currently is.

### **Freedom from Administria**

The third theme was one that many principals would recognise. This was the conflict between managerial and educational roles. Principals wanted more flexibility in determining staffing, financial goals and asset planning but wanted much less of the day-to-day management of the minutia of these areas. To make changes in these roles will require the DET in NSW to re-think many of its practices and structures. The SPC welcomes initiatives by the new Director-General to look at futures planning. In June the SPC annual conference discussed a draft role statement and considered issues that would have to be addressed in effecting the major cultural shifts required to put a new more futures-oriented role of principals in place. There is a strong belief that these changes are long overdue. If we wish to create more effective twenty-first century secondary public schools in NSW, we have to have our work focused on those things that are most important.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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# Australasian Principals' Update

## New South Wales

**THE** NSWSPC has introduced a learning and development opportunity for principals as part of a fellowship grant. Coaching as a Leadership Development Strategy will be available to selected applicants as a 2-day pilot coaching workshop. The purpose of the program is to explore the potential of coaching as a leadership and development strategy and to skill participants in some aspect of coaching. The program will be theory-based and provide appropriate interactive and practical activities to enhance skill development.

The President has raised some concerns with the Director-General, one of which is in relation to the new position of Principal Support Officers (PSO). This new position, one in each of the 10 regions, stemmed from the identified need to have principal welfare and leadership for principals as high priorities. It now appears that the Leadership Development Unit (LDU) within the DET has no direct link with these deployed principals. Unless there are formal and substantial channels of communication between the LDU and the PSOs, the leadership development strategy will flounder. There is also a concern about the apparent lack of funding support for these principals. This will make it difficult to meet as a group, and attend professional development opportunities.

The SPC is currently working on consultation protocols with DET. The following guidelines were recently approved by the Executive.

- The emphasis in memoranda and policies should be on DET giving schools and principals guidance, trust, resources and considerable discretion and flexibility.

- The document should be distributed within the SPC to reference group members, Executive, etc, to enable the maximum input and responses.
- Accountability requirements should utilise existing school/principal accountability mechanisms, rather than creating new accountability procedures.
- Where appropriate, each document should include a section detailing the likely financial impact on schools and the availability of funds to meet these costs. In addition, the increased or reduced workload on principals and staff, or details about an evaluation to discover any change in workload.

*Dr G.W.Wagener, Principal, Oak Flats High School, NSW*

# Australasian Principals' Update

## New South Wales

**LEGISLATION** to proclaim the Institute of Teachers was signed in August with bipartisan support. The Institute will be an independent statutory body with a Board to be appointed, while the Quality Teaching Council will be mostly elected, with elections being held in mid 2005. The Secondary Principals' Council will have direct representation to the Council. The Institute will accredit teachers in all schools at four levels: Graduate; Professional Competence; Professional Accomplishment and Professional Leadership.

The work of the Institute will start in 2005. Upon employment, teachers will be given provisional or conditional accreditation. The process of accreditation will take a number of years and will consider:

- the applicant's teaching;
- evidence provided by the teacher of their ability to plan and analyse teaching;
- a report from an experienced peer; and,
- advice from an external assessor ( external assessors will be accomplished practising teachers who are accredited by the Institute. It is envisaged these teachers will volunteer and there will be a pool to choose from).

During the last school term of this year, 7,000 teachers will be invited to answer a 20-minute questionnaire to verify the draft teaching standards which will eventually be applied for accreditation. SPC will request members to encourage staff to be involved.

One of the most important aspects of our work recently has been the investigation of educational leadership. The SPC has conceptualised the preferred role of leadership in five dimensions. They are abbreviated as:

- responsibility for maximising students' educational outcomes to sustain success;
- addressing the particular needs of all students, staff and community;
- sustaining strong educational leadership and effective professional learning;
- building strong community relationships and ensuring public education as the preferred choice;
- accommodating diverse relationships through planning, organisation, management; and, administration, evaluation and accountability.

We remain encouraged that the recent re-organisation of the system will result in improvements across a wide range of schools. After all, it is our core business.

Dr G. W. Wagener, Principal, Oak Flats High School, NSW

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