

# My retirement and subsequent return to the Principalship in 2013

Frank Pikardt

Just to set the scene for you, I was the Principal of NBSC Freshwater Senior Campus from 2007 to June 2013, at which time I turned 60. I was in the old State Super scheme so from a financial point of view retirement was a no brainer. Towards the end of 2012 I was getting very jumpy about what I was going to do when I retired. I loved my school and really enjoyed my job so leaving was not that palatable a prospective. At that time I was seriously considering going back into the classroom. My background is Science and knowing how thin on the ground Chemistry and Physics teachers are I didn't think that I would have any issue getting work.

I received some coaching from a colleague and it became very apparent to me that I wasn't anywhere near ready to leave my role, but I thought I had no alternative. This was probably the moment that I decided that I was going to back myself and apply for Principal positions. I canvassed the idea with my Director as I knew I would need his support and was pleased with how enthusiastically he embraced the idea albeit that he cautioned me that there are no guarantees and that I better be prepared to put my ego away and deal with potential disappointment. I was OK with that then realised I hadn't written a CV for 11 years. I put my CV together over a couple of weeks and used a few trusted colleagues as critical friends, as I wanted to keep my intentions to myself. I figured there would be less embarrassment when I missed out if only a few people knew what I was up to.

Retirement day came and I said my goodbyes but tried to keep things low-key on the off chance that I might get another school somewhere on merit over the next 12 months. After some initial enquiries with the DET regarding the process I discovered that I could not apply for any positions unless I applied for permanency with the Department the same way any beginning teacher would. I had to get my teaching codes approved by providing academic transcripts and go through all the child protection paperwork. The one concession that I was given was that I did not have to attend an interview (I could have been a targeted graduate).

The first advertisement that came up for a Principal's position was my old school. I naturally decided to apply and put together what I thought was a solid application. The real difficulty in writing the application around the specific selection criteria was genuinely projecting forward and not wallowing around in the past. The interview went well and obviously I was successful in securing the position. I attended the year 12 graduation and announced my return and thankfully received a heart-warming response. I did say to my wife later I don't know what I would have done if they all remained deathly silent or booted.

The Department left me with my old email address, reinstated all my sick leave and I immediately started accruing long service leave again. I was back in business and loving it. It has been three years now since I retired and I am still thankful at being able to continue to work in a role I enjoy so much. I no longer have a 'use by' date and will make that decision when the time comes.

***So in summary if you are thinking of doing something similar...***

- (a) Get some coaching and work through the process to see if it is really what you want to do
- (b) Alert your Director to the possibility this may happen and hopefully garner his or her support
- (c) Get cracking on your CV well before your retirement date and get some feedback on it
- (d) Straight after your retirement date start working on getting your permanency approved so that you are ready to apply for any jobs that come up.

## Contributor information

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Frank was Principal of Freshwater Senior Campus, Northern Beaches Secondary College from 2007 to June 2013, at which time he officially retired from the Department. During Term 3 of that same year he applied for his old job when it was advertised and was successful at interview. Frank's current interests include reducing his golf handicap, travelling and hoping to be alive when the Manly Sea Eagles win their next premiership!