

Strictly embargoed to: 12:01am, Monday, 11 May



Ian Anderson, President of AGPPA, Responds to the Australian Principal Occupational Health Safety and Wellbeing Survey 2019

08/05/2020

A new survey has shown school Principals are facing record levels of stress and burnout and rising parental violence and offensive behaviour, even before the COVID-19 outbreak caused havoc in the education system.

The [Australian Principal Occupational Health Safety and Wellbeing Survey 2019](#), a joint project from Australian Catholic University and Deakin University, reveals 84 per cent of all principals and deputy/assistant principals have been subjected to 'offensive behaviours' by parents or students: another new, shameful national record, according to the research authors.

The survey found the combined impact of record levels of heavy workloads and offensive behaviour by parents and students was risking school leaders' long-term health and even shortening their life expectancy.

Now school Principals are reporting the COVID-19 crisis is dramatically increasing the pressure.

Ian said, I welcome the positive reactions and support from school communities towards their Principals and staff during this unprecedented COVID-19 period. If this can become our new normal, we may see improvements in the data, reflecting lower instances of physical and verbal abuse and fewer instances of red flags (self-harm, quality of life, occupational health).

*Government Primary Schools have amongst the highest reported levels of **threats of violence** 55.2%% and **physical violence** 46.5% according to the data. This cannot continue. We need to be doing more as a community and department to support the safety of our school leaders. The impact this is having on the health and wellbeing of our school leaders is detrimental to education in general. The data indicated that 28.2% of respondents from Primary Schools raised a **red flag**, which is nearly one in three school leaders.*

I have seen first-hand, the impact this has on our Principals and I can tell you, it is soul destroying and, in some cases, career ending. Those affected by threats of violence and physical violence can take years to rebuild their confidence.

Our school leaders give so much of themselves to ensure that their school is a safe and enjoyable learning environment for students, so it essential that it is safe for them and their staff as well.

School leaders reported working excessive hours and I know that this has increased dramatically during the COVID-19 period. We need to ensure that this is not the new normal and that we can get back to a manageable and healthy workload sooner than later.

The improved results seen in Victoria and the Northern Territory show that we can change things around. We need to learn from those states what works and look at implementing similar strategies across Australia.

The annual *Australian Principal Occupational Health Safety and Wellbeing Survey* has heard from more than more than 50 per cent of Australia's more than 10,000 school principals since it first commenced in 2011.

The full report can be read [HERE](#).

Media interviews

Please contact Ian Anderson, President, Australian Government Primary Principals' Association on 0401 670 502