



**AGPPA**  
Australian Government  
Primary Principals  
Association

*Promoting and Advocating for Government Primary Schools*

**Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey: concern over reports that violence and physical assaults of school leaders on the rise**

The Australian Government Primary Principals Association (AGPPA) is highly concerned by new survey results showing that in the last year one in three Australian school principals was physically attacked and one in two experienced threats of violence at work.

This is now 9.3 times the rate of the general population, up from 7 times in 2011 according to a new survey released today (Wednesday 27 Feb 2019).

Now in its 8th year, *The Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey*, has collected data from about 50% of Australia's 10,000 principals from 2011 to 2018.

The survey found that increasing threats and violence and the sheer quantity of work are leading to serious levels of distress, burnout and depression among school leaders.

Ian Anderson, AGPPA President, said, "It is a real concern that the prevalence rate for threats of violence in Government primary schools is reported at 49% and actual physical violence is at 42%, (which is 10.5 times the population rate). Women are most at risk with 40% experiencing violence compared to 32% for men."

The prevalence rates vary from state to state with concerning upward trends reported for New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the ACT.

Despite having many predictive attributes for high scores on health and wellbeing, collectively principals and deputy/assistant principals score below the general population average. Australia's principals are overwhelmed by the volume of work; being threatened with violence; being physically attacked, having great difficulty sleeping; and experiencing high rates of depressive symptoms.

Associate Professor Philip Riley, from Australian Catholic University's Institute of Positive Psychology and Education and the survey's chief investigator said, "Clearly, our nation builders are under attack. Consequently, fewer people are willing to step into the role. At a time when 70% of school leaders will reach retirement age within 2-3 years, we are ignoring a looming national crisis."

AGPPA calls on all State & Territory Governments to embrace the report's recommendations by reducing job demands, increasing resources and ensuring a safe work place for its leaders. AGPPA calls on school communities to support their local government school and help eradicate offensive behaviour.

AGPPA represents over 5200 government primary schools.

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