Principal Wellbeing

ACTION PLAN 2019–2021
“The role of the principal is an important one. It is highly rewarding, complex, and, at times, challenging. When principals thrive, so do their schools. Improving principal wellbeing impacts positively on the principal themselves, their students, staff, and school communities.”

**Sally Milbourne**
President of the Tasmanian Principals Association
School leadership is incredibly rewarding. It’s an opportunity to impact learning and life outcomes for young people. Principals are instructional leaders, coaches, managers, community liaison, student support, and policy advisors. It is a complex, challenging and meaningful role, preparing young people for a rapidly changing and uncertain world.

This Principal Wellbeing Action Plan 2019–2021 and forthcoming development of a staff wellbeing framework recognise that in order to fulfil our commitment to inspire and support all learners to succeed as connected, resilient, creative and curious thinkers, we need to address staff wellbeing.

The 2018–2021 Department of Education Strategic Plan, Learners First: Every Learner, Every Day sets a wellbeing goal that learners are safe, feel supported and able to flourish so they can engage in learning. In the same way, principal wellbeing must be flourishing so that they can best engage in their critical work – focusing on teaching and learning and nurturing positive learning environments.

Wellbeing is a dynamic state, affected by complex, interacting, internal and external resources and demands, and the intensive principal role puts its own unique demands on this equilibrium.

This Action Plan is a starting point to address some of the key issues principals identify as impacting their ability to ‘feel good and function well’ at work. This includes:

» strengthening supports available to principals in their day-to-day work
» increasing opportunities for interested principals to build their personal wellbeing tools, resources and mentoring connections and
» clarifying the role structure within school leadership teams in the long term, to better enable principals to focus on teaching and learning.

As part of this plan, two new Principal Wellbeing Leader positions will be established, to ensure this is the start of a more coordinated and sustained approach to principal wellbeing.

On behalf of DoE, I would like to thank principals for the leadership you demonstrate to improve education and life outcomes for every learner, every day. I’d also like to acknowledge your input to this plan, and encourage your continued engagement as we put it into practice.

I look forward to continuing to grow our wellbeing approach in a way that reflects on our values of respect, courage, growth and aspiration. This holistic wellbeing approach intends to support and connect children, students and staff across DoE, as an essential part of our work to inspire and support all learners to succeed.

Tim Bullard
Secretary, Department of Education
## Guide to icons

### Timeframe

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Principals play a critical role in achieving the 2018–2021 Department of Education (DoE) Strategic Plan commitment to inspire and support all learners to succeed as connected, resilient, creative and curious thinkers.

The Principal Wellbeing Action Plan 2019–2021 (the Action Plan) recognises that achieving the outcomes we seek for learners depends on supporting principals to flourish, so that they can engage in leading learning and improvement in their schools. The Action Plan sets out a series of practical actions DoE will take to support principal wellbeing over 2019–2021. It identifies twelve new actions and seven key initiatives underway to address wellbeing enablers and barriers reported by principals.

**A coordinated and sustained approach**

1. Establish two Principal Wellbeing Leader positions to coordinate a sustained approach to principal wellbeing.

**Workload and staffing in schools**

2. Pilot a specialist team to support principals navigate processes and manage underperformance.
3. Improve the accessibility of key information and communications for principals on the intranet.
4. Reduce allocation of the principal on the teaching quota in schools with greatest need.
5. Develop a responsive HR service model, drawing on the expertise of principals, to effectively fill vacancies in schools.
6. Clarify the roles of school leadership teams to improve principal capacity to lead.

**Principal preparation and development**

7. Provide principals and members of school leadership teams with professional learning to support them when dealing with challenging adult behaviours.
8. Provide opportunities for principals to participate in the Flourish Movement – Principal Wellbeing Project.
9. Expand and diversify the Principal Induction Program.

**Support systems**

11. Increase Respectful Schools Support Team (RSST) resources to support principals managing complex student behaviours.
12. Improve the recruitment, retention and allocation of professional support staff.
13. Explore a systemic approach to supporting students impacted by trauma and students with emotional and behavioural challenges.
14. Build a holistic approach to managing critical incidents which includes specific debriefing and support for principals.

**Managing challenging behaviours**

15. Provide principals with access to independent mediation services for resolving complex issues with students and families.
16. Improve and build understanding of the school issues management process across DoE.
17. Co-design a community education campaign to encourage respectful behaviours in school settings.

**A holistic wellbeing approach**

18. Develop a DoE staff wellbeing framework.
A coordinated and sustained approach

Action

1. **Establish two Principal Wellbeing Leader positions to coordinate a sustained approach to principal wellbeing.**

To lead a sustained, coordinated and collaborative approach to principal wellbeing over time and across DoE, two Principal Wellbeing Leader positions will be created, one in the Northern Region and one in the Southern Region. Working cross-divisionally, with a strong connection to Human Resources and Workplace Health and Safety, the Principal Wellbeing Leaders will report directly to the Deputy Secretary – Learning.

These positions will plan ongoing work to support principal wellbeing, including:

» Coordinating wellbeing supports and tools for all principals to help build their internal wellbeing resources, for example: professional learning, online resources and the pilot mentoring program (Support Systems, page 14).

» Brokering appropriate supports and services for individual principals seeking some extra assistance, which may include connections to other DoE teams, providing some personalised support during challenging periods, or referrals to external services.

» Overseeing implementation of the Action Plan, including collaborating with teams across DoE to plan and deliver actions and monitor progress and impact.

» Ongoing monitoring and reporting on principal wellbeing (see also Putting the Plan into Practice, page 29).

» Acting as a source of expertise on principal wellbeing to inform future DoE strategy and action.

The Principal Wellbeing Leaders will be recruited from the current or former principal community, and have a deep understanding of the principal role and its complexities. These are new positions that will work closely with each other and teams across DoE for improved support to principals, including key relationships with School Improvement Leaders, Community Liaison Managers, other key Learning Services staff, and the Professional Learning Institute (PLI). They will contribute to a whole-of-department, holistic approach to wellbeing.

**INTENDED BENEFIT FOR PRINCIPALS:**

» A coordinated and sustainable wellbeing approach delivering ongoing benefit to principals.

» A key contact for principals seeking information, advice and supports to build and manage their own wellbeing.

» Proactive, personalised support during challenging periods.

» High quality monitoring and reporting on principal wellbeing that informs DoE strategy, planning and action.

» Continued advocacy and advice on improving principal wellbeing.

**TIMEFRAME**

**ACTION TYPE**

**LEVEL OF FOCUS**
Workload and staffing in schools

What we heard

» More technical advice and support is needed to address underperformance in school teams, which is time consuming and challenging.

» Principals want an improved intranet and reduced email communication, so that they can access and manage key information more easily.

» Freeing up more time for principals to lead by no longer calculating them entirely in the school teaching quota would give some immediate support to principals trying to juggle competing responsibilities, particularly in small and combined schools.

» Recruitment is the number one issue affecting principals’ stress. Recruiting qualified staff who are the best fit for the role is critical to creating a great team, but this can be difficult and is time consuming, diverting principals away from instructional leadership.

» Role clarity would help principals prioritise their time amidst the intensive and diverse range of tasks they undertake.

Actions

Action 2. Pilot a specialist team to support principals navigate processes and manage underperformance.

This pilot will establish a dedicated team of performance specialists in Learning Services Human Resources, who will work with principals to provide technical advice and administrative support on identifying and addressing teacher underperformance.

Learnings from the first year of implementation will be used to inform the operation and focus of the team in future years, and the development of IT system solutions to improve administrative efficiencies and data collection related to managing underperformance.

INTENDED BENEFIT FOR PRINCIPALS:

» Timely and specialist HR support to address and improve staff performance.

» Improved data collection on teacher performance management and the effectiveness of formal and informal performance management processes, to inform improved system approaches to underperformance.

TIMEFRAME

ACTION TYPE

LEVEL OF FOCUS

Action 3. Improve the accessibility of key information and communications for principals on the intranet.

Finding key DoE information, contacts and resources is currently much harder than it should be. This adds to the already intense workload demands of the principal role. This action will see the development of intranet functionality that better meets principal needs, enabling quicker access to information and resources, as part of a broader intranet redevelopment.

INTENDED BENEFIT FOR PRINCIPALS:

» Reduced time required to locate and manage DoE resources, information and communications.

» More effective leveraging of system tools and resources to support instructional leadership and improvement.

TIMEFRAME

ACTION TYPE

LEVEL OF FOCUS
**Workload and staffing in schools**

**Action 4. Reduce allocation of the principal on the teaching quota in schools with greatest need.**

To enable principals in schools identified with greatest need to focus on instructional leadership, principals in these schools will be proportionally removed from the calculation of the teaching quota. Schools will receive a fractional increase in teaching FTE to account for this. This Government commitment is part of the Leading Quality Teaching and Learning Initiative and will roll out over six years from 2019.

For 2019, the areas of greatest need have been identified as small schools (those with less than 150 enrolments) and combined schools. From 2020, the focus will continue to be data driven, and informed by consultation with principals, the Principal Advisory Group and other key stakeholders.

**INTENDED BENEFIT FOR PRINCIPALS:**

- Acknowledgement of the increased complexities of principal workload.
- In identified schools, additional support for principals to focus on instructional leadership, lead improvement and to grow collaborative practices and professional learning communities.

**TIMEFRAME**

**ACTION TYPE**

**LEVEL OF FOCUS**

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**Action 5. Develop a responsive HR service model, drawing on the expertise of principals, to effectively fill vacancies in schools.**

A centralised permanent teacher recruitment process piloted in 2018 was a critical step in a comprehensive process to develop more efficient and responsive HR recruitment systems, reducing the administrative burden on principals and ensuring a high quality workforce in schools. The pilot developed and trialed new systems and ways of working that will be refined for future recruitment rounds, and inform a longer-term evolution of DoE’s recruitment and staffing approach. This includes how vacancy management can be more effectively supported throughout the year: for example, through centralised recruitment in other areas, or exploring pools of quality candidates for vacancies arising throughout the year.

Underlying this proactive project is the long term strategic work to review and optimise key HR frameworks for the contemporary context, including the transfer policy, employment directions, graduate placement program and Teach for Australia.

Our approach to identifying, training and supporting high quality new teachers into the workforce is also evolving, including through the Education Workforce Roundtable that brings together DoE, the University of Tasmania, the Australian Education Union, the Tasmanian Principals Association, and the Teachers Registration Board; and the More Teachers, Quality Teaching Action Plan.

**INTENDED BENEFIT FOR PRINCIPALS:**

- Reduced administrative burden on the principal related to recruitment.
- Progressively more responsive recruitment solutions for schools delivered by a contemporary and adaptive HR system.
- High quality, skilled and ready workforce.
Workload and staffing in schools

**Action 6. Clarify the roles of school leadership teams to improve principal capacity to lead.**

Role clarity is critically important to supporting balance and wellbeing. The Contemporary School Leadership Roles project is examining how the functions and roles of school leadership teams could be optimised to improve capacity for leaders to focus on providing instructional leadership.

Clarifying the roles and requirements of our school leadership teams, including School Business Managers, will enable DoE to take targeted action in relation to other supports and investments that may be required to help principals prioritise and explain elements of their role in the face of competing demands, expectations and stakeholders.

Throughout Term 1 2019, the project team will map the functions performed by school leadership teams. This will involve speaking with and seeking online feedback from principals and school leadership teams, and visiting a variety of schools to comprehensively understand the functions performed by school leadership teams, both now and into the future. A representative sample of schools will then be approached to model a conceptual role design during Terms 3 and 4 2019.

**INTENDED BENEFIT FOR PRINCIPALS:**

- Increased role clarity to ensure principals can spend more time focusing on teaching and learning for improved student outcomes, and are able to prioritise and explain elements of their role.
- Identify opportunities for more effective coordination of roles and activities within broader leadership teams, to maximise impact on student outcomes.
Principal preparation and development

What we heard

» Principals would like more professional learning in how to manage and work with complex and challenging adult behaviours in schools, which can have a significant negative impact on their day-to-day workload and wellbeing.

» Principals are interested in professional learning to help build practical tools, strategies and self-awareness to help strengthen and maintain positive personal wellbeing.

» Recent developments in DoE’s approach to principal induction have been well received. Spacing learning over longer time periods, and giving greater attention to the relationship management elements of leadership are some ways it could be further enhanced.

» The introduction of the Principal Preparation Program for aspiring principals is welcome, though more formal professional learning opportunities for acting and assistant principals are also needed.

Actions

**Action 7. Provide principals and members of school leadership teams with professional learning to support them when dealing with challenging adult behaviours.**

The 2017 Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey (the Riley Report) indicated that principals and assistant principals experience “far higher prevalence of offensive behaviour [such as threats of or physical violence, bullying, and conflicts and quarrels] at work than the general population.”

In 2020, the Professional Learning Institute will offer professional learning for principals and members of school leadership teams interested in consolidating and extending their existing tools and strategies for responding to challenging adult behaviours and their impacts on personal wellbeing.

**INTENDED BENEFIT FOR PRINCIPALS:**

» Increased tools and confidence to manage or respond to challenging and complex adult behaviours.

» Increased system recognition of the emotional and relational aspects of the principal role.

**TIMEFRAME**

**ACTION TYPE**

**LEVEL OF FOCUS**

**Action 8. Provide opportunities for principals to participate in the Flourish Movement – Principal Wellbeing Project.**

From Term 4 2018 through 2019, the Professional Learning Institute is running the Flourish Movement – Principal Wellbeing Project for 23 principal participants. Over 12 months, the program supports participants to build the knowledge, skills and capacity required to attain flourishing wellbeing while being a principal. It involves research into the roles, responsibilities and challenges of principal participants, and face-to-face workshops to build understanding about practices that can help enhance their wellbeing, as well as be more effective in their role.

The Flourish Movement is a collaboration between Dr Adam Fraser, Deakin University Business School and principals, and aligned with the Australian Professional Standard for Principals.

Subject to course evaluation, this program will continue to be offered in future years, supporting more interested principals to equip themselves with additional strategies to build their wellbeing resources.

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### Principal preparation and development

**INTENDED BENEFIT FOR PRINCIPALS:**

- Increased sense of personal wellbeing at work, through the application of practical strategies, tools and mindsets trialed as a Flourish participant.
- Builds cohorts of Flourish alumni to share experiences and support each other.
- Reinforced wellbeing culture and conversation opportunities across the system.

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**Action 9. Expand and diversify the Principal Induction Program.**

The Principal Induction Program has undergone significant change in recent years, and continues evolving to meet the contemporary demands and opportunities of the principal role. Recognising feedback received from principals and across DoE, in 2019 the induction program will be expanded to include an additional module on handling challenging conversations and relationships – a vital skill for school leaders. Future considerations include other modes of delivering the program and sharing content, including online.

To provide additional professional learning opportunities to consolidate and extend skills in technical areas, the Professional Learning Institute now also delivers standalone Management Modules in Legal Issues, Managing HR and Managing Financial Resources. These three hour workshops are open to all principals, not just those new to the role.

**INTENDED BENEFIT FOR PRINCIPALS:**

- New and aspiring principals have more opportunities to build and consolidate skills through practical professional learning.
- Experienced principals can access an expanded range of Professional Learning Institute modules to consolidate or refresh technical knowledge and practice.

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Support systems

What we heard

» There is strong support for establishing a formal mentoring program, with opportunities to learn from experienced colleagues, or to share experience as a mentor.

» More could be done to support principals with the challenges and opportunities related to their specific contexts – for example, new principals, or principals in rural or isolated schools.

» From 2019, a gap for more general support and ‘agendaless’ conversations will widen as the Principal Network Leader role becomes School Improvement Leader, focused on school improvement coaching and support.

» Schools need more system-level support in managing complex student behaviours, including those connected to trauma and disengagement.

» Sufficient access to professional support staff (including school psychologists, social workers and speech pathologists) is a widespread challenge for schools.

Actions

**Action 10. Pilot an opt-in mentoring program for principals and acting principals.**

Responding to the strong interest in more mentoring opportunities for principals, and additional support for those who are new to the role, acting, or in rural, isolated or combined schools, the Principal Wellbeing Leaders will set up a pilot mentoring program in partnership with the Professional Learning Institute. The program will identify a high-quality pool of mentors from among current or recently retired principal cohorts.

This mentoring would be opt-in for interested principals – and focused on more general ‘agendaless’, timely conversations around the day-to-day experience of the role, as opposed to the coaching and improvement-focused advice that the School Improvement Team provides. Mentors and mentees will be matched based on needs, interests and expertise. Mentors will also receive training to ensure they provide a quality service.

As a new initiative, the pilot will be monitored and reviewed, to evaluate its impact and any learnings for a longer-term approach.

**INTENDED BENEFIT FOR PRINCIPALS:**

» Opportunity to connect with experienced colleagues for informal and conversational support.

» Reduced professional isolation, including for principals of rural and isolated schools.

» Additional support for new and acting principals to transition into the role.

» New opportunities to share expertise and experience.

**TIMEFRAME**

**ACTION TYPE**

**LEVEL OF FOCUS**

**Action 11. Increase Respectful Schools Support Team (RSST) resources to support principals managing complex student behaviours.**

The work of the RSST team has received positive feedback from principals, improved outcomes for students and schools, and reduced the number of complex student cases being referred by schools in Learning Services. Building on this positive impact, this action will increase RSST’s FTE resourcing and capacity to support schools to create and sustain more inclusive environments. This may include delivering professional learning in positive handling frameworks and risk reduction strategies for addressing challenging behaviours.
Support systems

INTENDED BENEFIT FOR PRINCIPALS:

» Opportunity to consolidate and extend tools and strategies for engaging with complex student behaviours.
» Increased support to implement a whole-school approach to engaging with complex student behaviours to achieve positive outcomes.
» Continued strengthening of inclusive school environments.

TIMEFRAME

ACTION TYPE

LEVEL OF FOCUS

Action 12. Improve the recruitment, retention and allocation of professional support staff.

DoE will review and improve its approach to the recruitment and retention of professional support staff, and allocation of professional support resources. This is an important step towards addressing increasingly complex student needs, and the challenge of ongoing professional support vacancies. This includes a focus on recruitment for regional and remote areas.

As part of this approach, DoE will:

» Explore options to collaborate with the University of Tasmania to inform and strengthen Tasmanian training pathways for professional support specialties.
» Engage with students in specialist support areas to promote careers in DoE.
» Strengthen recruitment approaches to encourage more applicants, including in hard to staff areas.
» Promote staff retention by enhancing career pathways and support.
» Informed by measures of child and student wellbeing, review the allocation of professional support staff resources within DoE.

INTENDED BENEFIT FOR PRINCIPALS:

» Increased access to professional support staff to meet increasingly complex student needs.
» A skilled professional support staff workforce.

Action 13. Explore a systemic approach to supporting students impacted by trauma and students with emotional and behavioural challenges.

DoE will explore a long term, evidence based approach to how it supports schools to embed inclusive student support systems and practices. This will include building an understanding of the impacts of trauma and facilitating whole school approaches to supporting student wellbeing and behaviour.

This work will consider significant, long-term reform for DoE’s approach to supporting and resourcing student needs. In order to get this right, the Child and Student Wellbeing Unit, in coordination with the Student Support Unit and Inclusion and Diversity, will research and develop an evidence based approach over the course of 2019.

INTENDED BENEFIT FOR PRINCIPALS:

» Increased system-level guidance, programming, and professional learning for schools addressing learning and wellbeing needs of students impacted by trauma and students with emotional and behavioural challenges.
» Consistent and evidence based model for DoE resourcing to support students impacted by trauma and students with emotional and behavioural challenges.
Action 14. Build a holistic approach to managing critical incidents which includes specific debriefing and support for principals.

DoE will build on the current approach to supporting schools during critical incidents by introducing specialist debriefing and support for principals. Principals play a unique leadership role in responding to these situations, however their own support needs may not be so proactively addressed. Recognising this, DoE will appoint a psychologist and support staff to work closely with the Principal Wellbeing Leaders during critical incidents to ensure that principals’ wellbeing needs are addressed as part of the system response.

This approach will build on existing initiatives and supports, including the Critical Incident Procedures and work of the Professional Support Staff team.

**INTENDED BENEFIT FOR PRINCIPALS:**

» Better coordinated support for schools following critical incidents.

» Specialist debriefing following critical incidents to protect and support principal wellbeing.
Managing challenging behaviours

What we heard

» Principals would like to be better supported when dealing with family and community member issues and concerns, and for the formal process for managing these issues to be improved.

» There is a need to build understanding of the mechanics of the school issues management process among school leadership teams and DoE broadly, and to clearly communicate how family and community members can raise their concerns through this process.

» The need to promote and embed expectations of respectful behaviour across the school community was highlighted, including the rights of every staff member, student and community member to be treated with respect.

Actions

**Action 15. Provide principals with access to independent mediation services for resolving complex issues with students and families.**

The Principal Wellbeing Leaders will provide access to independent mediation services, available to principals on request, to help mediate complex student and family issues. This service will provide an additional tool to draw on when dealing with issues that cannot be resolved immediately or easily, but where there is still an opportunity for a constructive solution.

**INTENDED BENEFIT FOR PRINCIPALS:**

» Access to an additional skilled independent resource to try to resolve complex issues constructively.

» Opportunity to increase experience of mediation tools and approaches that could be applied in other settings.

**TIMEFRAME**

**ACTION TYPE**

**LEVEL OF FOCUS**

**Action 16. Improve and build understanding of the school issues management process across DoE.**

Dealing with issues and concerns from the school community is an expected but difficult part of the principal role. It is timely to review how DoE manages and addresses these issues, ensuring the process is transparent, fair and appropriate, for principals, students, parents and community members. Learning Services will lead a review of the current school issues management process, identify improvements, and work with school leadership teams, business units and the broader school community to build a consistent understanding of the process. This will include revisions to the current Grievances – Guidelines for Parents and the Community, and clear guidance on the roles of the family or community member raising an issue, principals, Learning Services, and supporting business units.

Key issues for consideration will include how repeated and prolonged complaints are consistently managed across DoE.
Managing challenging behaviours

**INTENDED BENEFIT FOR PRINCIPALS:**

- Greater clarity about the school issues management process and roles and responsibilities within DoE.
- Consistent approach to managing family and community member issues across DoE.
- More efficient and effective resolution of issues and concerns, and reduced time spent on any repeated and prolonged complaints.

**TIMEFRAME**

**ACTION TYPE**

**LEVEL OF FOCUS**

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**Action 17. Co-design a community education campaign to encourage respectful behaviours in school settings.**

A reference group involving principals and key teams across DoE will design a campaign to promote respectful behaviours in school settings. The campaign will build on the work schools have been doing on respectful relationships and the Education Act 2016.

As a collaborative project, the details of the approach and messaging will be based on the experience and knowledge of the reference group, and their understanding of what would be most effective. It may involve social media and visual reminders in schools.

**INTENDED BENEFIT FOR PRINCIPALS:**

- Increased community support and shared responsibility for upholding standards of respectful behaviour in school settings.
- Reinforced messaging on acceptable behaviour in school settings, building on the Tasmanian Education Act 2016 reforms.
To achieve DoE’s wellbeing goal for all learners, we recognise that wellbeing in schools must be addressed holistically. That is, to better ensure children and students feel supported and able to flourish, DoE needs to support the same positive wellbeing for our principals and all staff. This Action Plan is part of this coordinated wellbeing approach.

Recognising the interdependence of this work, implementing the 2018–2021 Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy and developing a wellbeing framework to support all DoE staff are highlighted in this plan as critical interlinked actions for improving principal wellbeing.

**Actions**

**Action 18. Develop a DoE staff wellbeing framework.**

The Action Plan recognises the role of the principal involves unique and complex challenges that require targeted action. Actions to support principal wellbeing will also align with a broader approach to staff wellbeing across DoE.

Staff wellbeing is a critical success factor in achieving an engaged, motivated and effective workforce who are best able to support the improvement of learner outcomes. Over 2019, DoE will develop a framework for supporting the wellbeing of all staff. The framework will identify priorities for improvement towards the wellbeing of all staff, based on the evidence of what works and the experience and expertise of a broad cross-section of DoE staff. This commitment to improving support for all staff wellbeing will impact principals as both staff themselves, and as managers of teams.

**Action 19. Continue to implement the 2018–2021 Department of Education Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy and action plans.**

The 2018–2021 Department of Education Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy: Safe, Well and Positive Learners was launched in 2018. Child and student wellbeing refers to a state where learners: feel loved and safe; have access to material basics; have their physical, mental and emotional needs met; are learning and participating; and have a positive sense of culture and identity. This definition comes from the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework and encompasses the six wellbeing domains of the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth: The Nest.

DoE is committed to ensuring that all learners have the resources they need to withstand life’s challenges irrespective of where they are on the wellbeing continuum, and that they have the resilience to bounce back and flourish in their learning.

In 2019, the focus of activity under this Strategy will be mental wellbeing.

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2. ARACY 2014, ‘The Nest action agenda: improving the wellbeing of Australia’s children and youth while growing our GDP by over 7%’, ARACY, Canberra.
Why principal wellbeing is a priority

The Action Plan aims to better ensure that learners are safe, feel supported and are able to flourish, so that they can engage in learning, by committing to actions to enable positive wellbeing in our principals. It forms one of three interdependent components of DoE’s wellbeing approach, along with the 2018–2021 Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy, and a staff wellbeing framework to be developed in 2019.

The principal role can be both incredibly rewarding and challenging. Principals lead complex places of learning, work and community. Their leadership is critical to creating conditions that support learners to thrive and achieve.

A global transformation in the role and nature of the principal’s work is taking place: educational reform, the constantly evolving integration of information and communication technologies into all aspects of life, and the growing diversity of student population and their needs has led to work intensification. This is a challenge for principals trying to maintain a healthy work-life balance. With 39 per cent of Tasmanian principals being 55 years of age or above, it is vital that DoE can effectively prepare and support new and future generations of principals to thrive in the role over the longer term.

Ensuring principals are enabled to ‘feel good and function well’ in their complex and workload intensive roles is critical to maximising and sustaining high quality leadership, positive learning environments, and improvement in student learning.

A model for understanding principal wellbeing

Wellbeing can be understood in many ways. The World Health Organisation describes it as realising your abilities, coping with normal stresses, working productively and fruitfully and making a contribution to your community. The DoE Principal Wellbeing Discussion Paper (the Discussion Paper) released in 2018 describes principal wellbeing as ‘feeling good and functioning well’ on a continuum from suffering to flourishing, and a dynamic state of equilibrium affected by interdependent factors including:

- internal (personal) and external resources and challenges;
- organisational and individual factors (the Inside-Out-Outside-In model);
- life events, genetic dispositions, and intentional practices.

The conceptual model on the next page illustrates the understanding of principal wellbeing underpinning this Action Plan.

The Discussion Paper is a useful source for further reading on findings from principal consultation, and international research and scholarship on wellbeing. DoE staff can find the Discussion Paper on the DoE intranet, or by emailing StrategicPlan@education.tas.gov.au.

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A Conceptual Model for Understanding the Dynamic State of Principal Wellbeing

**Resources**
(PERSONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL)
- Positive organisational culture
- Positive organisational structure and practices
- Positive physical environment
- Professional learning
- Physical and mental health
- Positive attitude and relationships

**Demands/challenges**
(WORK AND LIFE)
- School leadership
- Parent, student and staff interactions
- Managing the school
- Mental and physical health
- Home and family
- Student/staff wellbeing and behaviour

**Wellbeing Set Point**

(INSIDE OUT / OUTSIDE IN) STABLE WELLBEING (INSIDE OUT / OUTSIDE IN)
How the action plan was developed

The Action Plan was informed by contributions of principals and teams who work with and support them. A Principal Wellbeing Working Group including representatives from the Tasmanian Principals Association (TPA), the Australian Education Union (AEU) and the principal community provided input and advice throughout the process.

The first phase of development was a scan and assess process led by an experienced former principal, including a review of contemporary wellbeing research and practice, information sessions for all principals at Principal Briefings, and individual and small group consultation with 110 principals, four Principal Network Leaders, the TPA, the AEU and other DoE teams. A discussion paper bringing together key findings from this phase was released as a platform for a second round of consultation, which generated more than 400 additional items of feedback from principals and key stakeholders.

Principal Wellbeing Discussion Paper feedback items by theme

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<thead>
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<th>Workload and Staffing</th>
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<tr>
<td>Support Systems</td>
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During consultation, many principals highlighted the valued support they receive from colleagues within their own school teams, from other principals and from specialist areas like Learning Services, Corporate and Business Services, and the Professional Learning Institute (PLI). Engaging with these teams and their experience was also key to developing a practical plan that builds on those initiatives already supporting principal wellbeing.

The suite of actions has been developed to align with the key features of the conceptual model for wellbeing presented in the 2018 Discussion Paper by:

» Reflecting a holistic approach to wellbeing, complementing the 2018–2021 Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy and forthcoming DoE staff wellbeing framework and their scopes of influence;

» Addressing both system influences (organisational strategies, culture and practices) and individual influences (personal capabilities, mindsets and resources) on wellbeing, as interconnected dimensions for action.

The suite also:

» Includes a mix of new 2019 initiatives and longer term actions (2020–2021), and highlights critical actions already commenced at the time of the plan’s release.

» Includes both proactive and responsive action, where:

• ‘proactive’ refers to building resources and capabilities, individually or at a system level, to provide a stronger foundation for flourishing wellbeing

• ‘responsive’ refers to services and resources to assist with specific issues impacting on wellbeing at the time of need.

» Recognises that different types of support may be needed in different contexts and by different individuals – for example, connecting with a mentor, formal professional learning, or debriefing following a critical incident.

The Action Plan builds on a number of valuable initiatives supporting principals, as well as identifying some new priorities for action. It does not try to address every issue raised during consultation. Rather, it aims to provide a strong starting point for action, and to embed a longer-term and continually improving approach to supporting principals to flourish in the role.

Actions have been grouped into focus areas that build on those presented in the Discussion Paper.

A coordinated and sustained approach

Establishing an overarching mechanism to support, sustain and monitor work to enhance principal wellbeing, underpinning all actions in the plan, and identifying future priorities for action.

Workload and staffing in schools

Recognising the link between workload and principal stress, with staffing matters being a major contributor to this.

Principal preparation and development

Considering how new and experienced principals are supported to build and strengthen knowledge and capabilities they need to thrive in the role.

Support systems

Enhancing the systems of professional support and advice that principals draw on in their work.

Managing challenging behaviours

Recognising the time and emotional demands of managing challenging relationships and behaviours as a principal.

A holistic wellbeing approach

Ensuring a coherent approach to achieving the DoE wellbeing goal, reflecting the interdependence of child, student, staff and principal wellbeing.
Principal Wellbeing Action Plan

A coordinated and sustained approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Proactive/Responsive</th>
<th>System/Individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Establish two Principal Wellbeing Leader positions to coordinate a sustained approach to principal wellbeing.</td>
<td>New 2019 initiative</td>
<td>Proactive and responsive</td>
<td>System and individual</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Workload and staffing in schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<th>Proactive/Responsive</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pilot a specialist team to support principals navigate processes and manage underperformance.</td>
<td>New 2019 initiative</td>
<td>Responsive</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reduce the allocation of the principal on the teaching quota in schools with greatest need.</td>
<td>Commenced</td>
<td>Proactive</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Develop a responsive HR service model, drawing on the expertise of principals, to effectively fill vacancies in schools.</td>
<td>Commenced</td>
<td>Proactive</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Clarify the roles of school leadership teams to improve principal capacity to lead.</td>
<td>Commenced</td>
<td>Proactive</td>
<td>System and individual</td>
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Principal preparation and development

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<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Provide principals and members of school leadership teams with professional learning to support them when dealing with challenging adult behaviours.</td>
<td>Longer term (2020–2021)</td>
<td>Proactive</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Provide opportunities for principals to participate in the Flourish Movement – Principal Wellbeing Project.</td>
<td>Commenced</td>
<td>Proactive</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Expand and diversify the Principal Induction Program.</td>
<td>Commenced</td>
<td>Proactive</td>
<td>Individual</td>
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</table>

Support systems

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<tr>
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<th>System/Individual</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Pilot an opt-in mentoring program for principals and acting principals.</td>
<td>New 2019 initiative</td>
<td>Proactive</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Increase Respectful Schools Support Team (RSST) resources to support principals managing complex student behaviours.</td>
<td>New 2019 initiative</td>
<td>Proactive</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Improve the recruitment, retention and allocation of professional support staff.</td>
<td>Longer term (2020–2021)</td>
<td>Proactive</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Explore a systemic approach to supporting students impacted by trauma and students with emotional and behavioural challenges.</td>
<td>Longer term (2020–2021)</td>
<td>Proactive and responsive</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Build a holistic approach to managing critical incidents which includes specific debriefing and support for principals.</td>
<td>New 2019 initiative</td>
<td>Responsive</td>
<td>System and individual</td>
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Managing challenging behaviours

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Provide principals with access to independent mediation services for resolving complex issues with students and families.</td>
<td>New 2019 initiative</td>
<td>Responsive</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Improve and build understanding of the school leave management process across DoE.</td>
<td>Longer term (2020–2021)</td>
<td>Responsive</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Co-design a community education campaign to encourage respectful behaviours in school settings.</td>
<td>Longer term (2020–2021)</td>
<td>Proactive</td>
<td>System</td>
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</table>

A holistic wellbeing approach

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Develop a DoE staff wellbeing framework.</td>
<td>Commenced</td>
<td>Proactive and responsive</td>
<td>System and individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Continue to implement the 2018–2021 Department of Education Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy and action plans.</td>
<td>Commenced</td>
<td>Proactive and responsive</td>
<td>System and individual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Putting the plan into practice

The Action Plan brings together the expertise of teams across DoE to lead action in their areas of work, with the Principal Wellbeing Leaders taking oversight of implementation, and playing a key collaborative role across all action areas.

Timeline for action

The Action Plan is aligned with DoE’s Strategic Plan timeline. A timeframe for implementation is indicated for each action:

- commenced – underway at the time of the plan’s release
- a new 2019 initiative – due for implementation in 2019
- longer term (2020–2021) – indicating further detailed planning is required.

Monitoring and reporting

Action is a first step; impact is the test of success. The two Principal Wellbeing Leaders (A coordinated and sustained approach, page 4) will coordinate a sustained approach to supporting principal wellbeing, including oversight of the Action Plan’s implementation and reporting on progress. A number of actions involve pilots, which will also require in-depth evaluation of impact and learnings to inform longer-term approaches.

The Principal Wellbeing Leaders will also develop an ongoing monitoring and reporting approach for principal wellbeing, including measures to assess if the intended benefits of the Action Plan have been realised. This will be developed in coordination with a broader staff wellbeing approach. Indicators may include the annual Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey (the Riley Report).

Regular reporting back to principals and to other key groups across DoE (including the Executive Group) will help ensure principal wellbeing remains a key consideration in thinking, planning, and working across DoE, and identify future priorities for action.

Looking ahead

Throughout the consultations we also heard how important it is to staff that DoE is a workplace where we each care for each other’s wellbeing. Growing a wellbeing culture is a broader and deeper piece of work for DoE, but one everyone can and does play an active part in creating, from contributing to positive and supportive team ways of working, to role modelling by investing in our personal wellbeing.

This plan focuses on specific actions to support principals. The development of a DoE staff wellbeing framework is an important next step towards achieving our wellbeing goal – an essential part of fulfilling our commitment to learners.
References


Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) 2014, ‘The Nest action agenda: Improving the wellbeing of Australia’s children and youth while growing our GDP by over 7%’, ARACY, Canberra.


Acknowledgements

DoE acknowledges with thanks, the time and feedback principals invested to inform development of the Action Plan and the invaluable guidance and support of the members of the Principal Wellbeing Working Group:

Angela Bird, Nick Donnelly (AEU), Malcolm Elliott (TPA), Sally Gill, Sharyn Gill, Paul Gourlay, Sally Milbourne (TPA), Trudy Pearce, Helen Richardson (AEU), Andrew Starick, Mark Watson, Rob Williams, Wendy Spencer (Chair).
What do Tasmanian principals identify as the positive core of their work?

*During the 2018 principal wellbeing consultations, Tasmanian principals identified the aspects of the job that bring them the most satisfaction:*

» Having a positive impact on the lives of children and young people
» Developing leaders
» Being valued, listened to, trusted, respected and supported
» Focusing on teaching and learning
» Having a voice
» Engaging in the challenges and complexities of the role.