



Our Principal Wellbeing – Making a Difference

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Early in 2018 the Australian Capital Territory Principal's Association (ACTPA) and the ACT Education Directorate (ED) came together to respond to the need to develop a strategy to support principal wellbeing.

Our presentation and workshop will share this story and the resulting strategy and its impact from the first year of implementation.

Background Commentary

Much of the first research around principal wellbeing was conducted in Ontario, Canada (Leithwood et.al., Pollack and others). Around the turn of this decade the Ontario Principal's Council introduced professional learning for principals that aimed to build their resilience and capacity to do the job. Such research has continued in Australia in recent years and is supported by four recommendations of the Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey (2017, Riley) affirming 'what the individual can do' can guide efforts of each school leader. Further recommendations of this seven-year study informed what the employer and professional networks can do in professional learning around resilience and capacity building.

Many jurisdictions across Australia are providing initiatives in building Principal 'resources' and capabilities. For example, Education Queensland has partnered with the professional association, QSPA, and Headspace to design and implement a professional support service for Principals and Deputy Principals, especially those facing traumatic events or issues. This has four years of funding from government.

The ACTPA and ACT Education Directorate partnered and seconded a Principal to undertake a review of established research and canvass principal feedback. From this work a set of recommendations have framed an overarching strategy to support Principal Wellbeing.

The ACT research and consultation revealed similar themes to those acknowledged in Ontario and across other jurisdictions in Australia actively exploring Principal Wellbeing. The ACTPA / ED report identified nine (9) key recommendations. The recommendations focussed on themes of principal workload and workflow; essential professional learning; preparation and induction programs; and looking after self. The recommendations also advocated for system engagement with the principal profession to redesign the role; to adopt better ways of introducing major changes; to focus more on providing a 'service culture'; and to better respond to matters of violence towards principals and their teams.

This presentation will describe these recommendations, the strategy and the outcomes so far. The workshop will stimulate a global conversation and an exchange of ideas that will frame ongoing advocacy and active strategies to support Principal Wellbeing.