

THE PRIVILEGE AND THE PRICE

A Study of Principal Class Workload and its
Impact on Health and Wellbeing

Final Report

August 2004



Department of
Education & Training

Knowledge&Skills
Building a Future



THE PRIVILEGE AND THE PRICE²

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THE PRIVILEGE AND THE PRICE

The Privilege and the Price³

PREFACE

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OVERVIEW

The changing world of work and its implications for the quality of working life and for the safety and health of employees is receiving considerable attention around the world. While increased flexibility, devolved responsibility, and new technologies hold potential for improved satisfaction and wellbeing in the workforce, fears have been raised that these trends are resulting in a variety of potentially stressful or hazardous circumstances, particularly in relation to increased work demands.

After more than a decade of accelerated change within Victorian government schools focused on improving learning and teaching outcomes, the associations which represent principal class members have echoed these concerns in relation to workload and perceived adverse health and wellbeing effects.

The Department of Education and Training has had a long-time interest in addressing stress prevention within its workforce. In 1998 the Department conducted a major research project on teacher stress. This resulted in the introduction of a range of organisational health initiatives such as the School Climate Survey and, more recently, the annual Opinion Surveys of staff, parents and students within schools. (<http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/standards/improve/opinsurv.htm>)

There was also recognition of the need to effectively monitor and better track how workplace change is impinging on the Principal Class to assist the Department to better understand the organisational risk factors facing these employees and to identify those areas that require organisational interventions to protect safety and health. Consequently the Principal Class Workload Study was established to develop and trial a survey tool and collect baseline data from principals and assistant principals regarding their work.

The Principal Class Workload Study Project was carried out during 2003. It was conducted in four stages:

1. Desk research based on international literature search and interviews with key stakeholders and interested parties. Appendix 1 is a report of this research.
2. Focus groups with a representative sample of randomly selected principals and assistant principals. An account of the focus group outcomes is provided in Appendix 2.
3. Survey of a representative sample of randomly selected principals and assistant principals. See Appendix 3 for detailed findings.
4. Report on findings. The main findings comprise the body of this report.

Nearly 1,200 principals and assistant principals were invited to participate in the survey that closed on 17 October 2003. The response rate was 56.6%. This is a remarkably high figure for surveys of this kind which usually only record a return rate of around 33%.

The 47 survey questions were derived from discussion with principal class representatives and also from the desk research. Their suitability was tested through the focus groups. The questions were compiled by theme:

1. Effect of job on health & wellbeing (8 questions)
2. Approach to the job (10 questions)
3. Effect of department operations (8 questions)
4. Conditions and hours of work (10 questions)
5. Leave accessed in last year (4 questions)
6. Personal profile (7 questions)

Issues influencing principal workload, and affecting their health and wellbeing, which have been identified through the survey, include:

- Work demands particularly paperwork and report writing
- Perceived conflict between managerial and educational roles
- Limited staff management skills
- Insufficient student welfare support
- Lack of suitably trained staff
- Remuneration levels.

Similar concerns were identified in the *Schools Workforce Development Strategy* (<http://www.det.vic.gov.au/det/resources/blueprint/default.htm#BCGfindings>) prepared by the Boston Consulting Group (pp. 17-22) to inform the development of the *Blueprint for Government Schools*.

Blueprint for Government Schools

(<http://www.det.vic.gov.au/det/resources/blueprint.htm>)

On 13 November 2003, the Minister for Education & Training, Lynne Kosky MP, launched the *Blueprint for Government Schools*. The "Principal Workload Study" is mentioned in the Blueprint as a source of information to assist on-going consultation with schools, principals and teachers (p. 18). A number of the strategies adopted in the Blueprint will directly address matters identified through the workload study. These are:

Flagship Strategy 2: Developing a New Resource Allocation Model (p. 16)

A new resource allocation model that is less complex and more transparent than the existing one, and which is flexible, equitable, efficient and student focused will be developed and implemented.

Flagship Strategy 3: Building Leadership Capacity (pp. 17-18)

An improved principal selection process will be developed that includes increasing principal representation on selection panels, tailoring selection criteria to reflect the school's needs, and encouraging contact between candidates and the employing school.

The Government will establish a mentoring program for first time principals and a coaching support program for experienced principals to develop principals' leadership capabilities.

The Government will introduce a 'balanced scorecard' approach to improve the performance management of principals. This will link principal performance assessment to overall school performance.

The Government will implement an accelerated development program for high potential leaders. Participants will benefit from exposure to leadership responsibilities, tailored professional development, and mentoring.

The Government will also implement a development program for high performing principals that includes tailored professional development, placements in challenging schools, and mentoring other principals and aspiring principals.

The Government will expand local administrative bureaus for networks of small schools to help alleviate the administrative workload of small schools.

Flagship Strategy 6: School Improvement (p. 26)

To minimise the administrative burden on schools, a single planning and accountability document will be implemented.

However some areas of concern have not been dealt with in the Blueprint, particularly:

- attention to the school physical environment. Facilities related issues are a major source of concern for principals.
- Whole of government approaches to welfare provision through effective liaison with other agencies such as Department of Human Services and Victorian Police.

Comparative data on hours of work

Principals in Victorian government schools report they are working long hours. The hours in the table below are not adjusted to account for school holidays as principals and assistant principals indicate that they are undertaking some work during these periods.

Principal Class Workload Study - October 2003

	Average weekly hours
Principals	59.6
Assistant Principals	57.7

The data collected from other jurisdictions of comparable employment categories which is provided below, indicates that the working hours of people employed in leadership roles in schools is similar and of longer duration than other professional and managers.

UK Teacher Workload Study - 2001

(<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/remodelling/workloadstudy/>)

The Teacher Workload Study was conducted for the UK Department for Education and Skills (DfES) by PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC). This study was established to identify the main drivers of the workload for teachers and head teachers and to present potential solutions for the removal of unnecessary burdens. It was conducted in 100 schools across England and Wales.

Occupation	Average weekly hours
Primary schools:	
Headteachers 58.9	
Deputy heads ¹	56.2
Secondary schools:	
Headteachers	60.8
Deputy heads ¹	58.6
National averages for other managers and professionals:	
All Managers (ONS) 46.3	
All Professionals (ONS)	44.0

1 - All leadership group except headteacher used as a proxy due to low sample size of deputy heads alone.
Source: UK Office of Manpower Economics 2000 in PwC Teacher Workload Study p. 9.

European Synthesis Survey of working time and workload of Managerial and Professional staff - 2003

The EUROCADRES (Council of European Professional and Managerial staff) has set up a coordinated process involving various European countries. This peak council of unions that organise professionals and managerial staff (P&MS) has conducted surveys on issues related to working time and workload.

The table below was derived by combining answers from similar questions used in national surveys in 6 countries (Finland, France, Italy, Portugal, Sweden and the United-Kingdom). The surveys were conducted from late 2001 until spring 2003.

The total working hours during a usual week are around 46 hours per week. It is higher in the UK (47.1 hours per week) than in the other countries.

	Finland	France	Italy	Sweden	UK
Total working hours per week	44.6	44.6	46.9	46.9	47.1

Source: EUROCADRES surveys-2003]
(<http://www.eurocadres.org/EN/who/3c-002.cfm>)

Comparative data on Stress

Gender and Age as determinants

The Principal Class Workload Study reveals that workers in this category experience high levels of stress. Interestingly, there is very little difference between men and women or between different age cohorts.

Table 1: COMPARISON OF PRINCIPAL/ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL REPORTING HIGH LEVELS OF STRESS AT WORK, 2003

Principal Class Workload Survey 2003				
Occupational status	Gender		Age	
	Men	Women	< 50	50 +
	%	%	%	%
Assistant Principal	81	78	80	79
Principal	79	77	81	75

Source: Principal Workload Study

Job as determinant

These comparative data on stress are taken from the JOB futures/Saulwick National Employee Sentiment Survey, which is conducted quarterly among a national random sample of 1000 people in the Australian workforce or actively looking for work, and from the survey of principal class people conducted by this firm in 2003.

In the national survey, the question was asked in the following terms:

On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all stressful and 10 is extremely stressful, how would you rate your job?

The data were collated into three categories, low (0 – 3), medium (4 – 6) and high (7 – 10).

The comparative findings are calculated as an average over three JOB futures/Saulwick surveys conducted in 2003 – March, June and September. The quantitative survey of principal class people was conducted in September-October 2003. The comparison is presented in Table 2.

In the principal class survey, the same question, using the same scale and categories, was asked, with a rider (underlined):

On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all stressful and 10 is extremely stressful, how would you rate your job most of the time?

This was done to take account of the findings from the qualitative phase of the study which indicated that the level of stress felt by principal class people varied considerably from one day to another.

Table 2: COMPARISON OF PRINCIPAL CLASS PEOPLE AND CERTAIN CLASSIFICATIONS OF EMPLOYEE RESPONDENTS REPORTING HIGH LEVELS OF STRESS AT WORK, 2003

Principals & APs	JOB futures/Saulwick Employee Sentiment Survey average over three surveys in 2003								
	Gender		Age				Occupational status		
	Men	Women	18-24	25-39	40-54	55+	All White- collar	Lower/ middle white	Upper white
%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
79	41	42	27	45	44	39	46	43	55

It is clear from this information that Principals and Assistant Principals are facing higher degrees of stress than those in comparable employment categories.

The Privilege and the Price

Despite this situation, Principals and Assistants Principals, as a group, report high levels of satisfaction with their job. They are highly committed and highly motivated. They can "make a difference" in the lives of young people. Most would not consider changing their job.

Like other professionals, they have to contend with high levels of internal conflict between what they consider to be their primary responsibility – to the students – and the demands placed on them by the Department. This can lead to a sense of being undervalued. It is also likely to contribute to perceptions of overwork.

Changes in society have also brought other pressures. Principals are reporting increased disharmony caused by disruptive students and difficult parents. In country regions, Principals are being affected by the withdrawal of other professional services, leaving them as the sole "authority figure" in the area.

The survey responses provide valuable insight into the expectations that the principal class have for themselves and for the role they undertake. Given the significant position

that Principals and Assistant Principals occupy in leading and implementing the educational change agenda, this information is essential for department officers to assist them in developing programs which are based on an understanding of the needs of the school's leadership.

Next Steps

The study has established baseline data and survey tool that will enable the effective monitoring of workload demands and health and wellbeing outcomes through systematic data collection and longitudinal tracking of the impact of organisational change. The Department will undertake biannual surveys of Principal Class Workload starting from September 2005.

The results from the study will assist the Department to target interventions designed to improve principal work-life balance. Initially, the information initiatives gathered in 2003 will be used to inform the implementation of the Blueprint and a number of stress prevention initiatives being undertaken by the Employee Health Branch.

This Final Report will be referred to the Human Resources Executive Committee to determine further action that can be taken to address its findings.

BACKGROUND

The associations representing the interests of members of the Principal Class raised the issue of Principal Class workload and its effect on health and wellbeing. Because there was limited objective data available to assess the extent of this claim, it was decided to conduct a study of the work expectations and role of the Principal Class members and to determine how this may affect their work-life balance.

Scope of the study

The aim of the study was to survey members of the Principal Class to ascertain their perceptions of:

- Specific tasks required of Principals
- Particular drivers of Principal workload including the influence of school size, school type and geographic location on workload
- Time taken to complete key tasks required of Principals
- Daily/weekly work routines of Principals
- Resources available to undertake tasks
- Specific workload and working conditions issues that impact on Principal health and wellbeing

A comparison of workload requirements in other occupations at similar levels was also considered relevant if data was available.

Victorian Government Schools

Within the government education system there are 1631 schools. Support to schools is provided through nine regional offices (5 country and 4 metropolitan) and a central office. At 27 June 2002, there were 2,777 persons employed within the Principal Class. Table 1 provides a breakdown of Principal Class employment numbers by school type.

TABLE 1 - Principals and assistant principals numbers by school type as at 27 June 2002

School Type	Principals	A/Principals
Primary	1,117	664
Secondary	262	483
P-12	46	66
Special	77	61
Other	1	
Total	1,503	1,274

Prior to 1993 schools had considerable responsibility and authority for their educational programs but did not have equivalent responsibility and authority with respect to the use of financial and human resources. In most instances financial resources were allocated to schools for specific purposes. Staff were allocated through a central staffing process with financial resources allocated to schools for specific purposes.

Since 1993 there has been a radical restructure of the relationships between the central bureaucracy, regional offices and schools. Significant responsibility, authority and accountability are now located at the school level. Schools have greater control over their financial resources for expenditure on salaries, services, equipment, supplies and general maintenance.

The role of the principal is to lead and manage the planning, delivery, evaluation and improvement of the education of students in a community through redeployment of resources and facilities provided to or generated by the school.

Principal positions have a clear set of accountabilities that distinguish their work from other members of the Principal Class and the education community. At the core of these responsibilities are:

- management of a number of professional and other staff and the requirement to integrate all their work towards the delivery of a comprehensive education program;
- executive officer to the school council;
- establishment and monitoring of appropriate financial management systems and processes to ensure money is expended in accordance with DE&T and school council requirements;

- acting as a representative of the Deputy Secretary, Office of School Education at the school level and contributing to the development and implementation of DE&T policy;
- planning including the development and implementation of the School Charter.

Assistant principals report directly to the principal of the school and are delegated significant responsibilities for a discrete area of school functioning. In addition teaching duties may be allocated. The responsibilities of assistant principals may include the leadership and management of:

- school operations
- teaching and learning programs
- staffing, support and development programs
- a campus.

Study framework

To assist DE&T to effectively monitor Principal Class workload and its health and wellbeing implications, the study was designed to:

- undertake an analysis of the role of Principal Class positions
- develop a simple survey instrument to measure Principal workload
- establish baseline data to enable systematic data collection and longitudinal tracking of the impact of organisational change on Principal workload
- benchmark Principal working hours against comparable employment categories and against similar positions in other education systems
- identify organisational and societal factors impacting on Principal workload demands
- consider the implications of work on Principal health and wellbeing
- indicate areas of focus for organisational interventions designed to improve Principal health and wellbeing.

REPORTS

THE PRIVILEGE AND THE PRICE:

A Study of Principal Class Workload and its Impact on Health and Wellbeing

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Stress

Appendix 3

Detailed findings – Part A: Principals

Detailed findings – Part B: Assistant principals

Questionnaire

INTRODUCTION

In January 2003, the Department of Education & Training commissioned a study into the impact of workload on the health and wellbeing of principal class people in Victorian Government schools.

The first phase of this study was an examination of relevant literature, based on a worldwide search, and data from the Department. The second phase consisted of qualitative research that took the form of focus group discussions among principals and assistant principals. Those phases were the subject of two earlier reports (See Appendices 1 & 2). This report presents the findings from the third phase, a quantitative survey among a sample of principal class people across Victoria.

This report contains a:

- description of the methodology used;
- summary of main findings;
- a special section on stress, and
- detailed description and presentation of the data (See Appendix 3).

The questionnaire used is included in Appendix 3.

All research for this project was carried out by Denis Muller and Irving Saulwick. They also jointly wrote this report.

They are indebted to all the principals and assistant principals who gave of their time to participate. The response rate was 56.6%. This is a remarkably high figure, and is a tribute to the conscientiousness and generosity of principal class people as a whole. The average response rate for surveys of this kind is approximately 33%.

The researchers would also like to thank the Department for the opportunity to conduct this extremely interesting and important research. In particular they would like to thank those in the Department who contributed thoughtfully to the development of the questionnaire, notably Kay McVey, who has managed this project throughout.

DENIS MULLER

IRVING SAULWICK

November 2003

METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted among a sample of principal class people in Government schools across Victoria. For the purposes of the survey, the population of principal class people was segmented as follows:

Principals	Assistant Principals
Primary	Primary
Secondary (incl. P-12)	Secondary (incl. P-12)
Special	Special

A self-completion approach was taken in order to circumvent what was seen as an insuperable difficulty – that of being able to obtain the necessary access to principal class people during the working day for the purpose of conducting a fully controlled survey.

The inherent limitation of a self-completion survey is that it depends entirely on the unprompted participation of prospective respondents. Typically, self-completion surveys yield a participation rate of about one-third of the sample. However, because this study had been endorsed by the Department and by the associations representing principal class people, the researchers were of the opinion that a much higher participation rate could be expected in this case. It was therefore considered reasonable to risk using the self-completion approach, even though it was probable that there would be some loss of potential respondents.

It was decided to survey sufficient members in each principal class category to yield reliable results, allowing for sampling variance. Equal numbers of respondents were allowed for, where possible, to allow for equal sampling variance across the various population segments. On this basis, sample sizes for each category were as follows:

School Type	Principals	Assistant Principals
	No	No
Primary	200	200
Secondary	200	200
Special	124*	127*

**In these cases, because of the small numbers involved, all were given an opportunity to participate.*

To allow for probable wastage, the numbers for primary and secondary respondents were increased. In the event, the numbers of respondents in those categories approached to participate were as follows:

School Type	Principals	Assistant Principals
	No	No
Primary	244	245
Secondary	238	239

Adding the potential respondents from Specialist schools, it can be seen that the total number of potential respondents was 1217. In the event, 743 responses were received, a participation rate of 56.6%, bearing out the expectation that the participation rate would be considerably higher than in most self-completion surveys.

Because the respondents were self-selecting it is incorrect, strictly speaking, to apply a sampling variance to the results. Yet for practical purposes, where the findings deal with the full number of returns (689) a sampling variance of plus or minus 3.7% should be borne in mind.

Where the findings deal with the population segments only, the sampling variance is higher. The following are offered as indicative only, for the reasons already given:

Population	Number of returns	Sampling variance +/-
Total	689	3.7
Primary principals	166	7.6
Secondary principals	184	7.2
Special principals	67	12.4
Primary APs	127	8.7
Secondary APs	111	9.3
Special APs	34	17.5

To draw the sample, schools were listed by type (primary, secondary and special). P-12 schools were included as secondary schools. Each list was arrayed by departmental region and by size of enrolment. This yielded a sample that was self-weighting in terms of distribution by region and school size. Because participation in the survey was self-selecting within the sample, we cannot assert that the final sample accurately reflects these distributions. On the other hand, there is no reason to believe that schools from one region, or of one size, are more or less likely than others to participate. It follows

that the actual sample probably does closely represent the actual distribution of schools according to the variables of location and size.

The questionnaire used in the survey is included in Appendix 3. It was distributed online, and provision was made for respondents to complete it online, by e-mail or by conventional post. In the event, 85% completed it online. An analysis of those who used the other methods failed to reveal any pattern.

Potential respondents were e-mailed an invitation to participate. They were also e-mailed a letter of explanation by the researchers.

The invitations went out on Monday 15 September 2003, and responses were received until close of business on Friday 17 October 2003.

Respondents reached the questionnaire via a hotlink from the researchers' letter of explanation. Duplicate entries were removed from the database by tracking a unique ID number from each sending computer. If a survey was sent more than once from the same machine the duplicate entries were removed. While it was theoretically possible for a single respondent to send as many as three responses – one online, one by e-mail and one by post – we believed that the probability of this occurring was extremely low. Indeed there was no evidence at all of multiple responses being sent.

MAIN FINDINGS

In this section of the report we summarise the main findings of this quantitative phase and, where appropriate, make connections between these findings and those of Phases I and II of this study.

In our qualitative report, presented in June 2003, we made the following observations:

Principals and Assistant Principals almost universally love their job. They think of themselves as privileged to have such an important and rewarding vocation. It is rewarding because of what it can allow them to offer to young people and their families. It is important because it allows them to make a contribution to society by preparing young people to take their place as decent and educated citizens.

They see young people, individually and collectively, as the wealth of the future: to educate and nourish them gives their life meaning and brings them great satisfaction.

The findings are organised into the five themes in which the questionnaire was arranged. In turn, they reflected the issues that arose during the qualitative phase (Phase II).

A number of our respondents spoke reflectively about the type of person who is attracted to teaching, saying that this type of person is always destined to end up in "the caring professions" – nursing, social work, the Church, or teaching. They reflected that for such people commitment to the people in their care will usually take precedence over everything else – demands from outside the caring relationship, monetary reward and personal preferment.

We think there is a substantial point here. It seems to us that the Department faces a complex challenge arising from the fact that on the whole its principal class people probably do fit this type. Their values are primarily those of the carer, not those of the manager. Their first and strongest loyalties in their professional lives are to those in their care. An almost inevitable but unintended consequence of this is that at an emotional level they resent intrusions on their time from outside the carer relationship, even though at an intellectual level they accept such intrusions as necessary.

So it seems to us there is an inherent tension between the type of person who is generally available for appointment to principal class positions and the demands of the job. It may be summarised as carer-versus-manager tension. It is our observation that this tension is unresolved and unresolvable within many of the people to whom we spoke, and is the source of much of the pressure they feel.

This report validates and quantifies these observations.

In these results there is a very high degree of congruity between principals and assistant principals on virtually all questions.

Theme 1: The effect of the job on health and wellbeing

Under this theme we deal with how principal class people feel about their job, its effect on their home lives and health, and how they rate their job for stress.

Q1a: My job gives me great satisfaction

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Agree	90	91
Disagree	5	6
Neither	5	4
Mean	1.2	1.3

As we were told repeatedly during the qualitative phase of this research, principal class people derive great satisfaction from their job, especially because they believe it allows them to make a positive difference to the lives of young people and, through them, the future of our society.

Q1b: The best thing about my job is that I can make a difference to the lives of young people

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Agree	97	97
Disagree	*	1
Neither	2	2
Mean	1.5	1.5

For most, the worst aspect of their job is the amount of unnecessary paperwork, especially for principals. However, because many see themselves as perfectionists, they assiduously deal with the paperwork, along with other aspects of their job, although some seasoned hands told us in the qualitative discussions that they have become choosy about the paperwork they are now prepared to treat seriously.

Q1c: The worst thing about my job is the amount of unnecessary paperwork

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Agree	72	64
Disagree	14	18
Neither	14	18
Mean	0.9	0.7

Q1d: I'm really a perfectionist about my work

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Agree	63	73
Disagree	14	11
Neither	23	16
Mean	0.6	08

For a large proportion of principal class people, their job is a way of life. Many told us that it helped if their children were grown up or if they came from "teaching families", where this was understood and accepted. Some of those with partners who were not teachers told us that their partners were nonplussed by the level of commitment that seemed to be required.

Q1e: My job is really a way of life

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Agree	76	72
Disagree	15	17
Neither	9	11
Mean	0.9	0.7

Given that so many principal class people see the job as a way of life, it is not surprising that nearly all of them say they are very involved personally in their work. As the table below shows, nearly every principal class person surveyed said that this was the case.

Q1f: I am very involved personally in my work

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Agree	96	95
Disagree	1	2
Neither	2	3
Mean	14	14

It also follows that even though the job is seen as difficult and demanding – and that so many say they never seem to get on top of the work – a majority say they wouldn't do anything else.

Q1g: My job is difficult but I wouldn't do anything else

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Agree	57	59
Disagree	26	28
Neither	17	13
Mean	0.5	0.5

Q1h: There is so much work to do, I never seem to get on top of it

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Agree	75	75
Disagree	15	12
Neither	10	13
Mean	1.0	1.0

It should be noted, however, that the proportion who say they wouldn't do anything else is much smaller than the proportion who say it is a way of life and that they are very involved personally in their work. This suggests that their vocational attitude to their work might be transferable to other occupations if they offered them the kind of satisfaction that teaching has given them. A corollary of this is that unless some of the problems they report are addressed, there is a risk that will seek alternative forms of vocational fulfillment.

As some of these answers indicate, the impact of the job on the home lives of principal class people is in many cases considerable. A large majority says they come home from work too tired to do some of the things they would like to do.

Q2a: After work I come home too tired to do some of the things I'd like to do

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Frequently	80	78
Occasionally	18	21
Never	*	*
Mean	4.2	4.1

Smaller but still considerable majorities say they don't have time for hobbies or exercise, that their families dislike how pre-occupied they are with work, that it robs them of time they would like to spend with their families, and that it prevents them doing as many of the chores around the house as they feel they should. These findings are summarised in the next four tables.

Q2b: My job takes up so much of my spare time that I don't have time for personal interests such as hobbies, sport or keeping fit

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Frequently	61	59
Occasionally	38	40
Never	1	*
Mean	3.7	3.7

Q2c: My family/partner dislike how often I am preoccupied with my work while I am at home

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Frequently	55	47
Occasionally	44	53
Never	1	*
Mean	3.7	3.6

Q2d: May work takes up time that I'd like to spend with my family/partner

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Frequently	65	64
Occasionally	35	36
Never	*	*
Mean	3.9	3.8

Q2e: My job interferes with my responsibilities at home such as garden work, cooking, cleaning, repairs, shopping, paying the bills, or child care

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Frequently	68	62
Occasionally	32	38
Never	*	*
Mean	3.9	3.8

A very considerable minority also says that the pressure or work interferes with their intimate lives.

Q2f: The pressure of my job make it difficult to maintain a fully satisfying intimate relationship

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Frequently	40	34
Occasionally	54	57
Never	6	9
Mean	3.3	3.1

Nearly half the principals and more than one-third of the assistant principals in this survey reported that they had had a medical diagnosis making a connection between a health problem and their work.

Among principals the commonest problems were weight control and cardio-vascular disorders; among assistant principals the commonest problem was headaches. Further analysis shows that female respondents are more likely to suffer from weight control problems and headaches, while male respondents are more like to suffer from cardio-vascular disorders. The differences between genders on the other conditions are small and within sampling variance. These patterns may also reflect age differences, with APs tending to be younger than principals.

Q3: Has a medical diagnosis been made which connects any health problems you have, or may have had, to your work as a principal class person?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Yes	47	36
No	53	64

Q4: Which of the following categories best fits the nature of the problem/s?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	197	99
	%	%
Weight control	41	19
Cardio-vascular	40	26
Headaches	37	40
Digestive or dietary	27	28
Nervous	27	25

Principal class people generally appear to be unmindful of their health, many being inclined to come back to work before recovering properly from illness, not taking a proper lunch break, and not taking proper exercise, as the next four tables show. Getting a decent lunch break seems to be impossible for a very large proportion of principal class people. In the qualitative research many told us they simply couldn't turn people away when they showed up at the office, knowing they had been waiting to catch a moment. Others said they staffed the office during lunchtime to allow the office staff to get a break.

Q5a: I come to work when I really ought to stay home and recover properly from sickness

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Frequently	53	47
Occasionally	46	52
Never	1	1
Mean	3.7	3.5

Q5b: I don't get time to eat my lunch in peace

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Frequently	88	87
Occasionally	12	12
Never	*	1
Mean	4.5	4.4

Q5c: I find myself eating my lunch in mid-afternoon

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Frequently	77	71
Occasionally	23	27
Never	*	1
Mean	4.2	4.1

Q5d: My job prevents me from doing proper exercise

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Frequently	67	64
Occasionally	31	32
Never	2	4
Mean	3.9	3.8

In all these circumstances it is perhaps hardly surprising that so many principal class people find their job stressful. Nearly eight out of ten say their job is high-stress, and their mean rating on a scale of 0 to 10 is 7.3. The equivalent rating among comparable white-collar occupations in the Australian workforce as a whole is 6.1. This suggests that principal class people are feeling significantly more stressed than most comparable people in the workforce.

Q6: How would you rate your job most of the time?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Low stress (0 – 3)	5	1
Medium stress (4 – 6)	17	19
High stress (7 – 10)	78	80
Mean	7.3	7.2

Moreover, a majority of principal class people says the stress factor is getting worse.

Q7: Over the time you have been a principal class person, has your stress level generally been:

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Getting worse	58	46
Staying the same	33	45
Getting better	6	6
Don't know	3	3

Volume of work is regarded by principals and assistant principals alike as the biggest source of stress. However, as we heard in the qualitative research, dealing with non-performing staff and with student welfare issues are also widespread causes of stress.

Principal class people just seem to find it difficult to deal with non-performers, and we believe that this is a manifestation of the pastoral approach they bring to their work. They tend to lack, and even despise, managerial ruthlessness. So instead of warning or

sacking a non-performer – standard procedure in many organisations – they go to some trouble to try to turn the person’s performance around.

Dealing with student welfare issues is a burgeoning problem as family dysfunction makes ever-greater inroads into school life and the old sources of family assistance and professional guidance fall away. Again we heard much of this in the qualitative research, especially from principals in non-metropolitan schools, where the old institutions such as the Church were in decline, and many professionals had moved away, leaving the local principal as the best educated, the most respected and the most accessible source of advice and support.

For many this was a growing problem as welfare housing authorities took advantage of lower property prices in country areas by shifting their clients out of the city – and with them many of their socio-economic difficulties.

Principals, while willing to shoulder these essentially extra-mural responsibilities, found themselves ill-prepared to provide advice, and in some cases felt seriously insecure as a result of threats of violence or actual violence from those in whose lives they had been called upon to intervene.

The trend would appear to be in the direction of greater not lesser demands on principal class people from this quarter.

Q8: What is the single biggest source of stress in your work?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Volume of work	35	45
Dealing with non-performing staff	19	15
Dealing with student welfare	18	24
The way the Department operates	13	6
Trying to stretch resources	11	7

Theme 2: Principal Class people's approach to their job

In this theme we deal with how principal class people would like to see themselves, and what they perceive the reality to be. We also deal with their evaluation of the amount of time spent on certain tasks, why they spend what they say is too much time on some tasks, and how they assess themselves on such criteria as delegation and communication.

Overwhelmingly principal class people prefer to see themselves as mainly educational leaders. For the vast majority, however, the reality is that they see themselves as mainly managers. This is shown in the two tables below.

In our qualitative report, we hypothesised that one of the most important probable challenges to the health and wellbeing of principals was what we called "carer-manager tension". We believe that the data here bear out that hypothesis beyond doubt.

Q9: How do you prefer to think of yourself?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Mainly an educational leader	93	90
Mainly a manager	7	10

Q10: What is the reality?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Mainly an educational leader	22	20
Mainly a manager	78	80

There would appear to be dissonance built into the working lives of principal class people as a result of this gulf between what they would prefer to see themselves as being, and what in fact they do perceive themselves as being.

Further insights into the priorities of principal class people may be gained from the data in the following set of tables. They show that principals feel they do not spend enough time on staff management (although assistant principals feel they do spend

enough time on this). The same applies to student management. Perhaps this reflects the way these tasks are delegated in many schools. If so, the principals' responses indicate they delegate these tasks reluctantly.

Q11a: Time spent on Staff Management

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Too much	25	21
About right	41	52
Not enough	33	26

Q11b: Time spent on Student Management

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Too much	34	50
About right	55	39
Not enough	11	10

Q11c: Time spent on Financial Management

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Too much	20	11
About right	61	61
Not enough	18	25

While it seems most principal class people are satisfied that they spend the right amount of time on financial matters (see above), most feel they don't spend enough on planning, leadership and community liaison, but too much on accountability and complaints, as the five tables below show.

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Q11d: Time spent on Planning

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Too much	5	6
About right	35	35
Not enough	60	58

Q11e: Time spent on Accountability

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Too much	62	50
About right	28	39
Not enough	10	11

Q11f: Time spent on Complaints

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Too much	43	48
About right	53	49
Not enough	2	2
Don't know	2	1

Q11g: Time spent on Community Liaison

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Too much	8	3
About right	42	44
Not enough	50	52

Q11h: Time spent on Leadership in teaching and learning

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Too much	1	1
About right	20	21
Not enough	79	77

Q11i: Time spent on other activities

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Too much	14	10
About right	1	1
Not enough	6	3
Don't know	-	2
No other	79	83

A substantial minority says they spend too much time on facilities management, but about the same proportion say the time they spend on this is about right.

Q11j: Time spent on Facilities Management

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Too much	40	38
About right	41	40
Not enough	17	18
Don't know	2	4

In most of these areas, principals and assistant principals say there is simply so much to do they must spend the time on it, even though they think it is too much.

In some areas – notably staff and student management, financial management, accountability, complaints, community liaison and facilities management – between one-fifth and one-third of principal class people say there is no one with the right skills to whom they can delegate. The areas where principals are most likely to say they lack skills themselves are financial management and leadership; assistant principals are more likely to nominate financial management, planning, and facilities management, as the following nine tables show.

Q12a: Reason for spending too much time on Staff Management

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	106	57
	%	%
No one with right skills to delegate to	25	18
Don't have enough skills myself	2	12
Cannot be done in less time	74	67

Q12b: Reason for spending too much time on Student Management

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	141	137
	%	%
No one with right skills to delegate to	21	18
Don't have enough skills myself	1	-
Cannot be done in less time	76	80

Q12c: Reason for spending too much time on Financial Management

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	85	31
	%	%
No one with right skills to delegate to	34	13
Don't have enough skills myself	16	35
Cannot be done in less time	49	58

Q12d: Reason for spending too much time on Planning

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	22	16
	%	%
No one with right skills to delegate to	5	19
Don't have enough skills myself	9	13
Cannot be done in less time	64	63

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Q12e: Reason for spending too much time on Accountability

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	257	136
	%	%
No one with right skills to delegate to	19	11
Don't have enough skills myself	2	2
Cannot be done in less time	76	86

Q12f: Reason for spending too much time on Complaints

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	189	131
	%	%
No one with right skills to delegate to	22	16
Don't have enough skills myself	3	5
Cannot be done in less time	72	78

Q12g: Reason for spending too much time on Community Liaison

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	33	9
	%	%
No one with right skills to delegate to	27	11
Don't have enough skills myself	9	11
Cannot be done in less time	64	67

Q12h: Reason for spending too much time on Leadership in teaching and learning

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	6	3
	%	%
No one with right skills to delegate to	3	33
Don't have enough skills myself	17	-
Cannot be done in less time	50	33
Don't know	17	33

Q12j: Reason for spending too much time on Facilities Management

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	168	102
	%	%
No one with right skills to delegate to	30	25
Don't have enough skills myself	9	17
Cannot be done in less time	60	59

Nearly three-quarters of principals see themselves as being good at delegating responsibility, but assistant principals are far less likely to see themselves in that light. It may be because they are the people to whom principals delegate tasks initially and they see it as their job to take those on, rather than pass them further down the line.

Q14: How good would you say you were in delegating responsibility?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Good ⁷³	54	
Fair ²⁴	41	
Poor ²	5	
Mean	4.0	3.6

A very large proportion of principal class people regards themselves as good at prioritising tasks. Many of those to whom we spoke in the qualitative research – especially the assistant principals – clearly regarded this as one of the challenges of the job that they most relished.

Q15: How good would you say you were in prioritising tasks you have to do?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Good	83	86
Fair	15	13
Poor	1	1
Mean	4.2	4.2

And very large proportions of principal class people regard themselves as good at sharing information with the school council and with the staff.

Q16: How good would you say you are at sharing information with the school council?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Good	92	89
Fair	7	9
Poor	*	1
Mean	4.4	4.3

Q17: How good would you say you are at sharing information with school staff?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Good	95	94
Fair	5	6
Poor	-	-
Mean	4.5	4.5

Theme 3: The effect of the way the Department operates

In this theme we deal with attitudes to devolution, opinions about the adequacy of the global budget, the value and usefulness of various accountability documents, and the extent to which principal class people feel valued and supported by the various levels of management in the Department.

A clear majority of current principals prefer devolution, and of those who were principal class people more than 10 years ago – when devolution was introduced – 90% say they prefer devolution. Only a very small minority of current principals wants to return to the previous arrangements.

Assistant principals are not much keener on a return to the previous arrangements, but many more of them were not in principal class positions 10 years ago.

Q19: Thinking about the devolution of management functions at schools. Which of these statements comes closer to your view?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
I prefer devolution	60	32
I would prefer to return to pre-devolution arrangements	5	8
I was not a principal class person at the time	34	59

Very few principal class people say the global budget is generally adequate for running the school, although about half say it would be generally adequate were it not for the Department's requiring that schools pay for additional works not allowed for in the global budget.

Q20a: The global budget is generally adequate for running the school

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Agree	18	13
Neither	5	6
Disagree	76	79
Mean	-1.0	-1.0

Q20b: The global budget would be adequate except for the Department's requirement that we pay for additional works not allowed for in the global budget

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	
	%	272
Agree	51	51
Neither	9	15
Disagree	40	33
Mean	0.2	0.3

Just under half say it would be adequate if it allowed for one additional ancillary or welfare staff member, but nearly two-thirds say it is just generally inadequate.

Q20c: The global budget would be adequate if it allowed for one additional Person to take on student welfare or other ancillary work

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Agree	48	46
Neither	14	18
Disagree	37	35
Mean	0.2	0.2

Q20d: The global budget is generally inadequate for running the school

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Agree	64	71
Neither	9	8
Disagree	27	19
Mean	0.6	0.8

While these figures may appear to contain contradictions, we believe that respondents were answering each of them as separate questions. So when 51% say the budget would be adequate if there were one more welfare or ancillary person, and 64% say the budget is generally inadequate, what we believe some are doing is making a concession: while the budget is generally inadequate, if we had one more person we might be able to get by.

A substantial majority of principal class people regards the School Charter as being of considerable value as a planning document, whereas only a minority regards the Compact in the same light. Indeed there is a very widely held view that the two should be consolidated into a single document.

Q21a1: How do you rate the School Charter as a planning document?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Little value (0 – 3)	15	4
Moderate value (4 – 6)	25	25
Considerable value (7 – 10)	66	71
Mean	6.6	7.4

Q21a2: How do you rate the Compact as a planning document?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Little value (0 – 3)	41	24
Moderate value (4 – 6)	29	32
Considerable value (7 – 10)	28	37
Mean	4.3	5.4

The Annual Report is rated quite highly as containing a true indication of school performance. The School Level Report rates above the mid-point on the 11-point scale, but is not as highly valued for this purpose as is the Annual Report. APs give the School Level Report a higher rating than do principals.

Q21b1: How do you rate The Annual Report as a true indication of school performance?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Little value (0 – 3)	12	8
Moderate value (4 – 6)	31	33
Considerable value (7 – 10)	57	55
Mean	6.6	6.7

Q21b2: How do you rate the School Level Report as a true indication of school performance?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Little value (0 – 3)	13	7
Moderate value (4 – 6)	38	33
Considerable value (7 – 10)	49	59
Mean	6.1	6.7

Of the four accountability documents asked about, the School Level Report is rated most highly by principals as being necessary to allow the Department to keep track of what is going on in schools. Principals rate the Annual Report and School Charter as being on a par somewhere below the School Level Report, and they rate the Compact lowest in this respect.

Assistant Principals have a different view. Except in the case of the School Level Report, they give a higher rating to all the accountability documents than do the principals. And they give the highest rating to the School Charter.

Q21c1: How do you rate the Annual Report as necessary for the Department to keep track of what is going on in your school?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Little value (0 – 3)	22	10
Moderate value (4 – 6)	31	34
Considerable value (7 – 10)	46	54
Mean	5.8	6.5

Q21c2: How do you rate the School Charter as necessary for the Department to keep track of what is going on in your school?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Little value (0 – 3)	20	11
Moderate value (4 – 6)	32	28
Considerable value (7 – 10)	47	59
Mean	5.8	6.7

Q21c3: How do you rate the School Level Report as necessary for the Department to keep track of what is going on in your school?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Little value (0 – 3)	12	10
Moderate value (4 – 6)	28	32
Considerable value (7 – 10)	59	49
Mean	6.6	6.5

Q21c4: How do you rate the Compact as necessary for the Department to keep track of what is going on in your school?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Little value (0 – 3)	43	25
Moderate value (4 – 6)	29	32
Considerable value (7 – 10)	24	32
Mean	4.1	5.1

Q22: Should the Charter and the Compact be consolidated or left separate?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Consolidated into one document	84	73
Left as separate documents	9	16
Don't know	7	10

Principal class people generally say they getting greater support from their SEO than from their regional office, and greater support from their regional office than from the head office.

Q24a: How would you rate the support you get from your SEO?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Poor support (0 – 3)	16	17
Moderate support (4 – 6)	23	22
Strong support (7 – 10)	61	55
Mean	6.7	6.4

Q24b: How would you rate the support you get from your Regional Office?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Poor support (0 – 3)	19	15
Moderate support (4 – 6)	25	33
Strong support (7 – 10)	55	49
Mean	6.2	6.1

Q24c: How would you rate the support you get from your Head Office?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Poor support (0 – 3)	52	38
Moderate support (4 – 6)	29	30
Strong support (7 – 10)	17	16
Don't know	2	16
Mean	3.7	4.0

The same pattern is evident when they are asked how valued they feel by these three layers of management. They generally feel more highly valued by their SEO than by their regional office, and more highly by their regional office than by the head office. Indeed there appears to be considerable alienation from head office.

Q25a: How valued would you say you were by your SEO?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Valued Poorly (0 – 3)	13	13
Valued Moderate (4 – 6)	18	20
Valued Strongly (7 – 10)	61	46
Don't know	8	21
Mean	6.8	6.4

Q25b: How valued would you say you were by your Regional Office?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Valued Poorly (0 – 3)	19	15
Valued Moderate (4 – 6)	29	32
Valued Strongly (7 – 10)	43	29
Don't know	9	23
Mean	5.9	5.5

Q25c: How valued would you say you were by your Head Office?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Valued Poorly (0 – 3)	56	38
Valued Moderate (4 – 6)	15	21
Valued Strongly (7 – 10)	8	4
Don't know	21	38
Mean	2.6	3.0

Theme 4: Hours, terms and conditions

In this theme we deal with the hours, evening work, weekend work and holiday work patterns of principal class people.

It can readily be seen that they work nearly 60 hours a week, on average, more than one evening per week, and 60% usually or always work weekends.

Eighty-eight per cent work during the non-summer holidays and 85% during the summer holidays.

It would seem to us that this is a reflection of three things: their commitment to the job, the amount of work and the way they go about organising their working lives.

Q27: How many hours do you normally work each week during term, including evenings and weekends?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Mean	59.6	57.7

Q28: In a normal working week during term, on average how many evenings, if any, do you work?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Mean	1.3	1.3

Q29: How often, if at all, do you work on a weekend?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Always	27	27
Usually	33	38
Sometimes	33	30
Rarely	7	5
Never	*	*

Q30: How often, if at all, do you work during the term holidays (other than summer)

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Always	53	52
Usually	35	33
Sometimes	10	11
Rarely	2	3
Never	-	-

Q31: How often, if at all, do you work during the summer holidays?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Always	57	54
Usually	28	26
Sometimes	12	14
Rarely	3	5
Never	*	1

No principal class person says he or she is overpaid, and very few think they are adequately paid. On average principals believe they are about \$26,000 underpaid. Assistant principals think they are about \$15,000 underpaid.

Q32: Would you say your salary was too low, about right, or too high?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Too Low (0 – 3)	86	85
About right (4 - 6)	11	13
Too high (7 – 10)	-	-
Don't know	3	2

Q33: What is your annual salary

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Mean \$K	92.511	78.961

Q34: What do you think your salary should be?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Mean \$K	118.689	94.034

A substantial majority of principal class people does not regard the nexus between salaries and enrolments as reasonable. In the qualitative phase of this study, in fact, we found a considerable amount of resentment over this.

Also, a substantial majority of principal class people would prefer to hold a tenured rather than a contractual position.

Q35: Is using the number of enrolments at your school a reasonable basis to calculate your salary?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Yes	31	29
No	65	65
Don't know	4	6

Q36: Would you prefer contract or tenure?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Contract	28	18
Tenure	63	69
Don't know	9	13

Nearly half the principals surveyed could not recall having taken sick leave in the past 12 months. The incidence of sick leave was higher among assistant principals.

Q37: In the past 12 months have you taken sick leave?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base 417	272	
%	%	
No sick leave	48	33
Up to five days	41	53
More than five days	11	14

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Q38: During the past 12 months have you been on WorkCover?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Yes	3	4
No	97	96

Three per cent of principals and four per cent of assistant principals in this sample reported that they made WorkCover claims in the preceding 12 months.

Q39: In the past 12 months have you taken long service leave?

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Yes	27	21
No	73	79

Q40: In the past 12 months have you taken any special leave

	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
	%	%
Yes	9	11
No	91	89

STRESS

In a series of on-going quarterly surveys of the Australian workforce, Saulwick and Muller have asked a question about stress using the same scale as was used in this study. The results of the October 2003 quarterly survey, which were typical of the results obtained over the past two years, when compared with the results of this survey, are illuminating.

STRESS LEVELS

Stress levels	Workforce survey*	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	1000	417	272
	%	%	%
0 – 3	19	5	1
4 – 6	36	17	19
7 – 10	44	78	80
MEAN	5.7	7.3	7.2

These are the figures for the full sample of 1000 across the entire Australian workforce. Middle and upper white-collar employees and full time employees – who most closely approximate principal class people, all recorded a mean stress level of 6.1.

By any measure these are all high figures. Forty-four per cent of the Australian workforce report high stress levels at work – but this may be seen as modest when compared with the nearly eight out of ten principal class people who offer a similar self-assessment.

In the following paragraphs we look at the implications of these high stress levels for Principals and Assistant Principals.

What the figures show

In the responses to many of the questions which measure comfort or satisfaction at work there is a direct negative correlation between the respondent's stress level and the answer: that is, people under stress tend to be less comfortable or satisfied with their working environment.

For example:

- their job gives them less satisfaction;
- they are not as optimistic about their ability to positively influence young people's lives;

- they feel overburdened with the amount of work they are faced with;
- their work tends, more than others, to affect their home lives;
- they are more likely to have had a medical diagnosis which connects their medical condition with their work;
- they feel more burdened with some of the management tasks than do others;
- they work longer hours and more often on weekends than do others;
- they feel less appreciated by Head Office than do others, and
- they are more dissatisfied with their current salary than are others.

These comments apply, in general, to both Principals and Assistant Principals, although a careful scrutiny of the figures below will show some differences.

Analysis of similarities and differences between Principals and Assistant Principals on this matter

In this segment, we present an analysis of responses from high-stress respondents according to whether they were Principals or Assistant Principals. First, the introductory table shows the different incidences of high-stress responses among these two classifications:

HIGH-STRESS RESPONSES BY CLASSIFICATION

Stress levels	Principals	Assistant Principals
Base	417	272
%	%	
7-8 (High)	61	69
9-10 (Very high)	17	11

It can be seen that APs are more likely to report high levels of stress, and Principals are more likely to report very high levels.

In the next set of tables we summarise the responses of Principals and APs reporting differential levels of stress to questions concerning job satisfaction, impact on life, health, sources of stress, time management, devolution, sense of support, hours, remuneration, sick leave, and school location.

It can be seen that the highly stressed are:

- less likely to give a high rating on every positive question, and
- more likely to give a high rating on every negative question.

They are also more likely to report the existence of a diagnosed work-related medical condition, to take more sick leave, to feel under-paid to work long hours, and to say they spend too much time on many tasks.

PRINCIPALS

Job satisfaction questions				
Response	Stress levels			
	Low	Medium	High	Very high
Base	(19)	(71)	(253)	(72)
Mean scores				
My job gives me great satisfaction	1.7	1.5	1.2	1.0
The best thing about my job is that I can make a difference to the lives of young people	1.8	1.6	1.5	1.4
I'm really a perfectionist about my job	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.9
My job is really a way of life	0.6	0.7	0.9	1.1
There is so much work to do, I never seem to get on top of it.	0.0	0.5	1.0	1.5
Impact-on-life questions				
After work I come home too tired to do some of the things I'd like to do	3.6	3.8	4.3	4.7
My job takes up so much of my spare time that I don't have time for personal interests such as hobbies, sport or keeping fit	3.1	3.3	3.7	4.3
My family/partner dislike how often I am preoccupied with my work while I am at home	3.2	3.2	3.7	4.2
My work takes up time that I'd like to spend with my family/partner	3.2	3.5	3.9	4.4
My job interferes with my responsibilities at home	3.3	3.5	3.9	4.4
The pressure of my job make it difficult to maintain a fully satisfying intimate relationship	2.2	2.7	3.4	3.8

Health questions

YES when asked whether a medical diagnosis been made which connects any health problems to your work as a principal class person	32%	39%	44%	69%
Health problem – Weight control	50%	36%	38%	50%
Health problem – Cardio-vascular	17%	29%	40%	48%
Health problem – Headaches	33%	25%	38%	40%
I come to work when I really ought to stay home and recover properly from sickness	3.2	3.3	3.7	4.1
My job prevents me doing proper exercise	3.4	3.6	3.9	4.5
GETTING WORSE when asked about trends in personal stress levels	16%	32%	60%	85%
SINGLE BIGGEST SOURCE OF STRESS IN WORK				
The volume of work	21%	30%	38%	36%
Dealing with student welfare issues	11%	17%	17%	25%

Time-management questions

TOO MUCH time spent on Staff Management	26%	21%	23%	36%
TOO MUCH time spent on Student Management	26%	25%	34%	44%
TOO MUCH time spent on Financial Management	16%	14%	20%	31%
TOO MUCH time spent on Facilities Management	42%	34%	38%	54%
TOO MUCH time spent on Complaints	21%	31%	44%	57%

Attitude to devolution

Prefer devolution	84%	62%	59%	56%
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Sense-of-support questions

Rating of support from Head Office	3.6	4.2	3.8	3.0
Rating of valued by Head Office	2.9	2.7	2.7	1.9

Hours questions

How many hours do you normally work each week during the term, including evenings and weekends

58.8 57.0 59.6 62.4

ALWAYS work on a weekend

21% 18% 26% 42%

Remuneration questions

FAR TOO LOW salary

63% 23% 33% 63%

What is your annual salary?

\$K93.7 \$K92.4 \$K92.6 \$K92.0

What do you think your salary should be

\$K124.4 \$K115.5 \$K116.6 \$K127.6

Sick-leave question

More than five days' sick leave in last twelve months

5% 7% 11% 18%

Location question

A provincial city

5% 10% 12% 17%

ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

Job satisfaction questions				
Response	Stress levels			
	Low	Medium	High	Very high
Base	(52)	(189)	(29)	
My job gives me great satisfaction	1.6	1.2	1.0	
The best thing about my job is that I can make a difference to the lives of young people	1.5	1.5	1.6	
The worst thing about my job is the amount of unnecessary paperwork	0.6	0.7	1.3	
I'm really a perfectionist about my job	0.7	0.7	1.2	
My job is really a way of life	0.7	0.7	1.1	
There is so much work to do, I never seem to get on top of it.	0.6	1.0	1.7	

Impact-on-life questions

After work I come home too tired to do some of the things I'd like to do	3.7	4.2	4.7	
My job takes up so much of my spare time that I don't have time for personal interests such as hobbies, sport or keeping fit	3.2	3.8	4.0	
My family/partner dislike how often I am preoccupied with my work while I am at home	3.1	3.6	4.1	
My work takes up time that I'd like to spend with my family/partner	3.3	3.9	4.4	
My job interferes with my responsibilities at home	3.4	3.9	4.4	
The pressure of my job make it difficult to maintain a fully satisfying intimate relationship	2.5	3.1	3.8	

Health questions

YES when asked whether a medical diagnosis been made which connects any health problems to your work as a principal class person	23%	38%	50%
Health problem - Headaches	33%	40%	50%
Health problem - Nervous disorder	25%	22%	43%
Health problem - Weight control	8%	19%	29%
I come to work when I really ought to stay home and recover properly from sickness	3.0	3.6	3.9
My job prevents me doing proper exercise	3.4	3.9	4.3
GETTING WORSE when asked about trends in personal stress levels	23%	49%	75%
SINGLE BIGGEST SOURCE OF STRESS IN WORK			
The volume of work	38%	45%	61%
Dealing with student welfare issues	13%	28%	21%

Time-management questions

TOO MUCH time spent on Staff Management	21%	20%	25%
TOO MUCH time spent on Student Management	42%	52%	61%
TOO MUCH time spent on Financial Management	8%	13%	11%
TOO MUCH time spent on Facilities Management	40%	36%	46%
TOO MUCH time spent on Complaints	40%	48%	64%

Attitude to devolution

Prefer pre-devolution arrangements	6%	7%	21%
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Sense-of-support questions

Rating of support from Head Office	4.5	4.0	3.3
Rating of valued by Head Office	2.9	3.1	1.8

Hours questions

How many hours do you normally work each week during the term, including evenings and weekends

56.5 57.8 59.4

ALWAYS work on a weekend

15% 31% 21%

Remuneration questions

FAR TOO LOW salary

19% 26% 39%

What is your annual salary?

\$K78.9 \$K79.1 \$K77.9

What do you think your salary should be

\$K92.2 \$K93.9 \$K97.5

Sick-leave question

More than five days' sick leave in last twelve months

12% 13% 21%

School location question

Metropolitan Melbourne

60% 59% 71%

The two respondents who reported 'Low' stress have been omitted from the APs table.

The mean scores are drawn from a number of scales, some with a range of 0 to 10 with a mid point of 5 and others with a range or 1 to 5 with a mid point of 3. Further, in some of the five point scales a high mean is a positive result and in others a low figure is positive. Where means are not appropriate, a percentage response has been shown. Salary means are shown in \$K.

Implications

There are indications in the literature that high stress has serious implications, not only for the health of those afflicted, but also for their ability to carry out their tasks in an optimum way over a long period. These results suggest that the Department and Principal Class people together have a significant problem of stress that should be addressed.

We stated in our first report that there were two major themes in the literature about the impact of workload on the health and wellbeing of principals, and stress was one of them. The findings from this study would indicate that it is also a major factor affecting principal class people in Victorian government schools.

We also said in our first report:

The literature revealed that stress was a multi-faceted issue with a range of causal factors. These included balance between authority and responsibility, degree and type of accountability, sense of professional autonomy, sense of being valued, volume of work, multifarious nature of work, and hours of work.

Many, though not all, of those stressors appear to be present in the working lives of principal class people in Victorian government schools. Certainly the balance between authority and responsibility, the degree and type of accountability, the sense of being valued, the volume of work, and the hours of work are all present.

However, from this study we are able to say that the "multifarious nature of work" does not appear to be a negative factor among principal class people in Victoria. On the contrary, they regard this as one of the attractions of the job. It brings variety to their working lives, as well as offering new and unexpected challenges each day. Assistant Principals in particular like this aspect of their work.

Nor did we hear that people lacked professional autonomy.

We believe, however, that we are able to add one important dimension – what we have called carer-manager tension. This is discussed fully in the main findings of our qualitative report. It posits an inherent tension between the pastoral orientation of people who are attracted to teaching in the first place, and the managerialist requirements of much principal class work.