INDEPENDENT PRIMARY SCHOOL HEADS OF AUSTRALIA LTD

Volume 30 December 2025

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CONTENTS



03 **A Word from the IPSHA National President** - *Martin Lubrano*

06 **Reflections on my IPSHA Experience & Life Beyond Schools** - *Sally Ruston*

09 **National Secretary Report** - *Rebecca Lennon*

11 **National Treasurer Report** - *Chris Wyatt*

14 **Vale Honorary Life Member** - *Rev. John Campbell*

15 **2025 IPSHA Service Awards**

21 **2025 State President Reports**

39 **2025 Members Professional Development Report** - *Angela Drysdale*

FEATURE ARTICLES

35

DR HAYLEY WATSON
OPEN PARACHUTE

47 **APPA POSITION PAPERS**

APPA
Australian Primary Principals Association

57

SAVE THE DATES: 2026 BRANCH MEETINGS & NATIONAL CONFERENCES

A Word from the IPSHA National President



Martin Lubrano

As the year draws to a close, it is a fitting time to reflect on the progress, challenges and opportunities that have shaped our journey in primary education this year. 2025 has been marked by meaningful advocacy, international collaboration and a renewed commitment to connection and growth within our IPSHA community.

In September, I had the privilege of representing IPSHA at the ACARA meeting alongside Peak Principal Associations from across all sectors of education. With both the CEOs of ACARA and AITSL in attendance, the dialogue centred on the newly announced Teaching and Learning Commission. This initiative aims to unify AITSL, AERO, ESA, and ACARA under a single umbrella to streamline reforms and enhance coordination. While the potential to eliminate siloed approaches was welcomed, concerns were raised about the risk of creating an unwieldy bureaucracy that may divert resources without tangible benefits for students and educators.

> **"2025 has been marked by meaningful advocacy, international collaboration and a renewed commitment to connection and growth within our IPSHA community."**

ACARA's Executive Director of Curriculum, Kathy Tully, provided an update on the Australian Curriculum. Schools are seeking more than just curriculum and testing frameworks—they desire supportive resources that empower teachers. A proposal to develop additional mathematics materials, particularly for Foundation to Year 2, received positive feedback.

However, it was emphasised that such resources must remain optional to preserve teacher autonomy and confidence. The conversation also highlighted the need for improved early numeracy education and cautioned against overly prescriptive lesson plans that could undermine teacher engagement.

ACARA's Manager of Psychometrics, Rassoul Sadeghi, shared compelling research on student disengagement in NAPLAN numeracy assessments. Using 'rapid response' times as an indicator, the study revealed that while Year 3 and 5 students generally remained engaged, disengagement increased significantly in Year 9 boys. The findings underscore the importance of fostering student engagement to enhance performance.

During the September break, I attended the **International Confederation of Principals Council** Meeting in Delhi, India, alongside representatives from 23 countries. The event featured inspiring keynote presentations and collaborative discussions. One standout speaker





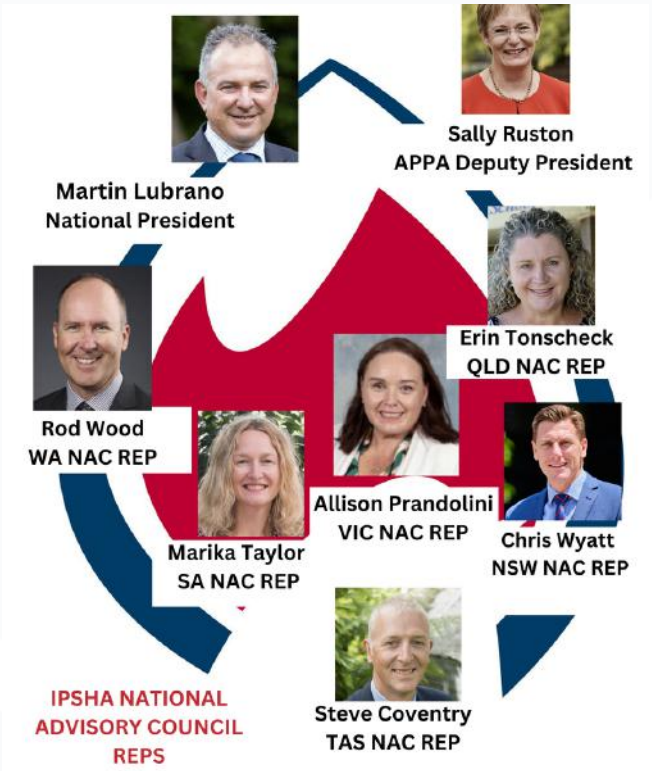
INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF PRINCIPALS COUNCIL MEETING - *DELHI INDIA*

was Mr Harpal Singh of the Salwan Education Trust, who eloquently described education as humanity's greatest weapon for change. He emphasised the need for equity, humility and character development, urging educators to cultivate not only intelligent minds but also wise hearts.

Common global challenges emerged throughout the discussions, including the need to bolster resilience, creativity and meaningful use of technology. Succession planning and leadership sustainability were also key concerns, with alarming statistics such as 54% of Irish principals teaching a 0.8FTE load. The UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report reinforced the importance of empowering and investing in school leaders to foster collaborative and effective school cultures.

IPSHA's involvement at the **APPA National Advisory Council** is strong and I thank our colleagues who represent each state at the termly meetings; Erin Tonscheck (Queensland), Chris Wyatt (NSW), Allison Prandolini/Jo Barker (Victoria), Steve Coventry (Tasmania), Marika Taylor (South Australia) and Rod Wood (Western Australia). The Term 4 meeting included a gathering in Parliament House with politicians who have aligned with the Primary School Friends of Parliament group. Jason Claire attended alongside the co-chairs of the group, Shadow Minister for Education, Julian Leeser and Victorian MP and ALP Whip, Joanne Ryan. All three have a passion for education, Joanne Ryan a former school principal from Victoria.

The **National Advisory Council** continue to develop papers to support the position of Primary Principals on key topics that affect our day to day work, the most recent papers under development have been on red tape for leaders and resilience in the primary years. There has been a focus on our response to the Anti Bullying Rapid Review report with a call to the Government and Federal Education department to ensure acknowledgement of the good work already being undertaken in primary schools in the development of respectful relationships and resilience building as well as appropriate resourcing of programs to build skills in children that look at respect, inclusiveness and kindness.





APPA Board: *Allison Prandolini, Sally Ruston & Martin Lubrano representing IPSHA.*

Connection remains a cornerstone of IPSHA's strength. Our collegiality and shared learning experiences make us better leaders and educators. I urge members to prioritise Branch Meetings, reach out to colleagues, and engage in IPSHA and APPA conferences to nurture growth and support.

Looking ahead, I invite all members to mark their calendars for the **IPSHA Biennial Conference** in Fremantle, Western Australia, from **4–6 June 2026**. The WA team is crafting a dynamic program that promises learning, connection and enjoyment.

APPA will host a Primary Education Summit in Canberra at Parliament House in May and we will be encouraging members to attend this event. In addition, the APPA conference will be held in Canberra at the end of August.

The next ICP Conference will be hosted by NZPF in Auckland in September 2026 and IPSHA members are encouraged to attend if they are able.

I would like to publicly acknowledge the incredible work of Paul Clegg, IPSHA Executive Officer throughout 2025, along with the othermembers of the National Executive, who have worked to ensure that IPSHA business continues in a productive and effective manner serving the needs of the Association and its Members. I also thank our administrative assistants across the country who are assisting our branches so effectively. IPSHA is well served by an incredible team.

As we approach the festive season, I extend my deepest gratitude to all IPSHA colleagues for your unwavering dedication to supporting primary students and educators throughout the year. Your passion and commitment continue to inspire and uplift our community. May you enjoy a relaxing and joyous Christmas and holiday break, filled with peace, laughter and well-deserved rest.

Warm regards,

Martin Lubrano
National President

2024 - 2026 IPSHA Board



Martin Lubrano
National President



Rebecca Lennon
National Secretary



Chris Wyatt
National Treasurer



Allison Prandolini
National President Elect



Wayne Revitt
Immediate Past President



Paul Clegg
National Executive Officer



Sue Floro
NSW State Director



Carolyn Thistlethwaite
QLD State Director



Rowan van-Raay
VIC State Director



Mark Febey
TAS State Director



Simon McKenzie
SA State Director



Anthony Moses
WA State Director



Simone Larwood
National Finance Officer

State Branch Admin/Event Assistants



Julie Sampson
NSW Events & Administration Officer



Jemma Robbins
QLD Administration Officer



Catherine Wilkinson
VIC Administration Officer



Nicole Parsons
WA Administration Officer

furnware Class Solver The School Photographer openparachute

Reflections on my IPSHA Experience & Life Beyond Schools



Sally Ruston AM Honorary Life Member

Leading with Purpose: A Career Shaped by Young Learners and Collegial Collaboration


Sally Ruston

I've always believed in the transformative power of learning – not just for intellectual growth, but for shaping character, unlocking potential, and forging pathways to brighter futures. From an early age, I knew education was my vocation. I wanted to make a meaningful difference in the lives of children.

That said, I gradually came to understand that education isn't the prerogative of the young. Enabling growth at every stage of life is equally purposeful and empowering. I also learned that leadership, while deeply rewarding, can be isolating without a professional community. The principle that "together we are better" became foundational to my practice.

These underpinnings drew me naturally to the professional community of colleagues that is the Independent Primary School Heads of Australia (IPSHA) in 2000 as I commenced my novice headship at Abbotsleigh Junior School. Young and inexperienced, I found myself in a turbulent school environment, in great need of support and guidance. I vividly recall my first JSHAA meeting at The King's School, arriving shell-shocked after a swimming carnival that ended with the abrupt dismissal of the PE teacher by the Headmistress. The empathy and encouragement I received from colleagues was the balm I hadn't known I needed.

While I've always felt a responsibility to give back, I now recognise that my contributions to IPSHA have been far outweighed by the generosity, mentorship, and collegiality I've enjoyed. These relationships and friendships have sustained me, beyond my formal leadership roles and to this day.

My first foray into serving IPSHA was when the then president – Steven Bowers asked me to take on the role of NSW State Branch Treasurer in 2004. While accounting wasn't my forte, I quickly learned the essentials of budgeting, cash flow and ensuring financial viability. Skills I have gratefully continued to use throughout my career. My stint as IPSHA State President was a challenging and greatly rewarding time as we managed to land a brilliant National IPSHA Conference in Sydney in 2014, resplendent with Sir Ken Robinson coming in via video link to speak to the delegates. We managed to pull off this bold and costly venture that drew record attendance and turned a profit.

Serving as Federal President from 2012-2014 was a whirlwind of meetings, advocacy and commitment to growing the national voice of independent primary schooling. I was humbled when approached to take on this role by two current Honorary Federal Life Members and being surprised that they saw in me leadership capacity and readiness that I hadn't recognised in myself. A highlight was representing Australian independent primary schools abroad. This included attending the Elementary School Heads Association conference in the US, where serendipitously I first encountered Brené Brown —then a little-known speaker—whose keynote

I've always believed in the transformative power of learning – not just for intellectual growth, but for shaping character, unlocking potential, and forging pathways to brighter futures. From an early age, I knew education was my vocation.

and signed copy of Daring Greatly left a lasting impression.

IPSHA has also been my gateway to APPA where I now serve as Deputy President and am able to again advocate for what matters in primary education on the national stage, with particular focus on championing the phenomenal job primary leaders are doing in State, Catholic and Independent Schools.

A career highlight was receiving an AM for *'significant service to primary education, and to professional associations'*. While personally gratifying, what mattered most was seeing primary education publicly honoured. This is something too rarely afforded to my many colleagues who deliver stellar work daily under increasingly complex and demanding circumstances in primary schools around Australia.

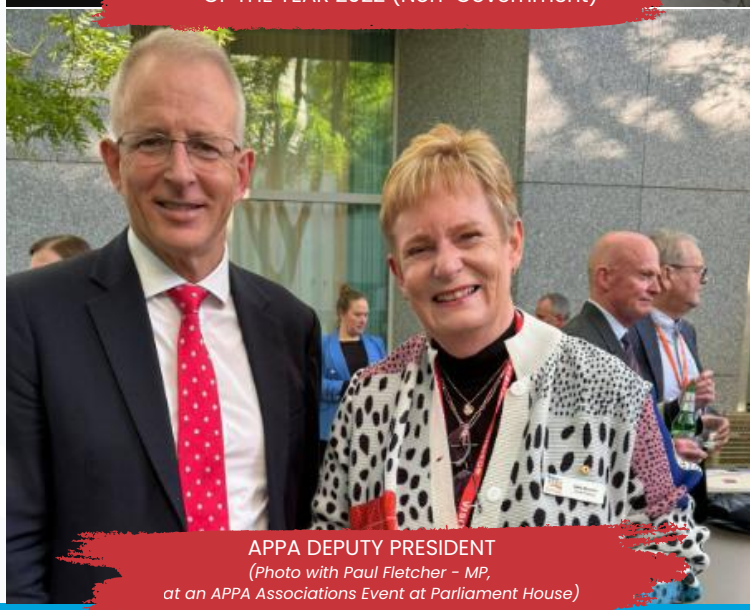
Now that I have finally walked out the school gates after a lifetime of such purposeful, rewarding work of educating minds to enable remarkable outcomes, I am delighting in the freedom of discretionary time and opportunity to do things of my choosing. I am back at university studying psychology at UTS, contributing to boards, applying my internationally accredited executive coaching skills and conducting school reviews to support peers in practical ways. My wonderfully patient husband is thrilled we can finally travel without the constraints of school holidays and I am learning to hack less in golf. I am, indeed, very fortunate.



AWARDED 'MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA (AM) - 2022'



AWARDED PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR 2022 (Non-Government)



APPA DEPUTY PRESIDENT
(Photo with Paul Fletcher - MP, at an APPA Associations Event at Parliament House)

National Secretary

IPSHA Governance, Growth & Achievements

IPSHA's Progress, Compliance and Member Engagement in 2025



Rebecca Lennon

As **National Secretary**, I am pleased to present this report to IPSHA members and stakeholders, reflecting our ongoing commitment to safeguarding the organisation and upholding the highest standards of legal and ethical compliance. This year has seen significant progress as we continue to strengthen our governance frameworks and ensure IPSHA remains a trusted and resilient association.

Governance and Compliance

Following the approval of the revised Constitution last year, considerable effort has gone into aligning our Bylaw structure to reflect our legal practice and requirements. This alignment ensures clarity, transparency, and consistency across all areas of IPSHA's operations. Regular legal and ethical reviews have been embedded into our processes to maintain compliance and communicate clarity in the interests of our members.

State Branch Practices

A master State Branch By-law has been developed to provide national consistency while respecting the unique practices of each state. Collaboration between branches has been instrumental in achieving this balance, ensuring both alignment and the preservation of valued local approaches.

Membership and Honours

The Membership Bylaw has undergone a comprehensive review to reflect current needs and expectations. Updates to the Honours and Award ByLaw have also been implemented, ensuring our recognition programs remain relevant and meaningful. Work has commenced on the Sub Committee ByLaw, setting a strong foundation for effective committee operations.

Forthcoming Reviews

In addition to the progress above, upcoming reviews of the Code of Conduct and Board Charter are scheduled to further reinforce IPSHA's commitment to integrity and accountability. These initiatives will continue to strengthen our governance and support the organisation's long-term success.

> **"This year has seen significant progress as we continue to strengthen our governance frameworks and ensure IPSHA remains a trusted and resilient association."**





STAFF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING DAY 2025 - *BRISBANE*

Online Systems and Operations

Significant advancements have been made in our online systems, enhancing efficiency and member engagement. The rollout of the new Member Management System has streamlined administrative processes and improved access for members. Our Event Management System continues to operate efficiently, supporting the delivery of high-quality events and professional development opportunities.



Staff Development

This year's staff professional learning day focused on collaboration and continuous improvement. There has been a strong emphasis on staff wellbeing, recognising that the dedication and enthusiasm of our team are central to IPSHA's achievements.

> **"The rollout of the new Member Management System has streamlined administrative processes and improved access for members. Our Event Management System continiues to operate efficiently, supporting the delivery of high-quality events and professional development opportunities."**

Acknowledgements

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the IPSHA team for their commitment and hard work throughout the year. Special thanks go to our Executive Officer, Paul Clegg, whose leadership and support have been invaluable. Together, we continue to advance the mission of IPSHA and uphold the values that define our professional network community.

National Treasurer



IPSHA Finance, Risk, and Innovation

2025: Strengthening systems, building confidence, and investing in the future

Chris Wyatt

FRAC Committee

2025 has been a year of consolidation. Following the significant work of consolidating IPSHA banking with ANZ in 2024, further work is being done in the background to ensure our accounts and associated processes are robust, efficient and built for purpose.

Transition from MYOB to Xero

Plans are currently underway to transition IPSHA accounts from MYOB to Xero. The decision to change platforms has been made following considerable research and advice from our auditors.

The change to Xero should provide a more flexible and appropriate system that will help to further integrate systems such as the new Member Management System (MMS). The National Board is currently speaking with a sub-contractor to support this transition process. This will also involve collaboration and partnership with Argon who have supported the ongoing development of the IPSHA website and the MMS.

This process should make financial management and day-to-day practices such as invoicing far more streamlined as well as providing greater transparency for our National Finance Officer, State Branch Treasurers and the National Board.

National Term Deposit

Earlier in the year, the National Board in consultation with State Presidents and Treasurers, made the decision to consolidate funds from existing State and National term deposits into one National term deposit. This is a shift from existing practice but the decision was made to benefit all IPSHA members. Once established (which should be around April 2026), the interest accrued from the consolidated term deposit will be channelled towards future Biennial Conferences. This is a strategic move to ensure planning committees receive financial support to book high calibre speakers and get planning underway prior to securing sponsors. The benefit of this consolidated approach will be experienced by all members given the Biennial Conference remains a centrepiece of IPSHA's offering to members and also the host Branch receives any profit made from the conference.

> **"The decision to consolidate funds from existing State and National term deposits into one National term deposit was made to benefit all IPSHA members"**

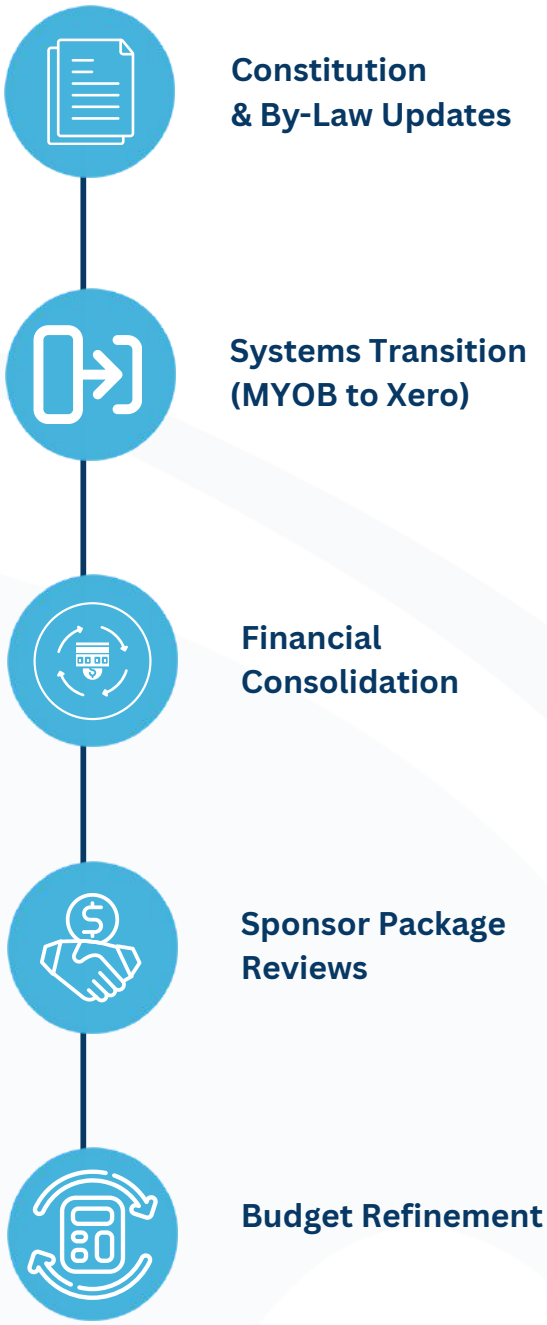
Sponsorship

IPSHA sponsorship at both National and State level is important for the provision of high-quality professional learning and activities that promote collegiality. Following a robust discussion at the Term 4 Board Meeting, a new Sponsorship Prospectus is being developed to highlight the different sponsorship packages and the associated benefits.

Budgeting process and financial position

Over the last couple of years, the annual budgeting process has been refined to provide greater consistency across the association. From a National Board perspective, this process has confirmed the confidence we have in the financial management of each Branch. My sincere thanks to the State Treasurers for their oversight of this process and for the ongoing management of State-based finances. Positively, IPSHA is in an incredibly strong position. Whilst it is never our intent to make a profit, a strong financial position provides security and flexibility to enhance the opportunities made available to members and their students.

Whilst reflecting on the strong financial position that IPSHA finds itself in, it is appropriate to thank Simone Larwood, IPSHA Finance Assistant for her oversight and management of our finances and support of the State Treasurers. I also want to acknowledge the significant leadership that Paul Clegg, IPSHA Executive Officer, has shown in the strategic initiatives described above.



> **“Positively, IPSHA is in an incredibly strong position. Whilst it is never our intent to make a profit, a strong financial position provides security and flexibility to enhance the opportunities made available to members and their students.”**



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Vale Honorary Life Member

IPSHA acknowledges with great sadness the passing of Rev. John Campbell, whose dedicated service and commitment enriched our association.

Rev. John Campbell (NSW)

IPSHA is deeply saddened by the passing of Rev. John Campbell, the founding Head of Junior School, at St Paul's Grammar School in New South Wales.

A passionate educator, Rev. Campbell is fondly remembered for his love of teaching and recitation, a tradition that continues to this day at St Paul's Grammar School who named their Public Speaking Competition some years ago in his honour. John continued to adjudicate up until 2023.

Previously, Rev Campbell was Head of Junior School at Kinross Wolaroi School and Launceston Church Grammar.

John was also JSHAA Tasmanian Branch President in 1984-1987



Rev. John Campbell

2025 IPSHA Service Awards



2025 IPSHA Service Awards

Honorary Federal Life Members

IPSHA's highest honour, awarded to a former, retired Member who has made an outstanding and sustained contribution as a Director within their State, which implies excellence of service for at least eight years. Comprising a minimum of four years on the Board, with a further four years on the Board and/or as a State Branch Office Bearer and/or National level representation on national educational bodies.



RECIPIENTS:

Sally Ruston (NSW Branch)

Honorary State Life Members

Awarded to an IPSHA member not less than ten years standing who is or has been a resident in their state and who has made an outstanding and sustained contribution to a State Branch.



RECIPIENTS:

Julian Carroll (VIC Branch)

Fellow Service Awards

An award to recognise and honour outstanding service by a current IPSHA Member providing willingness to show initiatives and take on work for IPSHA, or special contribution to primary education, and regular involvement in IPSHA's activities.



RECIPIENTS:

Rebecca Lennon (QLD Branch)



Wayne Revitt (WA Branch)



Chris Wyatt (NSW Branch)

Honorary Federal Life Member Award

Sally Ruston - NSW (2025)

Sally Ruston joined IPSHA (formerly JSHAA) in 2000, when she became Head of Junior School at Abbotsleigh, where she has served with distinction for 25 years retiring at the end of 2024.

In a career of over 40 years, Sally has worked across a number of Independent Schools in NSW; All Saints College-Bathurst, Tudor House, Trinity Grammar Preparatory School, Newington College-Linfield and Abbotsleigh.

Sally has been an outstanding IPSHA member and an example to other primary school leaders across the Association. Throughout her career, and in an ongoing capacity, she has served IPSHA as well as serving on a number of education boards. She has modelled the value of contribution to the wider work of primary school education across the nation.

Serving with enthusiasm, Sally has contributed fully to the life and work of IPSHA for 25 years. She served as NSW Branch Treasurer (2003-2006), NSW President Elect (2006-2008), NSW President (2010-2012) and NSW Immediate Past President (2010-2012), IPSHA Federal President (2012-2014) and Federal Immediate Past President (2014-2016). She served as NSW Representative on the APPA National Advisory Council, and the APPA Board, appointed Vice-President in 2021. She was a key driver in the organisation of the 2014 IPSHA Biennial Conference in Sydney and served on the organising committees of many APPA Conferences.



Sally's outstanding understanding of governance, procedures and protocols has seen her lead at State and National level with purpose, efficiency and an unbounded determination to prioritise primary education and to ensure IPSHA is a more effective and inclusive organisation.

Sally has been widely respected for her incredible IPSHA knowledge and understanding. She connects across generations as well as across education sectors, highly regarded in the primary school education field. Her advice and counsel have been regularly sought by colleagues and policy makers. She has ensured that she has been across education dialogue, direction and perspectives. She has always shared openly with colleagues and provided opportunity for connection and growth. Her encouragement, and friendly and interested manner, have been highly valued by her peers in leadership.

Honorary Federal Life Member

Sally has given extensive leadership to many professional and community networks. This has involved working at state level on BoS, ISTAA, AIS and NSWCIS committees and working groups, in academic, professional development and sport projects. Sally has also contributed extensively through her membership and involvement with APPA, serving as Deputy President, ACE, ACEL, PETA and AITSL (particularly the AITSL Working Group developing National Professional Standards for Principals 2010-11).

Whilst maintaining a rich contribution to IPSHA and APPA, Sally has maintained a vibrant and strong Abbotsleigh Junior School. She was highly regarded within the school community where she was a transformational leader. She co-ordinated extensive school building projects, initiated an Early Learning Centre from birth to 5 year olds, and provided the opportunity for the girls of Abbotsleigh to be bold, courageous and prosperous. Learning was at the forefront of all her decisions and the students were well placed to have successful futures having been well led, taught and encouraged. Skateboarding, roller blading and scootering are all activities the girls could engage in during their breaks from learning.

Sally has been a dynamic professional who always sought the best professional development opportunities for her staff. She was instrumental in the organisation of professional networks that have assisted her teachers and more broadly the profession. She proactively encouraged her staff to engage beyond her own school, and many of her former staff members are now in leadership positions in other schools.

Sally was the quintessential independent primary school leader. She had a clear mission, vision and purpose which she pursued with the utmost integrity, courage and persistence. She set high standards for both herself and others, however, she was always encouraging and supportive in her professional dealings with colleagues and the community. Sally has always maintained a close connection with her school and students. She provided every opportunity for the staff and students to be their best selves.

Sally Ruston has been a highly regarded and respected IPSHA member, well deserving of this acknowledgment through the awarding of an Honorary National Life Membership. I am sure that she will continue to connect and add value to IPSHA into the future.

Martin Lubrano
National President

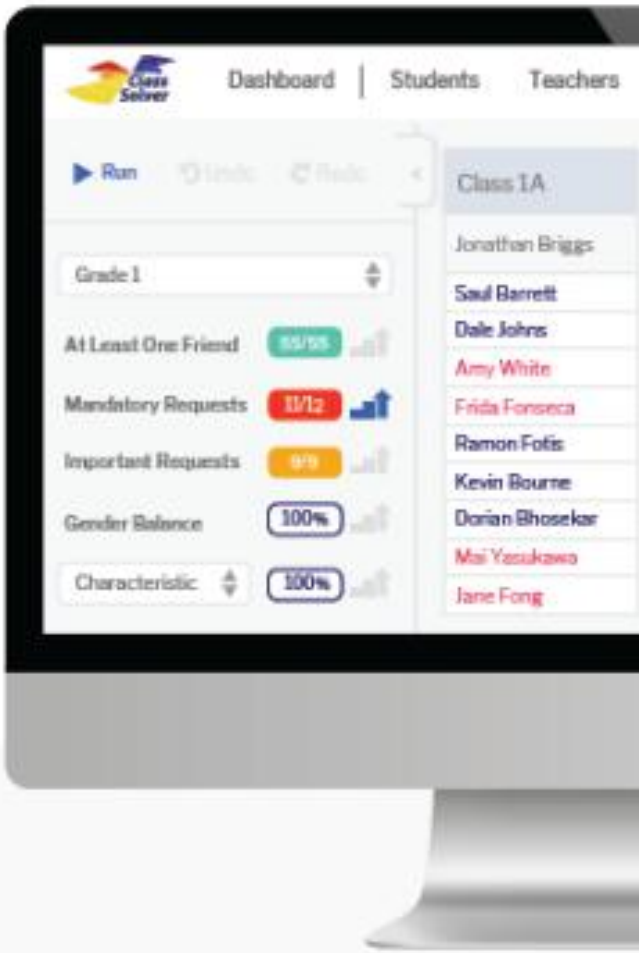
December 2024

Class Solver

Class lists just got easier...

'We won't go without it ever again!

Brad Gill
Head of Middle School
Scotch College, WA



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Drag and drop students between classes, while warning flags alert you to any issue that may need correcting.

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Create language-based classes, streamed ability groups, vertical forms, composites, and even school camp cabins.

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for these IPSHA schools



Watch the demo at **www.ClassSolver.com**

2025 State President Reports



NSW

State President Report



Suzanne Floro

The **IPSHA NSW Branch** has had a strong year of cementing our commitment to opportunities, connection and innovation. Our termly meetings have been very successful, most particularly due to the significant number of members in attendance, enabling collegiality, collaboration and the development of new networks. Balancing professional learning with networking and social interaction has been our aim this year and we are grateful to our members for their commitment to coming together each term. Throughout the year, we have learnt, time and again, that despite the different contexts within which we work, our experiences are more similar than they are different, which is comforting for those who are new to the role.

> **Balancing professional learning with networking and social interaction has been our aim this year and we are grateful to our members for their commitment to coming together each term.**

Opportunities for professional learning and collegiality have been outstanding this year.

At our **Term One** meeting, we welcomed new members at our first meeting of the year, with a breakfast, information sharing and networking meeting, hosted at SHORE's Pavilion atop their cricket ground...certainly a venue that was easy on the eye! At this meeting, we also spent time with Sophie Renton, a Managing Director at McCrindle, who worked with us in understanding the data relevant to the current education climate, and trends that are emerging. In a world dominated by data, she certainly used data visualisation techniques to make the information easy to comprehend and we all enjoyed discussing what it means for us, in independent primary schools.

In **Term Two**, we gathered at St. Luke's Bayview Campus, an idyllic campus that is literally across the road from Maybanke Cove on Pittwater – another stunning venue, and another opportunity to learn from Shyam Barr, Shyam workshopped metacognition and self-regulated learning. Shyam's research focuses on empowering teachers to think deeply about how children learn, and how to create sustainable improvement in schools.

Term Three is always a beacon for us to look forward to, as we gather for our annual **Country Weekend**. This year, we met at Cypress Lakes Country Club in the Hunter Valley and were treated to outstanding regional hospitality. There is something special about being so far removed from our regular day to day, and



2025 Term 3 Country Weekend New Member Dinner



2025 Term 3 Country Weekend

numerous opportunities to come together to learn, to socialise and to just 'be'. Our welcome dinner for new members, which has now become something we all look forward to attending, and our official dinner were fabulous events. Our professional learning spanned across 2 days and we spent time with James Anderson, digging into his work on Learnership, with a focus on growth, achieved by a combination of expert teachers and expert learners. James provoked thinking and encouraged us to turn our attention to the role that learners play in achievement. He certainly gave us plenty to think about, many opportunities to discuss our thoughts, and time to consider how we might apply his work in our individual contexts.

Our **Term Four** meeting was back in Sydney, at St. Catherine's School in Waverley, where we shared our annual Christmas Lunch whilst thinking about the work we did with Dr. Justin Coulson, who worked with us on the topic of 'Drive: The Science of Motivation in Schools'. Dr Coulson always inspires rigorous discussion and we enjoyed the time we spent unpacking this science of motivation work with him.

During the course of the year, we conducted a member survey, seeking to understand member preferences for termly meetings and opportunities for connection that should be considered. We had a high completion rate, which further evidences the fabulous engagement of our membership. As a result of the survey, we are in the process of reinstituting the Professional Learning Networks for 2026. There will be three broad umbrella groups, which will likely splinter into smaller, more specific topics. These are: Leading Learning, Leading Wellbeing, and Leading Culture. We are delighted to invite IPSHA members from across Australia to participate in these. Stay tuned for more information coming soon!

IPSHA Sport

Our major sporting carnivals are an annual event, and this year, the Swimming, Cross Country, and Track and Field Championships were held. This provides the students in our schools with a pathway through to higher levels of representation, and IPSHA students were again very well represented at these events.



2025 Term 4 Branch Meeting

Performing Arts Festival

Our NSW Performing Arts Festival attracted strong numbers again this year, with 24 schools being represented over three nights of performance. Led by the incredible Margaret Mead, former IPSHA member and committed performing arts advocate! This was Margaret's final year organising this event and she was honoured at the conclusion of the final evening of performance. We are grateful to Margaret for her incredible contribution to our members and schools, and for her unwavering commitment to providing our students with this wonderful performance opportunity. Bravo Margaret Mead!

Awards Conferred

In 2025, we awarded Mrs Sally Ruston an IPSHA State Life Membership, in recognition of her incredible contribution to our organisation and education more broadly, over many years. Her list of credentials and experience is indeed impressive and it was an honour to present her with the award.

In 2025, we also awarded Mr Chris Wyatt with an IPSHA Fellowship, for his many years of service to IPSHA, both in NSW and nationally. Having served most recently as the National Treasurer during this biennium, Chris has also served as a NSW State Office Bearer for more than ten years, in various capacities. His willingness to put his hand up and say yes has benefited us all enormously.

Congratulations to Sally and Chris for their unwavering commitment to our organisation!

This will be my last update as the NSW President, as I move into a different role in another school in 2026. Serving our membership, our students



and our schools has been equal parts an honour, a privilege and a joy. I have certainly been given more than I have contributed over the years that I have been a member, for which I am very grateful. I wish you all every success into the future and encourage you to make the most of every opportunity that IPSHA provides; you will undoubtedly be better for engaging wholeheartedly in each of these!

Sue Floro
NSW State President

"I have certainly been given more than I have contributed over the years that I have been a member, for which I am very grateful. I wish you all every success into the future and encourage you to make the most of every opportunity that IPSHA provides; you will undoubtedly be better for engaging wholeheartedly in each of these!"

QLD

State President Report



Carolyn Thistlethwaite

This year, the Queensland Branch enjoyed a year of connection, learning, and celebration, supported by an array of excellent guest speakers, inspiring conferences, and strong collegiality across our network.

Professional Development

In **Term 1**, we gathered at Moreton Bay Boys' College where Michael Hawton presented on navigating tough conversations and introduced *The Anxiety Project*. Members gained valuable strategies to support staff and students in managing challenges with clarity and kindness.

The **Term 2 Refresher Conference**, hosted on the Gold Coast, attracted record attendance. Highlights included school tours at Somerset College, All Saints Anglican School, and Emmanuel College, as well as engaging and inspiring sessions from Angela Falkenberg, Tracey Jessie, and Aaron Williams. Our host extraordinaire, Cam McDonald weaved the theme together wonderfully and the opportunity to connect and share stories was highly valued.



Term 2 Refresher Conference - Sofitel Broadbeach



Term 3 Branch Meeting - Guest Speaker *Amy Green*

Our **Term 3 Meeting**, hosted at Canterbury College, featured Amy Green presenting on wellbeing leadership. She highlighted the importance of "connection before content" and the need to move beyond superficial gestures of wellbeing to focus on psychological growth and fulfilment in schools. The Deputies toured the Canterbury campus as part of their program. We also enjoyed a collegial lunch at the Beenleigh Distillery.

"Members gained valuable strategies to support staff and students in managing challenges with clarity and kindness."



2025 Term 2 Refresher Conference

In **Term 4**, we ended the year on a high note with a fun and celebratory gathering. Angus Brennan, our guest presenter, brought his trademark energy and humour, drawing on over 15 years of entertainment experience. Through his engaging interviews with three of our members, we learned more about the inspiring work happening across our schools. We concluded the year with a collegial lunch at South Bank — a fitting celebration of another successful year together.





Branch Goals

Throughout the year, we progressed on our branch goals of connecting, growing, advocating, partnering, and sustaining. Achievements included support for aspiring leaders and the Deputies Collegiate, strengthening sponsorships, enhancing executive role clarity, and efforts to support regional members through participation in our branch meetings.

Awards

In 2025, we awarded Mrs Rebecca Lennon with an IPSHA Fellowship, for her many years of service to IPSHA, both in Queensland and nationally. Rebecca first joined the Queensland Executive as the inaugural Professional Development Chair, a role she held from 2012 to 2018. Rebecca's dedication to IPSHA grew further when she served on the QLD Executive from 2018 to 2024. Rebecca served as the Queensland Director on the IPSHA National Board from 2018 to 2020 and as National Board Secretary from 2020 to the present time. Rebecca has been a strong advocate for IPSHA demonstrating her commitment to the organisation and her colleagues and we congratulate her on her Fellowship Award.



Rebecca Lennon - IPSHA Fellowship Award 2025

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to our host schools, sponsors, and members who contributed to a successful year of growth and collaboration. The collegial spirit of IPSHA Queensland continues to inspire, and we look forward to building on this momentum in 2026.

Carolyn Thistlethwaite
QLD State President

SA

State President Report



Simon McKenzie

2025 has been an exciting and productive year for the IPSHA South Australia Branch, marked by strong engagement, professional learning for school leaders, and collegial support across our member schools. Attendance at all planned events was excellent, reflecting the strength and commitment of our South Australian IPSHA community.

Term 1

The year began with a Branch Meeting for Heads and Deputies hosted by Westminster School, attended by nearly 40 leaders. Guest presenters included Jonathon Robran from Operation Flinders, who spoke about the transformative power of outdoor adventure programs for young people, and Leah Harrison from Wait Mate, who discussed building parent alliances to delay smartphone use among children. Later in the term, Tracey Ezard led a Professional Development Day at St Peter's College Junior School on Ferocious Warmth Leadership, inspiring participants to balance intellect and empathy in leadership and to build positive school cultures through emotional intelligence and collaboration.

> **"Teachers at all stages of their careers contributed, reinforcing the idea that leadership can emerge from every level of a school community."**

Term 2

Eighteen Heads from South Australia attended the Tri-State Conference in Hobart, engaging with national colleagues and hearing from keynote speaker Dr Neil Carrington on high-performance teams. The conference also featured cultural presentations by Uncle Rodney Dillon and Thomas Mayo, deepening participants' understanding of reconciliation and leadership.

The IPSHA Collegial Gathering Network continued to thrive, connecting over 320 educators from 20 schools across six host sites. Sessions explored diverse themes such as outdoor learning, literacy, STEM integration, arts education, and support for exceptional learners. Feedback highlighted the gatherings as valuable platforms for reflection, collaboration, and professional growth. Teachers at all stages of their careers contributed, reinforcing the idea that leadership can emerge from every level of a school community.

Looking ahead, the network aims to expand teacher leadership opportunities, deepen inter-school collaboration through shared digital hubs, and include regional schools through zonal and virtual gatherings.

Term 3

The Term 3 Branch Meeting was hosted by Pedare Christian College and featured guest speaker Heather De Blasio, author and leadership coach, who presented on *Future Leadership.* Her insights into leadership capacity, authenticity, and potential were well





received. Thank you to Lisa Daws for hosting this event.

Middle Leaders also engaged in a professional development day with Gavin Grift at Westminster School, based on his book *Emerge*. The workshop explored self-awareness and the personal qualities that help leaders influence and empower others. These sessions remain a valued part of IPSHA SA's leadership development calendar.

The South Australian IPSHA Branch Annual Dinner was held at the Lion Hotel in North Adelaide in **Term 3**. Over 40 Heads and partners attended this event with a high number of retired heads in attendance. This opportunity further strengthens the connection between current and previous heads of school in South Australia, a goal the Branch has been striving for in recent years.

The IPSHA school year finished with our **Term 4 Branch Meeting** being held at Wilderness School. Tabitha Healey was the guest presenter who spoke about her experience as a Medical Oncologist and business owner and her experiences in seeing first hand the highs and lows of lives lived well and the sadness of regrets. During her address Tabitha outlined the fundamentals of a fulfilling life namely, strong relationships, good health and a sense of purpose. Thank you to Liz McCarthy for hoisting the final event of the IPSHA calendar for 2025.



Collegial and Student Engagement

Member schools continued to support student enrichment opportunities through the Junior Orator and Poetry Recital competitions, fostering confidence and communication skills among young learners.

In September, Westminster School hosted the Semester 2 EAL Hub Meeting, the largest yet, with over 30 educators in attendance. Participants explored Westminster's comprehensive EAL program, shared best practices, and discussed the emerging role of AI in supporting EAL learners and their families. The event strengthened networks and reinforced the sector's shared commitment to inclusive, culturally responsive education.

National Life Memberships

At the **Term 4 Branch Meeting** we acknowledged the extensive contribution made to IPSHA SA and Nationally by Grant Bock and Neil Andary. Citations were presented to attending members and it was unanimously agreed to put these forward to the National Board for official recognition at the 2026 Biennial Conference in Freemantle, Western Australia. Both Grant and Neil were honoured to have been recognised for their work over many years.

Simon McKenzie
SA State President

VIC

State President Report



Rowan van Raay

The Victorian Branch has had another productive and successful year.

A review of the Victorian Branch Strategic Goals was undertaken by the Branch Office Bearers to ensure alignment with National Goals. A revised Strategic Plan dashboard was prepared for 2025 and shared with members at our Term 1 Branch Meeting. Member professional learning, student engagement, and the updating of all member information and event management in our new Member Management System—and via the updated IPSHA website—were key focus areas in 2025. We also aimed to reaffirm and strengthen our connection with the Professional Learning sub-groups.

Our **Term 1 Heads and Deputies Meetings and Combined Cocktail Function** were held at Studley Park Boathouse. Before the commencement of these events, 39 Heads and Deputies participated in a 'Service to the Community' activity, supporting *Eat Up* by making 1,000 sandwiches—their daily goal—in just 41 minutes. These sandwiches were distributed to schools providing lunches for students in need. Following our meetings, we enjoyed a cocktail function together. We were also pleased to be joined by state sponsors ANZUK, A_Space, and Star Time.

In **Term 2**, 27 Victorian Branch members attended the Tri-State Conference, Building and Leading High-Performance Teams, held at The Friends' School. We were honoured to have Uncle Rodney Dillon deliver the Welcome to Country, followed by a powerful keynote on Reconciliation by Thomas Mayo, who closed his address with a moving recitation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. The Leadership Masterclass with Dr Neil Carrington covered key topics including Developing and Sustaining High-Performance Teams, The Staff is Your Class, and Culture Eats Strategy for Breakfast. Neil was a thought-provoking and engaging presenter who offered valuable insights throughout the conference. It was also a pleasure to connect with members during the social events. Our sincere thanks to Mark Febey and the Tasmanian Branch for hosting a memorable conference.



'Service to the Community' in support of *Eat Up*



Term 1 Heads & Deputies Cocktail Function



2025 Tri-State Conference

Our **Term 3 Branch Meeting** was hosted at Ruyton Girls' School, where Ashley Fell presented on educational trends and the evolving nature of educational roles. We extend our thanks to Catherine Samuel and the staff at Ruyton for their warm hospitality. We also welcomed state sponsors ANZUK, A_Space, MATTA, and Star Time, along with National sponsors The School Photographer and Class Solver.

In partnership with Kids Unlimited, we launched our first-ever IPSHA Chess Tournament in Term 3. Eleven schools and 110 students participated in this successful inaugural event. We thank Louise Peyton and the staff at MLC for hosting this event. Lauren from Kids Unlimited shared:

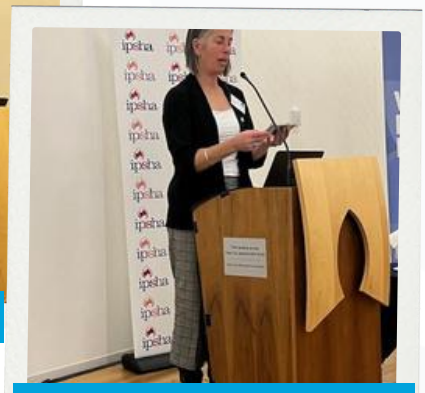
"The tournament was great! The day went really well and the students really loved it—they were all very well behaved! A few had never participated in a chess tournament and were very nervous at first, but by the end of the day, they were confident and said they can't wait for the next one. Hopefully, we can run it again next year!"



Dr Neil Carrington - 2025 Tri-State Conference



Ashley Fell



Louise Peyton

We were delighted to welcome keynote speaker Angela Falkenburg (APPA President) to our **Term 4 Branch Meeting and End-of-Year Dinner**.

Angela delivered an insightful and entertaining presentation on Contemporary Leadership, addressing the many challenges and tensions faced in today's workplace. Held at the Melbourne Zoo, the event was also an opportunity to thank outgoing Office Bearers and members, acknowledge our sponsors, and celebrate another year of collegiality and collaboration.

Our Student Leadership Program, in partnership with WELS School, continued successfully in 2025. This year, four sessions were held, involving 19 schools and 142 students. We will seek feedback from member schools to ensure the program continues to meet their needs.



This year, the Victorian Branch was proud to present Julian Carroll with a State Life Membership Award in recognition of his extensive contributions to the Branch over many years. Julian received this honour at our Term 4 Branch Meeting.

We are fortunate to have the support of a number of generous sponsors throughout the year. Our sincere thanks to state sponsors A_Space, ANZUK, Star Time, and our newest sponsor for 2025, MATTA. Their ongoing engagement is greatly appreciated by our members. We also acknowledge and thank our national sponsors—Furnware, Class Solver, The School Photographer, and Open Parachute—for their continued support of IPSHA.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all members for their unwavering support of both myself and the Victorian Office Bearers this year. In particular, I would like to acknowledge Brad Nelsen, who stepped down from his role as an Office Bearer. Brad served on the Executive and as an Office Bearer for nearly 15 years in several roles, including Secretary, APPA NAC Representative, and most recently, as coordinator of the Student Leadership Program.

We sincerely thank Brad for his long-standing contribution to the Victorian Branch.

I would also like to acknowledge the tireless work of our Administration Assistant, Catherine Wilkinson, who has worked diligently behind the scenes throughout 2025 to ensure the smooth operation of our Branch.

Reconnecting with colleagues throughout 2025 —whether through branch meetings, phone calls, emails, or informal coffee catch-ups—has been both meaningful and rewarding. Strengthening relationships within such a dedicated and talented team has been a highlight of the year. Sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to the Branch's success in 2025. Your commitment and hard work are genuinely valued and appreciated.

Rowan van Raay
VIC Branch President

> **"Balancing professional learning with networking and social interaction has been our aim this year and we are grateful to our members for their commitment to coming together each term."**

TAS

State President Report



Mark Febey

2025 has been an exceptionally busy and rewarding year for IPSHA Tasmania, reflecting our shared vision of being the leading independent primary school voice, connecting and advocating for school leaders across our state and beyond. The highlight of the year was our **Tri-State Conference**, bringing together colleagues from Tasmania, Victoria and South Australia for two transformative days of professional learning and collaboration. Facilitated by Dr Neil Carrington, the conference deepened leadership capacity, strengthened relationships and reminded us of the power of collegiality in fostering high-performing educational teams.

Throughout the year, branch members have continued to meet across the north and south of Tasmania enjoying the privilege of visiting schools and engaging with the diversity and richness of educational practice within our independent sector. These gatherings, whether formal meetings, informal catchups or our well attended branch breakfasts have continued to promote IPSHA's mission of providing professional support, learning opportunities and collegial connection.

Our network groups in Administration, Curriculum, Learning Support, Art and Wellbeing remain vibrant and purposeful, offering meaningful professional learning and peer collaboration. These networks reflect our core understanding that IPSHA plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of primary education through quality leadership, professional growth and connection.

Together, we continue to celebrate diversity, embrace innovation and enhance educational opportunities for students; values that sit at the heart of IPSHA's purpose.

Looking Ahead to 2026

As we move into 2026, IPSHA Tasmania will continue to strengthen its collegiality and professional leadership through:

1. Expanding IPSHA Student Leadership initiatives.
2. Consolidating Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) across network groups.
3. Enhancing statewide networking and professional learning opportunities.

Building on the momentum of 2025 we remain committed to empowering independent school leaders, enriching the educational experience of children and ensuring IPSHA Tasmania continues to be a voice of influence and connection in the educational landscape.



2025 Tri-State Conference

WA

State President Report



Anthony Moses

2025 has been a dynamic and rewarding year for IPSHA WA, marked by strong collegiality, professional growth, and the ongoing preparation for our 2026 IPSHA Biennial National Conference in Fremantle. Across the year, our focus has been on creating meaningful professional learning experiences, broadening member engagement, and strengthening financial and organisational stability across the Branch.

Professional Learning and Collegial Engagement

Term 1 began with our State Branch Meeting and Dinner at Long Neck Brewery, East Perth, where Dr. Amie Fabry from *The Learning Future* inspired members with her address on '*Pedagogical Transformation: Cultivating Environments Where Educators and Children Flourish*'. Amie will be presenting at the Biennial Conference next year.

In **Term 2**, we gathered for the Regional Retreat at Bunker Bay, headlined by Angela Falkenberg, APPA President, who spoke on the topics 'Permission to Pause' and 'Metaphorical Leadership: What Lies Beneath'. The retreat was both rejuvenating and reflective, encouraging Heads to consider the balance of leadership wellbeing and sustainability. We had strong sponsorship support from partners including Fotoworks, Class Solver, Click Against Hate, and IXL Education at this event.

In **Term 3**, members enjoyed a thought-provoking session with Daniel Burton, CEO and Co-Founder of Educated by Nature, titled 'Redefining Play and Connection for Adolescents'. His insights into 'Nature Disconnection Disorder' resonated deeply with our shared focus on student wellbeing and the power of unstructured, outdoor learning.

The year will conclude with our **End of Year Branch Dinner** at Ludo at The Station in South Perth, featuring the presentation of the IPSHA Fellowship Award to Mr Wayne Revitt—a well-deserved recognition of his long-standing contribution to educational leadership and collegial service at both a state and national level.

Regional Retreat - Bunker Bay



"2025 has been a dynamic and rewarding year for IPSHA WA, marked by strong collegiality, professional growth, and the ongoing preparation for our 2026 IPSHA Biennial National Conference."



End of Year Branch Dinner

State Activities and Student Opportunities

2025 has also seen a vibrant calendar of student activities including the Performing Arts Festival, Academic Challenge, Junior and Senior Speakers' Challenges, Chess Day, and a full suite of Co-Ed Winter and Athletics Carnivals. These events continue to exemplify IPSHA's commitment to student engagement and enrichment beyond the classroom.



IPSHA Academic Challenge

Looking Ahead: The *2026 IPSHA Biennial National Conference*

Planning is well underway for the IPSHA Biennial National Conference, to be held Thursday 4 – Saturday 6 June 2026 at the Esplanade Hotel Fremantle, themed 'Be Present!'

The program will feature world-class keynote speakers, school tours along Stirling Highway, the Wells Oration and Conference Dinner at the iconic WA Maritime Museum, and opportunities to connect and reflect in the heart of Fremantle's heritage precinct.

We warmly invite all IPSHA members across Australia to join us in Western Australia for an inspiring three days of learning, connection, and renewal, which backs onto the eastern states long weekend.

To register, please use the following link:

2026 Biennial Conference

We look forward to welcoming you all to Fremantle in June 2026!

Anthony Moses
WA State President



Dr Hayley Watson

Open Parachute





How do we support our students through the social media ban and beyond?

Dr. Hayley Watson

First, let's understand the mental health impacts of social media.

We are all aware of the negative impact of social media on students, because we see it every day in schools. We see increased anxiety and depression due to the constant (often unsettling or even cruel) information and messages they receive, and the comparisons that naturally arise from seeing the polished online accounts of their peers or celebrities. We also see the challenges that social media creates for body image, regardless of gender (although research points to this being particularly problematic for girls).

Students are shown 'ideal' body types. They are led to believe that these are attainable at an age when their self-esteem is already fragile and when they are susceptible to internalising negative messages about themselves and their worth.

On top of all that, we see students becoming increasingly unable to sit with their feelings, as they are so accustomed to being constantly stimulated and entertained. This means that they are less resilient in the face of stressors, and when a strong feeling arises and they can't brush it away by scrolling or posting, they are often lost and overwhelmed.

But wait... isn't there an upside to social media?

Yes, there is. And it is important that we don't miss this. For some students (particularly those who are different in some way from the peers they see every day in person), social media is the one place where they can find community and feel like they truly belong. And this is not a small thing. Belonging is vital to adolescent mental health and is a protective factor to help students cope with so many of the challenges of growing up. So when we think about how helpful it will be to remove the negative impacts of social media, it's important we also understand and validate for students that for some of them, the online world is a great and even life-sustaining source of support that they might feel they can't go without.

So what can we do to prepare our students for the social media ban?

First of all, we need to start with empathy and understanding. For many students, particularly older students, this might be frustrating, overwhelming, and could leave them in a very vulnerable position.



Even though we know they can survive very well without it (after all, most of us did!), we need to take their perspective and remember that this is a source of connection, support, joy, and in some cases a lifeline for students.

After we validate how hard this is for them, we can have open conversations about the reasons for the ban.

And in doing so, we want to focus on their own personal experiences.

If we can help them recognise their own negative impacts (even if they are also finding a lot of upside), that can help them come to terms with the situation. So we can ask questions like "when you are using social media, do you notice how you feel or the kinds of thoughts you have?" We want to help them draw attention to their own inner world, and begin to notice things like the natural down feeling they might get when they see everyone else having fun in a post without them. Or the insecurity that we all feel when we see people who look so perfect, and we can't help but compare ourselves to them. Or the lethargy they might feel when they spend all night scrolling or messaging instead of resting or doing something soothing or active.

If they can notice these impacts themselves, they are much more likely to see the purpose of the ban, and once they have this clarity, we can help them find their own boundaries
(e.g., "What are your own personal reasons for wanting to restrict your time on social media?").



If they can feel a sense of control in the decision and that it is not just being imposed on them from the outside, this will help them draw on their own agency and personal power, rather than reacting from a sense of helplessness or defiance.

And finally, we want to help them find alternative ways to meet their needs (ideally in advance of the ban, so they have a chance to practice). For example, if they really like the connection they feel online, we can help them find in-person ways to connect instead. If they really like the things they learn on social media accounts, we can help them find other sources of information. If they enjoy the fun and light distraction of messaging with friends, we can help them come up with alternative ways to communicate or bring a little joy into their lives. We don't need to have the answers; we just need to give them a chance to explore these questions themselves.

Kids are resilient and can find ways of adapting, but they need guidance, patience, and support to remind them of their own power. If we show them that we are willing to engage in real dialogue about this from a place of empathy and compassion, they will turn to us if they are struggling, and that is the most important thing we can do for them when they face any challenge, including this one.

But what if our students don't want to talk about it?

There are many students who will love having open and honest conversations as they navigate this challenge. But of course, there will be others who shut down, walk away, or roll their eyes when you try to bring up things like the mental health impacts of social media. In such cases, we can take a few steps to assist. Firstly, we can speak about our own experiences or the impacts we have found in our own lives from social media or other online platforms. If we role model that vulnerability and show that it's ok to speak about it, this can help create the emotional safety that students need to reflect themselves.

We also want to keep in mind that many students will be listening to what we are saying, even if they don't respond with positivity (or at all!), so regardless of the response we get, we want to keep trying and keep creating opportunities for dialogue where we can.

And finally, for students who are not engaging in these conversations, we want to make sure that we are teaching them the skillset they need to be able to navigate this change effectively, even if they won't open up to us.

Do they know how to relate to their emotions in a healthy way if they are struggling? Do they know how to reach out for help if they need it? Do they know how to find joy in their lives? Do they know how to change their thoughts if they are spiralling?

These are all skills that any student needs to be able to navigate challenges effectively, and when we remove a major distraction/soothing mechanism/source of support, such as social media, we will likely see students who lack this skillset struggling even more with all of the other challenges they face in their lives.

So how can we teach this skillset?

That is where we come in! At Open Parachute, we have created lessons for every year K-12 that teach students a skillset for facing and overcoming challenges. These lessons are designed so that any educator, regardless of background or experience can deliver them effectively, and by doing so, not just empower their students to thrive in all areas of their lives, but also create more opportunities for connection, empathy, and kindness in their classrooms. Our lessons feature documentary stories of real peer-aged youth, who role model vulnerability and help create the emotional safety needed for your students to engage in real reflection and build real resilience.

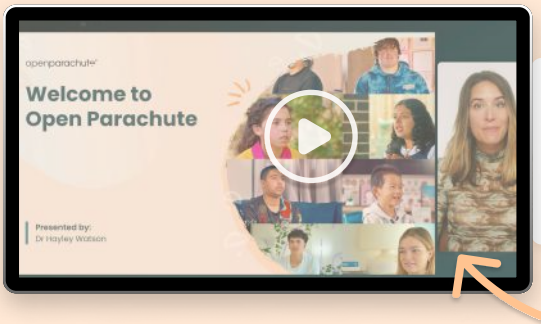
Special Offer for IPSHA members

FREE

As IPSHA's In-Kind Partner for 2025/26, your school is eligible to access **a free 10-week trial of Open Parachute**, gifting you the opportunity to explore the many lessons and resources available.

You can also take advantage of our special 2026 subscription offer **- 12 months for the price of 6 months (50% off).**

To organise access for your school, reach out to Rikki Waller - rikki@openparachuteschools.com



Click to watch!

Open Parachute's founder Dr. Hayley Watson provides an introduction to the program.

Angela Drysdale

Head of Primary & QLD Member

Global Perspectives and Wellness in Education


Angela Drysdale

I was honoured to be the recipient of the IPSHA Professional Learning Grant in 2024. As part of a two-week professional development program, I had the opportunity to travel to Oxford, England, where I was invited to attend and present, alongside educators from across the globe, at the International Round Table at the University of Oxford.

My participation in this conference was made possible after the submission and acceptance of an abstract of my presentation on the evolution of our school wellbeing program. I presented alongside Australian educators and others from across the globe, including Japan, New Zealand, and Qatar, in addition to university professors from various universities across the United States. The presentations focused on two main themes: global perspectives and wellness in education.

Through this opportunity, I participated in enriching discussions, observed insightful presentations, and networked with global scholars, experts and thought leaders, delving into topics shaping the future of education and society. Each presenter enriched my understanding and reinforced my commitment to lifelong learning.

The symposium began with an insightful keynote speech by Betty Liebovich (2024), who emphasised the importance of promoting a positive school culture through mental health support, safe and inclusive environments, anti-bullying initiatives, and the wellbeing of teachers and staff. She also stressed the significance of balancing physical and holistic education with academic goals—elements that are integral to our own programs. The global emphasis on wellbeing is mirrored in Australian research, which shows a significant increase in schools prioritising children's wellness—from 31% in 2018 to 48% in 2023 (Schools Plus).

A recurring theme in many of the wellbeing presentations was reference to the Eight Dimensions of Wellness, originally developed by Dr Peggy Swarbrick in the early 1990s, and subsequently evolving as a framework for the pursuit of wellness. The framework emphasises that wellness is not merely the absence of illness but a holistic integration of these dimensions, each interrelated and contributing to overall wellbeing. Swarbrick defines wellness as 'a conscious, deliberate process that requires a person to become aware of and make choices for a more satisfying lifestyle' (Swarbrick, 2012).

Peggy Swarbrick's Wellness Model is a holistic, strength-based framework that identifies eight dimensions of wellness (Swarbrick & Yudof, 2012). Her model is widely used in the mental health, education, and recovery fields and defines factors that contribute to overall wellbeing and illustrates how each dimension can be reliant and connected with one another.

The Eight Dimensions of Wellness are as follows:

1. **Emotional Wellness -** The ability to cope effectively with life and build satisfying relationships.

2. **Environmental Wellness -** Living in harmony with your surroundings and creating a safe, supportive environment.

3. **Financial Wellness -** Satisfaction with current and future financial situations.

4. **Intellectual Wellness -** Recognising creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills.

5. **Occupational Wellness -** Personal satisfaction and enrichment from one's work.

6. **Physical Wellness -** Maintaining a healthy body through exercise, nutrition, sleep, and healthcare.

Swarbrick's '8 Dimensions' model has been used to craft an effective framework for the pursuit of wellness. The model features adjacent dimensions overlapping as a visual representation that are all dimensions are connected and dependent on each other. Many presenters shared their programs which were based on these dimensions and the adaptions they made to fit their specific contexts but with the common goal of its implementation was for users to take tangible steps towards improving and having responsibility for their own wellness.

I presented on the evolution of St Margaret's wellbeing program since its inception in 2006: Body, Heart, Mind, and Soul. Over time, this evolved into our whole-school flower framework (Drysdale, 2022). It is interesting that we, too, have always based our program on our own set of dimensions, our 6-petal framework. Our framework includes dimensions that align with that of Swarbrick's: Spiritual, Intellectual, Social, Emotional, Vocational, and Physical. My newfound awareness of Swarbrick's dimensions provided a basis for reviewing our program. This review includes ensuring our model is a strengths-focused approach, building on daily habits and routines and ensuring wellness ownership.

Swarbrick's wellness model and its intended aim would be particularly useful in supporting child wellbeing because it emphasises balanced development across all areas of life. It encourages a whole-child approach, recognising that healthy development is not just physical or academic, but spans emotional, social, spiritual, and environmental domains. The relevance for our wellbeing program is outlined in the chart below:

Child-Focused Wellness Chart

Dimension	Definition	Child Wellbeing Relevance
Emotional	Understanding, expressing, and managing feelings effectively	Helps children build resilience, self-regulation, and confidence; reduces anxiety or distress.
Environmental	Living in clean, safe, and supportive surroundings.	Safe, nurturing spaces (home/classroom) support learning, security, and healthy development
Financial	Stability and satisfaction with financial resources.	Affects access to food, healthcare, housing, and learning materials that support wellbeing.
Intellectual	Engaging in learning, creativity, and critical thinking.	Promotes curiosity, problem-solving, academic success, and love of learning.
Occupational	Finding purpose and fulfillment in work or daily activities.	Engaging in meaningful roles like student, helper, or team member boosts identity and purpose.

Child-Focused Wellness Chart *(Continued)*

Dimension	Definition	Child Wellbeing Relevance
Physical	Caring for one's body through healthy habits.	Supports energy, immunity, growth, and emotional balance through diet, activity, and sleep.
Social	Building positive relationships and support systems	Encourages belonging, empathy, friendship, and social skill development.
Spiritual	Finding purpose, meaning and connection to values or beliefs	Supports identity, hope, inner strength, and moral development.

Our program will be enriched by integrating and adapting Swarbrick's model, enabling us to better support children in becoming resilient, healthy, and well-rounded individuals. Through the development of an enhanced program, students will develop the skills, such as goal setting, breathing, neuroscience, mindfulness and mindset. Empowering students with these skills will help them manage and take ownership of their own wellbeing, fostering greater agency and lifelong habits of wellness.

Another presentation of relevance for our school focused on effective strategies that could be used for self-development and included aspects that will be useful as we review our framework. The program HEART (Health Education and Art for Resiliency Teaching) was designed to enhance wellbeing and academic success among Indigenous students. This program uses creative self-expression as a tool to foster emotional development and resilience. The approach is grounded in trauma-informed education and is built around three key pillars: relationships matter, student voice and choice, and mindful practices. These core themes support the creation of safe, empowering learning environments that prioritise connection, autonomy, and emotional regulation.

The symposium offered valuable opportunities for personal growth and deepened my commitment to lifelong learning. A consistent and thought-provoking feature of each session came from the closing reflections of one of the professors, Dr Stephen Katsinas, Professor of Higher Education and Political Science. At the end of many presentations (International Round Table, 2024), he emphasised the importance of data collection as a foundation for meaningful progress and posed the powerful question: 'Where do you want to be in three to five years?' This challenge encouraged participants to think strategically about long-term goals and the evidence needed to guide continuous improvement.

Thank you also to Menzies School Leadership Incubator Program for the grant to contribute to my leadership grant.

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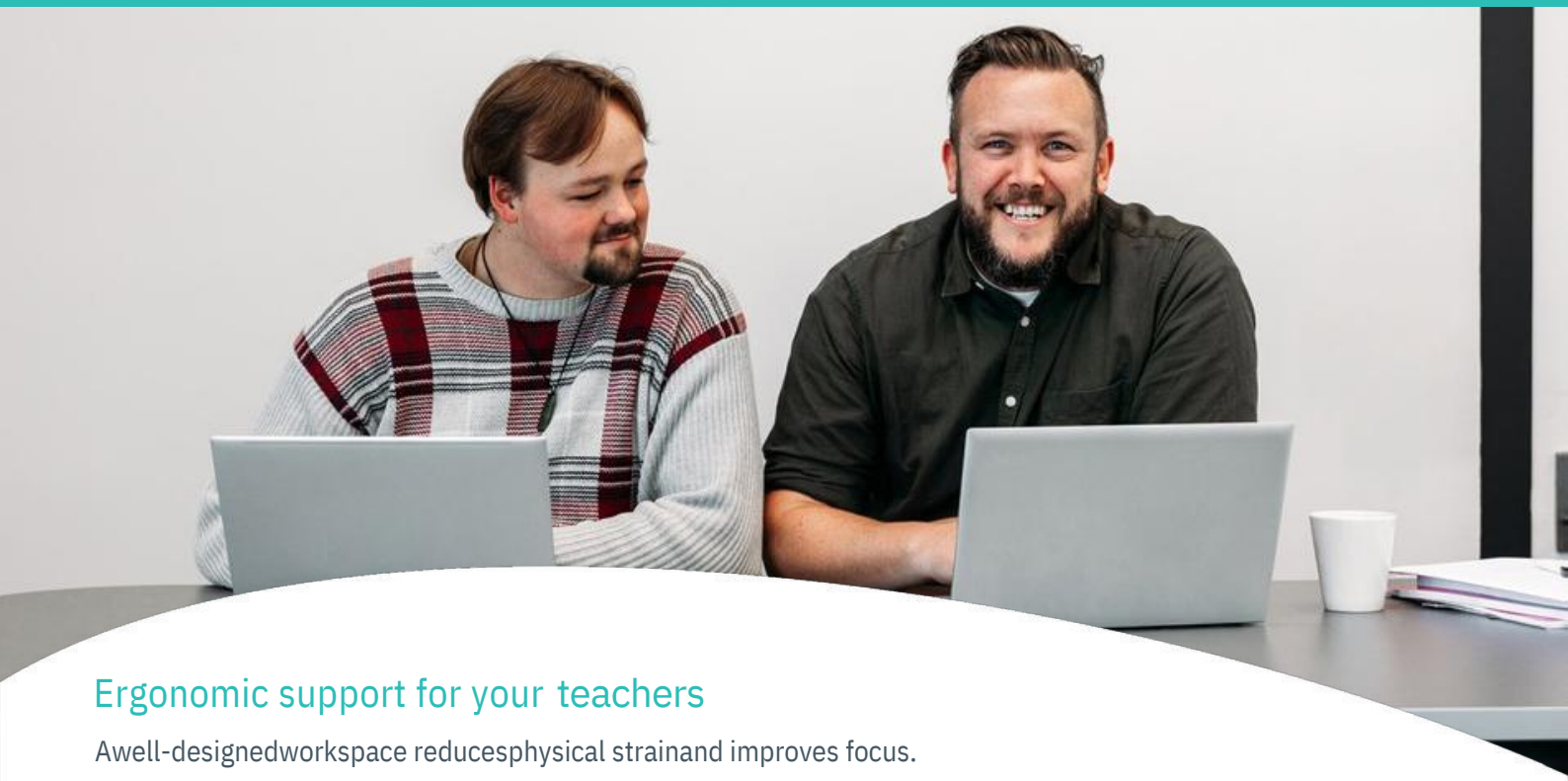
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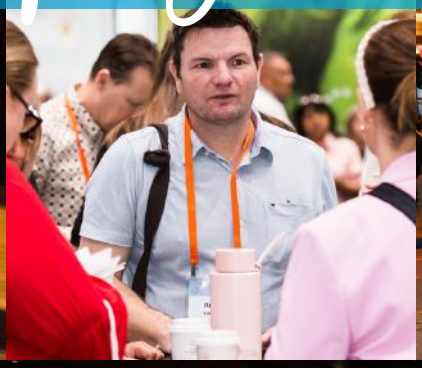
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2025 APPA National Conference



2025 APPA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Highlights











SAVE THE DATE • SAVE THE DATE



2026 APPA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

National Convention Centre, Canberra
30 Aug – 3 Sep 2026

APPA Australian Primary Principals Association

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING OUR IPSHA MEMBERS AT THE **2026 APPA NATIONAL CONFERENCE!**

APPA Position Papers

The APPA Position Papers, featured on pages 47 to 56 have been created by the APPA National Advisory Council as a way of documenting advocacy and influence for Primary School leaders.

FULL AND FAIR FUNDING

The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement (January 2025) ties the additional 25% Commonwealth funding to reforms that will help students catch up, keep up and finish school. But what do these reforms look like in practical terms and how can they be achieved? As the national voice for primary school leaders across Australia's 10,000 primary schools, the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) is uniquely positioned to provide evidence and practice-informed recommendations that reflect the diverse needs of our communities.

PRIORITIES

To maximise government investment and improve student outcomes, funding should be distributed to primary schools based on the following priorities. They include enhanced support for students with additional needs, strengthened teacher capacity, reduced administrative burden on school leaders, and expanded access to early intervention and wellbeing services.

NEEDS-BASED ALLOCATION

Direct funding to schools based on student disadvantage, including socio-economic status, Indigeneity, English as an additional language, and regional or remote locations. Targeted, needs-based funding, delivered directly to schools, empowers school leaders to make evidence-informed and practice-informed decisions that maximise learning opportunities and outcomes for every student, regardless of their geographic location or background.

EARLY INTERVENTION AND WELLBEING

Invest in early childhood supports and school-based wellbeing programs to address barriers to learning from the outset.

WORKFORCE CAPABILITY

Fund targeted professional learning, mentoring, and induction programs to attract, retain, and upskill teachers and school leaders.

DIGITAL EQUITY

Support quality learning by ensuring that students and staff in all primary schools have access to reliable digital tools and the professional learning and support needed to be confident, capable and innovative users of technology.

SUPPORT STAFFING

Resource schools to employ additional support staff to better meet diverse learning needs and student complexity.

DISABILITIES RESOURCING

Provide resources to students who have undiagnosed disabilities and/or learning disorders that are not funded through other means, to ensure every child has equitable access to education, support, and the opportunity to thrive.

REVIEW THE SCHOOLING RESOURCE STANDARD (SRS)

An urgent review of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) is also needed, to address the significant and widening per-student funding gap between primary and secondary schools in Australia. High-performing education systems such as Estonia, which was the top performer in the world in Science, Reading and Mathematics in the PISA (Programme for International Students Assessment) in 2018[1], demonstrate that maintaining a minimal funding differential across school levels can lead to stronger and more equitable student outcomes.[2] Estonia invests strategically in early and primary education, recognising that strong foundations are critical for long-term success both for learners and the nation.

Australia's future prosperity depends on ensuring that every child, regardless of age or stage, is equally supported to achieve their full potential through fair and needs-based funding. At the 2025 APPA Primary Summit (May 26) Professor Frank Oberklaid shared data showing that Australia spends less than 0.6% of its GDP on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), which is lower than the OECD average of 0.8%. Countries performing higher on PISA spend more of the GDP on ECEC: Iceland 1.8%, Sweden 1.7%, Norway 1.6% and France 1.3%. ▸

KEY ACTIVITIES

Here are ten activities primary schools may choose to engage in to deliver enhanced student outcomes under the six key priorities.

1. Implement **targeted literacy and numeracy programs** for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, regularly tracking and adjusting progress.
2. Engage **cultural liaison officers and community elders** to support Indigenous students and embed culturally responsive teaching practices.
3. Support **early intervention** for students with developmental needs.
4. Deliver **structured wellbeing programs** such as social-emotional learning, trauma-informed practices, and mental health support.
5. Provide **mentoring and induction programs** for teachers and school leaders to build capacity and reduce attrition.
6. Facilitate **ongoing, high-impact professional learning** aligned to student needs and evidence-informed pedagogy.
7. Employ **additional learning support staff** and **teacher aides** and build their capacity to work to support teachers in schools.
8. Create **flexible groupings and timetables** to enable smaller, needs-based instructional groups and help cater for students who are school refusers.
9. Support **strong digital environments** to ensure digital infrastructure, devices and pedagogy are elevated and maintained.
10. Enhance **learning environments** through upgraded facilities that support inclusive, collaborative, and future-focused education.
11. Strengthen **instructional leadership** by providing primary schools with additional middle leaders to respond to the intensity of the work, strengthen curriculum development, enhance pedagogy, and reduce teacher workload for improved student outcomes.
12. **Collaboration time** for primary school teachers is essential to enhance planning, share expertise, and tailor teaching strategies to better meet the diverse needs of students.

SUMMARY

Primary schools form the bedrock of Australia's education system, and strategic investment at this foundational level delivers the greatest long-term benefit to student achievement and national equity. Funding from the Better and Fairer Schools Agreements must be delivered directly to schools, as research clearly shows that money flowing through the school gate, positively impacts student learning outcomes.[3] Schools must have the autonomy to use this funding to meet the unique needs of their students and communities.

APPA calls for funding mechanisms that recognise and leverage the professional judgement and contextual wisdom of school leaders, ensuring that resources are directed where they are needed most. By empowering local leadership and targeting investment, we can ensure every child, regardless of their postcode or background, receives the high-quality education they deserve.

1 'Brief on high-performing systems: Estonia'. *NCEE Legislative International Education Study Group* (2020-2021). https://documents.ncsl.org/wwwncsl/Education/Study-Group/1.EstoniaProfileNCEE.pdf. Accessed 18 June 2025.

2 'ESTONIA: Overview of the education system (EAG 2024). *OECD: Education GPS*. https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=EST&treshold=10&topic=EO. Accessed 19 June 2025.

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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR PRINCIPALS

The role of primary school principals in Australia today extends far beyond administrative duties. Principals are instructional leaders, strategic planners, crisis managers, community connectors, and advocates for equity and excellence. They play a critical role in shaping the quality of education, school culture, student outcomes, and staff wellbeing. Given the growing demands and complexities of the role, including rapid technological changes, increasing student diversity, multiple compliance and workload demands, heightened community expectations, and ongoing reforms, there is an urgent need to invest in sustained, targeted, and high-impact professional learning (PL) for school leaders. Despite this, access to meaningful professional learning remains inconsistent, underfunded, and often misaligned with the realities of the role. APPA firmly believes that professional learning is not a luxury. It is essential.

THE CASE FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING (PL)

Professional learning is accepted as a necessary support for teachers; however, principals also deserve access to ongoing learning activities. Professional learning equips principals with the skills and knowledge to lead effectively, better support teachers in their work, create a supportive learning environment for students and enhances their credibility with parents and the wider community.

ADDRESSES COMPLEX AND EVOLVING DEMANDS

Principals manage multifaceted responsibilities. These include leading teaching and learning, facilitating curriculum innovation and implementation, supporting student wellbeing, navigating crises, employing a range of technologies and methods to manage a school, and engaging and working with the community.

ENHANCES STUDENT OUTCOMES

Research consistently affirms that school leadership is second only to classroom instruction in its in-school impact on student learning.[1] John Hattie more specifically notes that instructional leaders and their involvement with curriculum planning, setting academic goals and support of teacher development have the greatest effect.[2]

“ There is an urgent need to invest in sustained, targeted, and high-impact professional learning for school leaders. ”

SUPPORTS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

School leaders are charged with providing instructional leadership but often school management takes precedence as increasing demands impact the leader’s time, confidence, and capacity. In one study, over one-third of principals reported that they had no professional learning around instructional leadership and 45% of those who engaged in some learning, said it was ‘average’ to ‘weak’ in supporting the development of their capabilities.[3]

ENSURES RETENTION AND WELLBEING

Quality PL contributes to principals’ resilience and efficacy, significantly reducing attrition and ensuring leadership continuity. Principals need access to professional learning at all stages in their careers and, in fact, a research report published by the NASSP (National Association of Secondary School Principals) in the United States noted that Principals cite a lack of professional learning opportunities as the top reason for leaving the profession.[4]

EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

What effective professional learning looks like.

Contextualised Tailoring professional learning to the stage of career is important. Many professional learning activities have been focused on the needs of aspiring or newly appointed principals leaving experienced school leaders without the support they need. Experienced principals benefit from training on instructional leadership and strategic leadership skills while less experienced principals also need training on technical issues such as financial management. The context of community, gender and culture also needs to be considered. ▸

Personalised and flexible A 2017 survey by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) indicated that school leaders primarily attended specific courses delivered outside or within the workplace. A 2022 survey indicated a dramatic shift to in-house learning such as online learning. The increase in online professional learning activities which are more accessible, flexible, cost-effective, and scalable (reaching many people) than traditional courses and workshops, has allowed for more options and opportunities. School leaders reported online learning as the main type of professional learning activity followed by network conversations and general reading.[5] While increasing accessibility, this can contribute to decreased peer connection and increased isolation in the role.

Collaborative and practice-informed The sharing of knowledge and expertise can improve the quality of professional learning, so it is important to find new ways of incorporating more collaborative practice in professional learning activities, including those conducted online. Partnering with an experienced principal can provide invaluable insights that are grounded in lived experience as well as building a leader's professional network.

Coaching for sustained leadership growth Former principal and educational leader, Dr Paul Teys, concludes that the future of professional development for school leaders lies in innovative, focused, and accessible learning activities such as virtual coaching models, access to expert mentors, artificial intelligence-driven simulations, and immersive VR experiences.[6]

KEY AREAS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Professional leadership for school leaders needs to address Instructional leadership, leading teaching and learning

- Change and strategic leadership
- Leading innovation, change and informed improvement
- School management
- Community engagement and collaboration
- Cultural competence and inclusion
- Wellbeing and resilience
- System and policy knowledge
- Digital and data literacy

SUMMARY

Valuing principals begins with investing in their professional growth and equipping them with the contemporary leadership, pedagogical, and wellbeing skills required to thrive in increasingly dynamic educational environments. **APPA calls for sustained commitment and investment from the federal government as both a professional and ethical imperative, to ensure that every primary school principal in Australia has access to high-quality professional development.** Such a commitment, particularly as advocated in recent discussions with Minister Jason Clare, is crucial and represents a strategic investment in Australia's educational future, significantly benefiting leaders, teachers, students, and communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a **national framework** for professional learning for principals, ensuring consistency and relevance of PL across all educational sectors, highlighting support for rural and remote leaders.
2. Ensure that principals have **dedicated time and adequate resources** explicitly for PL activities, including coaching, leadership networks and peer mentoring.
3. **Formalise and sustain funding** for platforms such as the National Principals' Reference Group (NPRG), enabling cross-sectoral collaboration, peer learning, and policy advocacy.
4. **Embed professional learning** as a core element within educational policy frameworks, recognising its central role in overall school improvement.
5. **Prioritise wellbeing** within leadership development and establish a Principal Wellbeing and Efficacy Research Fund to underpin evidence-based practices, complementing ongoing research by ACU and Monash University
6. **Enable principals to lead and grow** by removing obstacles that block access to the professional development and collaboration essential for sustainable leadership.

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4 Levin, S. & Bradley, K. 'Understanding and addressing Principal turnover'. *NASSP Learning Policy Institute*. March 19, 2019. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/nassp-understanding-addressing-principal-turnover-review-research-report. Accessed 11 June 2025
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6 Henebery. 'Australia's school leadership.

PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) advocates for the implementation of professional supervision and support systems for school leaders. This approach addresses the growing challenges facing principals, including high stress levels, exposure to traumatic events, and the increasing complexity of their roles. Supporting school leaders' mental health and wellbeing is not just a matter of care but a strategic imperative that directly impacts staff wellbeing and, consequently, student outcomes.

Evidence demonstrates that proactive, preventative, and responsive programs tailored to the unique needs of school leaders can significantly improve their effectiveness, resilience, and overall job satisfaction. APPA calls for systemic investment in professional supervision frameworks, integrated support teams, and tailored initiatives for high-risk cohorts to ensure principals are well-equipped to lead thriving school communities.

"The principal role is marked by high exposure to challenging interactions, including conflicts, critical incidents, and community crises. Despite these challenges, principals currently lack access to professional supervision—a widely adopted framework in allied health professions."

THE CASE FOR ACTION

Mental Health and Wellbeing of School Leaders

Research consistently indicates a significant relationship between school staff well-being and student outcomes. To ensure principals lead effectively, their mental health must be prioritised through preventative, early intervention, and responsive programs. A strong narrative from the top, emphasising care and mental health, underscores the importance of accessible and quality-assured support services that deliver measurable outcomes.

Unique Challenges of the Principal Role

The principal role is marked by high exposure to challenging interactions, including conflicts, critical incidents, and community crises. Despite these challenges, principals currently lack access to professional supervision—a widely adopted framework in allied health professions. Reflective supervision, coaching, and integrated support systems are necessary to maintain their health and wellbeing while enabling them to navigate the complexities of their roles effectively.

PROPOSED INITIATIVES

Integrated Team Around the Principal

- Streamlined Access to Support: Reduce the number of steps required to access help, ensuring prompt and efficient resolution of issues.
- Trauma-Informed Responses: Embed trauma-informed practices into principal support systems to address the impact of critical incidents.
- Professional and Executive Coaching: Allocate $2,200 per school leader annually (CPI adjusted) for professional coaching, supported by high-level system endorsement. Provide this to schools directly and in addition to a leader's professional learning budget. ▸

Reflective Supervision Framework

Reflective supervision for school leaders is akin to clinical supervision for psychologists. In both contexts, the focus is on providing a structured, supportive environment for reflective practice, emotional resilience, and professional growth. For principals, this involves:

- Dedicated Time for Reflection: Just as clinical supervision allows psychologists to debrief and reflect on complex cases, principal supervision provides school leaders with opportunities to process challenging interactions and decisions.
- Expert Guidance: Supervision is led by trained professionals who understand the unique demands of school leadership, such as navigating trauma, resolving conflicts, and maintaining community relationships.
- Proactive and Restorative Support: Like clinical supervision, principal supervision helps to prevent burnout, foster resilience, and promote effective leadership practices.

THIS FRAMEWORK IS PARTICULARLY VITAL IN HIGH-RISK COHORTS:

- Low SES Communities: Address the compounded challenges of socio-economic disadvantage.
- Rural and Remote Schools: Provide targeted support for isolated or single leadership roles.
- Crisis-Affected Communities: Offer additional resources for schools recovering from events such as deaths, natural disasters, or significant disruptions.
- Data-Driven Targeting: Use evidence, such as community risk profiles, to prioritise supervision support.

CONCLUSION

Investing in the mental health and wellbeing of school leaders is a critical step toward building resilient, high-performing educational communities. **APPA calls for** professional supervision, integrated support systems, and targeted programs that can transform the way school leaders navigate their roles and maintain their wellbeing, ensuring they are equipped to lead with confidence and care.

APPA stands ready to advocate for and support these initiatives, ensuring the sustainability and success of Australian primary school leadership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

APPA advocates for the following.

- **Systemic investment in professional supervision**
  Allocate resources for reflective supervision programs tailored to the unique challenges of school leadership.
- **Integrated support teams**
  Establish multidisciplinary teams around principals to provide seamless and efficient access to support and reduce administrative burdens.
- **A national strategy for leadership preparation**
  Develop a unified approach to mental health prevention and support for school leaders, including strategies for personal agency and resilience.
- **Expanded research and data utilisation**
  Continue to invest in research that informs the development of effective support frameworks, ensuring initiatives are evidence-based and impactful.
- **Adoption of best practices**
  Learn from successful models in other states and countries to create a robust support system for Australian principals.

Research and Evidence

- APPA/ACU Research: Ongoing research on how offensive behaviours impact school leaders' productivity will provide valuable insights and inform further initiatives.[1]
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Data: Leveraging EAP usage data to identify trends, themes, and cohort-specific needs will enhance the design of support programs.[2]

1 'Violence escalates and mental health suffers but principals remain resilient.' ACU News. https://www.acu.edu.au/about-acu/news/2024/march/violence-escalates-and-mental-health-suffers-but-principals-remain-resilient

2 'Understanding average EAP utilisation rates: traditional vs. alternative Employee Assistance Programs.' Sonder. https://sonder.io/eap-hub/average-eap-utilisation-rates/

RAISING THE PROFILE OF PRIMARY LEADERS IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE

The Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) maintains that the contemporary role of the primary school principal is neither well understood or sufficiently valued by the broader community. Yet it is through their leadership that Australia's values of fairness, aspiration, and opportunity for all are brought to life, transforming national ideals into meaningful, everyday experiences for every child.

Today's primary school leaders are the cornerstone of a successful education system. Their role is far more expansive than traditional perceptions might suggest. They are not only leaders of teaching and learning but also visionary community connectors, mentors, counsellors, project managers, data analysts, and advocates. They operate with an unwavering commitment to every child's success, not just academically, but socially, emotionally, physically and creatively and as citizens of their communities.

THE ROLE OF PRINCIPALS

Principals are educational managers

Principals are the face of their schools. They communicate and build trust with families, lead school improvement, and foster deep, lasting partnerships with local councils, service organisations, and support networks, all in service of student wellbeing and achievement. They are highly skilled professionals who manage complex systems with fiscal responsibility, interpersonal acumen and strategic oversight.

In many ways, they are CEOs of their schools, ensuring that every moving part contributes to the shared goal of student success. According to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Principals 'align management procedures and processes to the educational goals and the vision and values of the school...ensuring that management procedures are fully understood by staff who take collective responsibility for the smooth and efficient running of the school.'[1]

Principals engage with communities and lead societal change

Their responsibilities extend beyond the school gates. Elliott and Hollingsworth note that principals are often regarded as leaders within the local community.[2] In many communities, principals serve on local fire brigades, coach sporting teams and, in country communities, negotiate housing and support for incoming teachers, demonstrating their integral role in sustaining vibrant communities. In every context, they are responsible for supporting student mental health, ensuring the safe administration of student medications, and advocating for families in crisis.

They also play a central role in shaping societal values and awareness among young learners. Whether promoting environmental responsibility, embracing multiculturalism, addressing bullying, or ensuring safety on roads and in water, principals are pivotal in guiding students to become informed, empathetic citizens. ▸

" Today's primary school leaders are the cornerstone of a successful education system. Their role is far more expansive than traditional perceptions might suggest. They are not only leaders of teaching and learning but also visionary community connectors, mentors, counsellors, project managers, data analysts, and advocates. "

Principals are agents of change and improvement

Critically, primary principals are leaders of change and professional growth. They develop staff, lead curriculum implementation, and analyse performance data to ensure pedagogical practices are impactful and both evidence and practice informed. Their leadership is committed to growing the teaching profession, ensuring that teachers are confident, capable, and empowered to meet the challenges of a rapidly evolving education landscape. According to Elliott, effective school leaders create opportunities for rigorous professional learning and collaboration that promotes a culture conducive to learning and development.[3]

Principals are moral leaders

More than operational leaders, primary principals are moral leaders. They champion the under-served, promote inclusion, cultivate creativity, and uphold the dignity and potential of every learner. They shape school cultures where young people are known, valued, and inspired to thrive. A 2023 paper drawing upon findings from Tasmanian, Victorian, and Northern Territory multiple-perspective case studies of successful primary, secondary, and special school principals found that the principals had strong values and beliefs, which were also reflected in the values, beliefs, and orientations of the schools.[4]

Since 2011, *The Conversation* has been surveying Australian school leaders about what is happening in their jobs, now the longest running survey of its type in the world. The 2023 survey found that the work levels, stress, and abuse continue but, on top of this, school leaders are experiencing significant levels of mental illness and more than half agreed or strongly agreed, 'I often seriously consider leaving my current job.'[5]

Imagine an education system without these leaders, without their commitment, their strategic insight, or their deep sense of moral purpose. The truth is, without effective primary leadership, the foundations of our education system would falter. It is through their stewardship that Australia can deliver a global standard education, one that recognises, nurtures, and celebrates the strengths of every child.

SECURING THE FUTURE

APPA calls for a national commitment to restoring respect, trust, and support for primary principals.

To secure the future of Australian education, we must **value and invest in** the people who hold its foundation steady, **our primary principals**. Esteeming their leadership begins with systems and governments publicly recognising the complexity and impact of their role, embedding their voice in decision-making, and ensuring their workload is sustainable.

This means:

- **designing policies** *with* principals, not *for* them,
- providing timely access to **professional learning** and coaching,
- **resourcing schools** to match the scope of leadership responsibilities,
- embedding system-wide structures that **prioritise principal wellbeing** and professional agency,
- **establishing systems that declutter their role**, allowing them to focus on their core business; creating the conditions for every child to thrive; academically, socially, and emotionally,
- **elevating their public profile** so that communities truly understand the depth of their contribution, not only to education, but to society.

When we lift our leaders, we lift our schools. When we lift our schools, we lift our nation. Because strong leadership in the primary years shapes not just classrooms; it shapes futures.

1 'Interactive leadership profiles'. *Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership*. https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/teach-documents/leading-the-management-of-the-school.pdf?sfvrsn=ef1aa43c_2. Accessed 29 June 2025.

2 Elliott, K., & Hollingsworth, H. (2020). 'A case for reimagining school leadership development to enhance collective efficacy.' *Australian Council for Educational Research*. https://research.acer.edu.au/educational_leadership/5/. Accessed 29 June 2025.

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4 Goode, H., Drysdale, L. & Gurr, D. (2023). 'What We Know about Successful School Leadership from Australian Cases and an Open Systems Model of School Leadership.' *Education Sciences*, vol. 13, issue 11. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13111142. Accessed 29 June 2025.

5 'School principals are reaching crisis point, pushed to the edge by mounting workloads, teacher shortages and abuse.' *The Conversation* (20 March 2023). https://theconversation.com/school-principals-are-reaching-crisis-point-pushed-to-the-edge-by-mounting-workloads-teacher-shortages-and-abuse-201777. Accessed 29 June 2025.

REDUCING RED TAPE IN AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: A SHIFT TOWARD EFFICIENCY AND TRUST

INTRODUCTION

The administrative burden on Australian primary school teachers and leaders has escalated, diverting valuable time and resources away from teaching and learning. Reports from the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2020)[1] and the Queensland Department of Education (2025)[2] and input from educational experts at the recent APPA Educational Summit, highlight the urgent need to streamline compliance and administrative processes. This position paper argues for a paradigm shift, moving from a compliance-driven system to a trust-based framework, supported by strategic guardrails to ensure accountability and equity. In reducing red tape, Australian schools can refocus on what matters most: improving student outcomes through high-impact teaching and learning.

THE BURDEN OF COMPLIANCE

AITSL's *Shifting the Balance* report (2020) identifies excessive administrative tasks as a key barrier to effective teaching. Educators are increasingly burdened by repetitive data entry, rigid templates, and complex documentation requirements, often without a clear link to student outcomes.

A recent APPA survey (2024) found that most primary principals spend between 61% and 80% of their work week on administration and compliance. This cumulative load is significantly reducing time for instructional leadership and student support.

Key pressure points identified by school leaders include:

- Extensive documentation for student wellbeing and behaviour management
- Procedural requirements for excursions and camps, often governed by duplicative and inflexible processes

While risk and compliance are essential, their current implementation is inefficient and contributes to staff burnout.

KEY CHALLENGES

1. **Duplication of Reporting**
   Schools are frequently required to submit the same or similar data to multiple agencies. This redundancy creates additional work without adding value or improving educational outcomes.
2. **Rigid Bureaucratic Processes**
   Many compliance systems apply uniform rules to all schools, regardless of context. State and Federal rulings vary and often contradict or duplicate. This limits responsiveness and creates inefficiencies in schools with different needs and capacities.
3. **Limited Local Autonomy**
   School leaders often report being unable to adapt procedures to suit their local communities due to overly prescriptive mandates, undermining professional judgment.

These challenges are symptoms of a broader systemic issue: a culture of distrust that prioritises evidencing compliance over enabling effective teaching.

A PARADIGM SHIFT: TRUST OVER COMPLIANCE

To meaningfully reduce red tape, the education system must transition from rigid proceduralism to a model that empowers educators and respects their expertise. This requires structural and cultural change: simplifying systems, decentralising authority, and using technology as a tool for efficiency rather than surveillance. ▸

PRINCIPLES OF A TRUST-BASED FRAMEWORK

- **Decentralised Decision-Making**
  Schools should be granted greater autonomy to interpret and implement compliance measures. Clear guidelines can replace detailed prescriptions, allowing leaders to tailor their practices to local needs.
- **Risk-Based Regulation**
  Oversight should be proportional. High-risk areas may warrant closer scrutiny, while low-risk areas can be managed with simplified processes.
- **Technology-Driven Solutions**
  Integrated digital systems can eliminate duplication, automate low-risk reporting, and reduce reliance on manual data entry.
- **Recognition of Professional Expertise**
  Educators must be trusted as professionals capable of self-regulation within clear ethical and operational standards. This is aligned with AITSL's (2020) call for greater emphasis on evidence-informed professional judgment.

GUARDRAILS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Shifting toward trust does not mean eliminating oversight. Accountability mechanisms must remain, but should support, not hinder, professional practice.

- **Targeted, Periodic Audits:** Audits should focus on key indicators and be conducted periodically rather than continuously. This approach balances transparency with practicality.
- **Consolidated Reporting Platforms:** A single portal for data submission would streamline reporting, reduce duplication, and enable greater consistency across jurisdictions.
- **Collaborative Policy Design:** Compliance frameworks should be co-designed with educators, school leaders, and policy-makers to ensure relevance, feasibility, and shared ownership.

These measures reinforce trust by ensuring consistency and fairness, without unnecessary micromanagement.

EMPOWERING SCHOOL LEADERS

Reducing red tape requires a reimagining of leadership roles. Principals must be supported and trusted to lead instructional improvement rather than to administer compliance. APPA encourages this shift, suggesting that school leaders be equipped with the flexibility and authority to manage school operations in ways that prioritise learning outcomes.

Key reforms include:

- Allowing leaders to adapt or temporarily suspend administrative processes during peak periods (e.g., reporting cycles)
- Providing targeted professional learning to help leaders navigate complexity with clarity and confidence
- Recognising and rewarding schools that innovate in reducing administrative burden without compromising quality

In addition, the growing compliance burden in primary schools over the past decade has not been matched by an increase in staffing. If red tape is deemed essential, it must be accompanied by the human resources required to manage it. Only then will school leaders see a genuine commitment to reducing workload and improving job satisfaction, both critical to sustaining a strong and stable workforce.

CONCLUSION

Reducing red tape in Australian primary schools is not merely a question of cutting paperwork; it is about restoring trust in the professional expertise of leaders and educators. Through decentralised decision-making, risk-based regulation, digital integration, and collaborative accountability, the education system can shift from a culture of compliance to one of trust, underpinned by appropriate guardrails. The AITSL (2020) and Queensland Department of Education (2025) reports provide a clear mandate for this transformation. Implemented systemically, these reforms will allow educators to focus on their core mission: teaching, leading, and helping every student thrive.

1. 'Shifting the balance: Increasing the focus on teaching and learning by reducing the burden of compliance and administration', *Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)* 2020 https://pages.aitsl.edu.au/red-tape/review-to-reduce-red-tape-for-teachers-and-school-leaders
2. 'Red Tape Reduction for Queensland Teachers', *Department of Education* 2025 https://education.qld.gov.au/initiativesstrategies/Documents/red-tape-reduction-consultation-report.pdf

IPSHA Biennial National Conference 2026



Welcome to the IPSHA Biennial National Conference 2026!

FREMANTLE, WA

Thu 04 - Sat 06 June 2026

Click HERE to Register!

Kaya Wanju — a warm Western Australian welcome to you all.

On behalf of the IPSHA WA Branch, in conjunction with the IPSHA Board, it is my great pleasure to invite you to the IPSHA Biennial National Conference, to be held in the historic and vibrant port city of Fremantle, Western Australia, from the 6th to the 9th of June 2026, conveniently timed to back onto the eastern states weekend for those who may wish to spend some extra time in the West! This is the first Biennial Conference hosted in Western Australia in 14 years, and we are delighted to welcome you to our great state.

Our theme, "Be Present," is both an invitation and a challenge. As leaders in education, we are constantly balancing the demands of the moment with the responsibilities of shaping the future. This conference will encourage us to pause, connect, reflect, and fully engage - with colleagues, with inspiring speakers, and with the future of primary education.

Across the program you will hear from keynote speakers, innovative thinkers, and educational leaders who will provoke thought and inspire practice, who will share insights into leadership, learning, and the challenges and opportunities shaping education today.

Beyond the program, the conference is designed to connect us in collegiality and fellowship. Fremantle, with its rich history, creative spirit, and coastal charm provides the perfect backdrop for meaningful conversations, moments of renewal, and shared celebration.

From the Wells Oration to the closing conference dinner at the WA Maritime Museum overlooking Fremantle Harbour, we trust you will experience both professional enrichment and personal refreshment.

Your involvement in the Biennial Conference strengthens IPSHA's proud tradition of supporting one another, sharing ideas, and celebrating all that is good about leading primary education.

We warmly encourage you to register, embrace the opportunities on offer, and most importantly, to be fully present, for yourself, for your colleagues, and for the students we serve.

We look forward to welcoming you to Fremantle in June 2026.

Anthony Moses
President, IPSHA WA Branch





2026 BRANCH MEETING DATES

Mark Your Calendar!

Please add the following State Branch Meetings and National IPSHA Member Event dates to your calendar in preparation for 2026.

	TERM 1	TERM 2	TERM 3	TERM 4
NATIONAL		**2026 IPSHA Biennial National Conference** 04 - 06 June 2026	**ICP Conference** 16 - 18 September 2026	
APPA/NAC		**Primary Education Summit** 26 May 2026	**2026 APPA National Conference** 31 August - 3 September 2026	
NSW	**Term 1 Branch Meeting** 14 March 2026	**Term 2 Branch Meeting** 15 May 2026	**Term 3 Branch Meeting** 7 August 2026	**Term 4 Branch Meeting** 6 November 2026
QLD	**Term 1 Branch Meeting** 6 March 2026	**Term 2 Branch Meeting** 29 May 2026 (Online)	**Term 3 Branch Meeting** 21 August 2026	**Term 4 Branch Meeting** 16 October 2026
SA	**Term 1 Branch Meeting** 25 February 2026	**Term 2 Branch Meeting** *Date To Be Confirmed*	**Term 3 Branch Meeting** 12 August 2026	**Term 4 Branch Meeting** 4 November 2026
TAS	**Term 1 Branch Meeting** 26 February 2026	**Term 2 Branch Meeting** 29 May 2026 (Online)	**Term 3 Branch Meeting** 10 August 2026	**Term 4 Branch Meeting** 29 October 2026
VIC	**Term 1 Branch Meeting** 13 March 2026	**Term 2 Branch Meeting** 11 June 2026	**Term 3 Branch Meeting** 28 August 2026	**Term 4 Branch Meeting** 13 November 2026
WA	**Term 1 Branch Meeting** 20 March 2026	**Term 2 Branch Meeting** 05 June 2026	**Term 3 Branch Meeting** 28 August 2026	**Term 4 Branch Meeting** 20 November 2026



The IPSHA Board wish to **thank you** for your support, collegiality and partnership throughout 2025.

We wish you have a relaxing and rejuvenating holiday season.

May 2026 bring hope, joy, and many positive opportunities and experiences!

ipsha

The IPSHA National Office will be closed from Monday **22 December** to Monday **12 January** 2026

INDEPENDENT PRIMARY SCHOOL HEADS OF AUSTRALIA LTD



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