

IPSHA Media Release

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Heads Up! – School Leaders’ Health and Wellbeing Requires A Call To Action

The Independent Primary School Heads of Australia (IPSHA) is urging Federal and State Ministers for Education to place their focus and attention on the health and wellbeing of our nation’s school leaders.

The recently released longitudinal [2020 Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey](#) has shown alarming findings, and these need to be addressed.

IPSHA President, Paul Clegg, said issues of concern highlighted in the 2020 survey included: longer hours of work, the strain of having to deal with an emotionally and physically demanding work environment, and an increase in threats and actual physical violence against school leaders. School leaders, as a group, are at risk of fatigue, mental health decline and burnout. On average, school leaders spend between 51-60 hours per week at work during term time.

The 2020 survey recommends an urgent need to establish an independent authority to investigate offensive behaviours occurring in schools including adult-on-adult bullying, and threats of violence and actual violence, and IPSHA fully supports this recommendation.

The 2020 Survey findings recommend opportunities for school leaders to engage in professional support networks on a regular basis as professional support is a strong predictor of coping with the demands of a school leadership role. Collegial and professional support for its members had always been a cornerstone of IPSHA and Mr Clegg stated that responding to the recommendations of the [2020 Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey](#) would be a priority for IPSHA. Current IPSHA members have access to confidential counselling services, funded by IPSHA, and further information on how members can access these services is available on the IPSHA website at <https://www.ipsha.org.au/members-area/resources/counselling-services/>. The sharing and learning from successful strategies implemented in other networks will also be important in a united approach to addressing school leader health and wellbeing.

School leaders stepped up during 2020, leading their communities through uncertainty and constant change through the COVID-19 pandemic, and continue to do so. The diversity within schools, in terms of access to resources and complexity of the changing landscape, played a significant role in how school leaders were able to cater for the needs of their communities, as did the increased workload and stress levels.

‘Through such adversity, school leaders and teachers deserved the praise and respect received from parents’, said IPSHA President, Paul Clegg. Mr Clegg further commented that ‘Educational leadership is such a giving profession and the 2020 Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing survey has provided a clear ‘heads up’ to our Federal and State Governments to invest in the education leaders of our nation through training, resources and support services.’

‘A united call to action is required by Governments, Researchers, Support Services, Education Associations for the health and wellbeing of School Leaders.’

ENDS

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IPSHA represents more than 380 Principals and Heads nationwide. Its members lead schools in the independent sector, ranging from ELC to Middle School.