

## Incoming National President's Address 2026 IPSHA National Conference: Fremantle, WA



**Date:** Friday, 05 May 2026

Good morning everyone,

It is both an honour and a privilege to stand before you today as National President of IPSHA.

Thank you for the trust you have placed in me. I feel incredibly privileged to serve this association and to work alongside such an extraordinary group of leaders over the next two years.

I would also like to acknowledge our outgoing President, Martin Lubrano, and thank him for his leadership, commitment and service to IPSHA. Martin has led our Association with integrity, wisdom and a deep belief in the power of connection. His leadership has strengthened relationships across our states, elevated the voice of primary education and ensured that IPSHA remains a collegial and supportive professional home for its members. Martin, thank you for all you have contributed to our Association.

I would also like to acknowledge the IPSHA Board, our Executive Officer Paul Clegg, and our administration and finance teams. Their commitment to IPSHA and its members is extraordinary, and I thank them sincerely for the work they do behind the scenes to support our association.

As I prepared for this conference, I found myself reflecting on my own IPSHA story.

A few weeks ago, when I announced my appointment as National President, one of the first messages I received was from Chris Lawson, a Victorian Honorary State Life Member.

What struck me was that Chris was also the person who first invited me to an IPSHA meeting back in 2008.

At the time, I was simply a leader looking to learn from others. I certainly wasn't imagining that one day I would stand here as National President.

Yet looking back, that invitation changed far more than I realised at the time.

I thought I was joining a professional association.

What I actually found was a community.

Over the years, IPSHA has been there through some of the most rewarding moments of my leadership career and some of the most challenging. At all of those times, IPSHA members have been there too. They have shared ideas, offered support, challenged my thinking and reminded me that leadership is never something we do alone.

This week we have the privilege of recognising nine new National Life Members.

Among them are Julie Rimes and Paul Clegg.

While I never had the privilege of knowing Julie personally, I am very conscious that leaders like Julie helped create opportunities for those who followed. As the first female President of JSAAA, her leadership helped shape the association we know today.

Paul's contribution has been different, but equally significant.

For me personally, Paul saw something in me that I had not yet seen in myself. At times when I questioned my own readiness, Paul never seemed to. His belief gave me the confidence to take opportunities that I may otherwise have stepped away from, and I am deeply grateful for that.

As I reflect on those relationships, I am reminded that every leader can point to people who have encouraged them, challenged them, opened doors for them or simply listened when the weight of leadership felt heavy.

Perhaps that is why the recent Principal Wellbeing Survey resonated so strongly with many of us.

The findings confirm what school leaders already know. Leadership is becoming increasingly complex, and too many leaders are carrying that responsibility in isolation.

It is one of the best jobs in the world.

And sometimes it includes some of the hardest days.

That is why organisations like IPSHA matter.

Not because they solve every challenge we face, but because they connect us with people who understand the work. They create opportunities for us to learn from one another, support one another and remind each other that we are not alone.

Over the next two years, I hope principal wellbeing remains an important focus for our association. If there is one thing I hope to contribute as National President, it is ensuring

that current and future leaders feel as supported by IPSHA as I have throughout my own leadership journey.

As we begin this conference, my hope is simple.

That somewhere over the next few days you have a conversation that challenges your thinking, restores your energy or reminds you why you chose this work in the first place.

We are all busy. We all know how difficult it can be to step away from our schools.

Yet if my own experience has taught me anything, it is that time invested in IPSHA is never time away from your leadership.

It is time invested in your leadership.

So my encouragement to you is simple.

Attend the sessions.

Join the conversations.

Make time for the social events.

Reach out to colleagues.

Be present.

Because some of the most important conversations of your career may happen over the next few days.

As we look ahead, I also believe IPSHA has an important role to play in advocating for the voice of primary education.

We know that the foundations laid in our schools shape learning, wellbeing, confidence and character. Over the next two years, I hope we continue to strengthen our collective voice, share our expertise and ensure that primary education remains at the centre of conversations about the future of education in Australia.

Because when we advocate for primary education, we are advocating for the children and communities we serve.

Looking back, I am incredibly grateful that I accepted Chris's invitation all those years ago.

My hope is that this conference does the same for each of you.

Whether this is your first conference or your twentieth, I hope you leave with new ideas, renewed energy and, perhaps most importantly, stronger connections.

Because at its heart, IPSHA is a community.

And I feel incredibly privileged to be part of it.

Thank you.

**Allison Prandolini**

IPSHA National President