

Video transcript:

Principal Health and Wellbeing

About this audit

In this audit, we looked at whether the Department of Education is protecting the health and wellbeing of the school principals it employs, including monitoring and reporting on outcomes, and identifying root causes of issues.

Why this audit is important

Currently, government school principals experience high levels of stress, burnout and sleeping troubles.

What we concluded

We concluded that the department is not effectively protecting the health and wellbeing of its principals.

We found several reasons for this – most significantly, workload.

Key reason 1: Principals' workload

On average, principals report working 55 hours per week during school term – 17 hours above their standard hours.

WorkSafe says that working long hours can increase a person's risk of ill health. This aligns strongly with principals' high levels of stress, burnout and sleeping troubles.

Key reason 2: Outcomes not improving

Though the department has developed many strategies and initiatives since 2018, these have not improved outcomes for principals.

The department needs to do more to reduce principals' volume of work.

Most of the initiatives are intended to reduce workload, but they primarily focus on increasing efficiency rather than cutting the amount of work.

Principals have welcomed new services, which include advice, templates and streamlined systems and processes.

But they need better access to support and more opportunities to delegate some school administration.

Key reason 3: Inadequate monitoring and reporting

The department also needs to better monitor, evaluate and report on health and wellbeing so it understands if its initiatives are achieving their desired outcomes.

For example, it has not set baseline outcome levels to measure progress over time, and does not monitor data specifically for Victorian government school principals.

These shortcomings mean it does not fully understand how principals are faring.

What we recommended

To address these issues we made 3 recommendations to the department about:

- further reducing principal workload
- better monitoring, evaluating and reporting on principal health and wellbeing outcomes.

More information

To read our full report or download a transcript of this video, please see our website