

The Changing Role of the Principal.

Commissioned Paper.
South Australian Secondary Principals Association.
March 1998.



Pat Thomson

From the Archive: The Changing Role of the Principal (1998 SASPA Research Paper)

In 1998, former SASPA president, Pat Thomson, was commissioned to write a paper to inform Enterprise Agreement negotiations between the Australian Education Union (SA), SASPA and the Department of Education, Training and Employment.

The paper concluded that “the current industrial arrangements fail to build in and reward all that school leadership and management now demands”.

Thomson’s paper identified 8 issues or factors related to those work demands.

1. Leading and managing a school in a context of paradoxes and tensions.
2. Increase in managerial work (i.e., devolved responsibilities, risk prevention, accountability measures).
3. Work in a re-adjusted hierarchy (i.e., “performativity”).
4. Work in the context of scarcity.
5. A complexity of reform tasks.
6. An hierarchical approach to reform.
7. Lack of recognition of difference.
8. Work in a high-pressure context.

Twenty-one years on, these issues remain unresolved for our profession, as does the tension between remuneration for the demands of the job and recognising that the demands of the job need to change.