

# Imagination and activism for the re-conceptualised principalship

SASPA CONFERENCE  
August 2025

**DR FIONA LONGMUIR**

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# Acknowledgement of Country

I acknowledge and pay my respects to the Kurna people, the traditional custodians whose ancestral lands we gather on today.  
I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

I would also like to acknowledge the Boonwurrug and Wurundjeri people, communities of the Kulin Nations, who are the ongoing custodians of the lands on which Monash University now stand.

I also acknowledge any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are present.



Bujil sculpture by Bruce Armstrong





# The Reading Guarantee: How to give every child the best chance of success

## NSW teachers to embrace 'step by step' explicit instruction method amid major syllabus shake-up

State becomes first to mandate methodology in overhaul educators hope will allow disabled and disadvantaged students catch up to their peers

Premier of Victoria  
Hon Jacinta Allan MP

The team Media

[Home](#)



## Making Best Practice Common Practice In The Education State

# ‘Everything came down to the evidence’: inside one school’s sweeping instructional shift

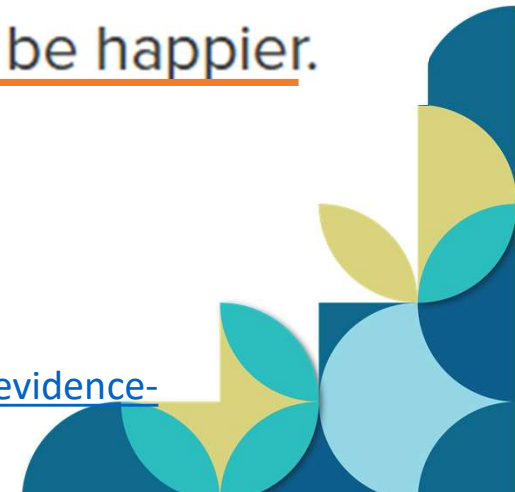


By Sarah Duggan

Published August 14, 2025

According to recent data, student satisfaction at [redacted] Primary School has dropped. And principal [redacted] couldn't be happier.

<https://educationhq.com/news/everything-came-down-to-the-evidence-inside-one-schools-sweeping-instructional-shift-197792/>



# ‘Everything came down to the evidence’: inside one school’s sweeping instructional shift



By Sarah Duggan

Published August 14, 2025

“[It was a case of, ‘let’s do a half hour lesson on democracy,’ rather than spend a four-week unit, as exciting as it could be, creating lesson plans all around that, and taking away from the real learning around English and maths, because our results really weren’t showing that we had that luxury,” the principal explains.

<https://educationhq.com/news/everything-came-down-to-the-evidence-inside-one-schools-sweeping-instructional-shift-197792/>

# ‘Everything came down to the evidence’: inside one school’s sweeping instructional shift



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Next to go was play-based learning, along with inquiry-based learning more broadly.

<https://educationhq.com/news/everything-came-down-to-the-evidence-inside-one-schools-sweeping-instructional-shift-197792/>





## ‘Everything came down to the evidence’: inside one school’s sweeping instructional shift



By Sarah Duggan

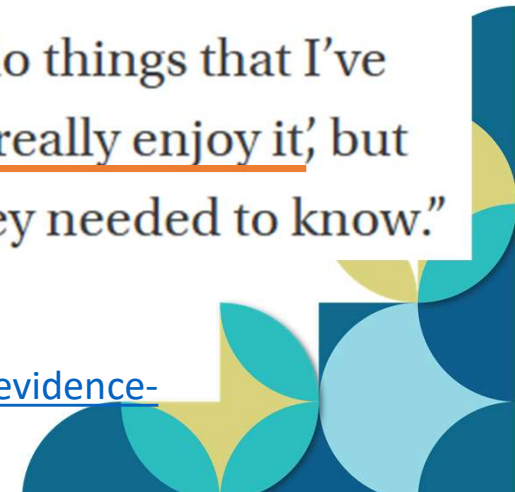
Published August 14,

A new level of scrutiny also came into play, the principal adds.

“Everything came down to evidence. So, it might be nice to do this new program, but what’s the evidence behind it? What’s the research say? Is this going to be our best bang for buck when we implement it?

“We really had to shift the culture of ‘happy just to do things that I’ve done forever, because it’s comfortable and the kids really enjoy it’, but really the lessons weren’t teaching the kids what they needed to know.”

<https://educationhq.com/news/everything-came-down-to-the-evidence-inside-one-schools-sweeping-instructional-shift-197792/>





## ‘Everything came down to the evidence’: inside one school’s sweeping instructional shift



By Sarah Duggan  
Published August 14, 2025

At [REDACTED], [REDACTED] says the positive impact of the initiative is showing up in all areas, from staffroom chats to the school’s NAPLAN results.

# *Where are the kids??*

<https://educationhq.com/news/everything-came-down-to-the-evidence-inside-one-schools-sweeping-instructional-shift-197792/>





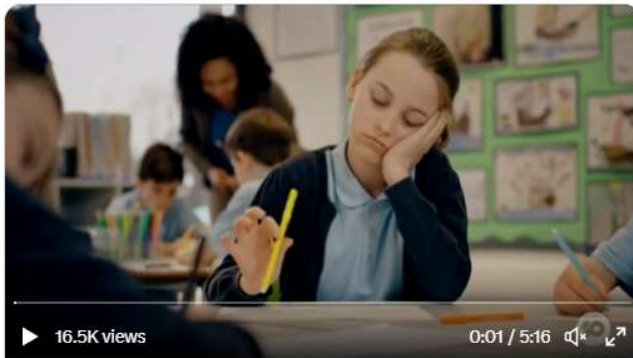
**LIVE BLOG** Keep up with the latest ASX and business news

## ANALYSIS

# Australia's teacher shortage is a generational crisis in the making. How can we turn things around?

The Project @theprojecttv

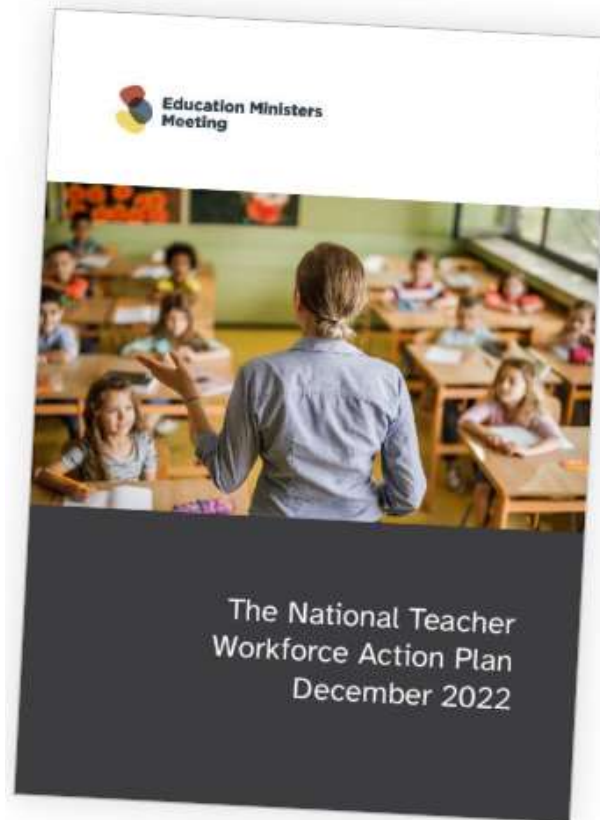
Teachers are stressed, overworked, overwhelmed and across the country educators are quitting with schools struggling to find people to replace them. So what can be done to fix the national teacher shortage? @EmilyKBrewin left the profession in 2021 and joins us. #TheProjectTV



16.5K views

0:01 / 5:16

Teachers Quitting In Huge Numbers



# Teacher shortages: It's week one and principals are already back in the classroom

7NEWS Melbourne @7NewsMelbourne

Australia's education system is at crisis point and is about to undergo its biggest overhaul in a decade. The number of teachers entering the industry has dropped by sixteen per cent over the last decade. To discuss, @mikeamor7 spoke with @RealSchools1 CEO, @adam\_voigt. #7NEWS



**SCHOOLS AT CRISIS POINT**  
TEACHING ENROLMENTS DROP 16% OVER PAST DECADE

860 views

The Sydney Morning Herald

National NSW Education

# The top Sydney public school offering \$20,000 bonuses to lure teachers



- Globally an estimated 44 million teachers are needed by 2030
- Attrition of primary school teachers doubled between 2015 and 2022 (UNESCO, 2023)
- Teacher shortages in Australia have moved from a concern of hard-to-staff schools, to be a general concern for most schools

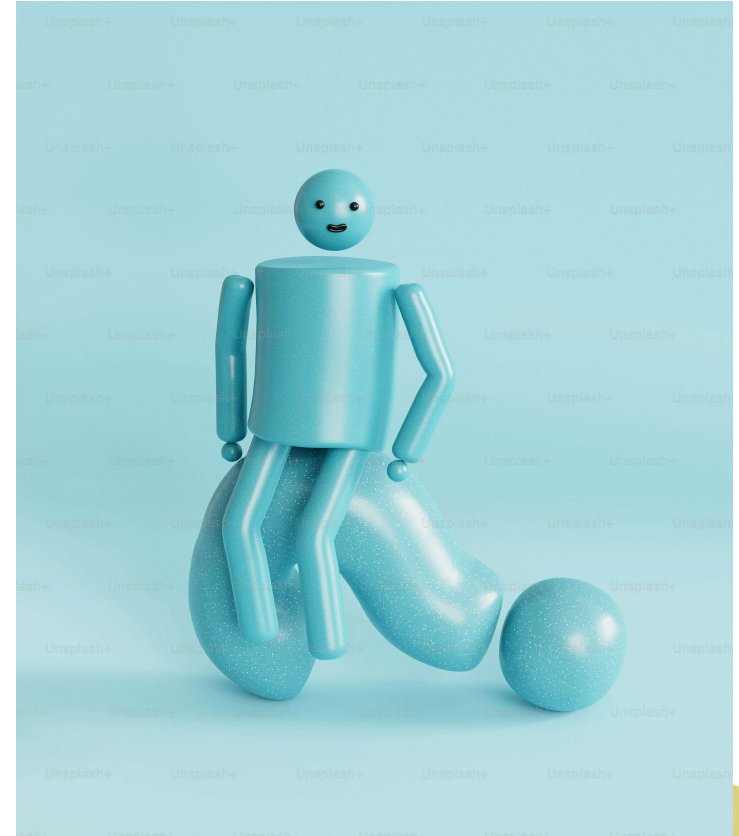
# Teacher retention data

- *Australian Teacher Perceptions of their Work*  
(2022, 5500 Australian teachers)  
**28% intend to stay**
- *What the Profession Needs Now for the Future*  
(2024, 8800 Victorian educators)  
**31% intend to stay**
- *AITSL Australian Teacher Workforce Data*  
(2023, 55,500 Australian teachers)  
**26% intended to stay**



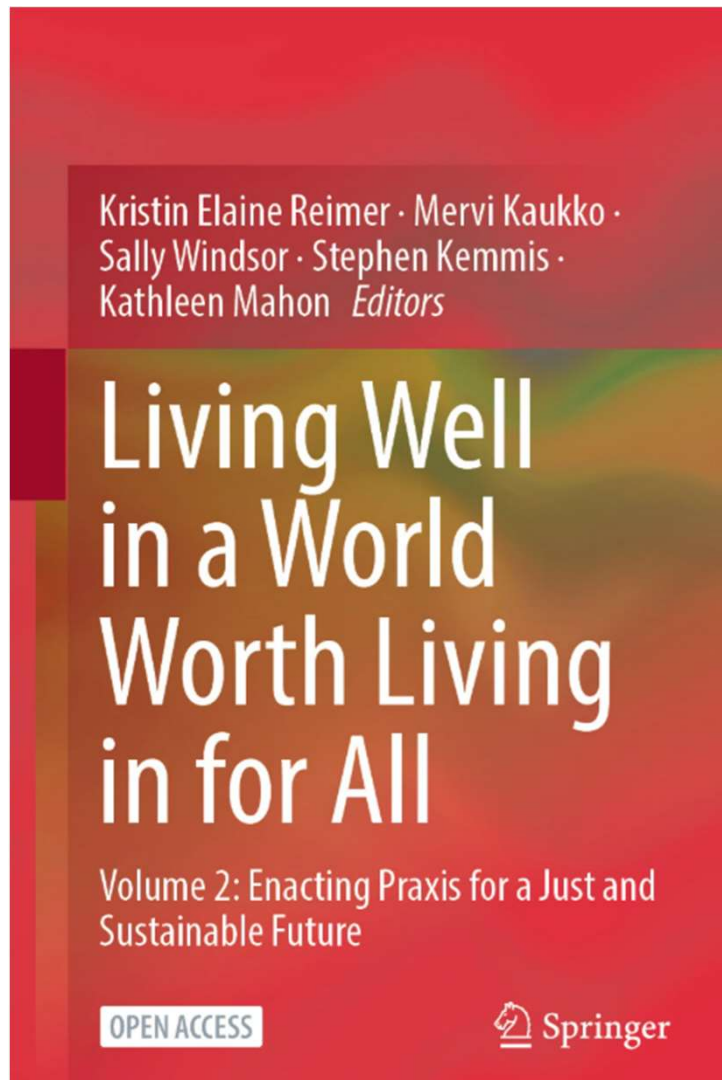
**Uncertain about a future in schools**

**40%**









## Chapter 5 Potential of Students' Voices to Contribute to Education for a Future World Worth Living In

Fiona Longmuir

**Abstract** This chapter examines the positioning and potential of students to contribute to the evolution of educational practices and arrangements that better



***A 16–17 year-old in Australia today has spent most of their years of adolescence amidst crisis: devastating bushfires, an ongoing pandemic and unprecedented flooding events – and these are just the crises that have impacted directly on our nation, never mind looking further afield to global issues such as wars in Europe and the Middle East, and threats to liberal democracy in the United States of America (USA).***

***At a time when young people are moving to independence and exploring possibilities for a future beyond the safety of their families and their homes, the world is presenting as a scary and uncertain place.***







**Australian Government**  
**Australian Institute of  
Family Studies**



## Key findings

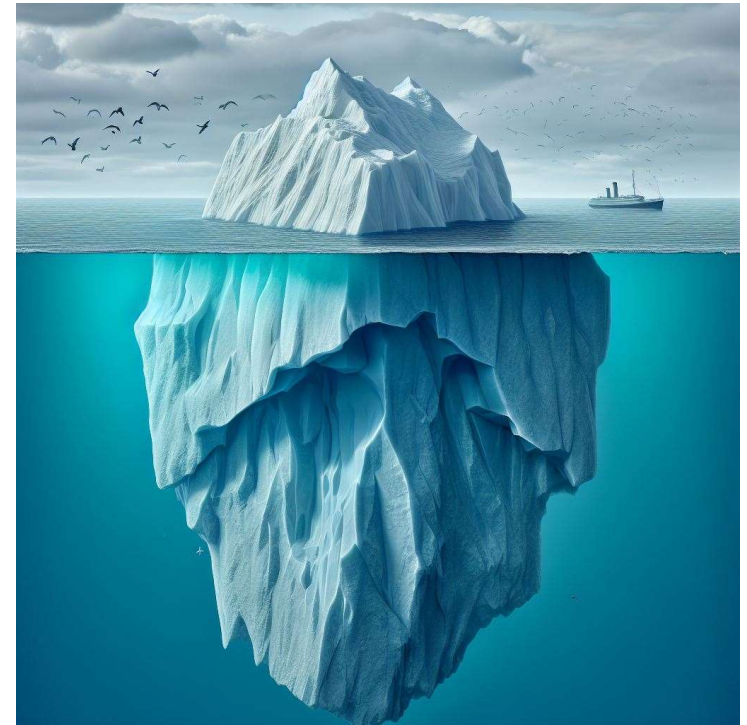
**34%**

**of young people reported suicidal thoughts and behaviours by age 19**



# Student disengagement

- 20% not starting Year 12
- 64% of those who start are finishing
- Year 9 attendance rates 85%



# Disenfranchisement

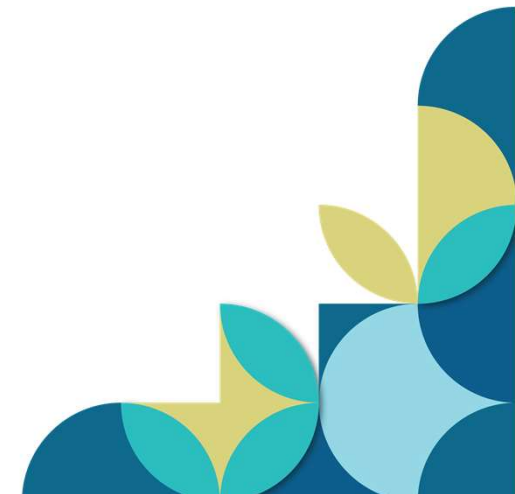
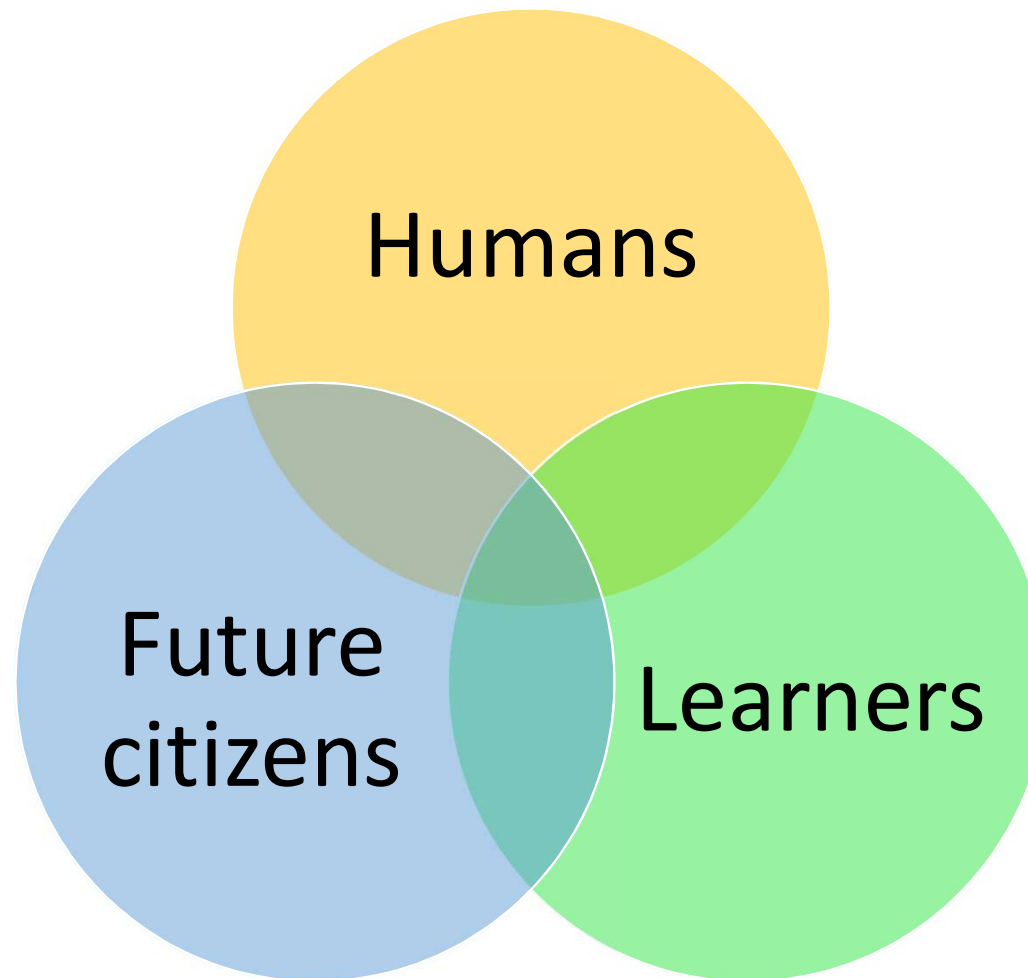
When students feel they don't belong due to a misalignment of their needs with school arrangements.

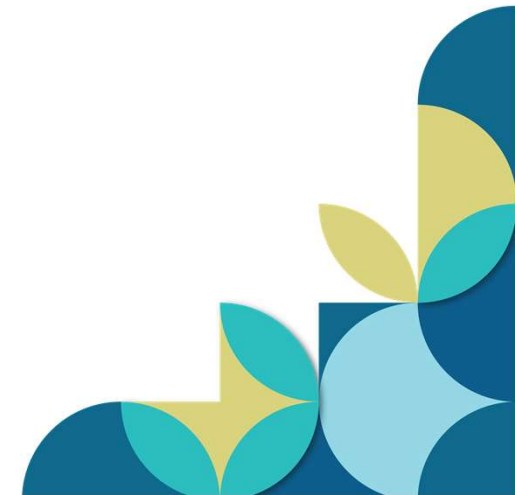
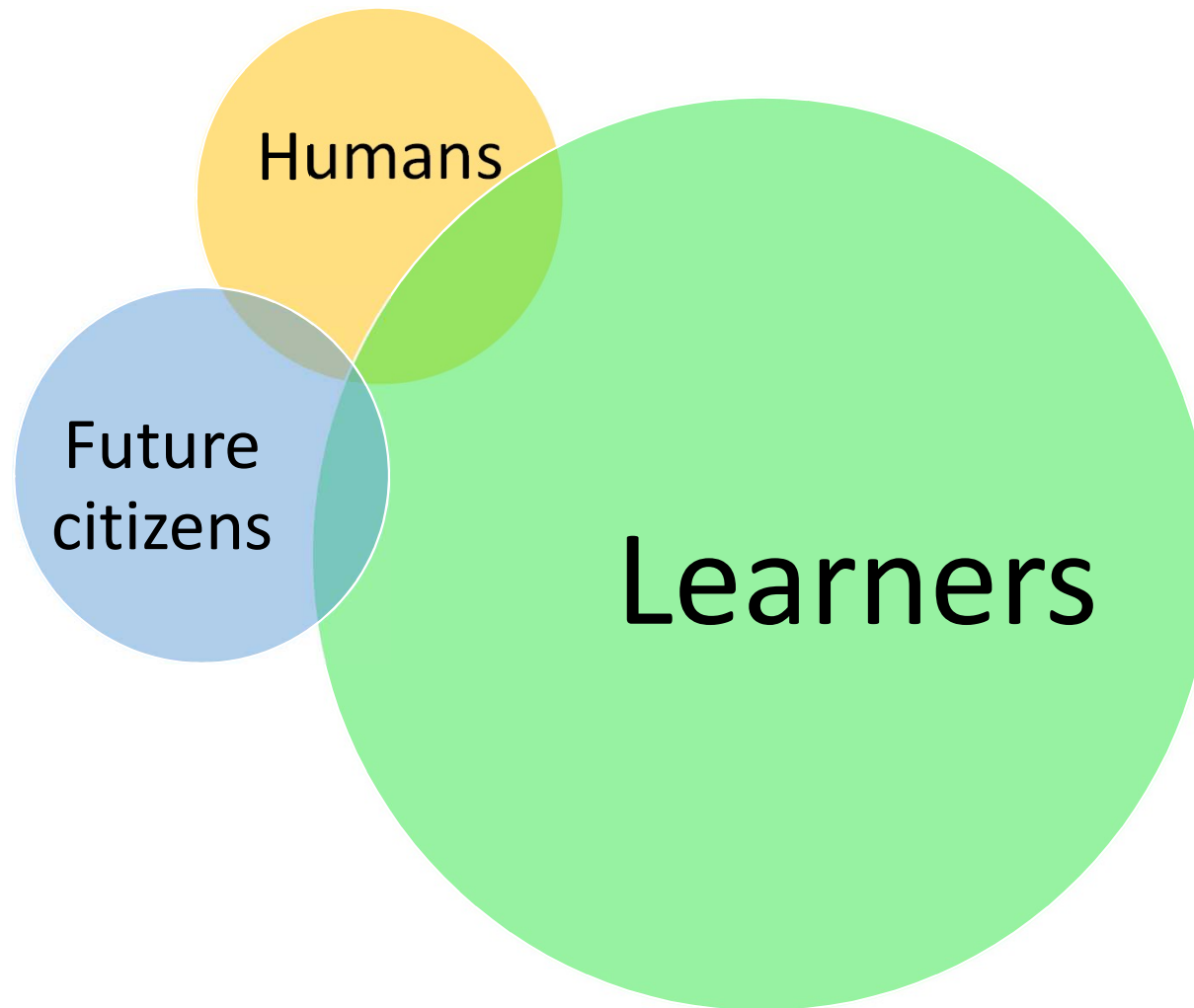




*“I missed a lot and... if I asked for help in class, they’d explain but they didn’t really care...they just pointed at the board and explained again...and everyone else knew what they were doing and then I’d feel like ‘I don’t understand’ but they’d just leave it and move on”.*

*“they’ve got their job and their job is set: to teach everybody in the class”*









## School leaders' work (ACU Survey, 2024)

- 53% intending to leave the profession
- 45% of principals triggered a “red flag” alert in 2024, indicating risks of self-harm, serious occupational health issues, or quality of life impacts
- 49.6% of principals experienced physical violence, and 54.5% faced threats of violence—the highest levels since the survey began

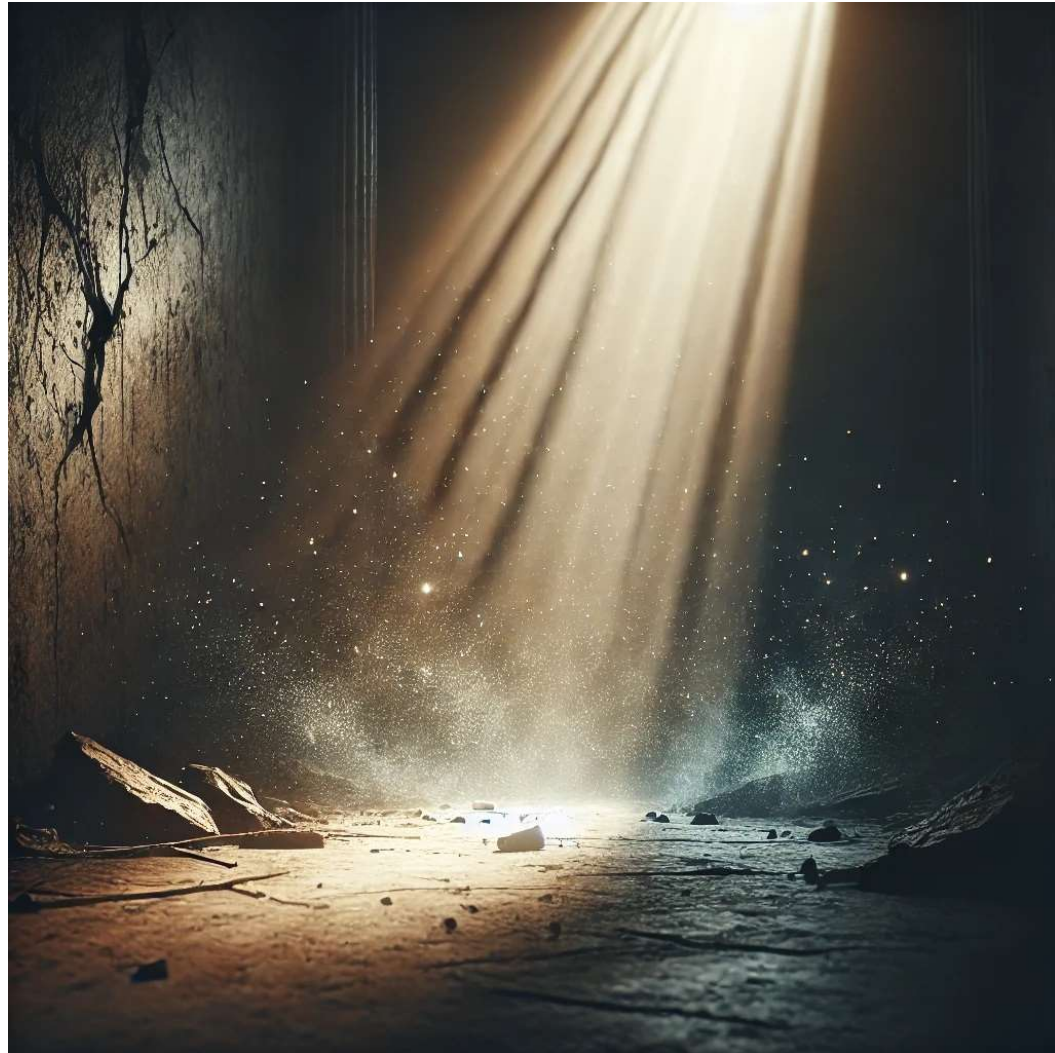
# School leaders' work (Principals Emotional Labour study)

- **The impact of emotional labour on the individual principal**
  - Wearing a professional mask
  - The bodily impacts of emotional labour.
- **Schools and emotional labour**
  - The escalation of violence in schools
  - Social volatility and gendered tension
  - Emotional labour as a collective act of solidarity.
- **Emotional Labour, Schooling and Education Systems**
  - Exploitation of principals' care

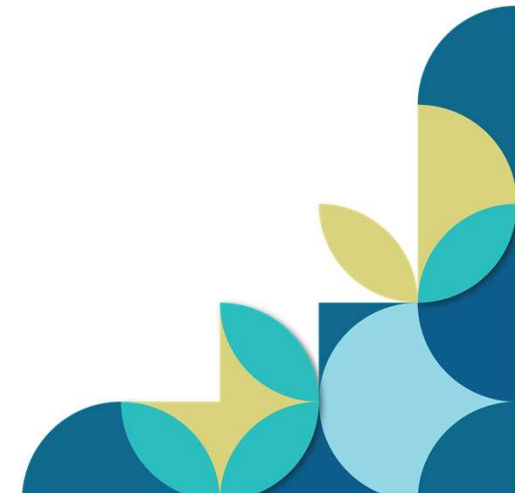
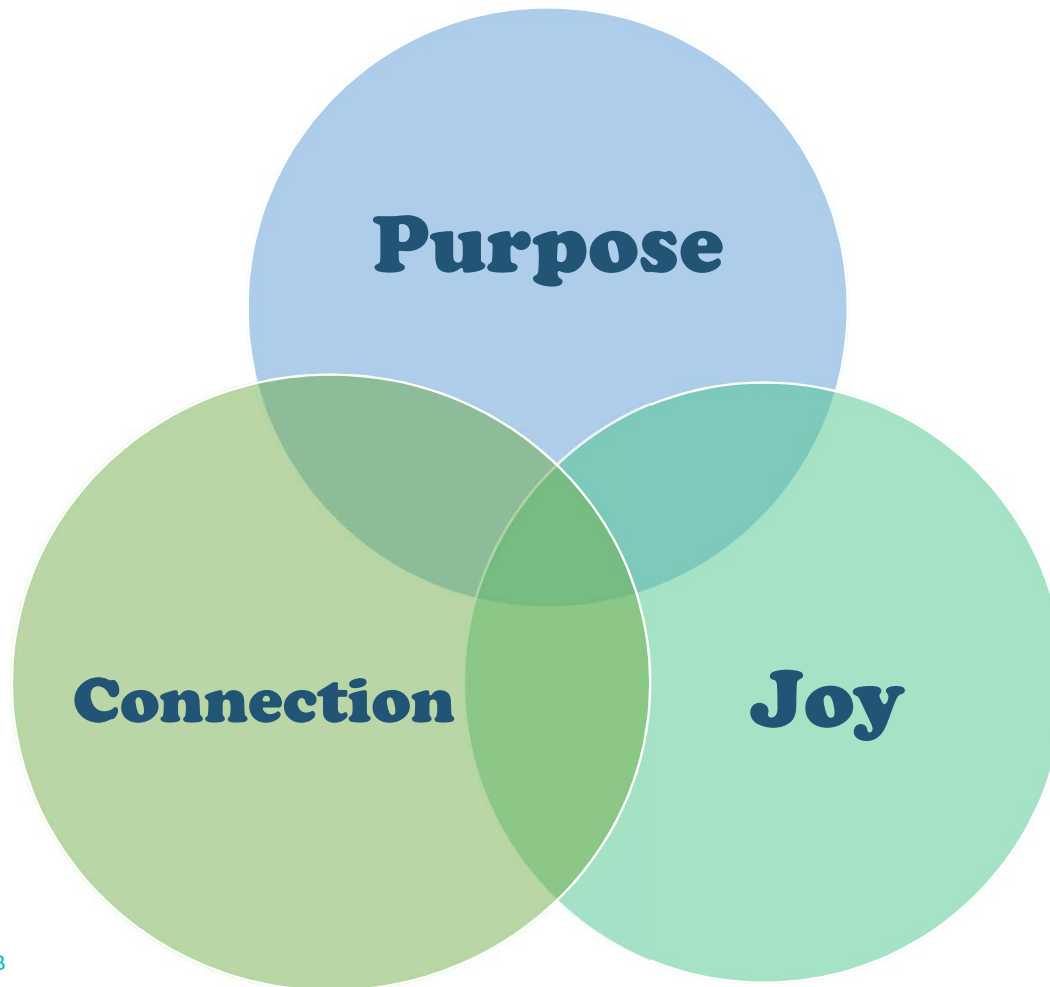
<https://www.monash.edu/education/research/projects/school-principals-emotional-labour-in-volatile-times>



# FINDING THE LIGHT



# EQUITY, EXCELLENCE... *AND ENJOYMENT?*





*The environment is **happier** here. Like you can **talk to anyone**, everyone just has their own opinion and they can express it really freely, whereas at my old school it was more conservative.*

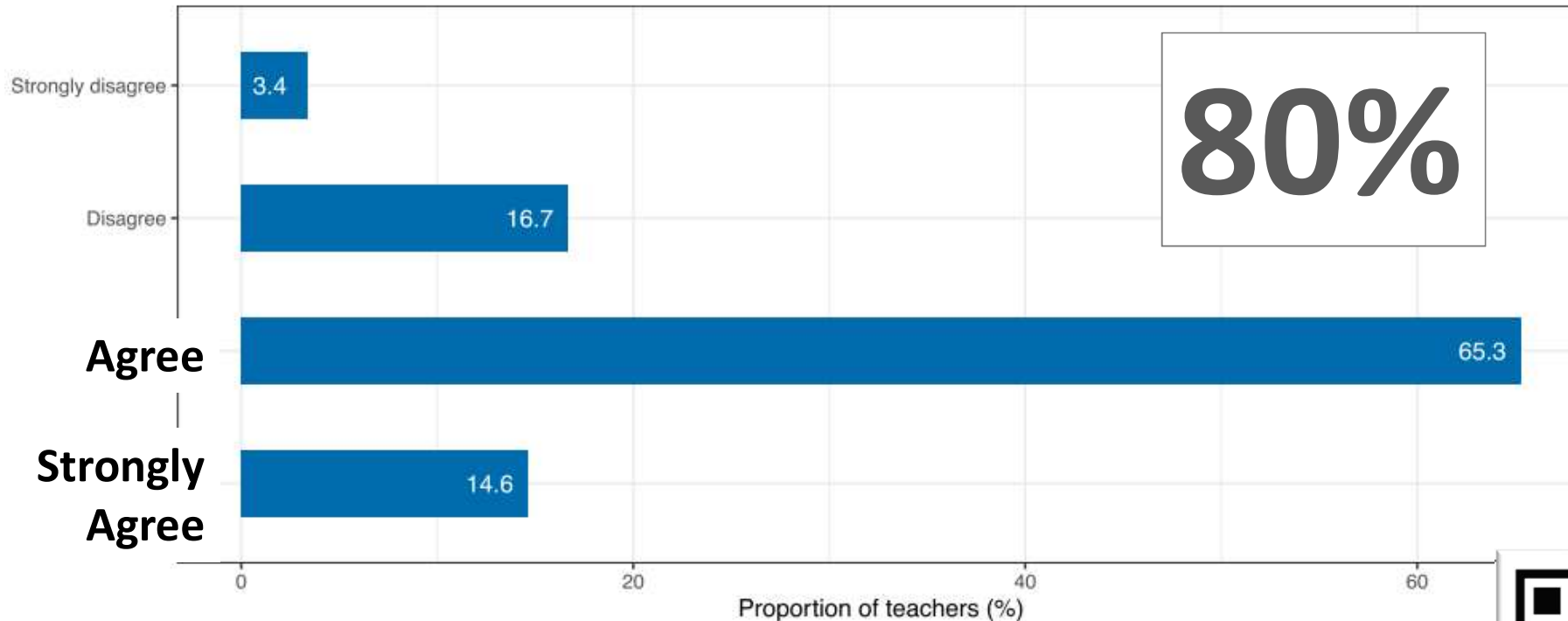
*They **respect** you and what you want to do...and you feel you can say what is on your mind without being shot down. They **listen** to what you have to say*

*It's just a chill place. You don't have to wear uniform and stuff,  
that's the one good thing about it. It's just a chill place. **You can  
talk, everyone understands you.***

*You have really **good relationships** with your teachers, it makes  
**learning much better.***



# BELONGING



Allen, K.-A., Longmuir, F., Thorn, M. G., Melzak, E., Berger, E., Gallo Cordoba, B., Phillips, M., & Reupert, A. (2025). What facilitates a sense of belonging amongst Australian teachers? *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 77(1), 2459190.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00049530.2025.2459190>

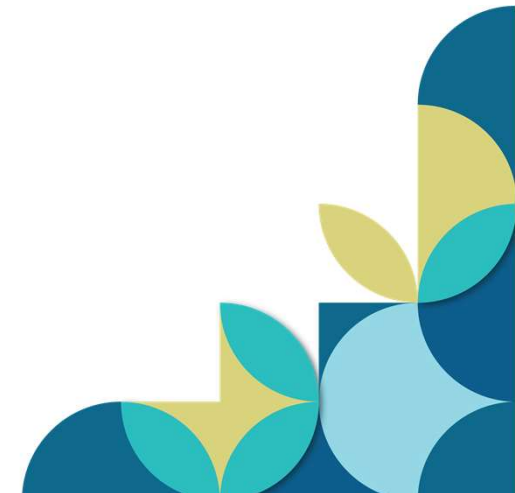


***“ Teachers are usually incredibly warm, passionate, positive people who want the best for their workmates and our shared students.”***



## **Purpose**

***“I love learning, and passing on a passion for learning is the best thing I can do for humanity.”***







## Connection

*“When I have good **connections with my students**, and I can see they are growing.”*

*“more time to **make connections and build relationships** with children”*

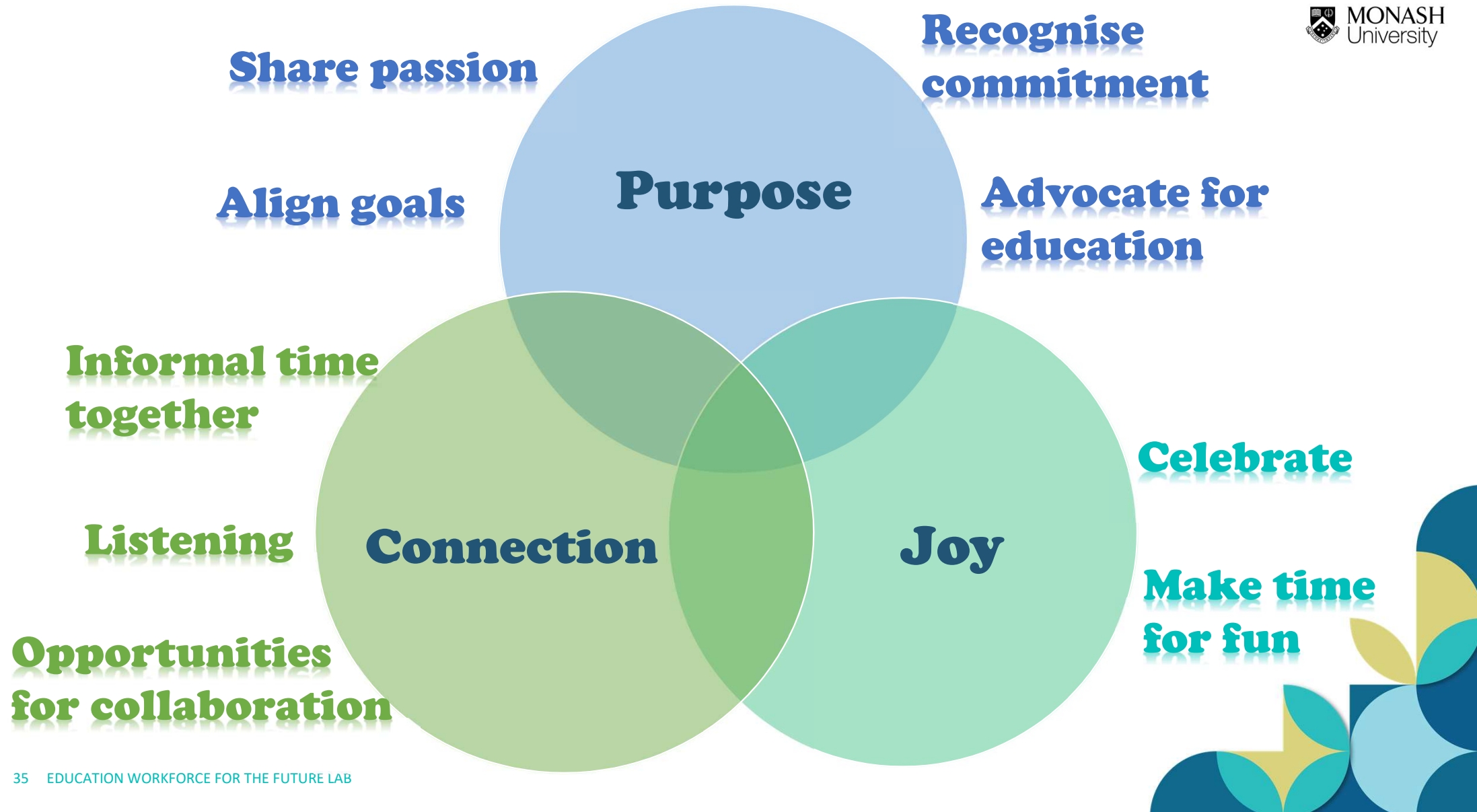
*“more time for **collaboration with colleagues**, strong and **supportive leadership**”*

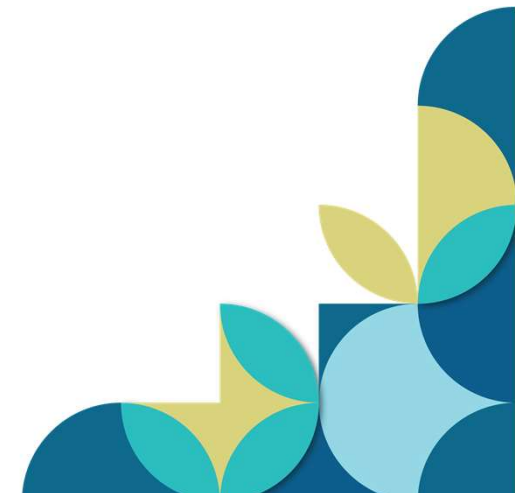
“  
the **imbalance between the enjoyable aspects of teaching** (e.g., classroom and student interactions, designing learning experiences) **and the draining aspects of teaching** (e.g., accountability paperwork, parent complaints, Nationally Consistent Collection of Data [NCCD] requirements, paperwork, record keeping etcetera) ...

“  
I used to **LOVE my job...** I've **had so much fun** over the years **with children** and focused on **spreading joy** but that's quickly disappeared ....I feel like I lost my freedom to be the teacher I wanted to be because I have no time to be with my class, there's no time to stop a lesson and have a fun dance break, or no time to organically learn something of interest .. everything is becoming very sterile, everyone has to do the same thing, teachers need to report SO much ...and it's honestly so draining.”



**Joy**







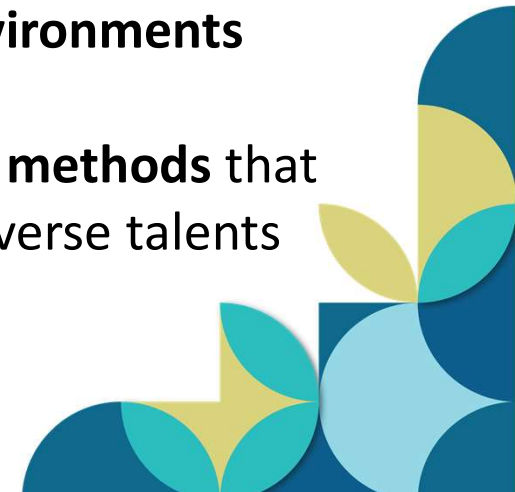
*“Imagination lies at the heart of all that is best in education. It has always been so in the way we nurture the creative arts. Advances in medicine and science are often stimulated by the imagination. The great social movements that have freed the human spirit and lifted people out of material deprivation have required heroic effort by those who have imagined a better world”*



# REIMAGINING A new social OUR FUTURES contract for TOGETHER education

REPORT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE FUTURES OF EDUCATION

- **Curriculum design** that fosters creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving
- **Pedagogical approaches** that are student-centred, collaborative and inclusive
- Innovative physical and virtual **learning environments**
- **Assessment methods** that recognise diverse talents



# Case study of a *lack* of imagination

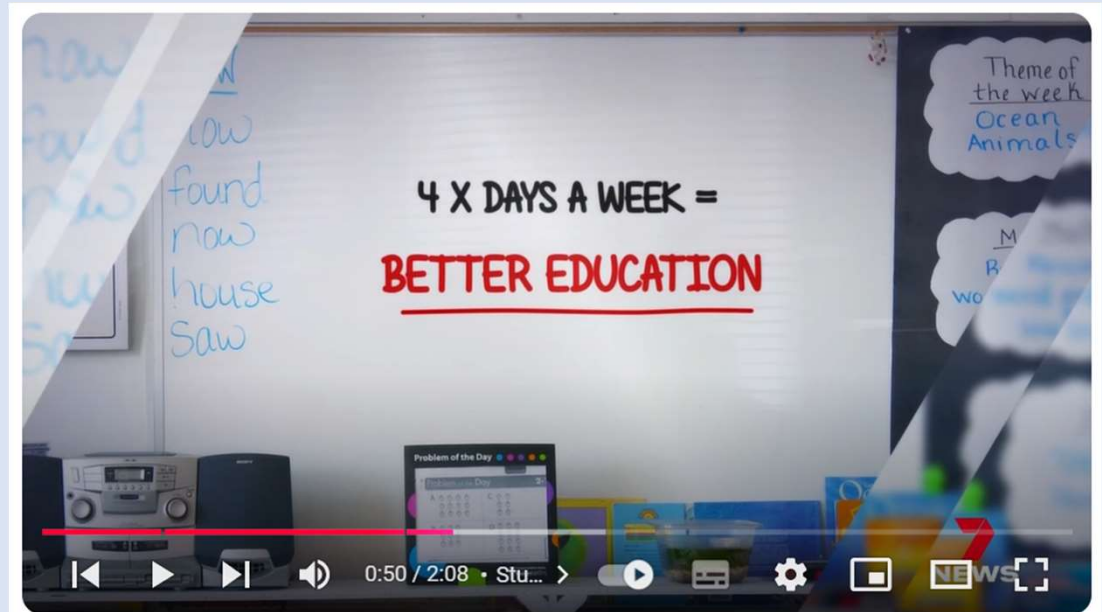
## Teachers call for four-day work week

**EXCLUSIVE**  
**Noel Towell**  
Education editor

The teachers' union is pushing the state government to trial a four-day working week for teachers and other staff at public schools, as

Teachers' aides could also be trained to help with marking and other administrative tasks.

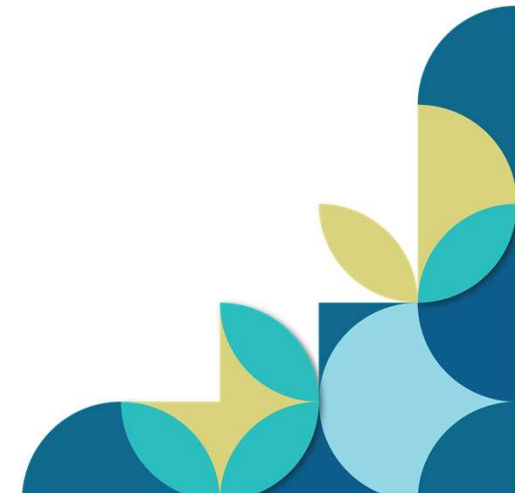
Longmuir is calling for bold reform, arguing the supports available to teachers had not kept pace with the demands of the modern classroom.



Victorian teachers are fighting to secure a four-day work week | 7NEWS

# ACTIVIST EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

*We can  
choose  
what to  
care about*





# ACTIVIST EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

***Reclaim moral and intellectual leadership over educational debates***

***Make things happen – rather than letting them happen to them***

(Sachs, 2000).

## ACTIVIST EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

- Whose issues get put on the agenda and how do these issues become public?
- Who provides the initial moral and intellectual leadership in such an endeavour?
- How is inclusiveness promoted such that a broad range of educational interests is represented and heard?
- How can trust and understanding be established to overcome traditional suspicions and reservations?

(Sachs, 2000, p.85)



# ACTIVIST EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

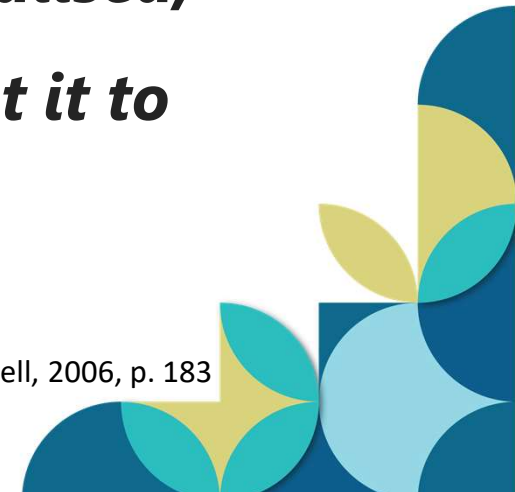
- Love, care and solidarity
- Student and community voice in what schooling should be
- Next practice disposition
- Standing up to say the hard things, when the expectation is to sit down and remain silent



***“What will education be like 40 years from now? I can’t tell you. Nobody can. But I can tell you that it must be totally different because if it is the same as it is today, we’re dead.***

***Current approaches will be irrelevant, marginalised, and the world will be different. You may want it to be the same, but it can’t be the same.”***

Singapore’s PM – Lee Hsien Loong, cited in Caldwell, 2006, p. 183





# EDUCATION WORKFORCE FOR THE FUTURE

Impact Lab



Our research focus



# Thank You!