

Position statement principal permanency

Executive level principal contracts were introduced from approximately 1997. These were seen as highly attractive and a good way to recruit principals. The Northern Territory (NT) Government currently has 86 executive contract principals in 152 schools and non-executive, mainly teaching principals, in the remaining schools. The NT is the only jurisdiction where contracts are the main mechanism of employment for principals. In other jurisdictions where principals are on contract they have a reversionary right providing a level of job security. This is not the case in the Northern Territory.

In 2017 Northern Territory Principals Association (NTPA) members raised concerns about principal contracts including but not limited to; employee benefits, leave entitlements, vulnerability as not protected by an industrial arm such as the Australian Education Union, job security and whether this was seen as an attractive career pathway. Currently Assistant Principals have to resign from the department to accept an executive level contract.

As a result of growing concerns, in 2018 NTPA contracted PwC to undertake a comparative analysis of principal terms and conditions of employment in the NT Department of Education (DoE). What this highlighted to our Association was that this was a very complex space without transparency of salaries and differences in terminology and classifications across Australia. It highlighted our vulnerability with no other state or territory opting for fixed term principal contracts.

Compounding these growing concerns in 2019 the NT Government announced its *Plan for Budget Repair* which outlined a range of recommendations to return to balance/surplus over the medium term. These recommendations included a wage freeze for all executives (including executive contract principals) and parliamentarians (Recommendation 5.3.7). This has had a significant impact on principal's wellbeing in regards to job security and valuing of the role. The risk associated to this is that NTPA are concerned about losing high calibre experienced principals when current contracts expire.

The NTPA believe a return to permanency is a viable option and are seeking opportunities for principal permanency within the NT government workforce.

NTPA are calling for these negotiations in good faith aspiring to the following guiding principles:

- Transparency and strong change management practices
- Simple and easy to understand
- Competitive and attractive across Australia
- Fair and equitable
- Encouraging for aspirational leaders and seen as an attractive career pathway.

In all negotiations it needs to be factored in that the NT is a unique labour market and for many of our schools our context is very different and challenging. It is critical that the NTPA are involved in shaping and informing any model for permanency. The outcome we hope to achieve is a situation that is best for future NT principals and school improvement as a whole.

The NTPA looks forward to working in collaboration with OCPE, the NT Government, DoE and other key stakeholders to progress a move to permanency.

