

The Band B Workforce

A Discussion Paper:
Current Realities & Future
Development Opportunities



Preamble

In 2011, as Executive Director, Human Resources and Workforce Development in the Department of Education and Children's Services, I led work on development of a new Band B classification structure. This work culminated in a new integrated Band B classification structure being implemented through the 2012 enterprise agreement. This experience gave me a deep appreciation of the role Band B leaders play in a high performing public education system.

In 2026, the work of Band B leaders has again come into the foreground of interest and discussion due to the rapidly changing leadership and managerial demands in schools and preschools and the introduction of a redesigned Band A Principal classification structure. These changes have been the catalyst for me to again set out to understand the contemporary realities of Band B employment and identify opportunities for change and improvement.

The task I have set myself is to provide a grounded and transparent analysis of how the Band B structure and roles are being utilised in schools and to identify opportunities for policy improvement. I have purposefully set out to discover what has changed in Band B employment, why it has changed and what is needed to build for the future.

I present this work as a discussion paper with the aim of providing information and insights that can help shape future policy thinking. I recognise that good policy is not just facts and analysis – it is also a social process of how people engage, share critical views and ideas, and collaborate. In this sense the success of the paper will be determined by the range and depth of discussion it generates.



Phil O'Loughlin
Chief Executive



Introduction

The Band B classification structure encompasses roles commonly titled Deputy Principal, Assistant Principal, Senior Leader and Coordinator. Band B roles extend across every area of school activity, including teaching and curriculum, management, specialist student support, community relations, accountability and quality assurance.

“ They are the people who translate vision into practice, who work at the boundary points between senior leadership’s strategic intentions and everyday realities of teaching and learning in classrooms.”

Pathways to the Principalship
Principals Australia Research
Foundation¹

A review of Band B employment is a strategic priority for two reasons:

- ① Changing complexities and demands in schools are continually reshaping and expanding the work of the Band B workforce.
- ② The introduction of a new Band A site classification structure has significantly altered the relationship and relativities between Band A and Band B employment.

Changing Complexities & Demands in Schools

Since the Band B structure was implemented, the work of school leaders has undergone significant and far-reaching transformation influenced by several broad patterns of societal and managerial change²:

- Changes in family structures and parenting.
- A growing culture of entitlement and complaint.
- The rapid expansion of technology, including the ubiquity of social media.
- Increasing mental health concerns.
- Growth in the number of students with identified additional needs.
- Changes in school governance, including an increased reliance on accountability and quality-assurance frameworks.

Much of the new and evolving work associated with societal and managerial changes, including student wellbeing and support, accountability and quality assurance, falls within the scope of Band B employment. This is reflected in the significant shift from the broadly defined roles of the early 2000s to today's more specialised positions, including, Wellbeing Leader, Inclusion Leader, Early Years Leader and Head of Campus.

A defining feature of Band B employment is that roles can be readily designed and redesigned to respond to changing work demands. In contrast principal and teaching roles have a more fixed character due to their specifically defined duties within the schooling system³. The value of Band B roles is that they have the utility to quickly adapt to changing needs and demands. In this sense the current profile of the Band B workforce in 2026 is a bellwether for the changing work demands in public education.

Alignment with the New Band A Site Classification Structure

Band A and Band B employees collectively fulfil the leadership and management responsibilities of a school. Their work requires extensive interaction and collaboration to realise strong and effective leadership at the site level. For this reason, the two classifications are best understood as forming a coherent leadership and management continuum, rather than as separate and distinct employment structures.

A new Band A site classification (SC) structure, based on the Mercer job evaluation methodology, was administratively introduced in 2026. It consolidated 10 Band A classification levels into six levels and in doing so, it disrupted the established relationship with the Band B structure⁴.

To maintain a cohesive and stable leadership classification continuum, the Band B structure must now be redesigned to complement and support the new Band A structure.

The body of this paper has three sections:

- ① Band B Employment: Background and Analysis
- ② Recommendations for Band B Employment Reform
- ③ Future Workforce Strategy in Public Education

1 Band B Employment: Background and Analysis

Industrial history of the Band B structure

The 1990s

Until the mid-1990s, the school leadership structure in the DECS Teachers Award differentiated between primary and junior primary schools, secondary schools and area schools. The integrated Principal Class Officer (PCO) structure was established in 1997:

- PCO Levels 1-8 were established and the School Size and Complexity Rating (SSACR) developed to determine classification of schools.
- A nexus relationship between Principal and Deputy Principals (DP) remuneration was established and referred to as the Band 3 structure.

Principal Level	Deputy Level
PCO-8	PCO-4
PCO-6/7	PCO-3
PCO-5	PCO-2
PCO-2/3/4	PCO-1

Internal school leadership roles available to schools were referred to as Band 2 and included:

- Coordinator levels 1-3
- Assistant Principal levels 1-2

Each of the five levels had classification criteria and the allocation of Band 2 positions were based on a formula established in the Staffing Allocation Document (SAD).

The 2008/2009 Arbitration

After negotiations for a new enterprise agreement failed, the matter was referred to the South Australian Industrial Relations Commission (SAIRC) for arbitration. The SAIRC decision issued in 2010 had two significant long-term effects on the Band B structure:

- The removal of the SAD as the primary instrument for establishing staffing levels and replacing it with a base per capita model known as the Student Centred Funding Model (SCFM).
- A new PCO-9 level was created. This later resulted in an additional nexus level being created in the Band B structure – level B-6 established in the 2012 Enterprise Agreement (EA).

The removal of the SAD provided the policy impetus for a raft of reforms including open selection of teachers and a more accessible and flexible Band B leadership structure.

The 2012 Enterprise Agreement

The main changes to the Band B leadership structure introduced through the 2012 EA remain in place. They included:

- Establishment of Band A: A nine level classification structure that incorporated the Preschool Director (PSD) structure at levels Band A1-A3⁵.
- Band B: The establishment of a six level Band B structure (Band B1-B6). This involved:
 - The abolition of Coordinator 1 and the translation of Coordinator 2 to level B-0, and Coordinator 3 to level B-1⁶.
 - A new level of Band B-6 was established and available to Principals classified at A-9
- New classification criteria were established for Band B level 1-6. Access to Band B levels were tied to Principal levels to preserve classification relativities between Band A and B structures. Only at level A-9 could the full range of Band B levels 1-6 be applied⁷.
- New work level definitions for Band B levels 1-6, using standardised work value indices and typical position responsibilities⁸.
- Three generic descriptors of Deputy Principal (B2-B6), Senior Leader (B3-B5) and Coordinator (B1-B2) were used as reference points. Schools were not required to use these titles and could adopt local descriptors.
- Integration of the Deputy Principal role into the Band B classification, rather than identifying it separately as under the former Band 3 structure. The role was optional and was defined as follows:
 - Provides leadership and management across the school and has specific designated areas of responsibility assigned.
 - Undertakes some teaching duties pursuant to maximum teaching loads prescribed in the EA.
 - Deputises for the Principal in their absence.
- The Deputy Principal is not an exclusive classification. The classification criteria enable schools to have Band B leaders at the same classification as the designated Deputy Principal classification level identified for a site.

The Central Governance System for Band B Employment

Delegation for the classification of Band B roles is held centrally by the Director Workforce, Schools and Preschools.

The major change in the governance structure since 2013 has been the progressive change from peer-to-peer review of classification under the staffing officer model to administrative oversight through the business partner model. Outcomes of this change include:

- The department has progressively given schools flexibility to create and classify Band B positions, supported by lighter central regulation.
- Under the business partner model, classification decisions rely on technical interpretation of criteria and do not routinely incorporate knowledge gained from working in a school. A risk of this system is that assessors have an incomplete view and understanding of school context and operations.

Evaluating the Impact of the 2012 Reforms on the Band B Workforce

Between 2008 and 2012, major reforms reshaped school staffing and leadership. The reforms replaced a uniform model with a more flexible framework designed to reflect schools' differing needs. Key changes included:

- Introduction of the Student Centred Funding Model (SCFM).
- Open selection of teachers and ancillary staff.
- Creation of the Band A and Band B classification structures.

These reforms gave schools greater discretion to design Band B structures within departmental policy settings. As a result, role design and classification now vary more widely, replacing the previously tightly defined and standardised structures.

The Band B structure has not been formally evaluated since the changes in the 2012 enterprise agreement were fully implemented. An analysis of the current Band B workforce and operating environment is therefore the starting point for identifying future risks and reform opportunities.

Band B workforce: Changes from 2020 to 2025

Future reform should begin with a clear picture of the Band B workforce, including its strengths and risks. This paper draws on aggregate workforce data presented in four tables:

Table 1

Band B workforce overview 2020–2025

Table 2

Band B distribution of classification levels 2020–2025

Table 3

Relativity of DP positions to Principal Roles 2012–2026

Table 4

Alignment of the current Band B levels 1–6 remuneration with the new Band A SC1–SC6 model

Tables 1 and 2 cover 2020–2025, the period for which open source data is available. This period includes the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerated technological and social change, providing insight into how schools adapted their employment practices. Each table is followed by explanatory notes. The section concludes by identifying the additional data needed for a more complete workforce profile.

Table 1 Band B workforce overview 2020–2025⁹

Students enrolled by year ¹⁰	Band B FTE and % equivalent of teacher FTE workforce ¹¹	Student ratio to Band B FTE	Gender %	Full-time/Part-time %	Average age	Separation rate % ¹²
2020 177,038	2407 20.3%	73.6	M 32.2% F 67.8%	FT 89.3% PT 10.7%	44	2
2021 174,244	2399 20.5%	72.6	M 30.7% F 69.3%	FT 89.6% PT 10.4%	44	2.3
2022 172,654	2470 21.2%	69.9	M 32% F 68%	FT 89.85% PT 10.2%	43	2.4
2023 172,137	2552 22%	67.5	M 31.2% F 68.8%	FT 88.3% PT 11.7%	43	2.3
2024 176,204	2634 22.7%	66.9	M 31.6% F 68.4%	FT 88.8% PT 11.2%	43	2.6
2025 173,438	2676 23.1%	64.8	M 32% F 68%	FT 89% PT 11%	43	2.2

Analysis of Data

Growth in Employment Numbers

The net growth in Band B employment between 2020-2025 is as follows:

- FTE population increased by 269, or 11.3%.
- Band B FTE as a proportion of teacher FTE population increased from 20.3% to 23.1%.
- The number of students per Band B FTE population decreased from 73.6% to 64.8%.

Plausible explanations for the continuing growth of Band B employment are:

- Responsiveness to demand factors in schools associated with increased student complexity and more diverse curriculum offerings.
- Higher levels of specialisation related both to student complexity and strategic priorities introduced by the department.
- Higher administrative and compliance workloads associated with performance reporting, Work Health and Safety (WHS), quality standards and Inclusive Education Support Program (IESP) funding applications.

The data indicates a continuing trend of increased Band B employment in aggregate numbers. The increase in the Band B workforce relative to the teacher population suggests that the utility and flexibility of the Band B workforce is highly valued by schools.

The growth in Band B employment has a positive effect on principal and teacher workload through the increased capacity to manage additional complexities and work demands. This indicates that Band B leaders are playing a crucial role in ameliorating the work demands placed on principals and teachers.

Band B employment has acted as a buffer for managing and absorbing greater complexity and work demands which ameliorates the workload of principals and teachers.

Age Profile

The workforce is undergoing generational change with the average age falling from 44 to 43 in 2022 and continuing at this level through to 2025. SASSLA members report that relatively inexperienced teachers can access Band B roles, particularly in country and low-SES schools. This presents both benefits and risks:

- A positive is that earlier access to leadership roles, combined with high retention rates for Band B employees, can strengthen the future stability of school leadership¹³.
- A risk is that schools lack the key leadership and managerial capabilities needed in the present. This risk is magnified when there are limited school resources to support new leaders and limited options for high quality training and development¹⁴.

Part-Time Employment

Part-time participation remained relatively stable over 2020-2025, ranging from a low of 10.2% in 2022 to a high of 11.7% in 2023. In 2025, 11% of Band B employees worked part-time, compared with 44% of teachers. The differential between part-time employment in teaching and Band B roles is significant. Two factors may explain this trend:

- Schools have a preferment for full-time positions and maintain this as a default position when they make recruitment decisions.
- Part-time employees may be deterred by reduced flexibility, workload pressures and limited interest in management responsibilities.

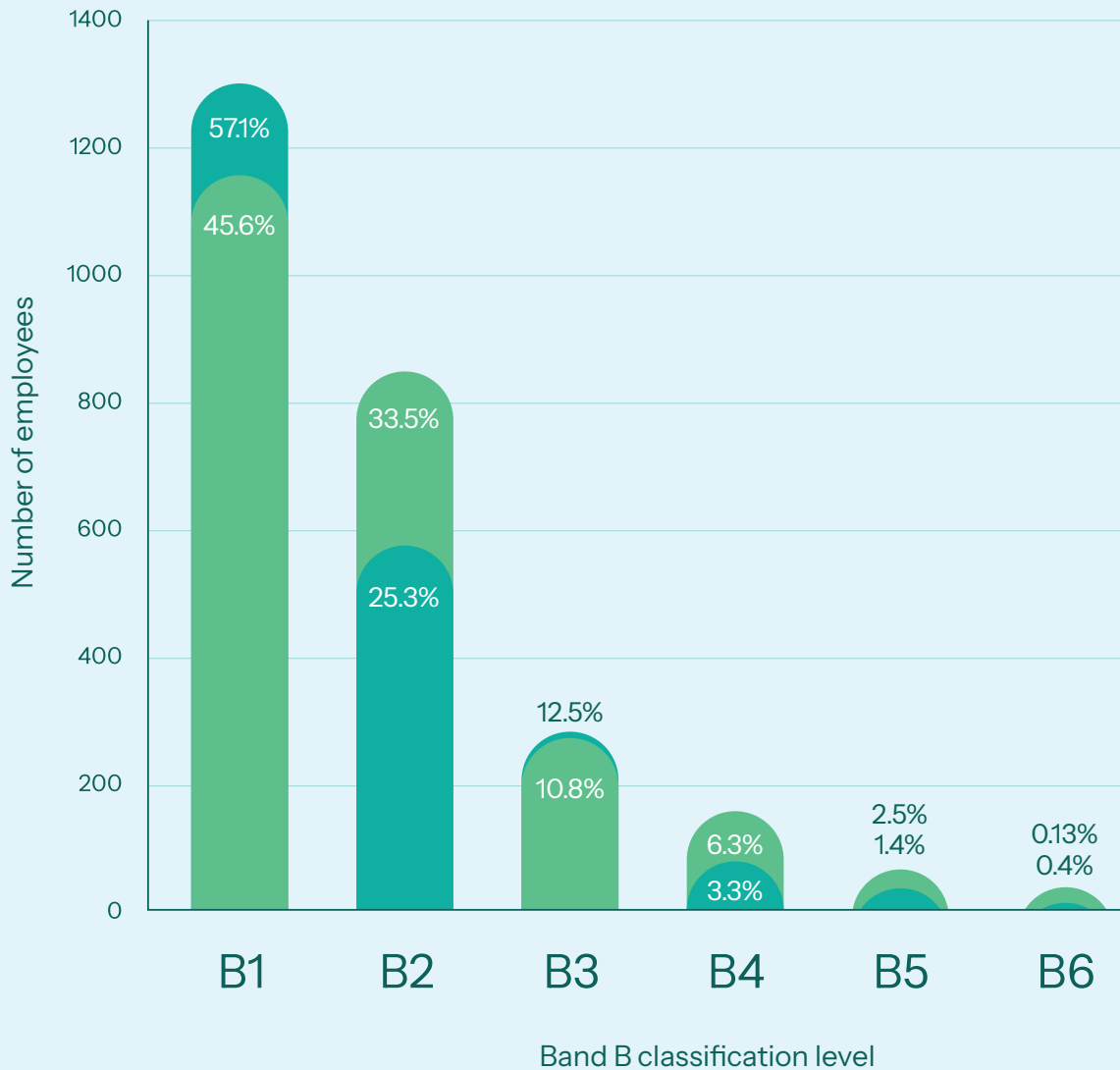
Gender Representation

Female representation remained broadly stable, declining from 69.3% in 2021 to 68.0% in 2025. In 2025, women represented 64.8% of the Band A workforce and 74.5% of the teaching workforce.

Table 2 Graph

Band B distribution of classification
2020 & 2025¹⁵

2020
2025



Total positions

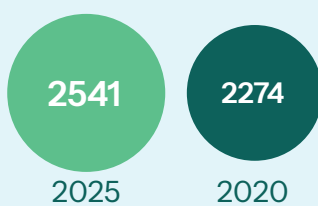
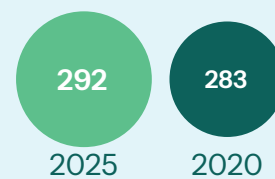
DP Positions in
aggregate total

Table 2 Band B distribution of classification 2020 & 2025¹⁵

Band B level	2020 number by level and % distribution	2025 number by level and % distribution
B1	1301 (57.1%)	1159 (45.6%)
B2	574 (25.3%)	851 (33.5%)
B3	284 (12.5%)	274 (10.8%)
B4	74 (3.3%)	159 (6.3%)
B5	32 (1.4%)	64 (2.5%)
B6	9 (0.4%)	34 (0.13%)
Total Positions	2274	2541
DP Positions in Aggregate Total	283	292

Analysis of Data

Classification Movement

The data shows a significant upward shift in classifications between 2020 and 2025. Two factors may explain this trend:

- Revaluation of work in response to greater complexity and impact.
- More frequent use of remuneration incentives to attract and retain staff. At a systems level, this can shift work valuation from consistent classification criteria towards local market conditions – a process referred to as “marketisation”¹⁶.

Deputy Principal Roles

- Deputy Principal numbers remained stable, indicating that the role continues to be a default feature of school leadership structures.

Additional Data Requirements

Additional data is needed to develop a complete and detailed profile of the Band B workforce.

Priorities include:

- Disaggregating Tables 1 and 2 by sector: secondary, primary, area and special schools.
- Identifying the teaching and leadership time allocated at each Band B classification level. This is a crucial data set needed to define the actual commitment to non-teaching work and understanding how Band B employees’ time is utilised.
- Assessing labour market activity, including:
 - Positions advertised and applications received.
 - Contract churn, measured by employees returning to teaching roles when a contract ends.
- The number and range of specialised Band B roles.

Current department employment data is limited, and a sampling methodology will be needed to obtain reliable system wide estimates of Band B hours committed to non-teaching time, and potentially other data requirements specified.

Focussed qualitative research on attraction and retention to Band B roles and increasing productivity through deployment and development of skills and capabilities, together with the additional statistical information would provide a strong evidence base for a future long term Band B development strategy.

A high priority is to develop a standardised data set to enable longitudinal measurement of Band B employment characteristics and deployment. This is essential for effective workforce planning.

The Band B Workforce: Overview of Strategic Opportunities & Risks

Retaining a Flexible Employment Model for Band B Roles

The data indicates that schools have responded to external demands by designing and implementing new Band B roles. This demonstrates that the 2012 reforms have successfully supported flexible and adaptive staffing arrangements in response to changing workforce demands. This flexibility is a particular strength of the current model and should be integral to the design of any future system.

Risks to be Managed

Part-Time Employment

The low participation rate of part-time employees in Band B roles suggests that potential applicants face barriers to entry. These barriers may include:

- A lack of advertised part-time roles.
- Employment conditions that do not accommodate employees' personal circumstances.
- Difficulty designing part-time roles that combine teaching and leadership responsibilities.

Ultimately, these barriers represent a productivity issue because capable members of the workforce may be prevented or discouraged from taking up Band B roles. A secondary effect is reduced competition for available roles, which may also negatively affect productivity.

Upward Movement in Classifications

The data suggests that some inflation of classification levels may have occurred, with schools establishing higher classifications to attract and retain staff, referred to as marketisation. The nature and extent of this issue require further analysis.

In the long term, marketisation may increase costs and contribute to the inequitable distribution of human resources across public education. In this scenario, schools with greater market power, arising from their location, reputation or community catchment, are advantaged. This specific equity issue is discussed in greater detail in SASSLA's submission to the *Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System (2023)*¹⁷.

This issue highlights the importance of embedding equity considerations in workforce strategies and governance systems. These systems should support a disciplined and fair approach to establishing and maintaining classification levels across the public education system.

Support for New Leaders

The combined effects of rising demand for Band B roles and generational workforce change are likely to result in more people entering leadership positions with limited leadership and management experience. Some evidence suggests that this is already an issue within the system¹⁸.

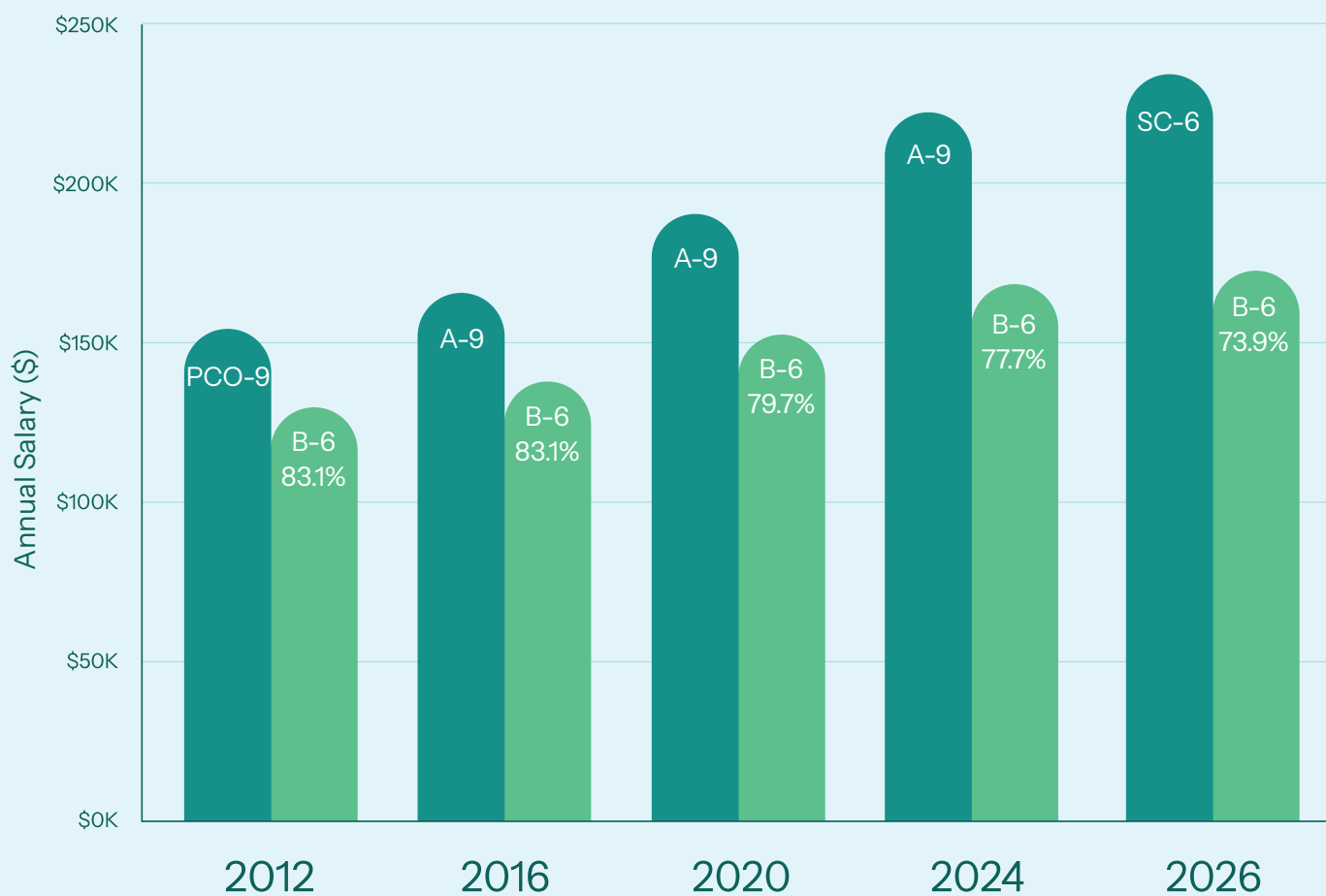
Additional investment in tailored professional development, through both formal training and site-based development, will be needed to support and manage this transition.

Classification and Remuneration of Band B Positions Relative to Band A Roles

Table 3 Graph

Remuneration relativities of Principal & Deputy Principal roles

● Top Level Band A
● Top Level Band B-6



Enterprise Agreement Wage Adjustment

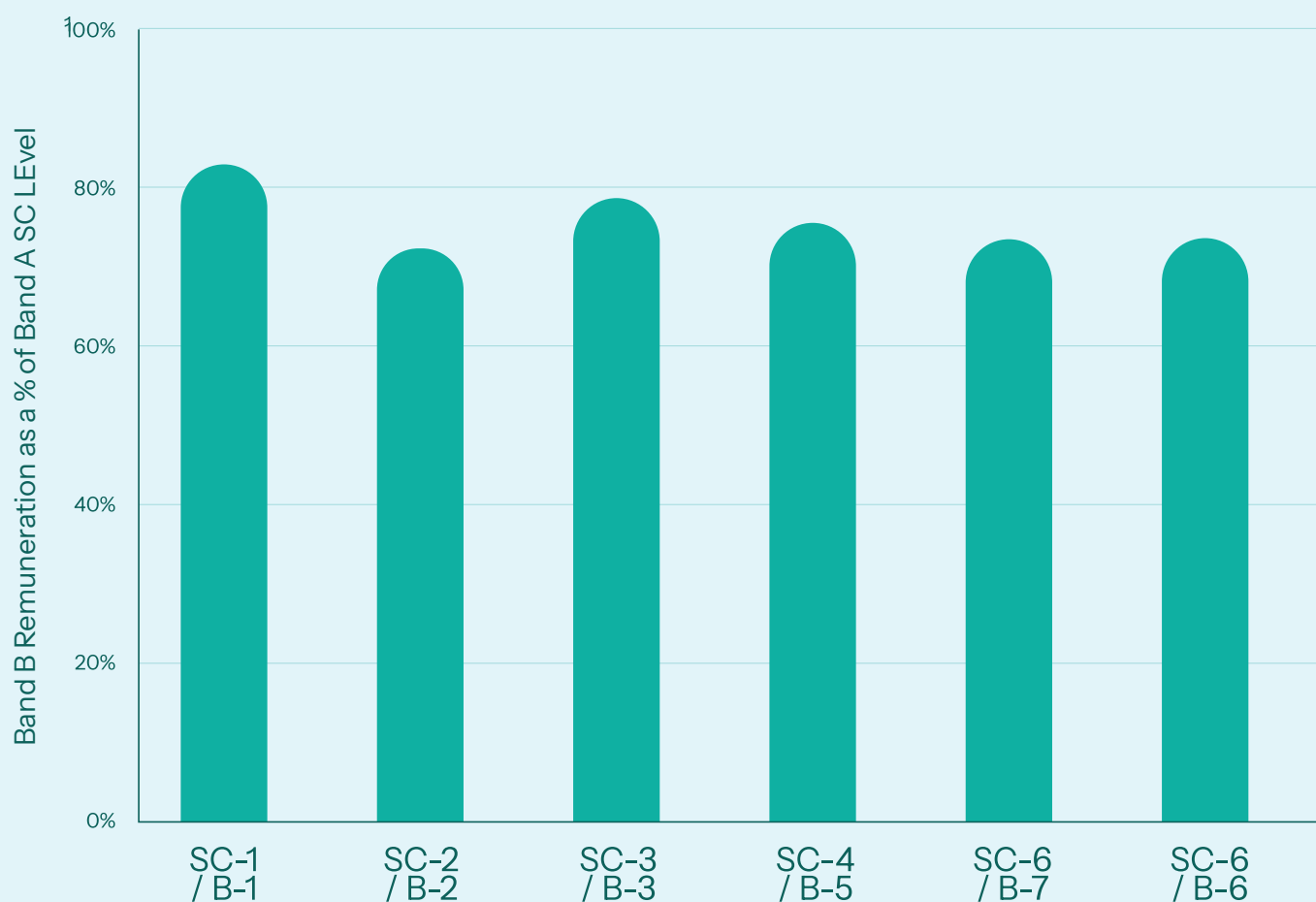
Table 3 Remuneration Relativities of Principal & Deputy Principal roles

EA approval/admin adjustment	Top step Principal and DP salaries	DP % equivalent of Principal salary
2012	PCO-9 \$154,767 B-6 \$128,683	83.1%
2016	A-9 \$166,667 B-6 \$138,578	83.1%
2020	A-9 \$190,198 B-6 \$152,091	79.7%
2024	A-9 \$222,484 B-6 \$167,808	77.7%
2026	SC-6 \$233,774 B-6 \$172,842	73.9%

Analysis of Data

- The decline in the B-6 to A-9 relativity from 2016 to 2024 reflects the additional 1% payable to all Band A positions under the EA.
- The increase from 2024 to 2026 reflects the structural adjustment resulting from the implementation of the Mercer Site Classification (SC) model.
- From 2012 to 2026, the B-1 relativity to a top step teacher remained at around 8.5%, reflecting standardised EA increases.
- The relativity to AST-2 has also remained at around 4.5% throughout the same period.

Table 4 Graph

Relationship of the Band A SC Model & Band B¹⁹

Band A SC Level matched with comparable Band B Level

Table 4

Relationship of the Band A SC Model & Band B¹⁹

SC-1	SC-2	SC-3	SC-4	SC-5	SC-6
\$156,111	\$166,411	\$185,432	\$204,453	\$223,474	\$233,774
B-1 ²⁰	B-2	B-3	B-4	B-5/6	B-6
\$133,736	\$136,872	\$145,859	\$154,852	\$163,842 (5)	\$172,842
% of SC-1	% of SC-2	% of SC-3	% of SC-4	% of SC-5	% of SC-6
85.7%	72.2%	78.6%	75.7%	73.3%	73.9%

Analysis of Data

The table compares the six Band A work levels with the six Band B levels. The wide variation, and declining relativity at higher classification levels, demonstrates a lack of coherence between the two structures.

A Future-Oriented Band B Classification & Remuneration Structure

Band B Relativities with Principal Roles

The data highlight changes in the remuneration relativities between the highest level Band A and Band B roles from 2020 to 2026. These changes have arisen from remuneration policy decisions rather than from an underlying assessment of relative work value.

A further issue is the fractured relationship between Band B classifications and the new Band A structure. When mapped across the two structures, the classification relativities lack coherence and present an inconsistent picture of relative work value.

Entry Level Relativities

The remuneration differential between a top step teacher and a B-1 classification has remained stable at around 8.5%. However, when B-1 remuneration is compared with the AST-2 classification (the fallback level available after five years of continuous contract employment) the differential narrows to around 4.5%.

These relativities can be assessed from two perspectives:

- Attraction to the role: Whether the 8.5% differential above a top step teacher's remuneration provides a sufficient incentive to take on a B-1 role involving both teaching and defined leadership responsibilities.
- Retention in the role: Whether the 4.5% differential above the AST-2 fallback level provides a sufficient incentive for employees to remain in a B-1 role.

Attributes of a Future Oriented Band B Classification Structure

A contemporary leadership classification structure should have two main attributes:

- It should establish a coherent career pathway from entry level Band B roles through to the highest site classification of SC-6.
- It should provide appropriate financial incentives both to enter leadership roles and to pursue continuing career progression.

2 Recommendations for Band B Employment Reform

Opportunities for Band B Policy Reform

Contemporary interest in Band B policies relating to conditions of employment and allocation of resources can be captured under five main headings:

- Classification and remuneration structure.
- Regulation of teaching hours.
- Early Years allocation of Band B positions.
- Leadership capacity in primary schools.
- Tenure in Band B roles

Within the five policy areas there are different modes of regulation:

- The Band B classification and remuneration structure and regulation of teaching hours are incorporated in the EA. Any variation of existing terms and conditions require industrial agreement, usually enacted through the enterprise bargaining process.
- Early years allocation of Band B positions, leadership density in primary schools and tenure in Band B roles are incorporated in departmental policy. These policies can be amended by the department subject to meeting consultation requirements established in the EA.

Regardless of the regulatory approach, effective employment policy should have the following attributes.

- Maintain or improve general conditions of employment, career opportunities and work satisfaction.
- Enhance productivity through work and job design, development of capabilities and skills and process improvement.
- Is future oriented and aligned with priorities established by the government and department.

Classification and Remuneration Structure

The Band B classification and remuneration structure is set out in Schedule 5 (Band B Classification Descriptors and Work Level Definitions) and Schedule 1.3 (Leader Classification) of the 2024 EA.

The analysis in Part 1 of this paper supports the following design principles for a future Band B classification and remuneration structure:

- School flexibility and agency in designing and establishing Band B roles.
- A coherent career structure from entry level B-1 roles to the SC-6 principal classification, with²¹:
 - Clear progression from entry level Band B roles to the highest principal classification of SC-6.
 - Financial incentives to enter leadership and continue career progression.
- A governance system that supports consistency in the application of the classification criteria and equitable access to human resources.

Discussion of Future Directions

Two options could guide the redesign of the Band B structure:

- 1 Re-establish the structure of the former Band 3 model in place prior to 2012 which defines the Deputy Principal role as a discrete position with a defined remuneration relativity with the Principal role. For other Band B positions, the existing 6 level classification structure and criteria would be retained.
- 2 Retain an integrated Band B structure that includes Deputy Principals. Conduct a comprehensive review of work levels, classifications and criteria, supported by governance arrangements that promote stability and equity.

Option 1 would be easier to implement but may not realise the full potential of Band B employment.

Option 2 has better alignment with the design principles established above and enables the development of a structure that responds to the contemporary and emergent realities of Band B work. Specific factors that support the development of a new structure are:

- Ongoing growth in the demand and complexity of Band B work has outpaced the current work level definitions.

- Roles are becoming increasingly specialised.
- The Band B structure requires more stable and nuanced alignment with the new Band A structure.
- A contemporary, integrated career structure that supports workforce development.

Option 2 would require significant time and resources. An EA facilitation clause may be needed to establish broad design parameters. Collaboration among stakeholders, as demonstrated in the Band A reform process, would strengthen this work.

Implementation would involve four sequential workstreams:

- **Establish design principles** that define system requirements and boundaries.
- **Identify work levels** through detailed analysis and draft classification criteria.
- **Align Band B classification and remuneration** with the Band A structure by mapping relativities across the integrated framework.
- **Design governance arrangements that support stability and equitable resource distribution** including explicit criteria that enable consistent school level decisions²².

Regulation of Teaching Hours

Regulation of maximum face-to-face teaching hours for Band B leaders is included in clause 5.2.14 of the EA. The clause defines maximum face to face teaching hours for each level of Band B work²³.

Information provided by SASSLA members is that teaching time for Band B positions, particularly for positions B3 and above are substantially lower than the regulated maximum. An increasing number of Band B positions have no programmed teaching time.

Discussion of Future Directions

The regulated hours stipulated in clause 5.2.14 of the EA derive from the SAD and relate to conditions that existed in the early 2000s. Since then, the work of Band B roles has significantly evolved, and the value add from their non- teaching work has substantially increased. A pertinent question is whether the current model of regulation is still relevant and practicable today or needs to be completely redesigned.

In relation to the consideration of future regulation of teaching hours the following comments are relevant:

- An immediate issue is the regulation of teaching hours for Band B-1 positions following the progressive reduction in face-to-face teaching hours for teachers

introduced in the in clause 5.2.12(b) of the 2024 EA. This is highly relevant to Band B-1 positions and potentially some B-2 positions where teaching loads are set at the maximum level²⁴. Relativities must be maintained with the teaching workforce to incentivise people to aspire to Band B roles and ensure industrial fairness. There is a strong argument to use regulation as the primary instrument to achieve this policy objective²⁵.

- If a modified Band B structure and classification criteria are developed regulated teaching hours would need to be aligned with the scope of work determined for each defined classification level. This would require a fresh assessment of the regulatory model.

Early Years Allocation of Band B Positions

School Based Preschools

The 2026 SASSLA/SAPPA School-Based Preschool Report identifies a need for additional leadership capacity in school-based preschools. It highlights two problems:

- Some medium and large primary schools fund a Band B preschool leadership role by redirecting resources allocated to the primary school.
- Small schools who do not have the financial capacity to fund a Band B role rely exclusively on the principal for management of the school, preschool and, where applicable, OSHC and Rural Care services. Recent SASSLA reviews of five country school-based preschools provide further evidence of the associated risks and workload pressures²⁶.

The recommendation of the SASSLA/SAPPA report is:

Establish minimum leadership standards based on enrolment, complexity, and environment, taking size and context into account. We propose that, as a default, each school-based preschool should have at least a B-1 leader with allocated release time. While different settings may require varying levels of leadership, they all need some form of support. A clear minimum standard should be adopted promptly. In larger sites, this requirement could scale up to a B-2 or B-3 leader.

Standalone Preschools

Preschool Director classifications were incorporated in the Band A structure through the 2012 EA at levels A1–A3. The A–3 level was restricted to Directors of children’s centres²⁷. Under current arrangements, standalone preschools, including children’s centres, receive no funding for Band B positions, regardless of size or complexity.

Over the past 20 years, Preschool Director roles have evolved rapidly with changes in policy, integration of schools and preschools under the Education and Children’s Services Act 2019, and the statutory National Quality Framework (NQF)²⁸.

Departmental data identifies 13 preschools with more than 70 enrolments, including two with more than 100. Further growth is expected from 2027 as universal three-year-old preschool is progressively introduced²⁹.

The increase and complexity of regulation under the NQF requirements and the expanded role of the Education Standards Board indicates a need for greater leadership capacity in larger standalone preschools. The introduction of universal three-year-old preschool strengthens this case.

Discussion of Future Directions

Rapid and substantial change in early years education has outpaced established resource allocation policies. There is a strong case for clear policies governing Band B leadership in preschool education:

- For school-based preschools, the SASSLA/SAPPA report proposes a minimum leadership standard to support quality assurance. Further work is required to assess implementation and budget impacts.
- For standalone preschools, a minimum leadership standard should be developed, taking account of operational needs, risk and the rollout of universal three-year-old preschool.

Leadership Capacity in Primary Schools

Primary educators have long raised concerns about the need for increased leadership capacity to meet operational challenges across the primary sector. The common term “leadership density” has been used to describe the low ratio of leadership roles relative to student enrolment and complexity.

The core issue is that primary school leadership profiles developed in the 1990s for base leadership funding were incorporated in the SCFM per capita model when it was introduced in 2011 and remains in place today. This has long been seen as a contentious issue by primary educators.

The issue of leadership capacity is particularly acute in high enrolment primary schools in the loED 6-7 range. These schools often receive reduced Tier 2 funding (specific student based and specific

initiative funding) and have limited flexibility to increase leadership capacity beyond base SCFM funding. In recognition of this problem, a policy was established for primary schools to create an Assistant Principal position at Level B-2, above the level of resourcing provided in the SCFM where two conditions are met:

- Enrolments are greater than 600.
- Within the total enrolments, 250 students are in junior primary (R-2)³⁰.

In 2020, some metropolitan primary schools receiving Assistant Principal supplementation lost funding following enrolment reductions associated with the Year 7 transition to high school, despite no corresponding reduction in job demands³¹.

Discussion of Future Directions

The Assistant Principal supplementation policy illustrates the fragmented response to leadership capacity in primary schools. A detailed review is needed to establish an objective basis for establishing future policy. A review would need to consider:

- Current work demands in primary schools, and the leadership capacity required to deliver high quality education.
- Current resources available to support a minimum standard of leadership capability and capacity.

If additional funding is justified, two approaches could be considered:

- Modify the base SCFM formula to provide a universal response across primary schooling.
- Target funding to areas of greatest need, such as school-based preschools, high enrolment schools in the loED 6-7 range etc.

Tenure in Band B Roles

The Band A renewal procedure, which provides for employment contracts in a school for up to 10 years, may prompt comparable claims for greater security in Band B roles³².

Two factors distinguish tenure in Band A and Band B roles:

- Band B roles adapt to changing needs and, apart from Deputy Principal roles, are not fixed positions. Principal roles are fixed by legislation³³.

- Band B roles develop capabilities and applied skills through working in different education settings and contexts. System wide leadership capacity is enhanced through Band B employees having mobile careers across public education.

These considerations highlight a tension between individual security and system wide needs for developing capabilities and future leadership capacity across public education.

Discussion on Future Directions

Research and evaluation work is needed to provide a more complete picture of policy options for calibrating the right balance between individual security and the systems need for deployment of resources. Areas of immediate interest are:

- Evaluation of the flexible reappointment processes in place for Band B positions at a site level including levels of retention at a single site.

- Identification of enablers and barriers that support people to build their careers through working in different sites and contexts with a specific focus on rural and remote and low SES schools.

3 Future Workforce Strategy in Public Education

Key Learnings for Future Workforce Reform

How the education workforce is developed and managed over the next ten years will define the future of the public education system. Workforce strategy must be a core priority for policymakers in government and the department and not a mere addendum.

The analysis of Band B employment has highlighted contemporary workforce challenges in public education that have wider implications for the workforce strategy and policy. These are briefly discussed below.

1 Changing Patterns of Employment

The growth in the schooling workforce from 2020 to 2025 was concentrated in two employment groups:

- Band B: 267 FTE, representing aggregate growth of 11.2% over five years.
- Paraprofessional School Services Officer (SSO): 888 FTE, representing aggregate growth of 13% over five years.

This data clearly indicates that the flexibility and adaptability of Band B and SSO employees are highly valued by schools.

Long-term thinking is needed on the development of the Band B and paraprofessional workforces to create additional capacity and improve workforce productivity.

2 Aligning Established Policies with Contemporary Realities

The analysis of Band B employment shows that employment policies remain anchored in policies and assumptions that no longer reflect current operational realities. Examples cited in this report are:

- Resource allocation policies for school-based preschools.
- Regulation of teaching workloads for Band B employees.
- Leadership capacity in primary schools.

Dynamic changes being experienced in public education are not being supported by flexible policy responses.

A systematic approach to the identification and prioritisation of workforce policy reviews is needed to enable adaptive responses to future challenges and opportunities.

3 Generational Change

Workforce profile data indicates that the average age of Band B employees declined between 2020 and 2025 and this trend is also evident in other employment groups across public education.

Deloitte Australia research has identified the behaviours and preferences of younger generations entering the workforce³⁴:

“What stands out this year is the level of realism coming through the data. Gen Zs and millennials are not disengaged from work or growth, but they are far clearer about what they are prepared to trade off. They are looking for careers that are sustainable over the long term, and they expect employers to meet them there with the right support, skills and pathways.”

A specific issue identified in this paper is the disparate allocation of part-time roles between Band B and teaching roles. This data suggests that barriers to entry may impede employee choice and ultimately have negative consequences for workforce sustainability and productivity.

A sharper focus is needed on the impacts of generationally driven change and a more deliberate approach to adapting workforce policy to meet the needs of the new generation of educators.

4 Equitable Distribution of Human Resources at the System Level

Equity in public education is realised through giving every student the specific resources, support, and opportunities they need to succeed, based on their unique needs and background.

The major workforce reforms introduced between 2008 and 2012 increased the system's capacity to respond flexibly to changing needs and gave employees increased agency in managing their careers. These changes were enabled by strong teacher supply.

In 2026, the labour market is experiencing teacher shortages and changing patterns of behaviour in the workforce in relation to mobility across the education system. These changes are favouring those schools with greater market power based on location, student population,

financial capacity and reputation. Two outcomes of the changing labour market are:

- Chronic staffing problems in hard to staff rural remote and low SES schools.
- Competition for scarce staff resources which can lead to marketisation as indicated in the inflation of Band B classifications

The equitable distribution of human resources is a major policy challenge for public education that needs to be recognised as a strategic priority.

Acronyms

AP	Assistant Principal
Band A	Principal and Preschool Director Positions
Band B	Positions classified at levels B1- B6 with the common titles Deputy Principal, Assistant Principal, Senior Leader and Coordinator
DP	Deputy Principal
EA	Enterprise Agreement
ECW	Early Childhood Worker
IESP	Inclusive Education Support Program
NIT	Non-Instruction Time
NQF	National Quality Framework
PCO	Principal Class Output

PDA	Preschool Directors Association
PSD	Preschool Director
SAD	Staffing Allocation Document 1999
SAIRC	South Australian Industrial Relations Commission
SAPPA	South Australian Primary Principals Association
SASPA	South Australian Secondary Principals' Association
SC	Site Classification of Band A Principal and Preschool Director roles
SCFM	Student Centred Funding Model
SSACR	School Size and Complexity Rating
SSO	School Services Officer
WHS	Work Health and Safety

Endnotes

1. Thomson, P., & Dolan, C. (2025). *Pathways to the principalship: Research report to the South Australian Secondary Principals' Association*. South Australian Secondary Principals' Association. https://saspa.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/P2P_SASPA-Report_Final_120226.pdf
2. Robinson, V., & Hamilton, P. (2023). *Understanding and reducing the workload of teachers and leaders in Western Australian public schools*. Western Australian Department of Education. <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/dl/nxjk4vgj>
3. These duties are outlined in Regulation 72 of the *Education and Children's Services Regulations 2020*.
4. The 10 levels include the Band A-9 plus level administratively applied following the Year 7 to high school initiative.
5. Operationally the nine level structure regulated by Schedule 4 SSACR was replaced by the 6 level Mercer Site Classification System in 2026. The Mercer system is not industrially referenced, and the SSACR system is retained as an industrial safety net.
6. Band B-0 is assigned remuneration level in the 2024 EA but is no longer operationally applied.
7. Refer Schedule 5 of the 2024 EA, Table 2 Recommended Classifications in the 2024 EA.
8. Refer Schedule 5 of the 2024 EA, Table 3 School Leader Classification.
9. Data for this table is taken from the Department for Education Workforce Profile 2020-2025.
10. Open source ABS data.
11. Data incorporates Band B leaders, and a small legacy population of a group titled seniors who have a minimal impact on the ratios presented.
12. Exit from the system is reported as retirement, resignation or administrative action and does not include persons retuning to the teaching workforce at the cessation of a contract. In 2025, the separation rate for Band B was 2.2% compared to the teaching workforce of 6.5%.
13. There is no data available on Band B appointments returning to a teaching resulting from choice or failure to win a position and this is needed to have a complete picture of retention in leadership roles.
14. Pathways to Principalship Report p. 12 identified that rural and regional leaders face multiple compounding barriers to training and development, and professional learning operates as an "add on" rather than core business.
15. Data supplied by the department on 24 April and 4 May 2026. There is some discrepancy between the data in the published Department for Education Workforce Profile 2025 and the figures supplied on classification distribution. This is likely a result of factors such as leave, short-term assignment and the exclusion of legacy seniors' roles.

16. Pathways to Principalship report, p. 7. Specific reference is made to classification inequities where comparable roles carry different classifications depending on school resources. A specific example cited is “curriculum leaders might be classified as B-1 in less resourced schools whilst holding B-2 classification in well resource ones, despite comparable or even greater complexity of work”.
17. SASSLA formal submission on the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System 2023. Available on the SASSLA website.
18. Pathways to the Principalship, p. 8 cites lack of mentors, especially when line managers lack the necessary skills or willingness to support aspiring leaders.
19. Per annum salaries accurate as of 8 May 2026. Remuneration does not include superannuation or allowances.
20. Band B permanent pay rates are used for this comparison.
21. A career structure defined from entry level Band B roles to the highest Band A site classification SC-6.
22. The current criteria rely on experience in interpreting classification criteria. Explicit criteria that is understandable to people working in schools is needed if greater weight is put on self-regulation.
23. Entry level Band B-1 has a maximum teaching load of 18 hours 30 minutes for primary and 17 hours and 50 minutes for a secondary. The lowest level of regulated teaching time is for a B-6 Secondary Deputy Principal with maximum teaching hours of 10 hours and 30 minutes.
24. Band B-1 aligns with the previous coordinator role where administration often encompassed curriculum leadership or management of small programs. The advent of more specialised roles at Band B-2 have extended work requirements that generally require greater release time than the industrial minimum.
25. The Pathways to the Principalship Report cites the complexity of managing a high teaching load with management responsibilities p. 23.
26. This includes four schools in the south east of the state and one in the mid north.
27. EA Schedule 5, Table 2 Recommended Classifications for Schools indicates Band B-1 level positions are available at the A-1 and A-2 level, and Band B-1 and B-2 level positions are available at Level A-3. The reference is to schools only.
28. The joint SASSLA/PDA 2020 Report on implementation on Conditions of Employment for Standalone Preschools provides a detailed summary of the regulation of workload of preschools.
29. Data provided by the department, 5 June 2026.
30. This policy is not industrially referenced. The underlying aim of the policy was providing additional leadership capacity in high enrolment primary schools to support the curriculum and pedagogy needs for junior primary students.
31. SASSLA wrote to the Chief Executive in May 2020. The letter identified that the loss of the Assistant Principal position resulted in a reduction of 25% in leadership capacity in the school with no consequential reduction in job demands.
32. Principal and Preschool Director (Band A) tenure and appointment renewal procedure.
33. DP roles are not defined by legislation, but they have specific duties defined in the EA.
34. Deloitte Australia. (2026, May 20). Younger Australians rethink career success amid ongoing pressure and change. <https://www.deloitte.com/au/en/about/press-room/younger-australians-rethink-career-success-amid-ongoing-pressure-change-200526.html>.



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