

Tasmania

Mr Greg Morgan

WE are currently in the implementation phase of a new blueprint for education in Tasmania.

Our structure of three branches has been replaced by four new learning services groups. Six principals will be appointed to the advisory board for each learning services group. The Tasmanian Principals Association (TPA) has provided some preliminary advice to the Minister regarding the selection of principals for these boards, and we are confident we will continue to play a strong role in the development of these. Fortunately, timeframes have been extended for these until March 2007.

The review period for the refined curriculum has just expired. There has been a range of options for responses. However, it is clear that our members have no clear, unified position. Nevertheless, we continue to work with our members to build a cohesive position. While the 'new look' curriculum has attempted to cater for national imperatives in its framework, we are yet to see how successful the marriage will be!

The TPA executive has worked with the Department's Human Resources Deputy Director to begin the process of providing clear, easy-to-follow processes for Managing for High Performance. This issue is one that has been consistently identified by our members as highly problematic and stressful.

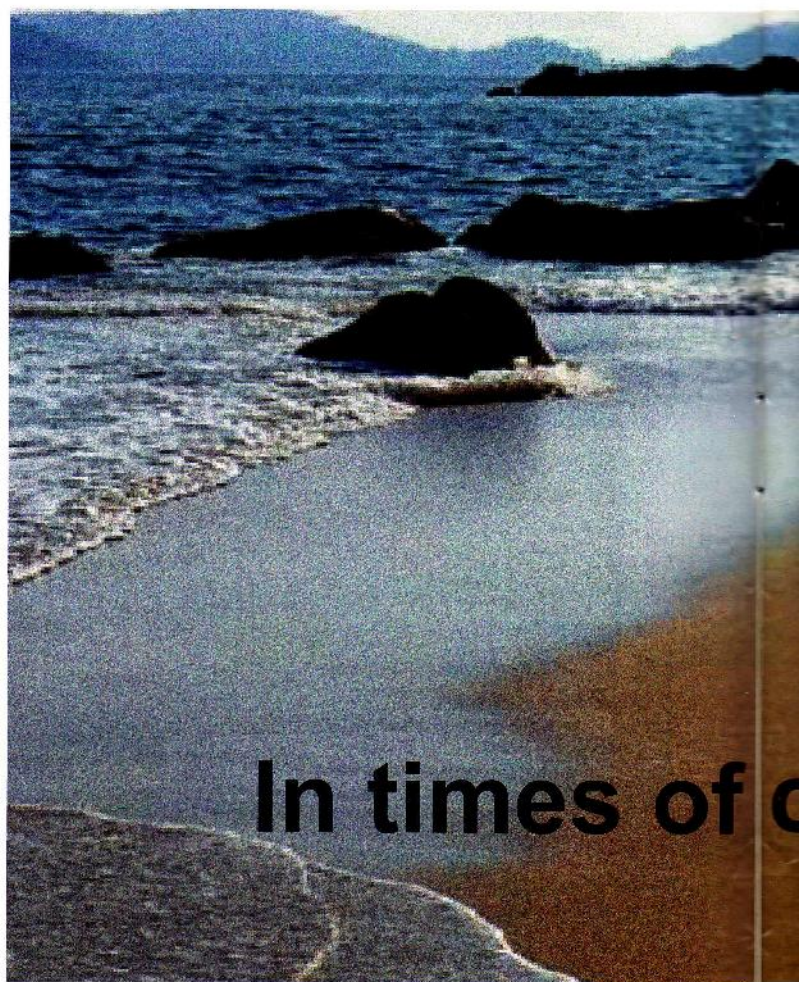
There is ongoing discussion about the support available to principals, should they find themselves in a position where claims are made about their performance by teachers. The Australian Education Union claims to provide support to both groups; it may well be timely to explore another means of support for principals.

Planning for the 2007 TPA conference, which is also the combined Australian Primary Principals Association and Australia Secondary Principals Association conference, is well underway. Check out the website for all the conference details, including a call for papers, at:

<http://www.windsofchangeconference.com.au/index.php>

The final details in organising keynotes are near completion. The conference will feature separate cultural/administration events for each association. However, the rest of the conference will involve shared keynotes, social events, and so on.

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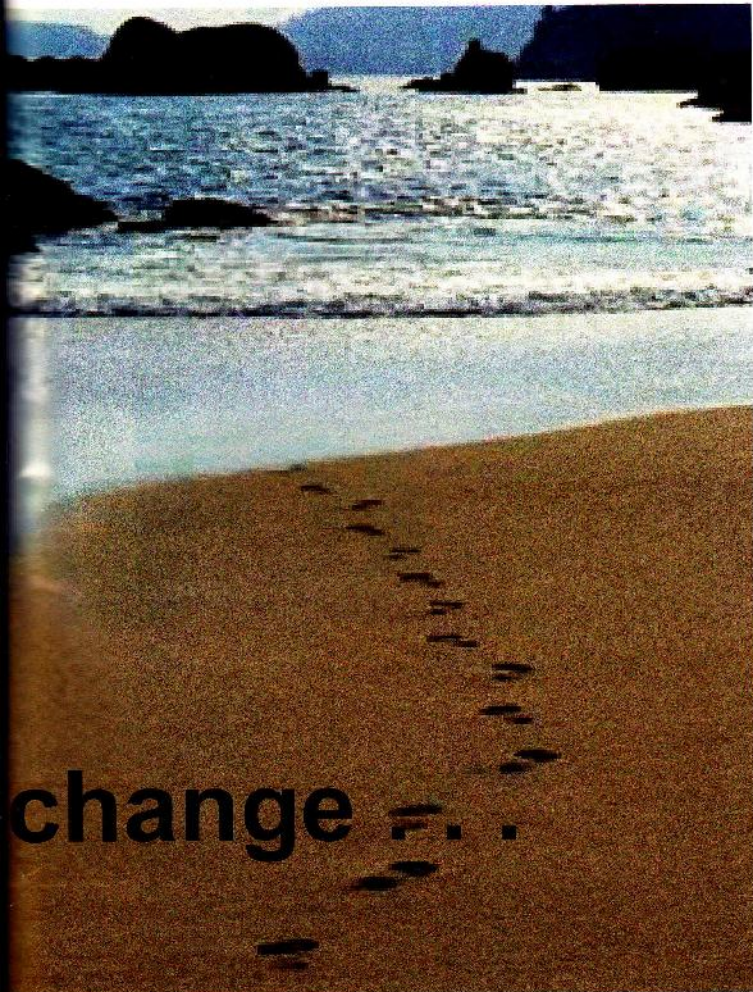


'In times of change, learners inherit the earth while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists'

Eric Hoffer

IT is my blessing these days to be able to walk morning and evening on a beautiful beach. Every day is different, with new joys to be discovered and unexpected adventures. A little like being a principal, really. Usually life is relatively calm, 'beautiful one day and perfect the next'. Except when it's not. Today the surf is so high and viciously rough. We are in the midst of a 'Clayton's cyclone' otherwise known as an east-coast low. The whole landscape is changing - in one day.

This week I had one of those 'whack on the side of the head' moments that strike us all occasionally. It happened during one of my morning walks when I noticed two pieces of plastic junk. As cleaning up the beach is also a daily event - done in an attempt to show Mother Nature that she is appreciated by some of us



- just not the 'weekend tourist/terrorists who insist it's not their responsibility to keep anything clean or consider anyone except themselves! I knelt down to pick the plastic up, intending to throw it in the bin along with the broken glass, fish hooks and used disposable nappies collected that morning.

After gingerly turning both pieces over, I saw, to my surprise, the number of small living flora and fauna which were firmly attached, opening, closing, and moving, looking for water. I had experienced this once before. I had thought that was a 'one-off' experience. Last time it was a plastic drink bottle with a whole colony of creatures attached around the lid. At the time I had offered it to a teacher visiting the beach that day with her year 11 biology class, as a problem-solving exercise for the students. Do we destroy this as plastic rubbish or preserve it as a legitimate habitat? I thought it was a fascinating dilemma. She wasn't interested, or in fairness to her, maybe the sight of me in my walking gear was just too scary. The 'head whack' experience this week was that this was obviously not a single event. As well as the two pieces of plastic today, yesterday I found an abandoned tyre which had a whole colony of creatures using it as a habitat base.

Don't overlook left-of-field experiences

What does this have to do with being a principal? Well, I think it raises a series of extremely important and timely issues.

1. How often do we overlook or discard experiences that have the potential to change our perspective?
2. How open are we to changing our viewpoints and frameworks, and what does it take to do that?
3. In what ways, and how rapidly, are we adapting, and assisting our schools to adapt to a world that is moving at breakpoint speed?
4. Are our departments, bureaucracies and politicians ready or able to encourage and support those principals who 'think and act outside the box'?
5. When the going gets rough for our principals and teachers, are the tough cut free so they can survive and create a new environment, or are they tethered so that they drown?

In a world where our coral reefs are dying and the sea levels are rapidly rising and threatening our way of life, our sea creatures are creating new places for themselves in the world. It's happening very quickly. They're simple creatures. We are not! Will our rubbish dumps will become the new reefs? Unattractive but effective - maybe.

In a world where we have kids and parents striking until a principal who did think laterally and act in the best interests of the kids is reinstated; where we have teachers bemused by the transcultural nature of many of our students; where technology and behaviour is running ahead of moral and ethics, one question must be asked.

How are our schools, particularly our secondary schools, fitting students for the world as it exists now, and supporting teachers who are working toward this?

Or are we so focused on trying to assess the unassessable, at the behest of governments wanting numbers for political leverage, that we've completely lost sight of the purposes of learning and education?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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