

Education NT Principal Wellbeing Framework





For the purposes of this Framework '*principal*' is inclusive of teaching principal Level 1 to executive contract principal Level 5, and assistant principal. It includes principals in urban, rural, remote and very remote schools.

INTRODUCTION

The Northern Territory Department of Education (the department) is committed to principal wellbeing and values supporting principals to flourish in their roles. The department's Principal Wellbeing Framework (the Framework) provides direction for maintaining healthy, adept and resilient principals to lead our schools. The Framework has been developed in partnership with the Northern Territory Principals' Association and reflects the voices and visions of current principals.

Principals in the Northern Territory work across a range of varied and unique school and community contexts; as such, the demands and challenges vary greatly. There are 167 principals (inclusive of 61 teaching principals) and 122 assistant principals in Northern Territory schools. These 289 school leaders provide direction and support to over 3500 school-based staff. 117 principals (including 59 teaching principals) and 51 assistant principals are located in remote or very remote locations, with approximately 35% of these located in small schools with few staff.

The Framework acknowledges that principals in Northern Territory schools require wellbeing resources and strategies that can be accessed and implemented in a range of contexts to meet individual and collective needs.

By acknowledging the challenges of a principal's role and identifying strategies and resources that empower principals to flourish in the role, this Framework sets the course for future work in this area.

To continue the department's journey to become *the most improving system*, it is imperative that principal wellbeing is prioritised.

FRAMEWORK VISION STATEMENTS

Principals are empowered to build their wellbeing capability through increased wellbeing knowledge, skills and resources.

Wellbeing is considered a core foundation of a high performing team-based culture that optimises principal wellbeing through continuous improvement practices.

Principals, colleagues and management have established meaningful partnerships to support principals in meeting their wellbeing needs.

Supporting principal wellbeing is an established mindset of the workforce in corporate and school settings.



WHAT IS WELLBEING?

The World Health Organisation defines wellbeing as, “a state in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community”.¹

Wellbeing is a state of being. It is a person’s physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual state.² An individual is said to be in a state of ‘optimal wellbeing’ or ‘flourishing’ when they feel positive, engaged and fulfilled.

It is important to acknowledge that wellbeing is not a constant. It is dynamic and fluctuates depending on circumstance. Wellbeing may be impacted upon and affected by a range of factors at any given point in time, including: personal and professional challenges; different stressors and demands; workload; challenging contexts and relationships; and critical incidents.

1 World Health Organisation, *Mental health: a state of wellbeing*, http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/ Accessed 18 August 2017

2 Stephen Macdonald, Lianne Sipsma, Lisa Vandertogt, *Definition of Wellbeing*, Kaya, 2015.



As individuals, our available resources to support a flourishing state of wellbeing, ebb and flow. At times they may even be depleted. Crucially though, they can also be replenished.³

Maintaining and building a flourishing state of wellbeing often comes down to an individual's knowledge of, and access to, resources which can assist in meeting challenges. Risks to wellbeing can be reduced by acquiring a range of resources and developing implementation strategies that build wellbeing capability. Increased wellbeing knowledge, resources and capability support maintaining, growing and sustaining wellbeing.

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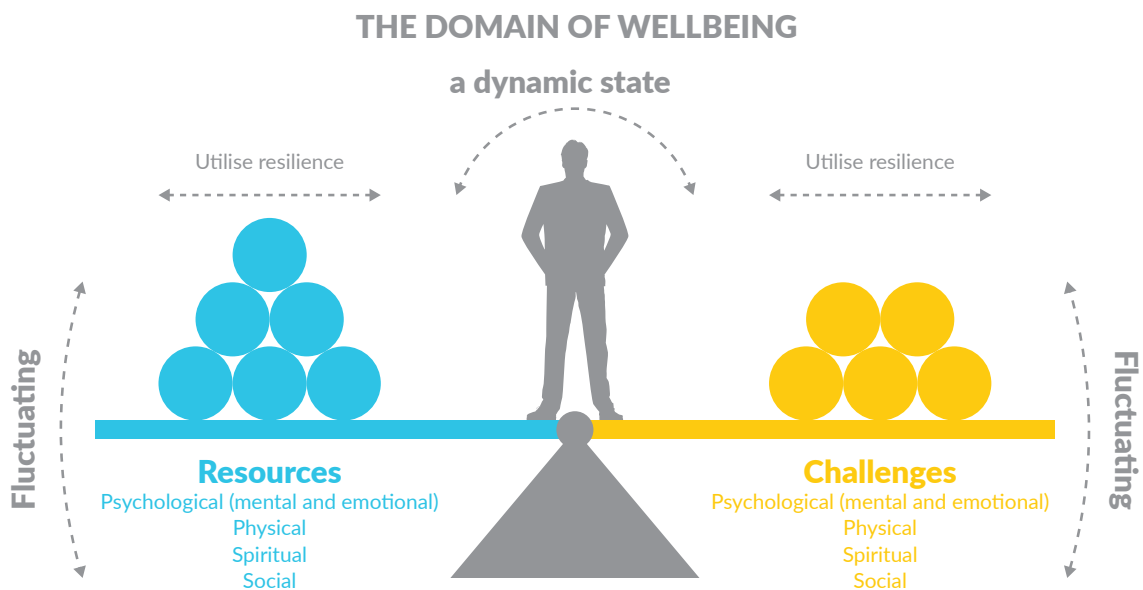


Figure 1. The dynamic state of wellbeing.³ The relationship between challenges and resources

³ Stephen Macdonald, Lianne Sipsma, Lisa Vandertogt, *Definition of Wellbeing*, Kaya, 2015.

WHY IS PRINCIPAL WELLBEING IMPORTANT?

Globally the work of principals is intensifying in terms of complexity and volume.

The impact and significance of this is amplified in the unique context of the Northern Territory where many principals are living in remote locations. Principals working remotely commonly experience fewer on-site peer to peer connections; greater challenges accessing professional development; and, health and wellbeing service providers.

The Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey⁴ found that the health and wellbeing of Australian principals has deteriorated over the past five years. It is critical that the wellbeing of principals is prioritised to turn this trend around.

Principal leadership has the second biggest in-school impact after classroom teaching and has the greatest impact in schools with high need.⁵ The literature on principal wellbeing is conclusive that positive principal wellbeing plays a significant role in the wellbeing of staff; the academic and social performance of students; and, the overall success of a school.⁶ Therefore, it is vitally important that principals ensure their own wellbeing is a priority.

Compared with other jurisdictions in Australia, the Northern Territory is a small system and as such, is perfectly positioned to build strong networks of support between existing and future principals to enhance principal wellbeing.

Overall, despite this decline in wellbeing, principals continue to report significantly higher job satisfaction than the general population⁷ and continue to display high levels of commitment, efficacy and goodwill.

4 Phillip Riley, *The Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey*, 2016.

5 Kenneth Leithwood, Alma Harris, & David Hopkins. Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. *School leadership and management*, 2008, 28(1), 27-42, p. 27.

6 Kenneth Leithwood, Karen Seashore Louis, Stephen Anderson and Kyla Wahlstrom, *Review of research How leadership influences student learning*, 2004, p.70.

7 Phillip Riley, 2016.

FAST FACTS – NATIONAL

- » Principals rate the biggest contributor to stress as the sheer quantity of work and lack of time to focus on their core business of teaching and learning.⁸
- » Compared to the general population, principals experience higher levels of job demand, burnout 1.6 (times higher); stress, 1.7; sleeping troubles, 2.2; depressive symptoms, 1.3; somatic stress symptoms, 1.3; and cognitive stress symptoms, 1.6.⁸
- » 55% of Australian principals average 51-56 work hours per week⁸ (an employee's mental health will start to suffer on average after only 39 hours per week⁹).
- » One in ten principals thinks about self-harm or has a low quality of life.⁸
- » A principal is eight times more likely to be verbally abused and six times more likely to be physically abused than a manager at a similar level.⁸

FAST FACTS – NORTHERN TERRITORY

- » Principals in urban and remote schools work between 56-61 hours a week and identify workload as the top ranking pressure in their role.¹⁰
- » Principals in urban and remote settings listed complexity of the job as the second highest pressure in their role.¹⁰
- » Threats from parents listed as third highest ranking for urban principals and a lack of skills to deal with critical incidents for remote.¹⁰
- » 53% of principals reported experiencing physical violence in their roles.¹⁰
- » 55% of principals in the Northern Territory reported feeling threatened by physical violence while at work.¹¹
- » 68% of principals strongly agreed and 27% agreed that employer and government accountability requirements were an increasing proportion of their workload.¹²

“...the health and wellbeing of Australian principals has deteriorated over the past five years. It is critical that the wellbeing of principals is prioritised to turn this trend around.”

⁸ Phillip Riley, 2016.

⁹ Dinh, H., Welsh, J., & Strazdins, L. *The Conversation*, 2 February 2007, <https://theconversation.com/work-hour-limits-need-to-change-for-better-mental-health-and-gender-equality-71999> Accessed 31 September 2017.

¹⁰ Sue Beynon, *Principal Wellbeing in the Northern Territory*, 2017.

¹¹ Phillip Riley, *The Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey*, 2016.

¹² Australian Primary Principals' Association, (yet to be released survey results), 2016.

THE WELLBEING CONTINUUM

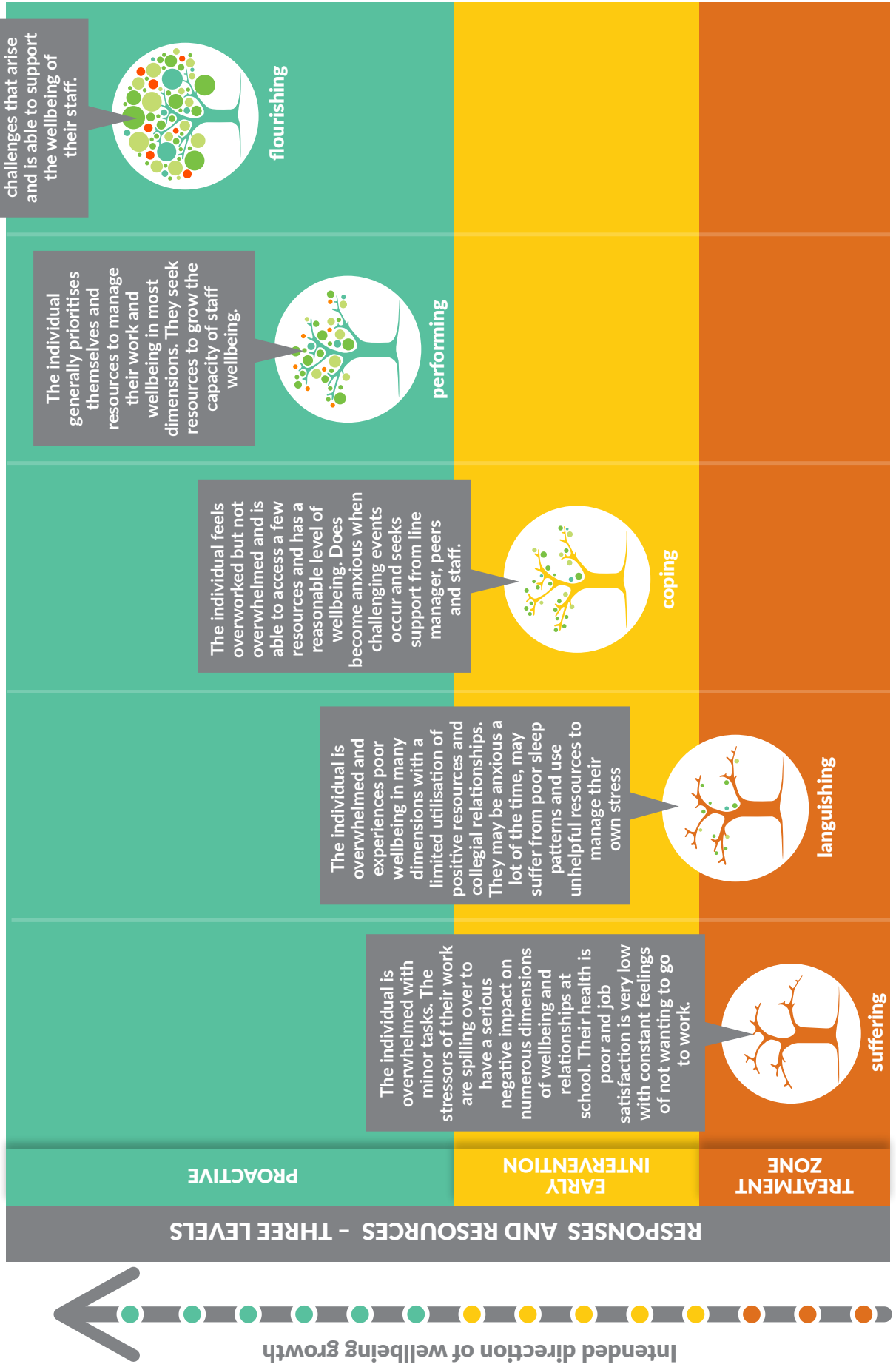
Over the course of time, principals may find themselves at different points on a wellbeing continuum that align to the following: suffering, languishing, coping, performing and flourishing. Movement back and forth along the continuum may occur over a period of time; or be in response to a high impact event such as a critical incident.

Responses and resources for meeting and supporting wellbeing needs will vary depending on where principals are located along the continuum. Principals who identify as flourishing are more likely to have their wellbeing needs met with proactive responses and resources. Early intervention approaches are most suited to those who are coping, whereas those who are languishing or suffering are best supported with strategies connected to the treatment zone.

Different strategies should be incorporated to enhance wellbeing, no matter where individual principals identify across the continuum. The dotted arrow in the diagram highlights the direction in which wellbeing responses and resources aim to guide the individual.

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Figure 2. The wellbeing continuum aligned to three levels of wellbeing responses and resources



THE PRINCIPAL WELLBEING FRAMEWORK

This Framework aims to empower principals to engage in their wellbeing; be supported to grow strategies to enhance their wellbeing; and experience development in their wellbeing capability regardless of where they identify along the wellbeing continuum.

The Framework model identifies five wellbeing dimensions for supporting a holistic approach to principal wellbeing including: physical; mental; social; emotional and spiritual. There are three encircling wellbeing enablers - building a wellbeing culture, growing wellbeing capability and supporting mental health and wellbeing.

These identify core focus areas for building an organisational culture that supports the wellbeing of principals and guides planning, implementation strategies, resourcing and evaluative practices.

The Framework identifies three key stakeholder groups consisting of the individual, the collective and the department. These stakeholders have a shared responsibility to provide a strong foundation and fuel the commitment to support, grow and sustain flourishing principals.

Information and resources are available on the supporting *Principal Wellbeing Webpage*¹³. These provide guidance on individual and workplace activities that contribute to principal wellbeing.

¹³ teachintheterritory.nt.gov.au/educator-support/educator-wellbeing

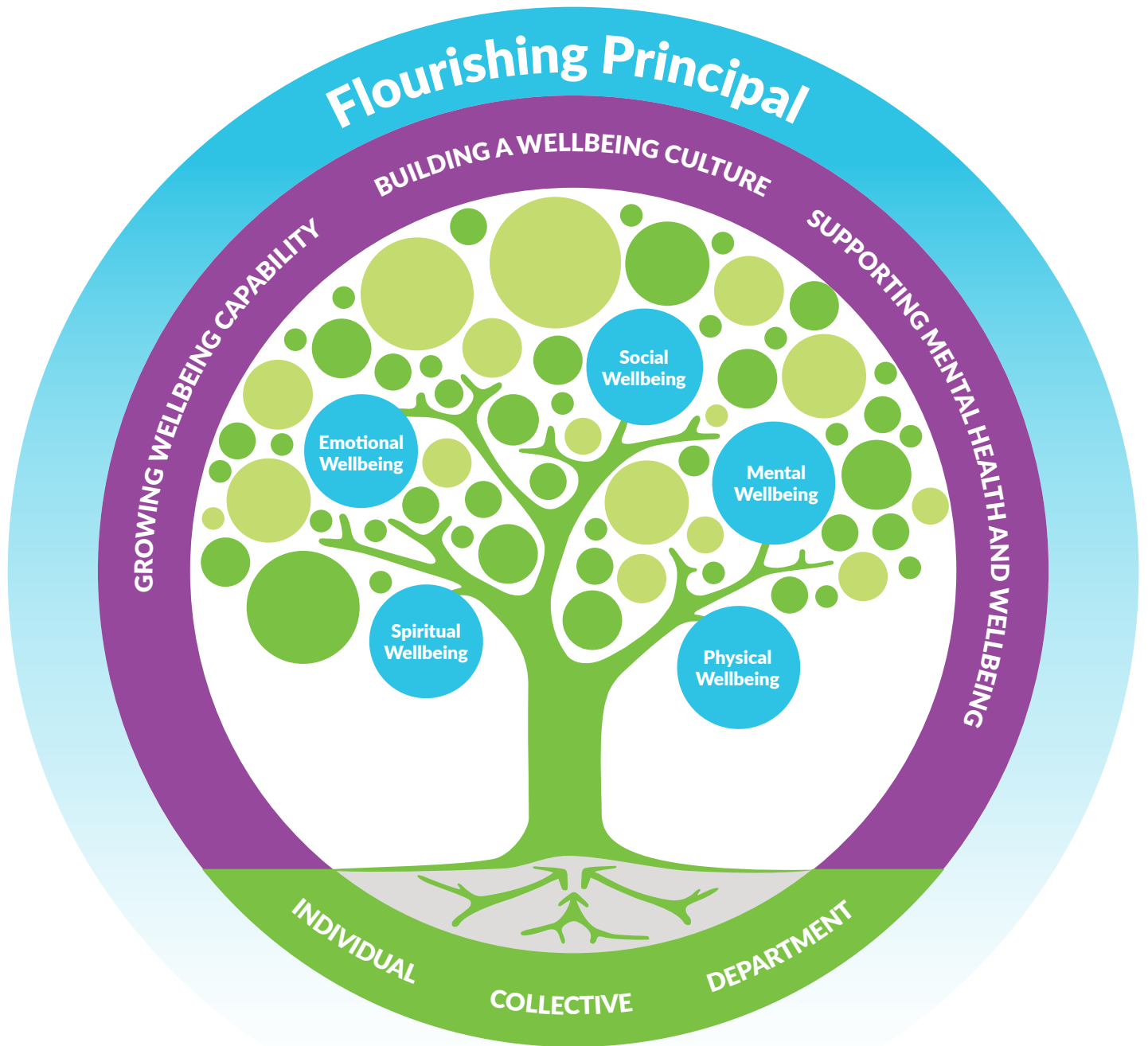


Figure 3. The Wellbeing Framework

Wellbeing information and resources can be accessed via teachintheterritory.nt.gov.au

DIMENSIONS OF WELLBEING

The Framework identifies five dimensions of wellbeing.

Physical wellbeing is associated with the extent to which we feel physically safe and healthy. It includes nutrition, preventative health care, rest and recharge, sleep, physical activity, physical safety and security. Physical wellbeing enables positive health outcomes.

Mental wellbeing is associated with achievement and success. It includes how information is processed and judgements are made. It is also informed by motivation and persistence to achieve. Mental wellbeing is important for attaining knowledge and experiencing positive growth.

Social wellbeing includes the extent to which we experience positive relationships and connectedness to others. This includes relationships both in and beyond the workplace. It encompasses the quality and availability of an individual's social capital and is important for pro-social behaviour, trust, and empathy towards others.

Emotional wellbeing relates to self-awareness and emotional regulation. It includes how well we cope, and is often reflected by the level of a person's resilience. Emotional wellbeing is in part informed by our capacity for self-reflection.

Spiritual wellbeing relates to our sense of life-meaning and purpose. It can include our connection to culture, community, spirituality and/or religiosity and includes the beliefs, values, mental models and ethics we hold.



STAKEHOLDERS

The Framework identifies three key stakeholders in principal wellbeing – the individual, the collective and the department. All stakeholders play an important role in growing the wellbeing of principals, and cultivating a wellbeing culture amongst the collective and across the department.

INDIVIDUAL

Individual principals play a key role in their own wellbeing. All principals are encouraged to engage in the maintenance of their wellbeing, access suitable resources and have a planned approach to wellbeing that incorporates the dimensions and strategies aligned to this Framework.

COLLECTIVE

The collective refers to those who make up the social capital that principals have access to, and are themselves an active part and includes: principals; teachers; support staff; department officers; managers; students; parents; and, community members.

Social capital relates to the quality and quantity of interactions and relationships among people.¹⁴ The World Health Organisation (1998) states that, “Social capital represents the degree of social cohesion which exists in communities.

It refers to the processes between people which establish networks, norms and social trust, and facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit”.¹⁵

For principals to flourish in their wellbeing it is important that members of the collective invest in and support principals by building and maintaining quality relationships that allow for high levels of social cohesion and increase the available social capital for principals.

THE DEPARTMENT

The department commits to addressing key issues identified by principals as impacting on their wellbeing. The department supports principal wellbeing by adopting and promoting strategic directions and systemic approaches based on evidence, data and principal feedback. The department resources quality programs aligned to needs assessment, data analysis and consultation. Leading health bodies, have recognised the workplace as a priority setting for promoting health and wellbeing.¹⁶ A principal wellbeing framework actively supported by department heads through policy, strategic planning and resourcing has a firm foundation, and contributes greatly to a positive wellbeing culture throughout the organisation.

¹⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Social capital and social wellbeing Discussion Paper*, p.4, 2002.

¹⁵ Michael Fullen, *The Principal. Three keys to Maximizing Impact*, p.70, 2014.

¹⁶ World Health Organization, Division of Health Promotion, Education and Communication and Office of Occupational Health, 1997. *WHO's Global Healthy Work Approach*. WHO: Geneva.

ENABLERS OF WELLBEING

The Framework identifies three encircling wellbeing enablers - building a wellbeing culture, growing wellbeing capability and supporting mental health and wellbeing. These enablers provide focus and direction for building an organisational culture that prioritises wellbeing and guide planning, implementation strategies, resourcing and evaluative practices.

BUILDING A WELLBEING CULTURE

Building a wellbeing culture supports the occupational wellbeing of principals. The desire to contribute and make a positive impact on the organisations in which we work, and on the society in which we live, leads to occupational wellbeing. Occupational wellbeing involves the ability to achieve healthy work-life satisfaction; manage workplace stressors; and build positive relationships with managers and colleagues. Supporting occupational wellbeing also involves actively seeking professional development opportunities and developing functional skills that will transfer into the workplace.¹⁷

Includes: building social capital; sharing links to organisations and associations including the Northern Territory Principals' Association; planning for work-life satisfaction; and professional development.

Occupational wellbeing involves the ability to achieve healthy work-life satisfaction; manage workplace stressors; and build positive relationships with managers and colleagues.

¹⁷ Oakland University, What is occupational wellbeing?, <https://ourecrewell.wordpress.com/2016/10/24/what-is-occupational-well-being/> Accessed 10 August, 2017



GROWING WELLBEING CAPABILITY

Providing a range of wellbeing resources and committing to growing and sharing these with principals and the collective offers multiple and real opportunities to enhance principal wellbeing and grow collective wellbeing capability. The freedom to achieve wellbeing is of primary moral importance and opens the way for principals to increase their wellbeing capabilities. Increasing an individual's capabilities means increasing their real opportunities to do and be what they have reason to value.¹⁸

Includes: Coaching and peer mentoring; increasing resilience and stress management strategies; professional development and leadership growth.

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Supporting mental health and wellbeing refers to the appropriate supports required to create and maintain mental health and holistic wellbeing. The department supports principals by providing information and services aimed at enhancing all dimensions of wellbeing.

Includes: Improving physical health through addressing lifestyle factors, such as: good nutrition; physical activity; considering levels of smoking and alcohol consumption; improving mental health in the workplace; increasing mental health literacy by providing information and resources to support optimal mental health; relaxation strategies; and, information and resources to support mindfulness.

The freedom to achieve wellbeing is of primary moral importance and opens the way for principals to increase their wellbeing capabilities.

¹⁸ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, [The Capability Approach](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/capability-approach/#BasCap), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/capability-approach/#BasCap>
Accessed 11 August 2017.

5 STEP PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The five step process provides an approach for principals, the collective and the department to engage in principal wellbeing. The process suggests a systematic approach to developing, implementing and evaluating individual wellbeing strategies along with system level wellbeing initiatives and programs. Future directions are indicated against each step.

STEP	OVERVIEW	FUTURE DIRECTIONS
Engage	<p>Principal engagement and commitment to their own wellbeing is essential to increase sustainable and high impact approaches to principal wellbeing.</p> <p>The department and collective commit to supporting principal wellbeing and to actively engaging with principals to build social capital and provide support structures and resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A principal wellbeing webpage to engage principals supported by department resourcing, including: wellbeing information; proactive approaches to wellbeing; responding to critical incidents; resilience strategies; mental health information and services • Professional development opportunities, including: leadership courses; principal orientation; principal induction; principal conferences and networking opportunities inclusive of a wellbeing component • Case studies – principal case studies sharing approaches to wellbeing
Needs assessment	<p>Principal wellbeing is supported through individual strategies based on principal self-assessment.</p> <p>The department supports meeting the identified wellbeing needs of principals through the ongoing collection of qualitative and quantitative data.</p>	<p>Tools for assessing needs, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual wellbeing self-assessment tools • Annual principal wellbeing survey data • Human resource data (early intervention, length of tenure, principal exit survey data, stress leave, number of applicants for advertised principal positions)



STEP	OVERVIEW	FUTURE DIRECTIONS
Wellbeing planning	<p>Planning involves engaging and supporting principals in identifying wellbeing strategies for implementation.</p> <p>The department supports wellbeing planning by identifying appropriate resources and making them available.</p> <p>The collective share skills, knowledge and expertise to enhance wellbeing planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Principal wellbeing workshops/training – to assist principals to engage with and plan for wellbeing ● Online resources to guide wellbeing planning and wellbeing strategies for implementation ● Information to facilitate coaching and mentoring through peer to peer mentoring and connecting principals with the department's accredited coaches
Action	<p>The most effective wellbeing plans consist of multiple strategies implemented over time.</p> <p>The department and collective support principals to initiate and undertake wellbeing actions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individual wellbeing action plan template to assist in planning wellbeing activities ● Resourcing for wellbeing, leadership and executive coaching ● Information and resourcing regarding available counselling services
Review	<p>To assess the effectiveness of each wellbeing strategy, evaluation measures must be considered in the action planning stage. Scheduled reviews are a commitment at the individual and department level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Guiding information and processes on how to evaluate individual wellbeing activities ● System level evaluation process and measures

Impact measures monitor and evaluate wellbeing initiatives to ensure they are targeted to meet principal needs across the Northern Territory.

MEASURING IMPACT

Future strategic development against the Framework will include a range of impact measures to monitor and evaluate the status of principal wellbeing. This will occur as part of an ongoing review cycle to ensure all initiatives are targeted to principal needs. Approaches may include:

- » Annual principal wellbeing survey data – system level/individual level
- » Individual self-assessment tool and wellbeing review cycle
- » Human resources data (early intervention, length of tenure, principal exit survey data, stress leave, number of applicants for advertised principal positions)
- » Principal feedback collected via the principal wellbeing webpages feedback system
- » Wellbeing webpage usage data
- » Coaching data including regional usage and types of coaching utilised
- » Return on investments measures



