



**PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES FOR  
SELECTING AND APPOINTING  
PEOPLE TO LEADERSHIP POSITIONS  
UNDER THE *EDUCATION ACT***

**A WHITE PAPER**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>OVERVIEW OF CURRENT SITUATION .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>PROPOSED PRINCIPLES.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>THE SPECIFIC CHALLENGES RELATING TO LEADERSHIP POSITIONS....</b>	<b>13</b>
5.1.	“The ‘Environment’ facing DECS over the next five years”	14
5.2.	“The premises underpinning current processes and procedures, their continuing relevance and proposed changes”	18
5.3.	Other Considerations .....	27
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>SHORT TERM VACANCIES.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>CONSULTATION .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Chapter 8</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>31</b>

## Chapter 1

# INTRODUCTION

This White Paper was commissioned by the Corporate Executive Team of the Department of Education and Children's Services ("DECS").

The White Paper has several purposes:

- To indicate which of the current policies, practices and procedures mitigate against effective recruitment and appointment of people to school and pre-school leadership positions.
- To raise awareness of a pending situation resulting from the expected retirement of a number of school and pre-school leaders in coming years and, as a consequence, DECS needing to appoint, to site leadership positions, a greater number of people less experienced in leadership than in the recent past.
- To explore the environmental context within which DECS will be facing this situation and the implications of this context for site leadership selection.
- To assess whether the processes and procedures currently used by DECS to select and appoint people to leadership positions remain appropriate given the challenges ahead.
- To propose, for discussion and consideration, revised processes and procedures as necessary.

The White Paper, consistent with the Corporate Executive Team's brief, has been prepared not as a research document (although much reference has been made in its preparation to national and international research) but as a document based on pragmatism and practical ways forward. It also draws extensively on recognised good practice in the broader South Australian public sector and specifically the processes which are increasingly being used to appoint people to *Public Sector Management Act* positions. This is relevant as many of the employees of DECS are employed under this Act.

The White Paper is timely. The OECD, in August 2008, published an extensive research study entitled "Improving School Leadership" – Executive summaries of which are featured on the OECD website. Those summaries clearly indicate that the circumstances which South Australia faces are being experienced internationally. The challenges for school leaders are enunciated and the importance of improving (or "professionalising" as the OECD suggests) recruitment and selection procedures is emphasised.

The OECD report is also useful in that it demonstrates that the selection processes constitute one part of a comprehensive agenda relating to school leadership. Although this White Paper was not required to address other aspects (such as the scope and attractiveness of leadership positions, leadership development and support and performance management) occasional reference to, and comment on, such aspects in the context of selection processes has been made in this White Paper.

For the purpose of this White Paper, leadership positions include School Principals, Deputy Principals, Assistant Principals and Pre-School Directors. The principles presented in this White Paper should be applied to selection processes for all leadership positions although the application of the principles may vary. That said, greater detail is included in relation to proposed processes for the selection of Principals and Pre-School Directors.

The White Paper is intended to be the basis of a formal consultation between DECS and key stakeholders in any proposed amendments to the selection processes. Some of the concepts and recommendations within this White Paper represent a significant departure from current practice and may prove not to be acceptable. However, it is expected that they will be useful in stimulating deep thinking and discussion on this most important topic.

Only informal discussions were held with a small number of stakeholders in compiling this White Paper. Whilst the views expressed in those discussions were extremely useful in providing relevant perspectives, the discussions did not in any way constitute a part of a formal consultation process.

The preparation of the White Paper was greatly assisted by the research coordinated by Mr Ilia Houridis of the South Australian Centre for Leaders in Education ("SACLE"). Ilia's assistance and that of the people throughout DECS who contributed information is acknowledged with appreciation. Similarly the efforts of the staff of SACLE who provided considerable administrative support are gratefully acknowledged.

## Chapter 2

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The challenges facing DECS in continuing to recruit, appoint and promote staff employed under the *Education Act* are considerable.

Not only is its workforce large in number (approximately 24, 500 people), but it is spread across the State, is diverse in nature and is subject to all of the social and demographic forces that are evident within the broader community.

The existing workforce is ageing and is increasingly concerned with work-life balance, whilst the job pressures are greater as the quest for even higher performance (leading to improved learning outcomes for students) continues. Younger South Australians already in, or about to enter the workforce, increasingly see each workplace as being, for them, of limited duration and overall they regard their potential workplace as global, not local.

The DECS policies and procedures relating to *Education Act* employees' recruitment, appointment and promotion have been the subject of regular updating and fine tuning since the development of the comprehensive foundation document entitled "Merit Selection Policy and Procedures – School Sector" in 1997.

The commissioning of this White Paper was based on a view by the DECS Corporate Executive Team that it was time to have a more fundamental assessment. This is not surprising, as in its 2004 publication entitled "Human Resources Guidelines on Emerging Best Practice", Standards Australia reported that international organisations, when surveyed, "generally perceived their current selection methods and tools as only moderately effective" with more than 40% of them planning to adopt different approaches.

The cornerstone of DECS' current policy and procedures is the concept of selection on the basis of merit. This replaced the previous practice whereby seniority was the major criterion. However, what is emerging is that the concept of merit is not a static or absolute one as will be discussed below.

This White Paper explores the continuing development of the concept of merit, proposes some principles to be applied in that regard and discusses the consequential implications for procedures to attract, select and promote people to leadership positions.

The challenges facing DECS as it moves into a period of appointing, to site leadership roles, more people who are relatively less experienced in leadership and management, will be particularly significant.

These are not new challenges; nor are they challenges facing only South Australia. They parallel those which faced the then Education Department in the 1950s and 1960s when the number of sites expanded rapidly to cope with the large number of baby boomers attending State schools.

However, today's environment is vastly different. There is not the same assumption that large numbers of skilled teachers will see their career path as being confined to South Australia, let alone automatically aspiring to leadership roles in the State system. For many reasons that have been researched extensively, site leadership roles are perceived to be extremely difficult and the inherent rewards and job satisfaction not as well articulated or understood as the difficulties.

As with all other roles, seniority is no longer the major selection criterion. Selection processes are much more decentralised, involving a wider range of key stakeholders including members of the school community, external to DECS.

Merit – which on the surface is a straightforward concept – is now the sole criterion. But, as indicated above, merit is becoming an increasingly complex notion because it includes both demonstrated experience and leadership potential and:

- with a pool of candidates with less experience in leadership roles, potential (which is much harder to assess) is becoming a relatively more important factor; and
- merit is, in part, situational, as the challenges facing teachers and leaders from site to site vary significantly. Assessing each candidate's ability to meet the specific challenges of each position will inevitably see different emphases being placed on the leadership and management criteria for each position.

Furthermore, the requirements for procedural fairness to all potential and actual candidates have never been greater with high expectations for the transparency of all processes.

At the same time, there is a feeling within the State system that the application and selection processes for site leadership roles need to be less demanding in terms of the effort required of candidates and of the people involved in the process. This is a consistent trend in recruitment across many sectors.

This White Paper submits proposals for dealing with that dilemma.

The White Paper was not required to explore ways of making site leadership positions more inherently attractive or to address the perceived imbalance in the minds of many teachers of the rewards and difficulties associated with these roles.

However, aspects of this issue should be addressed by suggestions in the White Paper which, if implemented, would:

- provide encouragement for existing, well-performing site leaders to remain in their leadership roles for up to 10 years on the basis of performance;

- relieve senior people of some of the workload associated with selection processes;
- assure successful candidates for leadership roles of continuing personal and professional support, regardless of their leadership and management experience when initially appointed;
- enable relevant experience of retiring leaders to be used in a constructive and supportive way in future selection processes and beyond; and
- assist people involved in selection processes with additional techniques and tools now commonly used in the selection processes of industry and government more broadly and which will be particularly useful in dealing with the assessment of potential.

That said, the current DECS policy and procedures are not grossly deficient in their intent. They have served DECS and the State Education sector well for the past decade.

They do need to be extended to make the overarching and operating principles on which they are based more explicit, so that there can be sensible flexibility in their application, as well as to accommodate the procedural changes proposed in this White Paper. Making the underlying principles more explicit will also help to avoid or overcome situations in which processes, either fully or in part, are unnecessarily followed as if by rote, for no particularly sound outcome.

In addition, the policies and procedures need to be brought up to date and restructured so as to:

- refer to organisations by their current names; and
- separate the procedural arrangements for site leadership positions from those that apply to teaching staff.

They also need to acknowledge, and directly address, the substantial differences in the challenges facing Principals from site to site that are not sharply enough defined by the current standard job and person specification, supplemented by site context statements.

## Chapter 3

# OVERVIEW OF CURRENT SITUATION

This White Paper was not required to cover the history relating to the development of DECS' current policy and procedures. However, it is instructive to note the range of documents that deal with aspects of the various processes.

In addition to the overarching "Merit Selection Policy and Procedures – School Sector 1997", the following documents are relevant:

- Policy Documents
  - Principal, Director and Deputy Placement Policy
- Enterprise Agreements
  - S.A. Education Staff Enterprise Agreement 2006
  - Principal Classifications – Operational Guidelines
  - S.A. Government Wages Parity Enterprise Agreements 2006 and 2007
- Guidance to Selection Panels
  - Panel Report
  - Vacancy Selection Outcome
  - Merit Selection Checklist
- Generic Job and Person Specifications
  - Principal Positions
  - Pre-School Director Positions
- Forms for DECS Processing
  - Requests to Fill Vacancy
  - New Appointments and Assignments
  - Vacancy Approval Forms
- Standard Letters
  - Acknowledge Application
  - Ineligible to Apply
  - Shortlist for Interview
  - Shortlist Process Delay
  - Successful Applicant
  - Unsuccessful Applicant
  - Unsuccessful after Interview

In addition, the DECS website contains references to, and access to, a number of other relevant documents, including:

- Applying for Promotional Positions

- Guidance Notes for Applicants and Selection Panels to Assist in Addressing and Assessing OHS & W and Risk
- Management Requirements of Leadership Vacancies
- Conducting Internal Leadership Panels – Some Frequently Asked Questions
- Short-listing Guidelines for Merit Selection Panels for Leadership Positions
- Merit Selection Training – Key Points

The key points to note about the above collection of documents are that they are well intentioned in that they clearly aim:

- to make the machinery aspects of the recruitment, appointment and promotion easier for people to follow and manage;
- to guide both applicants and people involved in assessing applications;
- to ensure that processes are reasonably standard; and
- to respect the rights of applicants to be treated fairly and to be kept informed of the progress of their application.

In addition, they demonstrate the importance of the processes to employees and their industrial representatives.

Of critical importance to this White Paper are the questions:

- Do they, overall, encourage or discourage the widest possible range of potential applicants?
- Do they sufficiently assist potential applicants to make a reasonable judgement as to whether an application would be worthwhile?
- Do they assist people involved in the selection process to make the best possible decision?

These questions will be explored in subsequent Chapters.

It is also relevant to note that the current “Merit Selection Policy and Procedures” document is extremely complex. It is 68 pages long and contains the following sections:

- a four-page introduction which outlines the basic principles of selection, the application of the merit principle and the definition of merit;
- a 26-page section which covers the processes for initiating and conducting a selection process for teacher and seconded teacher positions. This includes the processes for positions of Principal, Deputy Principal and Assistant Principal;

- a 17-page section which covers the processes for initiating and conducting a selection process for school services officers and government services officers; and
- an eight-page section which covers the processes for initiating and conducting a selection process for Aboriginal Education Workers.

Within each of the final three sections, there are sub-sections which describe the variations which apply in various circumstances, including:

- where a vacancy is for more than one year or less than one year;
- where a vacancy is for up to six months;
- the rights of certain classes of employee (such as people in part time, contract or temporary relief positions);
- the rights of people in specified circumstances (such as people who are at a substantive Principal level but have been performing other duties and wish to return to a Principal role); and
- the composition of the selection panel and the nature of the application process in each circumstance.

The procedures, without compromising the merit principle, aim for an appropriateness to each circumstance. For example:

- where a vacancy is short-term and school-based applications are sought, applicants may simply register interest in a range of ways and selection may occur without interview; and
- where selection panels are required, they can comprise as few as two members.

Undoubtedly, the most intensive processes relate to site leadership positions, particularly the positions of Principal and pre-school Director where the appointment is for a period longer than one year.

In Chapter 5, there is discussion about these complexities and the situation re site leadership positions is explored fully.

In addition to the hard copy documents, DECS has developed the “Teaching in South Australia” website. The website not only includes all of the documents referred to above, but describes the benefits of living and working in South Australia (as a potential attractor to people interstate and overseas). This is a relatively recent development as, until this year, site leadership positions were restricted to employees of DECS.

Furthermore, the website includes the details of vacant positions and provides for on-line application lodgement. For leadership positions, direct links to the website of the school or pre-school in which the vacancy exists enable a potential candidate to obtain current information about the location.

Without wishing to be particularly critical, the overriding impression that a reader gains from the extensive amount of documentation referred to above is that there is considerably more attention directed towards ensuring that well-documented processes are followed, with an associated lower amount of attention directed towards guiding people involved in selection towards ensuring that the candidate who best meets the requirements of the position is identified.

## Chapter 4

### PROPOSED PRINCIPLES

As indicated earlier, the sole criterion for the selection of people to positions is merit where merit is defined in the *Public Sector Management Act* and the DECS policy as:

- “(a) the extent to which each of the applicants has abilities, aptitude, skills, qualifications, knowledge, experience (including community experience) and personal qualities relevant to the carrying out of the duties in question; and
- (b) if relevant:
  - (i) the manner in which each of the applicants carried out any previous employment or occupational duties or functions; and
  - (ii) the extent to which each of the applicants has potential for development.”

Recognising the obligations on DECS to comply with the *Public Sector Management Act*, it is the conclusion of this White Paper that the definition is appropriate – but with one subtle qualification, viz. that the words “ (b) if relevant” should be removed.

There are several reasons for this, as follows:

- it is apparent that “merit” is in part situational; the skills and abilities of a person may well be much more suited to a particular position in specific circumstances and therefore section (i) in the above definition will be particularly pertinent; and
- the likelihood of less-experienced candidates being considered in future will make the assessment of potential more important relative to experience.

That said, one of the most important changes that could be made to the *DECS Policy and Procedure* document is to make explicit the principles on which it is based.

As part of its recently completed work program, the Public Sector Reform Commission produced a “*Good Practice Recruitment Guide*”. Embedded in that guide are ten “Good Practice Recruitment Principles” as follows:

1. Selection must be based on merit where merit means the best person for the job based on candidates’ abilities and potential for development.
2. All behaviour in the selection process must be honest, respectful and courteous with decision-making being without bias.

3. The selection process and decision-making must be free of unlawful discrimination.
4. The selection process must operate from a foundation of respect; all interactions must be professional, responsive, reasonable and courteous.
5. The selection process must respect diversity to the point of providing opportunities to people from a wide range of backgrounds.
6. Selection processes must be free of patronage and nepotism.
7. Selection processes must be fair – where fairness means treating all candidates impartially and without whimsical decision-making. However, this does not mean treating all candidates identically if a candidate's circumstances require that they be treated differently if they are to have an equal chance to present their case.
8. There must be fairness of access to positions for all interested and suitable candidates.
9. Selection processes must ensure natural justice, emphasising confidentiality, transparent decision-making and a requirement that people are entitled to be informed about decisions affecting them.
10. There must be procedural fairness; policy and practice need to be defensibly fair.

All of the principles are un-arguable and are implied in DECS' current policy and procedure though not explicitly stated.

This White Paper proposes that they be supplemented by a set of operating principles which will provide practical guidance to people directly involved in future selection processes. Therefore, in a revision of the DECS policy and procedure, it is proposed that both the Reform Commission's principles and a set of new operating principles be included.

The proposed operating principles are based on the same non-negotiable requirement that each process must have as its primary objective that of identifying the person best suited to meeting the requirements of the position from the pool of possible candidates. In so doing it must aim to create the circumstances in which all possible candidates believe that they will have the maximum opportunity to present their credentials and to have them considered fairly, objectively and thoroughly.

In presenting these proposed operating principles, there is no suggestion that they are not implicit in the current policy and procedure. To the contrary, a number of them can be drawn out from the current documentation.

However, they have not been explicitly stated.

The proposed operating principles are as follows:

- the aim must be to generate a high degree of interest and enthusiasm amongst potential candidates. This assumes, in the first instance, the maximum amount of relevant information will be readily available to potential candidates so that they can make an informed judgement about whether to pursue the opportunity;
- the effort required by candidates to present their candidacy must achieve a sensible balance between the effort required of the candidate and the effort required of the people assessing the relative merit of each candidate;
- candidates must be kept informed throughout the process of the progress of their application;
- there needs to be confidence amongst all candidates that, should the selection process require information other than that which is provided by the candidates themselves, it will be obtained rigorously and fairly;
- a sound process recognises that not all candidates have the same stake in the outcome and take account of this. For example, a person who has acted in a position for some time before it is advertised more formally will often see himself or herself having “more to lose” than others, become increasingly nervous and present at interview quite poorly;
- people who will have key working associations (including people from the broader community) with the successful candidate, have a legitimate part to play in the selection process. However, they may not have had experience in the processes of selection and may need professional assistance in aspects of the selection process;
- many selection processes for leadership positions lead to on balance decisions with a choice to be made between several candidates each with excellent claims and this is likely to continue for site leadership selection, particularly as potential will become a more prominent factor;
- leadership selection requires a high degree of skill and, whilst people can be taught the mechanics of good processes including how to elicit facts, that does not necessarily ensure the judgement needed to make good selection decisions;
- for successful candidates, there must be confidence that relevant support will be in place to ensure their success in the position; and
- for unsuccessful candidates, feedback must be available and be based primarily on how their candidacy for future positions can be enhanced.

Later in this White Paper, the implications of these proposed operating principles for changed processes are discussed.

## Chapter 5

# THE SPECIFIC CHALLENGES RELATING TO LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Although it is impossible to predict with any absolute certainty, there is a high likelihood that a significant number of Principals and Pre-school Directors will retire from full time leadership positions between 2008 and 2012. While the current financial crisis will cause many to delay their retirement, the issue of replacing Principals and Preschool Directors who do retire must be addressed.

Moreover, in the case of the school Principals, the group that would be regarded as most likely to be considered as their logical successors are likely to retire in similar numbers. This is reflected in the almost identical age profile (to that of Principals) of the combined group of Deputy Principals, Assistant Principals and Coordinators.

In the case of Pre-school Directors, the situation is further exacerbated by the fact that there is no obvious feeder group as exists in schools. The age profile of the staff of pre-schools, from whom the next wave of pre-school Directors is expected to come, is similar to that of the Pre-school Directors. In addition, the salary differential between pre-school Directors and the staff of pre-schools is not large.

Although the distribution of these retirements is unlikely to be evenly spread over the five-year period, the tasks associated with this amount of appointment activity will require significant effort.

In addition, as the terms of appointment of almost all leaders who are not retiring will also expire in that time, there will need to be appointment processes entered into for those positions as well.

Given that currently most site leadership positions are subject to a reappointment process every five years, it could be argued that, mathematically, the workload in managing and conducting the processes of selection may not be any greater over the next five years than in the past five years. However, that is not the conclusion that underpins this White Paper as:

- in the past, approximately 80% of all Principals and pre-school Directors whose positions are subject to re-appointment at the end of their initial term of appointment have been re-appointed when their initial term concludes. This has meant that as long as the existing Principal or pre-school Director has performed well and reapplied for the position, the field of candidates is inevitably limited with a very firm benchmark against which other candidates can be assessed;
- there is a distinct possibility that over the next five years for positions in highly sought after schools, fields could be larger, the relative leadership

experience amongst candidates will be lower and potential will play a larger part in selection decisions. This will inevitably make decisions more difficult with more decisions being regarded as “on-balance” decisions based on judgement than previously; and

- conversely, and as a consequence of the above, there is a distinct possibility that for more difficult to staff sites including remote sites, the extent of possible candidacy could be extremely low, necessitating significant processes of generating interest amongst possible candidates. This is being seen already. Information collected for this White Paper showed that candidate numbers for leadership positions ranged from four in a near metropolitan District to eight in an inner city District.

This complexity is compounded by the following circumstances:

- the increasing rate of retirement is a natural consequence of the post World War II baby boom so it is unlikely to be avoided or deferred even with the recent international financial crisis having an impact on superannuation returns in the short term;
- this is a national and global situation so most education systems in the western world will be facing similar situations. Therefore, there is not a ready made pool of experienced candidates elsewhere from which to draw; and
- the environmental aspects are quite different from those which would have faced the then Education Department in the 1950s and early 1960s when there was a rapid expansion in the number of schools and pre-schools and consequential expansion in the number of leadership positions as a result of the baby boomer children attending schools in large numbers. In particular, merit has replaced seniority as the key selection criterion, selection processes are decentralised and procedural fairness, demonstrated by highly transparent processes, expected.

In the next section, the environmental context within which DECS will be facing this situation over the next 5 years is discussed in more detail.

### **5.1. “The ‘Environment’ facing DECS over the next five years”**

Much has been written about the changing nature of the workplace, the different attitudes and expectations of people from different generations, the impact of technology on the speed with which decisions are expected, the ever increasing quest for improved work life balance, and the broader view among highly skilled younger people that all workplaces are temporary and their potential overall workplace is global.

In addition, the expectations on leaders in all workplaces for high levels of accountability, consistent with their levels of responsibility, are ever increasing. Already this can be seen in the education sector in South

Australia as a result of local site management. These expectations are likely only to increase.

All of these factors are part of the environment in which DECS will be seeking to ensure that it is well placed to enable the identification, selection and appointment of site leaders in the next five years.

That said, some aspects relating to leadership also remain relatively constant.

Overall, it can be reasonably argued that:

- the quality of leadership and management of a school or pre-school is fundamental to the enthusiasm of the school community, the engagement of staff and students, the efficient use of resources and the learning outcomes for students. This point has certainly been reinforced by the OECD paper “Improving School Leadership” released in August 2008;
- leadership must be authentic and cannot be based on pretence. Increasingly, every action of a leader is observed and weighed for consistency against the leader’s rhetoric;
- leadership roles are at times very lonely with leaders having few confidants and on some particularly difficult topics, possibly no trusted confidants at all;
- leadership is a demanding role both in terms of the increasing range of matters that require a leader’s involvement, the time pressures and participation, often at times not generally associated with normal working hours. Although work-life balance is gender neutral in theory, there are circumstances relating to family responsibilities which lead to women often being more concerned to ensure their work-life balance. Given that approximately 70% of DECS staff are women, this must be a consideration in future; and
- many aspects of leadership and management are learnt through both experience and observing skilled leaders in action and cannot always be taught in a more theoretical way. This includes matters of judgement in management practice such as knowing when to delegate and when to be directly involved, when and how to intervene in a contentious situation and when to let a situation take its own course and when to facilitate and when to be more demanding.

In October 2007, Judith Archer produced a Research Paper entitled “*Leaders in Education: Principal Selection*”. That paper thoroughly researched the environmental factors in South Australia and elsewhere. It noted the developments in countries which are acknowledged for their progressive thinking such as England, Wales and Finland as well as developments in some parts of the United States of America and in Australia.

It is not intended to re-present all of Ms. Archer's conclusions and suggestions in this White Paper, although some of the proposals in this White Paper are entirely consistent with those in Ms. Archer's Research Paper.

Of direct relevance to the discussion about the pressures on leaders today, are the references in Ms. Archer's paper to various research studies over the past decade (both national and international research) which question whether Principal roles (as currently defined) are even feasible. It is not the purpose of this White Paper to explore that question, although it is relevant to repeat the conclusion of Dr. K. Lacey in a 2002 Research Paper entitled "Understanding Principal Class Leadership Aspirations: Policy and Planning Implications" viz.

*"that teachers are unaware of the rewards of the role of principal as principals themselves tend to describe their job in negative terms."*

This is despite the conclusions from the same research that there are high levels of job satisfaction that balance the stresses of the role, that principals do not explicitly describe the positive attributes and that this leads to a general feeling among teachers that

*"the role is demanding, time consuming, too hard, stressful with no job satisfaction."*

Given that many people appointed as leaders over the next five years will almost certainly be less experienced in leadership roles than their predecessors, it is imperative that DECS takes account of these factors and institutes a range of measures including:

- reasonable preparation for people as they seek positions of leadership in schools and pre-schools. In that regard, the leadership programs conducted by SACLE are playing a part although the numbers of participants are not as large as the extent of the challenge ahead would suggest is needed;
- as needed, continuing employer-funded, professional and personal support to site leaders in a wide range of areas including financial management, people management, strategic planning, stakeholder management and self-management;
- regular, constructive and development oriented performance review of leaders; and
- opportunities for continuing employer-funded, professional development.

This has implications for the role of the newly appointed Regional Directors and Assistant Regional Directors (to whom Principals and pre-school Directors report formally), School and Governing Council Chairpersons (to whom Principals and pre-school Directors relate continuously) as well as to the need for DECS to continue its commitment to leadership development.

Finally, it has implications for site leaders themselves and the respective Associations representing Principals and pre-school Directors.

It is worthwhile noting that in England, people wishing to be considered for site leadership roles must have undertaken significant accredited training in leadership and management before being eligible to be appointed to a leadership position. This White Paper does not propose replicating that system in South Australia, largely because the immediacy of the challenges facing DECS is such that it would be unlikely to be able to implement such a program in sufficient time. However, investment in assisting people to be job ready must continue whilst at the same time ensuring high levels of support to people appointed before they are as job ready as might be ideal.

A related trend that has been gradually gaining pace in Australia is recognition in the professions that leadership and management is not a minor, part-time activity that simply fills in gaps in a professional's daily routine.

Whether it be law firms, engineering organisations or medical institutions, for example, people are being appointed for, and expected to display, leadership and management skills. Mostly, but not exclusively, these people are being recruited within the same professional area because their knowledge of the profession is important to their credibility.

This trend has also seen a significant investment being made in leadership and management development programs as organisations recognise that people with strong professional backgrounds need more than just a sound professional knowledge to be a successful leader or manager. In more recent years, this trend has been complemented by the engagement, by many people in leadership roles, of confidants or coaches with whom they can explore solutions to increasingly difficult problems.

For site leaders in DECS, the leadership and management challenges and pressures are clearly evident and increasing as their accountability obligations increase. The existence of SACLE and its programs is consistent with the broader trends described above.

There is one aspect of the emerging environment that does have significant potential to assist DECS over the next few years. Increasing numbers of highly experienced Australians from all professions and career backgrounds are choosing to transition to full time retirement over a period of time rather than to move immediately from full time work to full time retirement.

There are several reasons for this. The health, energy and greater life expectancy of people at the assumed retirement age of 60 is one factor. Improved, more tax-effective, access to superannuation as well as income from part time employment is another.

The result is that many of the soon-to-retire leaders in the State system – whether they be District Directors, Principals or Deputies are likely to be potentially available and interested in assisting with aspects of the selection

processes and on-going professional and personal support to successful (and perhaps even unsuccessful) candidates for leadership positions in future.

Another trend which has received much attention in recent times in the Human Resource Management literature is that potential candidates for vacant positions – whether leadership or other positions – from the post-baby boom generations are inclined to:

- lodge applications electronically;
- spend minimal time and effort preparing an application;
- be daunted by what they regard as excessive formality, including in the interview process; and
- accept positions only after they have conducted their own due diligence on the organisation.

DECS has clearly responded to at least some of these trends by the development of its “Teaching in South Australia” website which carries details of leadership roles that are vacant and which provides for electronic lodgement of applications. However, as will be discussed in Chapter 5.2, further development of the website is needed in line with proposed changes to both the documentation available about leadership positions and the expectations of applicants.

DECS has also responded in part to the quest for work-life balance by enabling the implementation of job sharing in senior roles including a trial of co-Principal and Preschool Director arrangements. These arrangements enable the sharing of a leadership role by two people.

The current Merit selection policy makes no reference to these arrangements as these are covered by other DECS policies.

DECS accepts applications from people wishing to be appointed to a site leadership role on a position sharing basis. However, the applications are separate and cross-referenced rather than joint. It is understood that a position sharing arrangement is only able to be recommended by a selection panel if the two people concerned are ranked first and second by the panel. This is further discussed below.

## ***5.2. “The premises underpinning current processes and procedures, their continuing relevance and proposed changes”***

Although the current “Policy and Procedures” document was prepared approximately 10 years ago, it is robust and comprehensive. Even if the overriding impression gained by reading it is that the selection processes are the dominant feature, it has as its fundamental and overriding objective that of identifying the best person for each position based on an assessment of the relative merit of each candidate. As part of this objective, the policy and procedure aims to ensure absolute fairness to all candidates. In addition, the

current policy and procedure insofar as it relates to leadership positions seems to be based on a number of premises as follows:

- that fairness to all candidates is not negotiable and needs to be demonstrated in each selection by such approaches as:
  - standard position specifications for Principal and pre-school Director positions;
  - identical questions at interview (at times supplied to candidates in writing in advance of the interview);
  - identically structured interview panels; and
  - standard ways of approaching referees and receiving verbal referee reports even to the point of the entire panel being reconvened to listen to the questions being asked and the referees' responses;
- that each leadership position is sufficiently similar in terms of demands that a standard job and person specification is an appropriate foundation for applications and the subsequent selection process;
- that the particular leadership demands of a given position can be largely determined from the parameters in the context statement prepared for each site and which deal mostly with the site's socio-economic status, size, geographical location, teacher and student numbers etc;
- that written applications, face-to-face interview and referee checks provide an appropriate way of assessing the relative merit of candidates and that use of additional techniques such as psychological and preferred working style tests, assessment centres and other tools are not necessary; and
- that a person's past experience is the most likely indicator of his or her capacity to be successful in future – the corollary being that although the current policy enables potential of a person to be taken into account, the likelihood is that it will not be given as much weight as past experience in the absence of other methods of assessment.

Whether any of these fundamental premises need to be re-assessed is now addressed.

Of particular relevance is the information contained in the Office of Public Sector Reform's Good Practice Guide that:

- unstructured (chat style) interviews – which are generally not used by DECS – have a predictive validity of 0.2 on a scale where 1.0 is a perfect score;
- structured interviews which are generally used by DECS have a predictive validity of 0.35;
- reference checking has a predictive value of 0.25; and

- an assessment centre approach which involves a combination of ability tests, preferred working style tests, interviews and simulations has a predictive capacity of 0.7.

It is this understanding which has led both public sector and private sector organisations to extend their selection methods beyond those embodied in an application, an interview and reference checking.

It is also relevant to note that the OECD report referred to in the Introduction to this White Paper contains the following conclusion:

*“Recruitment procedures should go beyond traditional job interviews to include an expanded set of tools and procedures to assess candidates.”*

The changing environment described earlier in Chapter 5, the operating principles proposed in Chapter 4 and those premises underpinning the current procedures that might be less relevant in the immediate future lead to suggestions for revised processes.

Best practice procedures adopted in the public and private sectors have developed over a number of years and have the following general characteristics in that they:

- encourage high performing people, particularly people on fixed term contracts, to remain as high performers for the duration of their contract and ideally to seek contract extensions;
- ensure that people who may be interested in applying for a vacant position have available to them as much information as possible about the requirements and challenges specific to the position so that interested people can make informed judgements about their suitability for the position;
- make it relatively easy for people to apply for a position by encouraging short applications that can be lodged electronically and address only the key selection criteria;
- place significant emphasis on the short listing process, often by using external professionals to assist in seeking out and/or screening applicants. Screening interviews enable many more people to present their credentials in person, thereby accommodating any shortcomings in their written applications. In addition they are efficient to organise as smaller panels (sometimes only two people) may be used to conduct the screening interview;
- are flexible in their formation of selection panels both in terms of number of people and including people with a genuine stake in the outcome of the position (which may include people from external organisations to which the selected person may need to relate extensively). The OECD report refers directly to the extensive relationships between Principals and other government agencies in the human services field, for example;

- *concentrate the selection process on ensuring the best possible match between the requirements of the position and each candidate's attributes. This is referred to in Judith Archer's Research Paper as "fit";*
- *recognise that a selection panel may need to conduct several interviews with a small number of shortlisted candidates and may need access to external, professional assistance tools in reaching a decision;*
- *expect that few successful candidates will have all the skills and abilities needed for success in the role and will need assistance, particularly in the early stages of taking up the role as well as on-going support; and*
- *recognise that unsuccessful candidates, particularly external candidates, form favourable or unfavourable impressions about the organisation from their treatment as candidates. Best practice procedures aim to ensure that all candidates are treated fairly and are kept informed of the progress of their application throughout the process. In addition, best practice procedures recognise that unsuccessful candidates may have an important role to play in the organisation in future and debrief them in a way that ensures their continuing positive interest in the organisation.*

DECS' current processes and procedures deal with a number of the above aspects reasonably well although as can be expected in a large organisation, there is almost certainly variability in their application. In addition, given that very busy District Directors have been required to Chair all site leadership position panels, it would not be surprising if the variability, at least in part, related to undue expediting.

There are several aspects of the current arrangements which lend themselves to further development and refinement as follows. There is:

- a requirement to ensure that existing high performing site leaders are encouraged and enabled to remain as high performing site leaders and are not discouraged by processes relating to continuing appointment;
- a need to ensure that there is a desire on the part of significant numbers of less experienced people to join the pool of people who may be interested in site leadership positions;
- a need for the special, circumstantial requirements of each vacancy to be more clearly specified than is provided for currently by reference to context statements, so that interested people can make more informed decisions about whether they should apply;
- a case for the task of preparing applications to be less onerous;
- a need for the process itself to recognise that making on balance judgements is likely to involve a greater degree of difficulty and almost

certainly will require input beyond that of a candidate's application, interview by people with a direct interest in the role and referee reports;

- an opportunity arising from the fact that DECS is about to lose a considerable amount of collective wisdom from the people who know most about the demands of site leadership and that their input could be extremely useful in assessing candidates for future vacancies as well as providing a degree of independence in selection processes in future; and
- a requirement to recognise that as an increasing number of less experienced people are appointed to leadership positions it will be important for each process to identify the needs of successful candidates for personal and professional support and ensure that such support is provided.

On this basis, it is proposed that DECS forms a retired persons panel of approximately 15 – 20 recently retired people with significant site leader experience (renewed approximately every 2 years). This panel would be gender balanced, would include an adequate representation of people with pre-school, primary and secondary experience as well as metropolitan and regional experience and members would undertake a number of part-time roles as described below.

- For each leadership position where the occupant wishes to enter into a new contract (to a maximum combined duration of 10 years) and, therefore, where the position could be filled by a continuing appointment, it is proposed that a performance review be conducted by the Assistant Regional Director supported, as needed, by an appropriate member of the panel referred to above (preferably a person who has not had previous, detailed involvement with the leader concerned) selected by the Regional Director in each case. The performance review would involve an interview with the full range of stakeholders including a formal 360° assessment with a view to making a recommendation as to whether the occupant would continue in the role for a second term or not. The performance review would be completed no later than 6 months prior to the end of the contract period.
- This would have several benefits. First, it would facilitate continuing performance assessment throughout the duration of each person's term as few people would wish to wait until the end of their contract period to receive vital performance feedback. Second, it would avoid the situation whereby approximately 18 months before the end of their current contract period, site leaders commence applying for a number of positions – often as a contingency against not being re-appointed to their current position. This has an understandable log-jam effect on the system and leads to large time delays as the system attempts to synchronise the outcomes of the various panel processes.
- It is acknowledged that this proposal might not have been sound ten years ago as it could have led to a “clogging” of positions and would

potentially have deterred aspiring leaders. However, that is the opposite situation from the one which DECS is now facing.

- For vacancies that are not to be filled by continuing appointment it is proposed that two panels be formed – an initial screening panel and the formal selection panel.
- It is proposed that there be some flexibility in the composition of the formal selection panel depending on the circumstances of the position. The panel would possibly include a member of the retired persons panel who in some circumstances might even chair the panel, the Assistant Regional Director (who would normally Chair the panel), a nominee of the Governing Council or School Council and a person nominated by the AEU. In addition, the Regional Director should be empowered to add another member representing an external agency or stakeholder to which the successful candidate will need to relate. As is the case now, all panel members should preferably have undertaken relevant training and panel composition needs to be gender balanced. In certain circumstances (such as where the panel includes an appropriate external person) it will be the responsibility of the panel Chair to brief the person on their obligations as a panellist.
- The membership of the screening panel would also have a degree of flexibility. Its membership could be drawn from the Assistant Regional Director, a person chosen from the retired persons panel referred to above and an external, professional human resources consultant. It is understood that the use of a screening panel, similarly constituted, is being adopted by DECS for the recently advertised Regional Director positions.
- The formal selection panel would meet before the job is advertised and would agree on the key criteria to be applied to the filling of the vacancy and would ensure that the job and person documentation relating to the vacancy is sufficiently specific to provide information to potential candidates about the key selection criteria. The existing standard job and person specifications for Principal and pre-school Director positions would be abandoned for the purpose of advertising vacancies, but could have a continuing role as foundation documents for the leadership development programs run by SACLE. (It should be noted that this concentration on a small number of key selection criteria is entirely consistent with approaches being used in Education systems interstate for site leadership positions).
- Before the position is advertised the Chair of the formal selection panel would meet the screening panel to describe the major demands on the position and the criteria which are to be foremost in the formal selection panel's mind as it conducts the formal interviews.
- Applications would be invited via the "Teaching in South Australia" website, with potential applicants being encouraged to contact the

Chair of the formal selection panel to make enquiries before deciding whether to submit an application.

- Intending applicants would be advised that the documentation that they should submit should be directly related to the key selection criteria as identified by the formal selection panel and reflected in the job and person documentation prepared for the position. There would not be a requirement for applicants to address the many criteria in today's job and person descriptions, as for all positions, the key criteria identified in the documentation would be much fewer.
- Candidates should be expected to "make a claim" on the position for which they are making an application. This means that candidates should, in their application, be advised to project themselves into the position, drawing on their experience and what they see as their potential, to describe how they will meet the challenges for the particular position as specified. This does not suggest that candidates be required to produce an application of a certain length. For most leadership roles, it should be able to be assumed that the key criteria will be relatively few in number (perhaps 5 or 6) and that the application will comprise a document less than 2 pages in length accompanied by a curriculum vitae.
- Applications would be initially examined by the screening panel and the screening panel would be encouraged to interview as many of the applicants as it believed met the majority of the requirements. Interviews would not normally take more than 30 minutes and could, depending upon the location of applicants, be conducted by telephone.
- It is anticipated that this process, together with the type of application proposed below, will encourage more people to express interest because well-conducted screening interviews offer considerable developmental opportunities (in terms of interview preparation and availability of feedback) for relatively inexperienced candidates.
- The screening panel would prepare a short list report for the formal selection panel. The formal selection panel would, if necessary, meet with the members of the screening panel to understand the rationale behind the short listing report and the formal selection panel would be required to interview all people recommended on the short listing report. It would also be free, having been provided with the full list of candidates, to interview any other people not included in the short listing report.
- The formal selection panel would then conduct its interviews focussing its attention on the key selection criteria. An interview provides an opportunity for a candidate to present his or her credentials in person. Very few interviews can provide a setting even remotely akin to that of the position for which the candidate has applied. Therefore, the most likely outcome of each interview is an initial impression of how each candidate might perform in the role – an impression which needs to be

subsequently tested before being confirmed. At the completion of the interview process, the formal selection panel would decide the information needing to be obtained from referees and the nature of the contact to be made with referees. This may require a subsequent discussion with each candidate as to the referee best placed to comment on the aspects identified.

- The Chair of the formal selection panel would then be authorised by the panel to obtain the information requested and to report back to the panel in due course. As part of this process the formal selection panel would also identify any other information that it requires about candidates that could not be elicited from referee reports and would require more professional testing such as 360° assessments or other preferred working style assessment techniques now available in the market place. The Chair of the formal selection panel would be authorised to negotiate with the Director Human Resources to enable such testing to take place under professional supervision.
- The Chair of the formal selection panel would then reconvene the panel and provide a report on the outcome of referee reports and any other testing that has been conducted. The panel would then make its recommendation as part of a formal selection panel report.
- The Chair of the formal selection panel, with whatever assistance he or she may need, would have the responsibility of informing all candidates at all times of the progress of the process. This means that the Chair would inform candidates if they had been short listed or if they had not been short listed. The Chair would also inform successful and unsuccessful candidates after the interview process of the outcome of the process and would ensure that there is an offer of a debriefing to all candidates. In some instances, the panel may decide that the debriefing is best handled jointly by two people, one of whom would be the or Assistant Regional Director. Where there has been a member of the retired persons panel involved, he or she might be the second person.
- In the case of the successful candidate, the Regional Director, the Assistant Regional Director and the candidate would meet for a frank debriefing. The aim would be to ensure that adequate documentation is prepared of the areas in which personal and professional support may be needed by the successful candidate as he or she takes up his or her role. It will be the responsibility of the Assistant Regional Director to ensure that the level of support which is agreed at that meeting is provided.

It is considered that this proposed process would retain the best features of the current system in that key stakeholders are actively involved in the process and particularly in the decision making processes. It also recognises the potential value that experienced site leaders can add to the process whilst taking some of the pressure from peer site leaders.

Consideration will need to be given to ways of handling the potential conflict between an Assistant Regional Director as a potential referee and as a Chair of a selection panel (as may occur today given that selection panels for Principal positions are generally chaired by a District Director). Each panel will need to address this situation on a case-by-case basis and again the member of the retired persons panel could be useful in collecting referee reports where a conflict is perceived to require independent seeking of referee reports.

If DECS agrees to the involvement of retired persons, it will need to initiate procedures for selecting the retired persons to be part of the panel, preparing them for their role, and assessing their performance.

It will also require DECS to enter into arrangements with qualified providers of professional assessment techniques so that panels will be able to access such techniques without each time having to initiate tender arrangements for such services.

In initiating the tender for professional assessment techniques, DECS will need to be mindful that some early versions of these techniques might have inadvertently discriminated against minority or disadvantaged groups. That would need to be taken into account in the tender documentation and assessment processes.

It is acknowledged that the proposals above will add cost to the system in terms of payments to members of the retired persons panel and for professional assessment techniques. However, industry and government have increasingly recognised that leadership selection decisions are “million dollar decisions” in that:

- an outstanding selection can add enormously to the performance of the organisation; and
- a poor decision can have a devastating impact in terms of cost, reputation and performance.

For this reason alone, an investment of a small amount relative to the salary of the position is considered worthwhile, particularly as the cost will substitute for some of the time of peer Principals participating on panels as is currently required.

Finally in this Chapter of this White Paper, it is worth commenting on four other aspects of the selection process. They are the involvement of the AEU in the selection processes, particularly for leadership positions, the treatment of sensitive information about a candidate, the consideration of joint applications and the further development of the “Teaching in South Australia” website.

Regarding the involvement of the AEU in site leader selection processes, this is prescribed by the Education Act. Therefore, any change would require legislative amendment.

At first glance, the involvement of the AEU would not appear to be consistent with industry practice. However, there is logic to it in that one of the key responsibilities of any site leader is for the motivation, sensitive management and well-being of staff. Assuming that the AEU nominee to a selection panel understands that consideration of applicants' attributes in this area is the primary reason for his or her participation, there should be no reason not to continue AEU participation.

There is an impression that the AEU has at times seen itself as being required to ensure the integrity of DECS' processes for individual positions as well as more broadly. No particular comment is made on this point except to reiterate that it must be the prime responsibility of DECS, through whatever mechanisms it needs, to ensure that its processes have integrity and to ensure that all staff individually and as represented by the AEU have confidence in them.

Regarding the treatment of sensitive information about any candidate, this White Paper acknowledges that at times a candidate may have been the subject of a disciplinary matter, performance management or related issue. Current procedures have provided significant protection to candidates in relation to the divulging of such information. However, recent cases tested judicially have found that a selection panel is entitled to have access to all relevant information, including sensitive information, in reaching their decisions.

This will require DECS to develop procedures to deal with people in a balanced way. It is anticipated that the retired persons panel members could provide significant assistance to DECS in this regard.

Regarding the consideration of applications for a position sharing arrangement, the current policy whereby the candidates are assessed separately and recommended only if they are ranked first and second is a logical first step. However, if DECS wishes to promote co-leadership in response to increasing demand, it will need to develop a capacity to assess the joint application as a whole against the individual applications of other candidates.

Regarding the further refinement of the "Teaching in South Australia" website, the most obvious area is in ease of access – particularly to current contextual information about the sites to which each vacancy relates. School context statements should be kept up to date and continue to be directly accessible via a link to the school's own site. In addition, there needs to be a more direct link to the revised "Merit Selection Policy and Procedures" document from the "How to Apply" section of the website.

### **5.3. Other Considerations**

The discussion and proposals in Chapter 5.2 are specifically aimed at site leadership positions (Principals and pre-school Directors).

However, this White Paper also proposes that the operating principles (as well as the overarching principles developed by the Public Sector Reform Commission) should apply throughout DECS.

There will be differences in their application across the various levels of position and the various terms of appointment.

There will also be differences in the level of some activities. For example, only when a particular position attracts a very large number of applicants would a screening process of the type proposed for site leadership positions be needed and if it was needed, the screening process could be conducted by a sub-group of the selection panel.

However, some of the features of the proposal for site leadership positions should find their way into the selection processes for other roles. Specifically, there should be the capacity to supplement a core selection panel membership where the nature of the position demands it. Also, there should be the opportunity to access professional testing techniques as and when the panel needs additional or confirming information about a candidate.

With reference to panel composition, it is understood that although DECS' panels always strive for gender balance, there are some circumstances where that is difficult to achieve. Occasionally where the field of applicants is all female in an area where the workforce is almost entirely female, it has been difficult to avoid an all female panel. This is an example of where the combined effect of the proposed principles needs to be applied – with the overriding question being one of fairness to all candidates.

A similar situation is understood to occur from time to time with panels for Aboriginal Education Worker positions and again the application of the principles should suggest some greater flexibility in panel composition as long as the process is fair to all candidates.

## Chapter 6

### SHORT TERM VACANCIES

Much of the existing “Merit Selection Policy and Procedures – School Sector” document produced in 1997 deals with the procedures for processing short term vacancies – in a variety of roles – and essentially deals with:

- who should have the right to apply and how should they apply; and
- how should the decision making be handled.

It is clear that in respect of the first question, the policy aims at giving people employed at the site the developmental opportunities arising from short term vacancies and thereby ensuring minimum across-the-system disruption. It also aims at making the effort required by the decision making process to be commensurate with the relative significance of the decision.

To that end, there is no obvious deficiency in the policy although, as with the situation with placed site leaders, there are risks viz.

- that the same people are always being provided with short term opportunities for reasons mostly associated with expedience;
- that the person making the decision may either have a “blind spot” in respect of possible candidates (or seek to reduce the effort in decision making) and may not encourage a wide range of interest; and
- that the short term vacancy and opportunity turns into a longer term (but still temporary) vacancy as the reasons for the vacancy extend, thereby distorting or potentially distorting the selection process when the vacancy is eventually subjected to more formal selection processes.

No change is proposed to these procedures.

However, it is essential that the Director Human Resources and Regional Directors monitor the circumstances associated with the filling of short term vacancies and take appropriate steps to mitigate the risks referred to above.

## Chapter 7

### CONSULTATION

As indicated in Chapter 1, this White Paper has been developed without a formal consultation process and with only limited, informal discussion with several key stakeholders.

This White Paper presents some proposed approaches to processes and procedures, for site leadership positions, which would be new to DECS even if they are being widely applied in government and industry. A number of them would see a closer alignment with processes for filling *Public Sector Management Act* positions which should in itself have benefits given that DECS employs many people under this Act as well as the *Education Act*.

Because of the proposed changes, it is recommended that the DECS Corporate Executive Team:

- satisfy itself that the coverage of this White Paper is sufficient without necessarily committing itself to the adoption of any or all of the proposals; and
- distribute this White Paper widely to all staff and associations and industrial bodies who represent the interests of employees, providing sufficient time for formal discussion and feedback.

On the basis of the feedback, the DECS Corporate Executive Team should determine a way forward leading to any revisions to the “Policy and Procedures” manual for implementation late in 2009.

## Chapter 8

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The existing DECS document entitled “Merit Selection Policy and Procedures – School Sector” has served DECS and the State Education system well over the past decade. It provides a reasonable foundation for a revised set of procedures without compromising the concept of merit.

However, there is a strong case for some new approaches to the selection of site leaders.

To quote the recently released OECD research report:

*“School leadership has become a priority in education policy agendas internationally. It plays a key role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivations and capacities of teachers, as well as the school climate and environment. Effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling.”*

*“The challenge is to improve the quality of current leadership and build sustainable leadership for the future.”*

*“Uncertain recruitment procedures and career development prospects for Principals may also deter potential candidates.”*

### **This White Paper therefore makes the following recommendations:**

1. That DECS maintain its policy on merit being the sole criterion for selection decisions where merit is defined as:

“the extent to which each of the applicants has abilities, aptitude, skills, qualifications, knowledge, experience (including community experience) and personal qualities relevant to the carrying out of the duties in question; and

(i) the manner in which each of the applicants carried out any previous employment or occupational duties or functions; and

(ii) the extent to which each of the applicants has potential for development.”

2. That the “Policy and Procedures” Manual be revised and that the initial section of the Manual contain the overarching Merit Principles prepared by the Public Sector Reform Commission and the operating principles proposed in Chapter 4 of this White Paper.

3. That the Manual be restructured so that the sections relating to site leadership positions be separated from other sections.
4. That greater flexibility be introduced to the processes for documenting, advertising and making appointments to site leadership positions, including:
  - (i) abandoning standard job and person specifications as the basis for selection of Principals and pre-school Directors and retaining them as foundation documents for leadership and management development programs;
  - (ii) replacing them, on a position-by-position basis, with a statement of key requirements;
  - (iii) requiring candidates to address only these key requirements in their application and reducing the expected size of applications to approximately two pages accompanied by a curriculum vitae;
  - (iv) the use of a two part process including a screening process to screen applicants before being interviewed by a formal selection panel;
  - (v) some additional flexibility to the composition of formal selection panels so that they include the relevant Assistant Regional Director, nominees of the Governing Council or School Council and the AEU and, as appropriate, a member of a proposed retired persons panel and one member of a key external organisation with which the successful candidate will relate when appointed;
  - (vi) less procedural rigidity in the seeking of referee reports and the greater use of professionally administered techniques to assist with selection decisions as and when requested by formal selection panels;
  - (vii) the formal documentation of the personal and professional development needs of successful candidates with Assistant Regional Directors being responsible for ensuring the implementation of strategies to address the needs; and
  - (viii) feedback to all unsuccessful candidates by the Chair of the formal selection panel with a focus on enhancing the candidate's ability to succeed with future applications.
5. That site leaders wishing to extend their contract to a maximum of 10 years be able to express that wish and be so extended subject to a comprehensive 360° performance review conducted by the Assistant Regional Director, assisted as need be by an appropriate member of the retired persons panel towards the end of their initial contract term,

the review to be completed at least six months before the end of the contract term.

6. That the "Teaching in South Australia" website continue to be developed with an immediate requirement to make the links with the revised "Policy and Procedures" document more direct.
7. That DECS establish arrangements with providers of professionally administered tools and techniques to be made available to formal selection panels and in so doing ensure that the tools used do not inadvertently discriminate against disadvantaged groups.
8. That this White Paper be the subject of extensive discussion and consultation with all relevant stakeholders prior to the DECS Corporate Executive Team making decisions in respect of the recommendations above.