

**EDUCATION AND HEALTH  
STANDING COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S  
INDEPENDENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS INITIATIVE**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
MONDAY, 16 MAY 2016**

**SESSION TWO**

**Members**

**Dr G.G. Jacobs (Chair)**  
**Ms R. Saffioti (Deputy Chair)**  
**Mr R.F. Johnson**  
**Ms J.M. Freeman**  
**Mr M.J. Cowper**

---

**Hearing commenced at 10.44 am****Ms KYLIE CATTO****President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc, examined:**

**The CHAIR:** Kylie, on behalf of the Education and Health Standing Committee, thank you for appearing before us today. The purpose of this hearing is to inquire into independent public schools. We will be taking evidence today in an open session. It is a public hearing and it is being recorded by Hansard. I am the chairman, Graham Jacobs. On my left is Rita Saffioti. On her left is Janine Freeman, and on her left is Murray Cowper. This standing committee is a committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia. The hearing is a formal procedure of the Parliament—hopefully not too formal—and does command the same respect given to proceedings of the house itself. Even though the committee is not asking you to provide evidence on oath or affirmation, it is important that you understand that any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. As I said, this is a public hearing. If you refer to any documents during the evidence, it would assist Hansard if you could provide the full title for the record.

Have you completed the “Details of Witness” form?

**Ms Catto:** Yes, I believe I have.

**The CHAIR:** Do you understand the notes at the bottom of the form about giving evidence?

**Ms Catto:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Did you receive and read the information for witnesses sheet provided with the “Details of Witness” form?

**Ms Catto:** Yes, I did.

**The CHAIR:** Do you have any questions for us?

**Ms Catto:** Not at this point.

**The CHAIR:** Kylie, would you like to tell us a bit about yourself and the organisation as an opening statement.

**Ms Catto:** If that would assist, sure. WACSSO was established in 1921 as the federation of parents Western Australia. We are the oldest parent body in Australia. We have since changed our name to the WA council. We represent affiliated parent organisations. Currently, there are approximately 650 parent organisations across —

**The CHAIR:** Is that like P&Cs, is it?

**Ms Catto:** Yes, parent organisations across Western Australia comprise mostly parents and citizens associations but we also have some school councils which are affiliated. A school council needs to be an incorporated body in order to be affiliated with WACSSO. In order for a school council to be incorporated, they need the permission of the director general of Education. I do apologise; I will probably direct my answers to Graham, but please do not think I am ignoring anyone else.

P&Cs are the only volunteer body that have a right to exist in Western Australia by virtue of an act of legislation, being the School Education Act, and P&Cs appear in there. We think it is quite a prestigious honour for them to do so, and it acknowledges the importance and the vital role that our parent organisations play in government schools across Western Australia.

---

We have an office of four staff. Other than that, we are run on volunteers, including myself. My role is a voluntary position with the organisation. We have a structure of councillors that broadly represent education districts—we are in the process of reorganising that—and that roughly reflects the education districts, and partly why we need to re-form is because the education districts have re-formed over recent years.

We manage the constitution for our affiliates as well as our own constitution. P&Cs provide not only monetary benefit to schools but also human benefit and human hours—human capital, I suppose. That is partly in recognition of the fact that parents are the first and lifelong educators of their students. We recognise the collaboration between parent and carer and student and school and we emphasise very strongly the importance of that relationship. We are far more than the petty cash tin; P&Cs are vital parts of contributing to the success of schools and students. Our first aim is that each student, regardless of any of their personal circumstances, is able to achieve to the best of their ability.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Kylie, and thank you for your submission to us. Maybe I could just ask a very perhaps open-ended question but just getting your perspective. How would you describe the implementation of the IPS initiative by the Department of Education?

**Ms Catto:** Varied.

[10.50 am]

**The CHAIR:** Can you elaborate on that?

**Ms Catto:** Yes, I will. I first became involved in school education in the Pilbara in the late 1990s, early 2000s when my own children started school. Back at that stage the act and the school education regulations were being changed to account for school councils. I have been quite familiar with the process of what a school council is. By my understanding, the act has not changed to acknowledge school boards or IPSs. By any other name, a board is essentially a council. The idea has great merit, I think—that our public schools can use their initiative and be innovative and cater for their individual school cohort, their individual school population, is a positive one because we are in a very broad state, a very vast state, with different populations and different community needs. In some ways the idea has great merit, the notion of that. There is great reliance placed upon the principal and also upon the school community. One of the early comments was that IPS was all about community ownership and community engagement. Our opinion is that where community engagement was done well prior to becoming an IPS, it continues to be so. Where community engagement was not particularly well done perhaps before IPS, it has not been the magic bullet to all of a sudden increase and improve community engagement. The parent voice is obviously very important but the ability to sometimes bring in additional intellectual property —

**The CHAIR:** Resources.

**Ms Catto:** — onto a board is fantastic. Yes, resources. Thank you; that is a good word. I have sat on the board at a couple of schools and been familiar with the workings of a lot through dealing with people. If a school has an environmental strain, getting in a person with strong environmental knowledge is fantastic. I think we could do that before with the council. The election process is problematic. There is public perception in some schools about the way that that is carried out in terms of whether we advertise and say “Please nominate” and people would put in a written submission and then they would go out to the school community and there would be a voting process of some sort or do I pick up the phone and say, “Hi, Graham. We’ve got a place. Would you like to be considered?” There is obviously industry and community. I understand that some are co-opted on, but for the school community that process is not consistent and in some areas there is concern, perhaps, of how that comes about. Also, even the way that some schools have gone about the decision to become an IPS has greatly varied. I received a phone call from a P&C president quite disappointed that they found out by virtue of reading the local newspaper.

**The CHAIR:** That they missed out on becoming an IPS, do you mean?

**Ms Catto:** No, that they had become an IPS. They were not aware that the school had firstly applied. Given the description I gave of P&Cs earlier in the piece, I should also say that in the P&C constitution, which is both approved by the Minister for Education and the commissioner—the Department of Commerce—the principal is an ex officio member of the P&C, so they are a member of that. When community support is one of the factors in applying for IPS, it concerns me—and that is not isolated; it would be in the minority, but it is not an isolated incident that P&Cs were not engaged or involved at all. For us, unfortunately, we have seen perhaps a dwindling of the importance placed on P&Cs in some schools, saying, “Well, we are IPS now, we don’t necessarily have a need for your organisation anymore”, whereas P&Cs are just there to help and work together. So we find that quite a negative.

In some of the positives, we have seen some great examples. I am now located down in the south west. I was previously on the board of Manea Senior College, so I am quite familiar with the workings of how that school went about allocating their budget, implementing after-school tutoring, catering for agreements with the co-located TAFE in terms of funding following the student model so that costs for certificate courses were not put upon the students and their families. So some really great, positive examples have come from it where you have an outstanding principal and a great board that works together.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** That was amazing, thank you very much.

When you were talking about that and talking about the issues around the school community and creating the school community, the previous gentleman, the president of the Western Australian Primary Principals’ Association, said that the main reason why IPS was wanted by principals was staffing. From what you have been saying—I suppose I want confirmation and then I will ask a question after that—do you think the main reason that parents wanted IPS is because they thought it would create a better community or a better outcome for students?

**Ms Catto:** I think there has been a shift towards that statement. I think now that statement is more true—what Stephen Breen from primary principals said about staffing. I think that has certainly become more evident; as more and bigger schools have become IPS, the centralised staffing pool is smaller. I do think that has been one of the perhaps expected or unexpected consequences, if you like, of IPS.

Parents did not push for IPS in the first place, and I think it would be fair to say that we would have liked to have seen a longer period of assessment to see how it would evolve. Our organisation believes, at the forefront of any educational changes, it has to be student outcomes. An improvement in student outcomes has to be at the forefront of anything that happens in the education sector. That is point blank. How that comes about, whether it is IPS or teacher training, whatever it might be, that has got to be the primary thing. If IPS allows innovation and staff selection and the one-line budget, and that enables better student outcomes, that is fantastic. We are yet to see that.

Community consultation, absolutely; but that should be happening in all government schools. That is a very good point because it is creating, whether it has intended to or not, a two-tier system. That is the absolute truth. In the Pilbara there is a town where there are a number of primary schools and one of them has repeatedly applied and not been successful. The parents in that area think, “What is wrong with my school?” Nothing—it is a fantastic public school. All of our public schools are great. Some of them just operate slightly differently, but they are all public schools. So, no, that would not be at the forefront of parents, but they would welcome the opportunity, a lot of them, for greater community involvement.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Just in terms of that example you gave, I asked the question as well to the president of the Western Australian Primary Principals’ Association, but given that IPS is so driven

---

by the principal in terms of that, not becoming, an IPS, if you have applied, do you get any feedback from principals that they feel like it is a judgement on them or that the parents judge the principals for that?

**Ms Catto:** I think principals would speak more to their own professional associations than to us. Certainly from a school community perspective, there are times when we are contacted by either a school council chair, a P&C president, and perhaps a member of the administration, saying they are concerned about the perception that their school might not be a wonderful school because of the IPS. I am not sure how that operates in a metropolitan sense because I have only ever lived regionally, but certainly in a regional sense, where people talk and know each other more intimately then it can definitely be an issue. The fact is that just because a school is not yet an IPS, it does not make them or their staff any less passionate about education and the needs of their kids. It is a real concern. In a formal sense, I would imagine that the principals' associations, WASSEA and WAPPA, would be better placed to answer that than myself.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Have you got a view on how the IPS and the two-tier system has affected staffing?

[11.00 am]

**Ms Catto:** Definitely there has been a lot of conversation regarding supernumerary staff—staff who have lost their position perhaps; redeployees, sorry; having a moment about redeployees—and some of the perceptions around the fact that they may not be of the quality, which, again is just the position that they find themselves in. It is very unfortunate for those individuals who may end up as a redeployee. There is the perception that they may not be as high quality as the person who is already in the system. That is not unique to education. We do not employ any staff as an education department. It is perception. That is all I can refer to you about. There was a strong perception and a lot of concern; a lot of media and some committees that we sat on where that was raised regularly as an issue.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** In Victoria they have a system with their IPSs where the IPS have to look at redeployees the same way as non-IPS would be. Would you be supportive of a similar system in Western Australia?

**Ms Catto:** Because it is an industrial issue, it is not our place to comment on that. I can tell you what a perception is, but I do not represent a union or staff, so it is really not my place to comment on that, sorry, Janine.

**The CHAIR:** Maybe this might be a bit around perception. There are a couple of things. What is the perception under the new IPS model that perhaps there is a potential for professional development of teachers to suffer, or the other side is, to be positive? What is your view around that? The principals and the board members seem to hold different views about the role of the school board and the role of the principal. What is your view on them?

**Ms Catto:** Different views from who sorry?

**The CHAIR:** What is the role of the school board and the role of the principal in making all this work in an IPS in developing a vision for the school, developing a way forward—the overall view of the school and its way forward? How do you see the role of the board and the role of the principal in that? We have heard things like, basically, if there is a very dominant principal and you have a board and the board says, “I think it will be the principal’s way.” We have also heard that the way the board is to be structured, some of them are very ill-equipped because they bring a very low skill set to the board table, especially in regional areas where it is difficult sometimes to get people with a skill set that is needed to be on a board?

**Ms Catto:** All better to know your local communities to select the right people. I guess that depends on which side of the fence you are coming from.

---

I will go with the second part first if that is okay. I guess it goes towards the change in language that has been used since the onset of IPS to now. When we looked at the Department of Education website early on, there was an awful lot about community engagement, community involvement, community ownership. It now is very principal focused. It is all about the principal, the principal, the principal. It is very hard to find mention of community. The director general, yes, and the Minister for Education, yes, they definitely do refer, but the website, which is where our members will be going to to look this up, has definitely changed a bit. That takes the focus away, in our opinion, from community. That has definitely put the focus back onto principals.

In terms of the principal and the board chair, we would see that as a vital relationship and in so many schools it works incredibly well. I was chair of a board for a while and I had frequent and transparent conversations with the principal and our meetings were regular. The board was engaged. All meetings were open. There were opportunities for other members to come. Obviously, there is an opportunity to have closed portions of meetings and each school council, by virtue of the regs, must hold at least one open meeting a year. I suspect that does not happen in all areas or is not well published. Not everyone will want to come along, and that is okay, but the opportunity must be there for them. Also, perhaps it goes towards some of how that is promoted and how some people are encouraged, because you are not going to have engagement of community if you are made to feel that you are coming along and being spoken at, and your ideas, if you are the mother of little Johnny in grade 3, might not be perhaps as valued as some of the co-opted board members if they are highly esteemed members of the public or whatever it might be. I think in the majority of cases that the board chair and the principal work very well together. I think in the majority of cases they have the best interests of their school and the students at heart. I think principals all want to see their students do well; some because it will make them look very good; most because it is what they are in education for. They are there to help students to better themselves to the best of their ability. I guess working with the board is what government schools are all about. We take every single person who wants to be there. We do not pick and choose. We do not say that you are good enough or not good enough or you do not fit the mould. When you have people who nominate to a board, if it is done in the manner in which the government, the act and regs suggest, everybody has the ability to nominate. If it is the will of that school community that you are the successful person, it is really up to the board chair and the principal to work with them, develop them and train them so that they can contribute to the best of their ability and perhaps represent that sector of the school community they are most familiar with.

In terms of PDs, I guess that comes back to a budgetary thing. There has always been a lot of sympathy from the parent community with regard to the amount of funding available for teachers' professional development. In most government departments I think when a person attends training, their training and travel is covered. I have a lot of personal friends who are teachers and often they are given the choice that you can either have your training or your travel covered. Obviously, some of it is claimable through tax but there is certainly not, I think, the volume. It is a very large workforce. That is understood but it is a very highly professional workforce with an incredibly important role and we do not like to think of expenditure on education as expenditure; we like to think of it as investment in the future of the country. Talking about the high spending on it, it is where that investment is going and what it means in the long term.

**The CHAIR:** Do you think training under IPS is positive?

**Ms Catto:** Training of the board members?

**The CHAIR:** Training of the teachers.

**Ms Catto:** I do not have any statistics on them.

**The CHAIR:** Some of the teacher have rung me and said, "We're just trying to understand whether in fact this is around autonomy or actually abandonment." So, do we now see in an independent public school, particularly in the regions, as much resource devoted to our training as there was

before and is it just on a school-by-school basis? We always had one-line budgets, so it was always an issue about how much that school would devote to training, so IPS or non-IPS or no matter?

**Ms Catto:** The one-line budget has come in for only the whole of the government system recently. Prior to that, it was only the IPS that had the one-line budget. I think it is more the student-centred funding model that is the issue with that. Following the recommendations from the Teese report in terms of funding and what is required, I think the model was great, but there was not enough money to put into the model and that then determines the budget that the school gets. It is not so much a matter of being IPS; it is a matter of the student-centred funding model that determines how much money goes into that school. If a school is an IPS and it is the same as a school that is not an IPS, they determine their priorities, what they have in terms of their capacity to deliver, if some of their teachers perhaps would benefit from, and hence the students would benefit from, some additional training or some upskilling—whatever we would like to call it—I would hope that the school would factor into their budgets the training for that to happen. There is an expectation as professionals that you would come back and share that information with the relevant colleagues. That is no different from any other workplace. If I am funded in my workplace to attend professional development, I would expect that I would share that information with my relevant colleagues and maximise the benefit of my attendance.

**The CHAIR:** The allocation of funding for teacher training, perhaps if the school had a cohort of special needs students and the teacher needed some upskilling in that area, in fact, the potential to do that under IPS or non-IPS is about the same?

[11.10 am]

**Ms Catto:** All schools have a one-line budget. I would not understand why that should differentiate. If a school has a one-line budget, ultimately the school board or the school council both have to sign off on that budget. I would think that most “departments” within the school would have the opportunity to put in submissions and they should get it back. I would really be disappointed to think that being an IPS would limit the opportunity for teacher professional development. If that statement were true, I would think that that would go completely against the whole ethos of becoming an IPS—so that you could cater better for your school community. If the training was not in line with the priorities of the school, that is really a matter for the teacher and the principal or the head of department to have in terms of its relevance. You cannot have everything—there is not enough money or time or anything. All of our teachers and all of our staff, we want them to be professional and we want them to be able to better themselves and develop. Education is a very dynamic industry, if you like. It is changing all of the time. We only have to look at career options and what our teachers for tomorrow are preparing our kids for. They need to be developing. What happens today did not happen 10 or 20 years ago, or 30 when I was at school.

**The CHAIR:** What is the role of the P&C now? I have been chairman of P&Cs a fair time back now when my kids were going through school. How does the P&C now fit with the new IP school? Putting it very pragmatically, what role does the P&C have and what say does the P&C have now in the affairs of the school under IP?

**Ms Catto:** When the IPS first came out with the initial 34 and then we progressed to the next intake, we had some discussions with the director general, Sharyn O’Neill. Sharyn’s statement, broadly, was that the implementation of IPS in no way diminishes the very important role of parents and citizens associations. We are not some special group that you have to apply to be a member of. If you have a dollar, you are more than welcome, and I am sure they would welcome you with open arms if you feel the need to go back! We are open to parents and citizens. We have a lot of aunts, uncles, grandparents, carers—people within the community who are invested in education. For most schools, I think that still works well. There are very discrete roles. The school council is the management—they look after the budget, they look after the policies. P&Cs do not get involved in the day-to-day management of the school. That is very clear. The principal, as I said before, is an

ex officio member of the P&C. They are also the person on the school board or school council. They have the power of veto on a school board; they do not on a P&C. P&Cs, I should have mentioned earlier, are also incorporated bodies. They are legal entities in their own right. They can hold bank accounts; they can employ staff. The P&C might run local businesses such as the canteen and the uniform shop perhaps on site. We encourage them to foster community and parental engagement. They have three objects under the act. One of them is to improve relations between the school and the broader community. We see that as a really vital part of what P&Cs do. The act also allows, or says, that where a school has a P&C, they are entitled to nominate a candidate, when there are elections, for a school council election. They are automatically entitled to nominate someone. That person would be there in their representative capacity. That is something that we have seen fall away. For the first time ever, the department has now given us a ruling, because in the past it was automatic that a P&C person sat on the school council as a way of communicating back and forward. They would present a report of P&C activities, keep the communication going with what they were permitted to report back from the council to the P&C. It was a great flow of communication because each has their own discrete roles, but they should complement each other and work together for the benefit of the whole school.

**The CHAIR:** Does a member of the P&C go on to the board now; is there a conduit there now?

**Ms Catto:** It depends on the school. Actually, it depends on the principal. I have had a principal say to me, “My colleagues laughed at me when I said I have a P&C president on our board.” Other principals highly value and they say, “Why would you not have a P&C? Why would you not have that communication?” because they really recognise the benefit. P&Cs are not there to take over the school; trust me. They do not want to take over the school; they want to work with the school. Predominantly, yes, the relationship is very strong. As I said earlier, where there was a good relationship and good engagement, it has continued to be so. Where it was not before, IPS has not been the solver of it now.

Murray is my local member. He is familiar with a lot of the schools down there. When I was a P&C president I had cause to work with Murray before, and I know the schools in my south west area very well and I know a lot of them in my old north west area very well. Predominantly, they are fantastic. But where it does not work well, it is really concerning. For our members, they not sure why, so it is difficult for them to know how to be engaged and involved. A P&C is not limited in numbers; the councils are limited in numbers to a maximum of 15. The P&C, if you pay up to \$1, anybody can come along and have a right to vote and speak and talk. A simple example, it might be a change in school uniform, which I will refer to briefly. The school P&C may sit and put their thoughts and recommendations together to the council, but the council has the final say. The P&C often will have the better ability to consult the school community. We are getting a vast increase in the number of complaints from parents saying, “Our school has become IPS. They’ve given us six months to change over to a new uniform. It’s costing us a fortune.” We had a phone call from a grandfather last week who has to pay the cost of the school uniform, at a government school, for their grandchild because the parent—his son—cannot afford it. The grandfather is ringing up, saying the amount that they have to pay is ridiculous. It is in a low socioeconomic area. But we do not want our kids or our parents to be faced with that, because the colour of your uniform does not determine how well you perform at the end of the year and it has nothing to do with educational outcomes. I would not have thought that it should be the most important thing that a school is looking at when they become IPS. For a lot, it is not. But for a lot—it is almost like they are trying to compete with their non-government counterparts—we already do that very well and the statistics are showing that, with the vast increase in enrolments to government schools and not to non-government.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Can I ask you about student outcomes in particular. To me, this is the key issue: how we are performing in our schools. I think you made the comment earlier that there is no proven figures to show there are improvements in student outcomes at IPSs. Is that something of concern to



your organisation and also is that something you are getting feedback from your P&Cs in relation to this issue?

**Ms Catto:** What I can only refer to is the first review that was done by Melbourne University a few years ago, which, in the outcomes, stated that it was too early to tell. There were no demonstrated improvements in student outcomes, but they acknowledged that it was too soon to be able to tell that and they felt that a longer period would be necessary. I am very cautious to refer to NAPLAN because parents do not like that NAPLAN is the only indicator of a good school or not. Nonetheless, it is a measure. It would be very interesting for us as an organisation to see, with those schools that are IPS, the rate of change—improvement, hopefully—and what that is attributed to compared to schools that are not yet IPS and what the same period showed for them. If those schools that are IPS had dramatic changes, why; and share that information with your colleagues because it is not, and it should not be, a competition between schools. We want the best for all of our kids. It is a difficult thing because there has not been another review done. If IPS is not demonstrating an improvement to student outcomes, we question why was it introduced, why was it implemented or what needs to change in IPS to see a demonstration of improved student outcomes? It has to be the priority.

**Mr M.J. COWPER:** Kyles, we looked at the NAPLAN results and we understand that whilst it is not there to rank or put them on some sort of ladder as to where they are, we simply went through the line items to see how they competed in mathematics in their various aspects of it. I am very interested to know what sort of feedback you are getting from your P&C folk as to what they understand about what boards do. You know the principal who I am on the board with. I think a lot of it comes down to the individual person that is running these boards. I must say I did not know a lot about the independent public schools until I got on the board and what we actually did. You can imagine the way that Mr Kidd runs his board; you would expect that it would be done well.

[11.20 am]

**Ms Catto:** I do not want to play favourites, but I do know Alan very well. He was the principal of my children, so I can say that he is a highly professional person whom I personally respect. I only know him through an education setting, not through a personal setting, so I can only say how I saw him run a school and the investment that I think he placed in not only Parkfield, where he was, but also now at Kingston, and similar to Manea Senior College where one of my daughters went to; it was the same thing—highly professional principal. He was awarded the Principal of the Year and ran a great board. You were made to feel included, but the importance was placed upon the role of the board and what it meant for that school and the honour, really, of being a member of that board and the benefit that you could bring to your school, most definitely. It was not just a tick and flick, “Come along, you’re on our board, sign here, do this” and go home. They are interested, they are engaged with their communities, but they were before becoming IPS and, I guess, that is part of my thing.

In terms of parents, they would love to know what a lot of their roles are. A lot of the times when schools become IPS, those ones that were not particularly good at engagement before, they do not always know—I am not assuming we have to dumb things down. We have incredibly intelligent parents out there, but speak to them in non-edu speak, because they might be incredibly intelligent, but they do not necessarily understand all the dialogue that goes on or the terms that are used in education. They want to know, “What is in it for me? What is in it for my kid and what will mean this mean for my student?” I do not think that is very clear at most levels. I think at school level, great principals do an awesome job of communicating to their parents and their community about what is going on and what this means for kids. If they have good social media in terms of Facebook, Twitter or perhaps a website, they can communicate well. I do not think most parents would want to sit down and read a three-year delivery and performance agreement. I do not think they would really be interested. They might be interested in the summary.

---

It does very much come back to the individuals. That is also a concern in terms of when a principal leaves a school. The whole focus is on the principal and what they can do and what they can bring and what their ideas are, so then if we have a change of boundary or a change of principal or both—unfortunately, this year it is problematic when a principal leaves an IPS school and we have acting because we cannot recruit them because of the freeze. It just perpetuates the issue along the way. But I think for any school the principal is the key. There is so much importance placed on them and great principals run great schools, and those students are just so lucky to be in those situations and parents are really lucky when they have those. It does not mean agreeing with them all the time.

**Mr M.J. COWPER:** Do you think parents are more engaged or less engaged as a result of IPS or the same?

**Ms Catto:** I think where communities were not well engaged, they are less engaged. I think the same in the majority and for the few that do it really well, more. But I would say it would be the exception.

**Mr M.J. COWPER:** But could it also be other things, such as the way in which we communicate? For instance, once upon a time it used to be a newsletter you would get once a month or two. Now it is an almost weekly newsletter by way of electronic message, is it not?

**Ms Catto:** Yes. Most schools do not put out a paper newsletter because it costs money. They used to do it in the local paper or now it is on the phone or electronically.

**The CHAIR:** It sits in a kid's bag for a week before you find it.

**Ms Catto:** Yes, very few actually even do it now. It is all on a Skoolbag app or something else. Definitely the way they communicate, but school was not always a pleasant experience for everybody. Some of us were not good students. It is the way a school board—and it does not always have to be the principal. It is about the way that they work to find ways to engage. We have travelled to Queensland recently and seen how their IPS works. We have travelled to different parental engagement symposiums in Canberra and heard from principals from all around the country about how they engage their school communities. It is not sitting in the room talking at them. They might have a coffee van. They might have a pizza afternoon. You get to know them. You get to talk to them, and you get to find out some pretty amazing things and work with them. Some of them build up banks of parents' skills so that they can ring up and say, "Hey, Janine, I know you have a business that does this. What would be the chance of you coming in and helping on the weekend?" "Graham, we know you are an accountant"—I do not know if you are or not, apologies.

**The CHAIR:** A doctor.

**Ms Catto:** Yes, I know he is a doctor, sorry, but "Would you be able to help us do our audit?" So, getting to know your school community does not always have to be in that formal setting. I think that is where the good principals work well. They know their school community and they can walk up to you and say, "Hey, Mr Jacobs, little Johnny has done really well last week. That is fantastic."

**Mr M.J. COWPER:** They never said that, did they?

**Ms Catto:** I do not know if you have a little Johnny, sorry. Anyway —

**The CHAIR:** I did not have a little Johnny.

**Mr M.J. COWPER:** Little Jill.

**Ms Catto:** Our schools are so different. There is not a one-size-fits-all solution and there is not a single answer, but I do think in some cases where principals have been able to—where it works well their engagement has definitely been better, but I think that is a small number; for the most it has stayed the same and for a very small few it has gotten worse.

---

**Mr M.J. COWPER:** Now, Kyles, when you were at your last meeting of WACSSO, was there a particular message that you wanted to convey to the committee? Was there any particular item that was discussed by the committee that you wish to raise?

**Ms Catto:** We have not had a formal meeting since we have done the submission. We meet once a term because our budget, like everyone else's, we are trying to be good with it. There is not really a single message. For us, the single message is the student outcomes and that is the constant conversation that we have. It is improvement in student outcomes and improvement in community engagement. They are the two very clear messages. Parents want to know what this means for our kids in terms of outcomes and engaged parents want to know that they still have an opportunity to be engaged.

**Mr M.J. COWPER:** Is it the case that governments are process driven as opposed to outcomes focused, in your mind?

**Ms Catto:** Yes, and because schools are effectively part of a government agency. We understand that. We understand that there has to be some process. There has to be some accountability. We want accountability. You cannot have 800-odd schools out there doing whatever they want and not being held accountable for it, and I think the department by and large does a great job of that. There has to be the balance. Parents are less interested in process: "I am interested in what this means for my student and what it means for them. At graduation will they go on to further education or to a job?"

**Mr M.J. COWPER:** That is the particular point that I think we need to be mindful of, at the end of the day, the outcome. I heard the previous person that came before us said there is a vision or an aim, and my aim is that these people progress through an education system and they can actually get a job at the end of the day and have a career and a lifestyle.

**Ms Catto:** Yes, or at the very least can read and write.

**Mr M.J. COWPER:** That, in essence, is an issue because when I was the minister for training, the amount of businesses that were coming to me saying, "We want to take on apprentices, but we first have to send them back to school to get their reading, writing and arithmetic."

**Ms Catto:** I guess that raises another very important issue: a lot of our schools that are not IPS perhaps cater for more remote or lower socioeconomic areas where students have more diverse and more serious learning issues. So, if we are saying that we are sending the best teachers to the IPS, but there are ones that can demonstrate improvement, you know what? It is very easy to demonstrate improvement with a highly educated or highly intelligent young person and, sure, our teachers guide them along and I would never ever disregard the importance of quality teaching within our classroom, but we cannot forget the schools that are not IPS. That is the other really important message: the two-tier system that this has created, because every time we see something come out, it will talk about "This particular primary school, an IPS school". A lot of the schools in Queensland told us they were not allowed to brand themselves as IPS, because it should not matter in the public's eyes. We already have the public-private perception. We do not even like to use the term "private education". They are non-government. They are government-funded non-government schools, because we have different, independent systems; we have the Catholic sector and the public sector. We do not want to see the two-tier or potentially the three-tier when we get public-private partnership IPS, IPS and then schools that are not IPS. They are all government schools and deserve the same recognition and same ability for their students to achieve.

[11.30 am]

**The CHAIR:** Kylie, talking about principals and the work they do, under IPS there has been some comment on the fact that perhaps an IPS administratively puts a lot of burden on principals. The question also is: Should there be a separate CEO-type position being created in order to free up

the principals to focus on teaching and learning? What is your feeling around that? Has that come to you?

**Ms Catto:** I think all principals have that high admin load. We have recently participated in consultation with the Department of Education. They are doing a review of principal development—the principal model—which is great if it ever gets implemented. Principals, I would imagine, by and large become principals by virtue of being great educators. They enter the system. You cannot be a principal if you do not have a teaching degree, but then once they become the principal, they are also the HR manager and they are the finance manager and they might be the building and works manager; there are a whole lot of things. Yes, they have a team under them and with them, but they also have to work with setting the priorities for the education and work with the timetabling and the student support services and the wellbeing-type issues.

**The CHAIR:** So has that administratively been more burdensome in IPS than non-IPS?

**Ms Catto:** My understanding is yes, particularly with the HR requirements and the selection of staff. I think a lot of principals would probably like that capacity. But in terms of everything else they have to do, we would certainly see a role now—in an IPS situation, I would imagine that, having a one-line budget, they would be able to create a business manager-type role that would take on more. But the accountability still sits with the principal, and that is fair enough; they are the site manager.

**Mr M.J. COWPER:** Would that not be the same case with any government department—Police, Health; they have all got these structures—and private enterprise? A person might have started off as a welder in an iron ore company and become one of the chiefs.

**Ms Catto:** They would, but I would imagine that that person would have more training, more development and more opportunities to work their way through the business rather than go from the classroom to the administration, which is quite a different role to be sitting in front of. When you are in a classroom, you might have responsibility for, I do not know, six classes of 30 students—180 students. If we look at schools in the western suburbs that might have 2 500 students, never mind several hundred staff members as well, that is a massive undertaking on a one-line budget for an educator who has developed through the system. Again, our principals are highly educated people, but there is no standard development for them. I do not know if they have undertaken financial training. I do not know if they are familiar with the public sector standards in terms of HR and recruitment. They have their own enterprise bargaining agreement for staff. There are industrial relations and employee relations. There is a lot to be considered. Other people in other businesses are not responsible for people's lives—for their future. The mental health issues and the complex societal issues that we face in schools, I would suggest, would be far more diverse than in many industries. In those industries, you might have your general manager or your CEO, but you would have your heads of department, you might have your directors or you might have your managers of those sections. In a school, you do not tend to have that, not from a corporate perspective.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** One of my schools appointed a business manager very early on and that business manager is not responsible for but does all the management work in relation to the finances to free the principal up to lead the educational issues. It is a good model that they adopted quite early on actually.

**Ms Catto:** It is a good model and that is fantastic if that school has been able to do it, but it does take the money out of the education side of things. Let us not forget that takes away from what the kids can do. Also, a lot of this is about devolving responsibility out. Really sadly, we hear schools say, “The cuts have meant we can't afford education assistants” and the response is, “That's up to your principal and your school board because they determine where the budget goes.” Okay; that is fine, but if they have got less money, the money has to come from somewhere and there is not enough money to go around. We know that they are not being given money when there is a stash here. We get that; we understand that. But the fact is you cannot just say, “You've got a board now;

it's up to you." No, it is not up to them. The government has a responsibility to deliver schooling and if there is not enough money there, you cannot just say, "It's up to you and your board; we've given you your bucket of money. Off you go." It is the responsibility of the government to deliver quality government education.

**Mr M.J. COWPER:** Do the parents and citizens generally at large understand the liability that exists within the education system to do with leave liabilities?

**Ms Catto:** I would not say that at a local level they would necessarily have a strong understanding of that. They would look to us as their elected representatives to be looking at that. But they do understand it in terms of losing a principal or a teacher for a long period of time because there was a leave liability and they have to undertake their leave as a result to get that down. That has different impacts really, I suppose, depending on who the teacher or the principal is or how that is managed internally. But it would not be a major issue for most parents, I would imagine. It is a disappointment, I guess, that it got to that stage in the way that leave now has to be managed to get it back under control.

**Mr M.J. COWPER:** That is exactly right. It has to be put under control; it just cannot keep ballooning.

**Ms Catto:** No. We have got a good model for that.

**The CHAIR:** Kylie, so that I do not forget, you referred to a copy of the Department of Education ruling in relation to members of P&Cs and boards.

**Ms Catto:** I can try to get you a copy of the letter. It was on the Department of Education's website previously, but that has all been updated. I can definitely try to get the committee a copy of it. I think we refer to it in our submission; I am fairly certain.

**The CHAIR:** If you can, that would be good.

Thank you for your evidence before us today, Kylie. A transcript of this hearing will be sent to you for your correction of any minor errors. Any such corrections need to be made and the transcript returned within 10 days. If you do not do that, we will deem that you are very happy with it and it is all correct. New material cannot be added via these corrections and the sense of your evidence cannot be altered, but should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on any particular points, please do so in your supplementary submission for the committee's consideration when you return the corrected transcript. I thank you again for your time before us today.

**Ms Catto:** Thank you very much for the opportunity to come along and speak to you all and to put in ours. I wish the committee well in its future work.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Kylie.

**Hearing concluded at 11.36 am**

---