



**Education and Health Standing Committee**

# **IPS Report Card**

**The Report of the Inquiry into the  
Independent Public Schools initiative**

**Report No. 8  
August 2016**

**Legislative Assembly  
Parliament of Western Australia**

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# Education and Health Standing Committee

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## IPS Report Card

### **The Report of the Inquiry into the Independent Public Schools initiative**

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Report No. 8

Presented by

**Dr G.G. Jacobs, MLA**

Presented to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and deemed tabled on  
Monday, 15 August 2016



## Chairman's Foreword

**O**n behalf of the Education and Health Standing Committee, I present this Report of the Inquiry into the Independent Public School initiative, the new organisational system of education which has been operating in Western Australia since 2010.

This initiative has been lauded as a success by the Department of Education, pointing to support from school principals and communities alike. The Committee thought it important to inquire into this system to determine what drove its introduction, what the notion of greater autonomy looks like in practice and what are its consequences, both realised and potential. Most importantly, the Committee wanted to determine what effect the initiative is having on student learning outcomes.

For decades now there has been a school of thought, both nationally and internationally, that local communities should be empowered to have greater control over decision making about important issues which affect their lives—be it education, health or any number of other matters—as a way to deliver better outcomes.

The Independent Public Schools initiative embodies this concept for the Western Australian public education system, following the lead of education systems with greater autonomy found in Victoria, England, and the United States of America. The concept of allowing schools to manage a one-line budget, allocate resources as needed, and recruit their own staff, with strong community input and governance is an admirable aim.

However, in any devolved system, and particularly in education, local decision makers need to be supported by central office guidance and be subject to appropriate levels of accountability. Support and accountability must balance autonomy so it does not become abandonment.

The strength of any new initiative in public education must be measured by the effect it has on student outcomes. As a community, we need to know whether students are learning. This is particularly important now as Australia's international rankings in numeracy and literacy are falling. In line with national and international research, there is no evidence that the Independent Public Schools initiative has had a positive effect on student outcomes. Indeed, the Department of Education points to teacher quality as the most important component in improving student outcomes.

Independent Public Schools, particularly early adopters, have benefitted by being able to recruit the best teachers. This benefit is at the expense of later adopters, and schools which have not become Independent Public Schools, who must accept redeployees, and are likely to be staffed with teachers who are less suitable for the school environment and have less experience. A 'two-tiered system' is reinforced, whereby more capable schools receive more benefits, and less capable schools fall further behind. Remote and hard-to-staff schools are particularly disadvantaged as a result. This is a critical issue given the important relationship between teacher quality and student outcomes.

In adopting any new organisational structure, it is important to monitor its progress and outcomes. I am concerned about the inadequacy of a school's performance being assessed against its own internally-set goals. A school can set easily attainable targets so that it can be seen as succeeding in meeting its goals.

Overall, the new organisational structure seems sound, but its ongoing implementation and continued expansion needs to be monitored rigorously in order to achieve the real and meaningful goal of educating our kids – to improve student achievement.

Particular thanks go to the Committee members and the executive—Alison Sharpe, Alice Jones and Catie Parsons—for their hard work on this Inquiry.

We look forward to the government taking on board the findings and recommendations of this Report, and in particular the agencies responsible for educating our most important asset, our children.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G.G. Jacobs', is written over a series of horizontal blue lines.

DR G.G. JACOBS, MLA  
CHAIRMAN

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## Executive Summary

**T**he Independent Public Schools (IPS) initiative commenced in 2010 with an initial intake of 34 schools. This year, there are 445 IP Schools across the state, incorporating 70 per cent of public school students and teachers. The initiative has been heralded by some as an innovation in public education that empowers schools, creates diversity in the system, builds strong communities and allows each child to achieve their full potential. Independent Public Schools are supposedly “characterised by choice, energy, motivation, innovation and engagement.”<sup>1</sup>

Given that the initiative has now been underway for some time, the Education and Health Standing Committee (**the Committee**) resolved to undertake an Inquiry into its implementation. In particular, the Committee has examined what the initiative has tried to achieve, whether this has been done and whether there have been any adverse effects from its introduction, especially for students with additional needs.

### **The aim of the IPS initiative and increased autonomy**

The IPS initiative was introduced with the aim of providing schools with greater control over their own decision-making and allocation of resources. Despite current trends, within Australia and overseas, which promote decentralised education systems, there is no well-established or direct link between autonomy and improved student outcomes.

The Department of Education (**DoE**) states that autonomy allows schools to create the optimal conditions within their schools to improve student outcomes. Research has found that certain types of autonomy are more likely to lead to improved student outcomes but this does not include the budgetary and staffing autonomy that is a main feature of the IPS model in Western Australia. Ultimately, teacher quality has a far stronger link to improved student outcomes than autonomy.

### **Has the IPS initiative achieved what it set out to do?**

The introduction of the IPS initiative has had no significant effect on the academic or non-academic performance of students, including those with additional needs. It’s also too early to tell whether the IPS initiative has created the conditions which will lead to improved student outcomes in the future.

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1 Department of Education, *Independent Public Schools*.  
<http://www.education.wa.edu.au/home/detcms/navigation/about-us/programs-and-initiatives/independent-public-schools/?page=2#toc2>. Accessed 2 August 2016.

Further, while the DoE acknowledges that teacher quality is paramount in improving student outcomes, it is not clear to the Committee how the IPS initiative directly promotes improved teacher quality. This ought to be the primary focus of future educational reforms.

### **Adverse effects of the IPS initiative**

The IPS initiative has exacerbated existing inequalities in the public education system, both perceived and actual, reinforcing a 'two-tiered system'. The staffing autonomy afforded to IP Schools is advantageous while non-IP Schools are disadvantaged by the requirement to accept redeployees that may be unsuitable for the schools' context. IPS principals have different and more targeted professional development opportunities than non-IPS principals. The resultant effect is that high-performing schools will continue to improve while lower-performing schools become residualised.

Autonomy has shifted a significant administrative burden to IP Schools which they are not always prepared for or equipped to manage. IPS principals have less time to devote to educational leadership. Devolved authority has led to a reduction in the central support and accountability machinery that should be at the core of a public education system. All schools bear a greater administrative burden since the introduction of the Student-Centred Funding Model in 2015, although IP Schools are better placed to meet this by way of additional funding for IPS administration.

The additional responsibilities of IPS boards form an important part of the governance and accountability structure of the IPS model. However, the potential contribution of experienced school board members is reduced as the Department of Education and IPS principals often relegate the board to an advisory role.

The review system in place to monitor the performance of IP Schools lacks rigour, is unsustainable and fails to impose a standardised level of control that is central to a public education system. In particular, the performance management system for IPS principals is inadequate. Too much reliance is placed on self-assessment and monitoring rather than independent oversight.

The management system in the current IPS model, where 'no news is good news', is too reactive. Accountability has been weakened by the decentralisation that is inherent in the IPS initiative, which compromises both student outcomes and public confidence in the education system. A more proactive monitoring and review system is needed.

## **Ministerial Response**

In accordance with Standing Order 277(1) of the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly, the Education and Health Standing Committee directs that the Minister representing the Minister for Education report to the Assembly as to the action, if any, proposed to be taken by the Government with respect to the recommendations of the Committee.



# Findings and Recommendations

## Finding 1

Page 4

The Department of Education chose mainly high-performing schools to be the first to become Independent Public Schools to increase the likelihood that the initiative would achieve its objectives.

## Finding 2

Page 12

The relationship, if any, between school autonomy and student outcomes is unclear.

## Finding 3

Page 14

The budgetary and staffing autonomy provided to schools as part of the Independent Public Schools initiative is unlikely to affect student outcomes.

## Finding 4

Page 15

The professional capacity of school staff has a greater effect on student outcomes than autonomy.

## Recommendation 1

Page 15

The Department of Education should focus on improving teacher quality and teaching practices as the most influential methods of improving student outcomes.

## Recommendation 2

Page 16

The Department of Education should ensure that Independent Public Schools do not discriminate against 'difficult to teach' students in student enrolments and pathways.

## Finding 5

Page 19

Improving student outcomes should have been a key priority of the Independent Public Schools initiative.

## Finding 6

Page 19

Improving student outcomes should be a key priority of any future educational reform.

## Finding 7

Page 20

Student outcomes are a central tool to measure the effects of the Independent Public Schools initiative.

## Finding 8

Page 22

The Department of Education does not sufficiently monitor student outcomes to analyse the effect of the Independent Public Schools initiative.

**Finding 9** **Page 22**

The Department of Education does not sufficiently monitor student outcomes for particular cohorts of students, such as those with additional needs.

**Finding 10** **Page 25**

There are no consistent trends in outcomes of students at schools that have transitioned to become Independent Public Schools, or between Independent Public Schools and non-Independent Public Schools.

**Finding 11** **Page 27**

The Committee is concerned that the Department of Education's monitoring of outcomes of students with disabilities is insufficient to allow the assessment of the Department of Education's performance in delivering services to these students.

**Finding 12** **Page 27**

The Independent Public School initiative has not had any discernible effect on the outcomes of students at Independent Public Schools, nor non-Independent Public Schools, for both students with additional needs, and those without.

**Recommendation 3** **Page 30**

That the Minister representing the Minister for Education reports to the Legislative Assembly on the Department of Education's progress implementing the recommendations made by the Auditor General in the report *Follow-On: Managing Student Attendance in Western Australian Public Schools*.

**Recommendation 4** **Page 35**

That the Department of Education implements greater accountability and transparency measures to ensure that schools are using funding allocated for students with additional needs for those students, and not for other purposes.

**Finding 13** **Page 36**

It is unclear whether the Independent Public School initiative creates the conditions needed to improve future student outcomes.

**Recommendation 5** **Page 36**

That the Department of Education monitor student outcomes in relation to the Independent Public School initiative and report the results of this monitoring in its annual report. This data should include:

- Comparison between student outcomes in Independent Public Schools and non-Independent Public Schools



- Separate consideration of outcomes for students who receive additional funding including:

- Aboriginal students
- Socially disadvantaged students
- Students with English as an additional language
- Students from remote and regional schools
- Students with a disability.

**Finding 14****Page 38**

The Independent Public School initiative has reinforced the existing inequalities within the public education sector.

**Finding 15****Page 41**

Independent Public Schools are provided with the opportunity to recruit the best teachers for their circumstances, while non-Independent Public Schools are not.

**Finding 16****Page 42**

Non-Independent Public Schools are disadvantaged by the requirement to accept redeployees who may not be most appropriate for the school's circumstances.

**Recommendation 6****Page 42**

That the Department of Education provides sufficient training opportunities and support to staff, particularly in their early years at an Independent Public School, to help them manage the additional pressures.

**Finding 17****Page 44**

There is an unreasonable burden placed on non-Independent Public Schools required to accept redeployees. This burden will only increase over time as more schools become Independent Public Schools.

**Finding 18****Page 44**

Harder-to-staff remote and regional schools will find it increasingly difficult to attract staff as incentives for working remotely become less effective due to the smaller number of schools where teachers returning from non-metropolitan service can be placed.

**Recommendation 7****Page 44**

That the Department of Education changes its policy so that Independent Public Schools and non-Independent Public Schools have the same responsibilities towards redeployee staff.

**Recommendation 8** **Page 47**

That the Department of Education ensure all school principals and staff involved in staff recruitment are appropriately trained and comply with all human resources legislative requirements and responsibilities.

**Finding 19** **Page 49**

There is a discrepancy in the level of professional development available to Independent Public School principals and staff by comparison with non-Independent Public School principals and staff.

**Recommendation 9** **Page 49**

That the Department of Education makes professional development opportunities available to all public school principals and staff, regardless of whether or not the school is an Independent Public School.

**Finding 20** **Page 50**

There is a persistent public perception that Independent Public Schools are better than non-Independent Public Schools. This perception is exacerbated by recruitment policies and the State Government's promotion of the Independent Public School initiative.

**Finding 21** **Page 50**

The State Government's promotion and marketing of the Independent Public Schools initiative has led to the perception that Independent Public Schools have greater capacity to better educate students than non-Independent Public Schools, reinforcing the two-tiered public education system.

**Finding 22** **Page 55**

School boards have significant experience which can benefit the governance of a school, yet some principals can relegate boards to an advisory role.

**Recommendation 10** **Page 55**

That the Department of Education manage principals in relation to their interaction with, and responsiveness to, the school board.

**Recommendation 11** **Page 55**

That the Department of Education establish appropriate mechanisms for school board members to resolve disputes with principals about board engagement and participation in governance.

**Finding 23** **Page 56**

There is reluctance on the part of the Department of Education to directly engage with school board members.

**Recommendation 12** **Page 56**

That the Department of Education create a Board Members' Advisory Group, taking on a role similar to the Principals' Advisory Group, to provide an opportunity for school board members as a group to provide feedback on the Independent Public Schools initiative.

**Finding 24** **Page 58**

School board members and principals generally have a good understanding of the role of the board.

**Recommendation 13** **Page 58**

That the Department of Education provide all Independent Public School principals and school board members with appropriate written guidance outlining the role of the board. This guide should detail the board's authorities and responsibilities, and dispute resolution mechanisms. The guide should be publicly available to the school community.

**Finding 25** **Page 60**

It can be difficult for school board members to access training and absorb all relevant information in the limited time available.

**Recommendation 14** **Page 60**

The Department of Education should ensure sufficient opportunity for all school board members to attend training, including members with work commitments and those who live outside the metropolitan area.

**Recommendation 15** **Page 60**

The Department of Education should evaluate the effectiveness of its new School Board Development Program in due course, including seeking the feedback of attendees that the course has assisted them in being effective school board members.

**Finding 26** **Page 64**

The Independent Public School selection process lacks transparency and it is unclear on what basis schools are assessed as meeting selection criteria.

**Finding 27** **Page 66**

Principals of Independent Public Schools are burdened with greater administrative responsibility during the transition process and beyond. Principals therefore have less opportunity to focus on being educators.

**Finding 28** **Page 69**

Due to the reduction in numbers of central and regional office staff, there is less support, guidance and training available to Independent Public School principals.

**Finding 29** **Page 69**

The level of support principals receive should not be entirely dependent on the principals having the time and being willing to access available support.

**Recommendation 16** **Page 69**

The Department of Education should ensure that appropriate levels of support are available to all Independent Public School principals.

**Finding 30** **Page 71**

The development of networks and clusters is part of the continued devolution of the Department of Education's responsibility to individual schools. Whilst peer support and collaboration are important, the Department of Education's ultimate responsibility for supporting schools should not be avoided. The benefits of being part of a public school 'system' will be lost when the 'system' aspects disappear.

**Recommendation 17** **Page 72**

That the Department of Education amend its guidelines to allow for the Parents and Citizens' Association to nominate a parent member to the school board.

**Finding 31** **Page 77**

The overarching principle of accountability demands that self-assessment is verified independently and thoroughly.

**Recommendation 18** **Page 81**

The Department of Education Services should conduct biannual surveys, inviting principals of Independent Public Schools which have been reviewed in the previous six months to complete the survey anonymously.

**Finding 32** **Page 82**

The accuracy of the self-review is at risk from bias and selective inclusion of information.

**Finding 33** **Page 84**

It is concerning that the Expert Review Group determined a need to review several schools not long after they were reviewed by the Department of Education Services and/or transitioned to become Independent Public Schools.

**Finding 34** **Page 84**

The Committee questions the rigour and efficacy of the Department of Education Services' review process and the Independent Public School selection process.

**Finding 35** **Page 84**

The findings of the Expert Review Group are inconsistent with the findings of the Department of Education Services' reviews.

**Finding 36** **Page 85**

The Department of Education Services' reviews are at risk of manipulation by school principals selectively providing information to be considered by reviewers.

**Finding 37** **Page 85**

The Committee has concerns about how the Department of Education holds schools accountable and monitors schools' progress in implementing Department of Education Services' review outcomes.

**Finding 38** **Page 86**

It is unclear to the Committee how the Department of Education provides support to Independent Public Schools to implement outcomes arising from Department of Education Services' reviews.

**Finding 39** **Page 86**

It is insufficient that the only mechanism for monitoring action to implement outcomes is for these outcomes to be considered by the next Department of Education Services' review in three or more years.

**Finding 40** **Page 86**

While taking account of a school's context and local knowledge is important when reviewing a school's performance, public education requires uniform standards.

**Recommendation 19** **Page 87**

The Department of Education Services should incorporate standardised review criteria into its review process.

**Finding 41** **Page 91**

The line management arrangement between Independent Public Schools and the Director General of the Department of Education is ineffective. It does not allow for the appropriate level of oversight of principals' actions, nor provide sufficient support for principals seeking guidance.

**Recommendation 20****Page 91**

A formal line management arrangement should be reintroduced to provide appropriate oversight of and support for school principals in a more manageable ratio than 445 to 1.

**Finding 42****Page 93**

While the Department of Education has reviewed and evaluated the Independent Public Schools initiative, the implementation of recommendations for improvement has been slow and only realised in Semester 2, 2016.

**Recommendation 21****Page 93**

That the Department of Education regularly review the Independent Public Schools initiative to ensure continual improvement and evaluate progress towards improving student outcomes.

**Finding 43****Page 95**

Introducing a school board into Independent Public Schools has provided the school community with no additional input than exists for school councils.

# Chapter 1

## Background

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**Such a significant public education system reform as the Independent Public Schools initiative requires review, particularly given the growing number of schools, students and staff involved.**

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### Background to the Inquiry

- 1.1 The Independent Public Schools (**IPS**) initiative commenced in 2010 as one of the most significant reforms in the history of Western Australia's (**WA**) public education system. As it continues to be rolled out to more and more schools, its potential impact increases for the 296,000 students enrolled in WA public schools, representing over 66 per cent of students in the state.
- 1.2 The Education and Health Standing Committee (**the Committee**) resolved to undertake an Inquiry into the initiative in response to concerns raised by parents and school staff about how the IPS initiative impacted students, particularly those with additional needs. The Committee resolved broad terms of reference to encompass all aspects of the IPS initiative with the aim of encouraging interested parties to bring their concerns to the Committee's attention.

### The process of the Inquiry

- 1.3 The Committee sought input from a range of parties and invited a number of bodies representing school staff, parents, children with additional needs, and government authorities to make submissions. The Committee received 32 submissions, the details of which can be found in Appendix Three.
- 1.4 During the submissions period, concerns were raised by school staff, board members and parents about the potential for negative repercussions if they were to provide candid comments about the IPS initiative. The Committee agreed to accept as closed evidence the submissions from those who held concerns about the negative effect of disclosure. The Committee is also aware that a number of people chose not to provide submissions directly to the Inquiry, instead contacting their representative organisation which then provided a submission to the Inquiry on behalf of all its members.
- 1.5 The Committee also conducted eight hearings with a representative selection of those who had made submissions. Details of these hearings can be found at Appendix Four.

## Chapter 1

### Goals of Australian public education

- 1.6 Declared by all Federal, State and Territory Education Ministers in 2008, the *Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians* (**Melbourne Declaration**) is Australia's overarching policy document setting out the goals for Australia's public education system into the future. It states:

*Improving educational outcomes for all young Australians is central to the nation's social and economic prosperity and will position young people to live fulfilling, productive and responsible lives.*

*Young Australians are therefore placed at the centre of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals. These goals are:*

**Goal 1:** *Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence.*

**Goal 2:** *All young Australians become:*

- *Successful learners*
- *Confident and creative individuals*
- *Active and informed citizens.*<sup>2</sup>

- 1.7 The primary goal, as declared by Australia's Ministers for Education, is for Australian schooling to be equitable and for students to achieve excellence. This includes, for example, that a student's socioeconomic background is not a significant determinant of their educational achievement. Also, that a student with disabilities is provided with the opportunity to achieve their best at school.

### Western Australia's public education framework

*Our purpose is clear: a system of public schools in which every school is a good school, every teacher is effective and every student is successful.*<sup>3</sup>

- 1.8 So states the Department of Education (**DoE**) about its strategic directions. These directions, in accordance with the Classroom First philosophy, put 'students at the centre of everything' done by the DoE. In accordance with the Melbourne Declaration, the DoE's goals are to achieve equity and excellence.

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2 Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, December 2008, p7.

3 Department of Education, *Our strategic directions*.  
<http://www.education.wa.edu.au/home/detcms/navigation/about-us/public-education-at-a-glance/our-strategic-directions/>. Accessed 25 June 2016.



- 1.9 The *Director General's Classroom First Strategy* has been the DoE's framework for its provision of public education since 2007. The DoE states that this strategy reflects its beliefs, is consistent with the best available evidence and informs its strategic plan and structure.
- 1.10 There are six elements to the *Classroom First* strategy:
1. A focus on student achievement: success for all
  2. A classroom orientation: sound teaching
  3. Context specific: distinctive schools
  4. Practical support: making it possible
  5. Meaningful accountability: asking the hard questions
  6. Public confidence: trusting public schools.<sup>4</sup>
- 1.11 In 2016, the new *Strategic Plan for Western Australian Public Schools 2016–2019: High Performance – High Care (Strategic Plan)* was released. The Strategic Plan builds on the *Classroom First* strategy and the significant level of reform in the education sector over the past decade.
- 1.12 The focus of the Strategic Plan is for all students to accomplish their best in an environment where children and young people are nurtured and developed. It aims to build on the reform agenda and refocus it to impact student learning, and has a specific focus on IP Schools. It has four priorities:
1. Success for all students
  2. High quality teaching
  3. Effective leadership
  4. Strong governance and support.
- 1.13 The *Focus 2016: An initiative of the Director General's Classroom First Strategy* sets broad but actionable directions for schools, Statewide Services and regions, and the DoE central office, in each of the four priorities of the four-year strategy.

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4 Department of Education 2007, *Director General's Classroom First Strategy*.

## Chapter 1

### The Independent Public Schools initiative

- 1.14 On 12 August 2009, the Premier, Hon Colin Barnett MLA, and then Minister for Education, Hon Dr Elizabeth Constable MLA, announced the IPS initiative.<sup>5</sup> At the time the Premier said:

*This initiative will enable school principals and senior staff to lead and make decisions to tailor their school for the best education outcomes for their students.*<sup>6</sup>

- 1.15 The initiative honoured a key State Government election commitment to hand greater control to schools and cut bureaucracy in the WA school system.
- 1.16 The Premier invited schools to apply for IPS status, commencing in 2010. Over 100 schools applied, with 34 schools selected for the first intake. The DoE suggests that the number of applicants indicated enthusiasm for the initiative. Other evidence shows that the DoE strongly encouraged high-performing schools to apply,<sup>7</sup> thereby increasing the odds of the initiative succeeding. The schools selected in this first round were already high-performing schools with capable principals,<sup>8</sup> likely to have greater capacity to handle the autonomy given and perform well under the increased pressure and workload.

#### Finding 1

The Department of Education chose mainly high-performing schools to be the first to become Independent Public Schools to increase the likelihood that the initiative would achieve its objectives.

- 1.17 Today there are 445 IP Schools.
- 57 per cent of all WA public schools are IPS.
  - IP Schools accommodate approximately 70 per cent of the teacher and student populations.
  - 72 per cent of IP Schools are located in the metropolitan area, while 28 per cent are remote or regional schools.
  - 67 per cent of IP Schools are primary schools, 18 per cent are senior high schools, and the remaining 15 per cent includes all other school types.<sup>9</sup>

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5 Hon C Barnett MLA (Premier) & Hon Dr E Constable MLA (Minister for Education), *New era for public education in Western Australia*, Media Statement, 12 August 2009.

6 Hon C Barnett MLA (Premier) & Hon Dr E Constable MLA (Minister for Education), *New era for public education in Western Australia*, Media Statement, 12 August 2009.

7 Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 June 2016, p3.

8 Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 June 2016, p3.

9 'Expressions of interest in Independent Public Schools since the announcement of the initiative', Attachment 9a of Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016.

- 1.18 Not all schools are IP Schools; some may have had their application rejected by the DoE, while others may have chosen not to apply to transition to IPS.<sup>10</sup> Schools may not apply for a variety of reasons, including a lack of interest on the part of the principal and school community. The DoE stated that it is unlikely that the IPS initiative will ever be rolled out across all schools as the model is not suitable for all schools, for example remote schools.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 1: Number of new IP Schools per year<sup>12</sup>**

Intake	Year	Expressions of interest	IPS	Regional	Metro
1	2010	104	34 <sup>#</sup>	9	25
2	2011	134	64	16	48
3.1	2012	196*	73	21	52
3.2	2013		36	18	18
4	2013	141	48	24	24
New schools	2014		9	2	7
5	2015	197	174	50	124
New Schools	2015		4	1	3
New schools	2016		4	0	4
6	2017	124	Up to 50 to be announced	TBA	TBA

<sup>#</sup> Two schools from the 2010 intake amalgamated in 2016, reducing the number of schools remaining from this intake to 33.

\*The third intake of 196 schools was split between 2012 and 2013 commencement.

## Objectives

- 1.19 The four core objectives of the IPS initiative are:
1. To allow public school principals, staff and school boards greater decision-making autonomy, authority and flexibility in the selection and management of their financial, physical and human resources; overall school direction; education programs; behaviour management; and values/ethos. Greater autonomy is also intended by offering IP Schools the opportunity to develop alternative policies and processes to those previously employed by the Department.

10 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p4.

11 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, pp4-5.

12 Table adapted from data in: 'Expressions of interest in Independent Public Schools since the announcement of the initiative', Attachment 9a of Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016; University of Melbourne 2013, *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*. A report for the WA Department of Education, Melbourne, Victoria, p12; & Supplement to Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 1 August 2016, p14.

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2. To facilitate a stronger engagement between the school and the community and to ensure community input into governance through the establishment of school boards.
3. To create different school accountability processes, with Delivery and Performance Agreements (**DPAs**) established between the Director General and the principals and school boards from each school.
4. To continue to receive the benefits of being part of the public school system, including: professional development, employee support services, regional support, and behaviour centres.<sup>13</sup>

### **Key elements of the Independent Public School initiative**

#### ***Line management***

- 1.20 IPS principals report directly to the DoE's Director General. Formerly, all principals reported to their regional executive director. Non-IPS principals continue to do so. The Director General is currently the line manager for 445 principals. This is expected to be nearly 500 principals by 2017.

#### ***Regional office support***

- 1.21 Regional offices have a limited oversight role for IP Schools as there is now no formal line management relationship between school principals and regional executive directors. Regional offices offer the same compliance, complaints management and critical incident support as before. These services are optional. IPS principals determine their level of contact with and support received from regional offices.

#### ***Authorities and responsibilities***

- 1.22 Curriculum: IP Schools can choose to offer different curricula provided the requirements of the Curriculum Framework and Australian Curriculum are met. They also have a choice of professional development days.
- 1.23 Staffing: IP Schools create their own staffing profile, can merit select all staff, and do not have to accept redeployees. Since 2012, all schools can merit select staff; however, non-IP Schools must still accept redeployees.
- 1.24 Financial management: IP Schools are allocated a 'one-line' budget which they then choose how to allocate. IP Schools are responsible for financial management, procurement, and maintenance of buildings and facilities. Funding for students with

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13 University of Melbourne 2013, *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*. A report for the WA Department of Education, Melbourne, Victoria, p16.

additional needs can be spent flexibly. The Student-Centred Funding Model (**SCFM**) has applied to all schools since 2015, and each school now operates with a one-line budget.

### ***Obligations***

- 1.25 There are no legislative or regulatory changes involved in the IPS initiative. All schools must comply with the same existing legislation and obligations. The difference between the governance of IP Schools and non-IP Schools lies in the DPA.
- 1.26 The DPA is a three year agreement entered into between a school's principal, chair of the school board and the DoE's Director General. This agreement outlines in general terms:
- the resources that the school will receive
  - the support that will be provided to the school
  - the programs the school will be contracted to deliver
  - the performance and accountability measures for the school over the life of the agreement.
- 1.27 The DPA follows a standardised template which is modified for individual school programs and school budgets.<sup>14</sup> The DPA has evolved since the beginning of IPS, with a significant restructure in 2013.
- 1.28 Each school develops a business plan which puts the DPA into practice. The business plan is tailored to a school's particular circumstances, resources, priority areas and overarching vision, and thus there is no set format or content. It will set targets for the school to achieve in line with and for the duration of the DPA; however what these targets are and how they will be measured is determined by the school.
- 1.29 In the final year of the DPA, an IP School is reviewed by the Department of Education Services (**DES**). IP Schools must also annually self-assess and produce an annual report. The school must also provide quarterly school performance reports to the school board. The school is obligated to maximise community and industry representation on the board.
- 1.30 The DPA forms the basis of the Principal's Professional Review, and also the DES' school review (see Chapter 7).

### ***School board***

- 1.31 IP Schools have a school board instead of a school council. The school board is not legislatively different from, and retains all the functions of, a school council.<sup>15</sup> The DPA

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<sup>14</sup> WA Primary Principals' Association 2015, *Regulatory Guidance Statement*, 'Successful School Governance: Moving from a School Council to a School Board under IPS', p1.

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outlines additional responsibilities of endorsing the DPA, the one-line budget, the business plan and the annual report. The board must participate in DES' reviews, and monitors school performance via quarterly reporting provided by the principal. It is also involved in the selection of a new principal.

### **Other changes to the Western Australian public school system**

- 1.32 There have been a number of other changes to the WA public school system in recent years. These include year 7 students becoming part of secondary schools, changes to Western Australian Certificate of Education (**WACE**) regulations, and the introduction of the national curriculum. Financial changes have included the August 2013 school budget cuts, and the 2015 roll out of the SCFM and one-line budget to all WA public schools.
- 1.33 These changes can obscure some of the effects of the IPS initiative. It is more difficult to compare school budgets over time due to the change in calculation and presentation of school budgets under the SCFM. Curriculum changes may impact student test scores, and the WACE changes affect student graduation achievement.
- 1.34 However, as most of these changes occur right across the public education system, IP Schools and non-IP Schools alike, it is likely that all schools will be affected in similar ways. Therefore differences seen between IP Schools and non-IP Schools are likely to be predominantly attributable to the IPS initiative.

### **Overall impressions**

- 1.35 The IPS initiative won the 2013 Premier's Award for Excellence in Public Sector Management<sup>15</sup> and has been highlighted by the federal government as a reform that should be adopted by Education Departments nation-wide.<sup>17</sup> The Department regularly heralds its success.
- 1.36 However, it is unclear to the Committee from the evidence given what the DoE's overall objective is in implementing this reform. It was also surprising that the objectives did not include a reference to improving student outcomes.
- 1.37 It is also unclear to the Committee what the end point of the IPS initiative is. The DoE has provided evidence that not all schools will become IPS. It is difficult to see how this is sustainable in the longer term, particularly in the metropolitan area. For example, it is unfathomable that a small proportion of schools may remain non-IP Schools and be expected to accommodate all redeployees.

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15 WA Primary Principals' Association 2015, *Regulatory Guidance Statement*, 'Successful School Governance: Moving from a School Council to a School Board under IPS', p1.

16 Department of Education, *Annual Report 2013-14*, p2.

17 Ministerial release, Monday 3 February 2014, *Transcript*, Launch of the Australian Government's Independent Public Schools initiative.

# Chapter 2

## School autonomy

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**The relationship between autonomy and improved student outcomes is unclear. While there is some suggestion that types of autonomy are positively linked to improved student outcomes, these are not the types of autonomy preferred by the current IPS model. Improving teacher skills and the way we teach have been shown to have a greater impact on student outcomes and should be an area of priority in education policy.**

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- 2.1 The overarching objective of the IPS initiative is “to empower school communities by affording them greater responsibility for their own affairs and the capacity to shape the ethos, priorities and directions of their schools.”<sup>18</sup> The empowerment of schools to respond to the needs and aspirations of the local school community, the DoE argues, creates the conditions for improved student outcomes.
- 2.2 This objective encapsulates the concept of school autonomy or self-management which has been and is being implemented by countries across the world. While the notion may sound straightforward, in reality the ‘autonomy’ provided to or imposed on schools varies significantly between these different educational jurisdictions.
- 2.3 The difference in the nature of autonomy makes it difficult to evaluate the relationship, if any, between autonomy and student outcomes. Discussions about whether autonomy improves student outcomes are fraught with disagreement and contradiction. The argument has both proponents and detractors, and each side can point to evidence supporting its position, or disputing the other.
- 2.4 In Australia, NAPLAN<sup>19</sup> is one mechanism used to assess student outcomes. WA NAPLAN results since the introduction of the IPS initiative are discussed in Chapter 3.

### What is school autonomy?

- 2.5 Professor Brian Caldwell is a leading Australian researcher on school autonomy. He defines an autonomous or self-managing school as one:

*to which there has been decentralised a significant amount of authority and responsibility to make decisions related to the allocation*

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18 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April, p1.

19 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy. See Glossary.

## Chapter 2

*of resources within a centrally determined framework of goals, policies, standards and accountabilities.*<sup>20</sup>

- 2.6 There are four broad areas in which schools may have autonomy:
1. organisation of instruction (how students are taught including textbooks and learning software choice, teaching methods, assessment etc.)
  2. personnel management (staffing)
  3. planning and structures (school location, programme design, course content)
  4. resource management<sup>21</sup> (allocation and use of resources – budgetary)
- 2.7 The IPS initiative in WA has a particular emphasis on personnel management and resource management.

### **Is there a link between greater school autonomy and improved student outcomes?**

- 2.8 The Committee considered a variety of international studies and reviews during the course of this Inquiry.<sup>22</sup> Overall, international and Australian research on whether there is a link between school autonomy and student outcomes is inconclusive. As one submission stated:

*A review of international research shows that there is not a straightforward connection between school autonomy and student outcomes; indeed there remains a high level of contention regarding both the meaning and purposes of school autonomy... and its effects.*<sup>23</sup>

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20 Caldwell, BJ, *Review of related literature for the evaluation of empowering local schools*, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Canberra, 2012 in Suggett, D, 'School autonomy: Necessary but not sufficient', *Evidence Base*, no. 1, 19 June 2015, p3.

21 These categories are set out in Caldwell, BJ, 'School autonomy and student achievement case studies in Australia', *Educational Transformations*, International Study of School Autonomy and Learning, 11 June 2015, p2.  
Similar categories are also identified in Fuchs, T & Woessmann, L, 'What Accounts for International Differences in Student Performance?: A Re-Examination Using PISA Data', *IZA Discussion Paper Series*, no. 1287, September 2004, p1; & Suggett, D, 'School autonomy: Necessary but not sufficient', *Evidence Base*, no. 1, 19 June 2015, p2.

22 National Charter School Resource Centre *Student Achievement in Charter Schools: What the Research Shows*, 2015, Safal Partners, United States of America;  
*Ofsted The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2014/15*, London, England;  
Centre for Research on Education Outcomes 2013, *National Charter School Study 2013*, Stanford University, Stanford, California.

23 Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Curtin University 15 April 2016, p6.



- 2.9 This is likely due to the multi-faceted nature of education and the difficulty in attributing student achievement to a single input like autonomy.<sup>24</sup> The DoE acknowledged this complexity in its submission:

*Drawing direct correlations between the multitude of variables that impact on student performance and the introduction of individual reforms has always been problematic and this is equally true of the introduction of greater autonomy.*<sup>25</sup>

### **Research about school autonomy in Australia**

- 2.10 In 2013, an Australian Senate Committee concluded that there is currently insufficient evidence on whether school autonomy impacts student performance.<sup>26</sup> It recommended that the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) research whether school autonomy programs led to improved student results. The Australian Government noted this recommendation and referred it to the COAG Education Council for consideration.<sup>27</sup> The outcome of this consideration is unknown.<sup>28</sup>
- 2.11 Victoria has the most autonomous public education system in Australia. A report of the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission stated:

*The Commission's assessment of the empirical studies looking at the relationship between autonomy and school performance reveals a mixed and inconclusive picture. While some studies report a performance benefit—particularly if autonomy is accompanied by effective accountability mechanisms—others find little impact, or even negative effects.*<sup>29</sup>

- 2.12 An Australian Government-commissioned research project by Professor Brian Caldwell of the University of Melbourne found that school autonomy does improve student outcomes. This was based on an examination of four schools in three jurisdictions.<sup>30</sup>

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24 Suggett, D, 'School autonomy: Necessary but not sufficient', *Evidence Base*, no. 1, 19 June 2015, p2.

25 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p16.

26 Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Teaching and learning – maximising our investment in Australian schools*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, May 2013, p47.

27 Australian Government, *Australian Government response to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee report: Teaching and learning – maximising our investment in Australian schools*, September 2014, p6.

28 COAG Education Council. <http://www.educationcouncil.edu.au/>. Accessed 4 August 2016.

29 Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission 2013, *Making the Grade: Autonomy and Accountability in Victorian Schools*, Melbourne, Victoria, p XXVII.

30 Caldwell, BJ 2015, 'School autonomy and student achievement case studies in Australia', *Educational Transformations*, International Study of School Autonomy and Learning.

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The then Minister for Education and Training, Hon Christopher Pyne said that the findings:

*support what we have been seeing, internationally and in Australia — that higher levels of school autonomy are associated with higher levels of student achievement, providing there is a balance of autonomy and accountability.*<sup>31</sup>

- 2.13 The outcomes of this study were disputed. The four schools examined in the study were selected specifically because “they achieved evidence of gains in student achievement that they can confidently claim were the effect of autonomy.”<sup>32</sup> Therefore, Caldwell’s findings were effectively determined before the study had even begun.<sup>33</sup>
- 2.14 These findings are also contradicted by evidence that NAPLAN and PISA<sup>34</sup> literacy and numeracy outcomes for New South Wales (NSW), a relatively more centralised system, are equivalent to, or higher than, the far more autonomous Victorian education system.<sup>35</sup>

### Finding 2

The relationship, if any, between school autonomy and student outcomes is unclear.

- 2.15 Further discussion of the literature about the correlation between autonomy and student outcomes can be found in the *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*<sup>36</sup> (University of Melbourne Evaluation) and *School Autonomy: Building the Conditions for Student Success*<sup>37</sup> (Hamilton Report) reports. Reference can also be found in various research papers.<sup>38</sup> Some of the relevant issues raised in this research are outlined below.

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31 Hon C Pyne MHR (Minister for Education and Training), *New research links school autonomy with stronger student achievement*, Media Statement, Australian Government, Canberra, 19 August 2015.

32 Eacott, S ‘Evidence for success of independent public schools is flawed’, *The Conversation*, 20 August 2015. <https://theconversation.com/evidence-for-success-of-independent-public-schools-is-flawed-46382>. Accessed 26 July 2016.

33 Eacott, S ‘Evidence for success of independent public schools is flawed’, *The Conversation*, 20 August 2015. <https://theconversation.com/evidence-for-success-of-independent-public-schools-is-flawed-46382>. Accessed 26 July 2016.

34 Programme for International Student Assessment.

35 Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Curtin University 15 April 2016, p6

36 University of Melbourne 2013, *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*. A report for the WA Department of Education, Melbourne, Victoria, Appendix 11.

37 Hamilton Associates 2015, *School Autonomy: Building the Conditions for Student Success*. A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia.

38 Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission 2013, *Making the Grade: Autonomy and Accountability in Victorian Schools*, Melbourne, Victoria;

### **Certain types of autonomy are more likely to lead to improved student outcomes**

- 2.16 Evidence suggests that staffing and budgetary autonomy granted by the IPS initiative in WA will have limited impact on student outcomes.
- 2.17 Studies have found that certain types of autonomy are more likely to improve student achievement than others. One evaluation found that curriculum and assessment autonomy tends to improve student outcomes. However, budgetary and staffing autonomy have little effect on student outcomes.<sup>39</sup> This evaluation concluded that greater responsibility in managing resources at the school level "appears to be unrelated to a school system's overall performance".<sup>40</sup>
- 2.18 The IPS model, primarily providing budgetary and staffing autonomy, is less likely to affect student outcomes than other types of autonomy.

*My understanding is, from the OECD, the critical aspect of autonomy is professional autonomy. It is autonomy in how you implement the curriculum in your classroom and how you assess that curriculum in your classroom. Systems that have high levels of that professional autonomy such as Finland—it is a classic—they perform well. The sort of autonomy that I think we are talking about here [for IPS] is almost zilch in the sense that we have an increased level of compliance with policy requirements and so, in fact, there is not a lot of experimentation, if you can talk about that, within the context, obviously, of a defined curriculum.<sup>41</sup>*

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Caldwell, BJ 2014, *Impact of School Autonomy on Student Achievement in 21st Century Education: A Review of the Evidence*, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Victoria;

Caldwell, BJ 2005, 'School-based management', *Education Policy Booklet Series*, vol. 3, International Academy of Education;

Fitzgerald, S & Rainnie, A 2011, *Putting the Public First? An examination of the implications of the 2009 EAC Report. Part Two: Independent Public Schools*, Curtin Graduate School of Business, report commissioned by Unions WA;

Fitzgerald, S & Rainnie, A 2012, 'Failing Forward: Public Schools and New Public Management', *Public Policy*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp167-182;

Gobby, B 2016, 'Putting "the system" into a school autonomy reform: The case of the Independent Public Schools program', *Discourse: Students in the Cultural Politics of Education*, vol. 37, no. 1;

Gobby, B 2013, 'Enacting the Independent Public Schools program in Western Australia', *Issues in Education Research*, vol. 23, no. 1.

39 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development *PISA 2012 Results: What Makes Schools Successful? Resources, Policies and Practices (Volume IV)* February 2014, PISA, OECD Publishing quoted in Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Curtin University, 15 April 2016, p6.

40 Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Curtin University, 15 April 2016, p6.

41 Ms P Byrne, President, State School Teachers Union of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p9.

## Chapter 2

### Finding 3

The budgetary and staffing autonomy provided to schools as part of the Independent Public Schools initiative is unlikely to affect student outcomes.

#### **Improving staff skills and other factors have greater impact on student outcomes than autonomy**

- 2.19 The Hamilton Report<sup>42</sup> largely dismissed the discussion linking autonomy to student achievement:

*The debate has moved beyond the simple question of whether the evidence supports or is against school autonomy, to identifying the conditions which must also be present for autonomy to deliver benefits. Increasing school autonomy will not in and of itself create better schools. Autonomy is only beneficial when someone uses it effectively.*<sup>43</sup>

- 2.20 The report examined the various “mediating factors” that link school autonomy to student achievement. These are discussed in Chapter 3. The report concluded that the key element linking school autonomy with student achievement is the degree to which principals and school leaders build the professional capacity of their staff.<sup>44</sup> This conclusion has also been found by other researchers.<sup>45</sup> Empowering principals to effectively use their increased decision-making authority was seen as equally important as advancing an autonomy agenda.<sup>46</sup>

- 2.21 A report by the Grattan Institute contends that autonomy should not be central to educational reforms. It states that Australia should concentrate on:

*articulat(ing) the best ways to teach and learn, then implement reform through high-quality systems of teacher development, appraisal and feedback, among other policies.*<sup>47</sup>

- 2.22 Rather than factors being “mediating”, the professional capacity of staff and other factors are of greater impact and importance than autonomy, and should therefore be the focus of education system improvements.

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42 Hamilton Associates 2015, *School Autonomy: Building the conditions for student success*. A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia.

43 Hamilton Associates 2015, *School Autonomy: Building the conditions for student success*. A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia, p1.

44 Hamilton Associates 2015, *School Autonomy: Building the conditions for student success*. A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia. p2.

45 Caldwell, BJ 2015, 'School autonomy and student achievement case studies in Australia', *Educational Transformations*, International Study of School Autonomy and Learning, p76.

46 Hamilton Associates 2015, *School Autonomy: Building the conditions for student success*. A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia, p4.

47 Jensen, B 2013, 'The Myth of Markets in School Education', Grattan Institute, p1.

**Finding 4**

The professional capacity of school staff has a greater effect on student outcomes than autonomy.

**Recommendation 1**

The Department of Education should focus on improving teacher quality and teaching practices as the most influential methods of improving student outcomes.

**Autonomy may lead to negative student outcomes**

- 2.23 Consistent with the concerns about the ‘two-tiered system’ being reinforced (see Chapter 4), research has found that autonomous schools can further advantage students from more privileged backgrounds while negatively impacting students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.<sup>48</sup>
- 2.24 Some research into student performance at Academy schools, the English equivalent to IP Schools, suggests that the improved outcomes at these schools have more to do with selective student intake than the benefits of autonomy. It has been suggested that lower achieving students have been excluded from Academy schools, thereby increasing achievement levels by default. This approach worsens education inequality.<sup>49</sup>
- There was a real concern that the academies over there were not really leading to better educational outcomes, but leading to, once again, greater inequality. Certain schools did better; other schools seemed rather excluded or students got through but were not given the same level of education that perhaps was expected.*<sup>50</sup>
- 2.25 Though the WA IPS model does not allow schools to selectively admit students, policies of autonomy may lead to greater pressure on schools to unduly prioritise academic achievement over other areas of performance. There is the potential for schools to encourage less able students to undertake vocational educational pathways to boost academic averages in other subjects. Also, high-performing students may be enticed by schools to boost the school’s academic performance.<sup>51</sup> This leads to a concentration of

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48 Gobby, B, ‘Enacting the Independent Public Schools program in Western Australia’, *Issues in Educational Research*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2013, p22.;  
Fitzgerald, S & Rainnie, A 2011, *Putting the Public First? An examination of the implications of the 2009 EAC Report. Part Two: Independent Public Schools*, Curtin Graduate School of Business, report commissioned by Unions WA, p7 & 10.

49 Wilson, J, ‘Are England’s Academies More Inclusive or More ‘Exclusive’? The Impact of Institutional Change on the Pupil Profile of Schools’, Centre for the Economics of Education, London School of Economics, May 2011, p4.

50 Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 June 2016, p13.

51 Fitzgerald S & Rainnie A 2012, ‘Failing Forward: Public Schools and New Public Management’, *Public Policy*, Vol. 7, No. 2, p4.

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‘difficult to teach’ students, particularly those with additional needs, students learning English as an additional language (**EAL**), or those with social or emotional difficulties, in socioeconomically disadvantaged schools.<sup>52</sup> The DoE should appropriately oversee schools to ensure this does not occur.

### **Recommendation 2**

The Department of Education should ensure that Independent Public Schools do not discriminate against ‘difficult to teach’ students in student enrolments and pathways.

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52 Fitzgerald S & Rainnie A 2012, ‘Failing Forward: Public Schools and New Public Management’, *Public Policy*, Vol. 7, No. 2, p4.

# Chapter 3

## Student outcomes

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**Improved student outcomes should be a key aim of the Independent Public Schools initiative and an important way to evaluate the initiative's effectiveness. The Independent Public Schools initiative has had no measurable effect on student outcomes.**

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### What are student outcomes?

- 3.1 Student outcomes may encompass a wide variety of academic and non-academic achievement. Improving social and emotional wellbeing, employment prospects, attendance and academic achievement are all student outcomes.<sup>53</sup> Some of these are very difficult to measure. Most are influenced by a variety of factors.
- 3.2 This Inquiry's Terms of Reference referred to "the engagement and performance of students, in particular those with additional needs." In accordance with the Terms of Reference, and based on submissions, school autonomy literature and available data, this Inquiry focused on attendance data to measure engagement, and academic achievement to measure performance.
- 3.3 The Committee notes comments that the use of NAPLAN is an inadequate measure of student outcomes, particularly for students with additional needs.<sup>54</sup> However, in lieu of "more sophisticated tools and analysis",<sup>55</sup> NAPLAN data is a sound starting point.

### Is the Independent Public Schools initiative intended to improve student outcomes?

- 3.4 When the IPS initiative was first announced in 2009, it was heralded as a way for "school principals and senior staff to lead and make decisions to tailor their school for the best education outcomes for their students".<sup>56</sup>

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53 Mrs J Gee, President, Western Australian Secondary Schools Executives Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p17.

54 Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, 15 April 2016, p18.

55 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p17.

56 Hon C Barnett MLA (Premier) and Hon E Constable MLA (Minister for Education), *New era for public education in Western Australia*, Media Statement, Government of Western Australia, Perth, 12 August 2009.

## Chapter 3

- 3.5 The publicity around and mechanism of implementation of the IPS initiative has been understood by many to mean that IP Schools will improve student outcomes:<sup>57</sup>

*A central claim of the IPS is that increased student achievement is associated with higher levels of school autonomy.*<sup>58</sup>

- 3.6 Indeed, an evaluation commissioned by the DoE found:

*improved student outcomes have been clearly identified as an objective.*<sup>59</sup>

- 3.7 However, in its submission to the Inquiry the DoE contradicted this statement. It said that the “initiative has never been founded on the basis that autonomy, in and of itself, will improve student outcomes”.<sup>60</sup> This sentiment was reiterated in the DoE’s hearing:

*We have never claimed that [there is a direct correlation between student outcomes and greater autonomy] and the research does not necessarily support that in full term. What we have claimed—and the research supports us in this—is that if you give schools greater autonomy, greater flexibility, greater empowerment to them and their school communities, they can build more appropriately the conditions to improve student learning, and the conditions being teacher quality.*<sup>61</sup>

- 3.8 This semantic rephrasing suggests that the IPS initiative has not achieved the improvement in student outcomes which was foreseen. Regardless, it seems clear that improving student outcomes should have been a central aim of the IPS initiative. As one witness stated:

*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.*<sup>62</sup>

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57 Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers’ Union of Western Australia, 15 April 2016, p16; &

Submission No. 27 from United Voice, 20 April 2016, p5.

58 Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, 15 April 2016, p6.

59 University of Melbourne 2013, *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*. A report for the WA Department of Education, Melbourne, Victoria, p65.

60 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p2.

61 Ms S O’Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, pp2-3.

62 Ms K Catto, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p8.



**Finding 5**

Improving student outcomes should have been a key priority of the Independent Public Schools initiative.

**Finding 6**

Improving student outcomes should be a key priority of any future educational reform.

## **Why are student outcomes important for evaluating Independent Public Schools?**

- 3.9 The Committee acknowledges that autonomy may affect a range of aspects of school life, school communities and the public education system more broadly.<sup>63</sup> However, a key goal of educational reforms should be to positively impact students' educational outcomes. Student achievement is generally considered a major indicator of school effectiveness.<sup>64</sup> As the DoE's own *Classroom First Strategy* states:

*Actions, programs and decisions will be judged by their impact on student achievement, not merely classroom and school processes.*<sup>65</sup>

- 3.10 Professor Brian Caldwell, a leading researcher in this area, said:

*a critical criterion for judging the effectiveness of reform that includes school-based management is the extent to which it leads to or is associated with the achievement of improved educational outcomes, including higher levels of student achievement, however measured.*<sup>66</sup>

- 3.11 Many submissions spoke of the importance of student outcomes:<sup>67</sup>

*It is generally accepted by principals and teaching staff that this [student outcomes] should be the main goal of becoming IPS.*<sup>68</sup>

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63 University of Melbourne 2013, *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*. A report for the WA Department of Education, Melbourne, Victoria.

64 University of Melbourne 2013, *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*. A report for the WA Department of Education, Melbourne, Victoria, p36.

65 Department of Education 2007, *Director General's Classroom First Strategy*, p4.

66 Caldwell, BJ 2005, 'School-based management', *Education Policy Booklet Series*, vol. 3, International Academy of Education.

67 Submission No. 11 from the Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia (AHISA), 7 April 2016, p7;

Ms C Smith, Secretary, United Voice, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p3; & Submission No. 20 from Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, 15 April 2016, p2.

68 Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, 15 April 2016, p16.

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### 3.12 The DoE noted:

*Certainly, in all of our work the key driver is student outcomes in their broadest sense, both specific academic outcomes but also, and of great importance, social and emotional developmental outcomes, because we are responsible for influencing and leading in the whole range. If I just step back for a moment, our ultimate objective in all of our work is improvement of student outcomes.<sup>69</sup>*

### Finding 7

Student outcomes are a central tool to measure the effects of the Independent Public Schools initiative.

## How does the Department of Education monitor student outcomes?

### 3.13 The Department of Education currently monitors IP Schools using the:

- School Performance Monitoring System (SPMS)
- DES independent reviews
- Principals' Professional Reviews.<sup>70</sup>

### 3.14 The most relevant monitoring process in relation to student achievement is the SPMS.

### School Performance Monitoring System

### 3.15 The DoE monitors student performance, and the human resources and financial management of schools via the SPMS.<sup>71</sup> As at November 2014, the performance measures collected by the system in relation to student academic achievement are:

- Teacher grade allocation in English, Mathematics, Science, Society and Environment
- NAPLAN:
  - Absolute achievement, trend (over five years), and change (current and previous year)
  - Overall relative achievement for years 3, 5, 7 and 9
  - Overall progress in numeracy, reading and writing.
- Senior Secondary:
  - ATAR<sup>72</sup> median relative

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69 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p3.

70 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p8.

71 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p12.

- ATAR change (current and previous year)
- Percentage of students achieving an ATAR of 55 or higher
- Percentage of WACE eligible students with ATAR of 55 or higher and/or a VET<sup>73</sup> Certificate II or higher.
- Western Australian Monitoring Standards in Education (WAMSE)<sup>74</sup> relative achievement in:
  - Science in years 5, 7 and 9
  - Society and Environment in years 5, 7 and 9.<sup>75</sup>

3.16 As at November 2014, the performance measures collected by the system in relation to student non-academic achievement are:

- Teacher judgements of student attitude, behaviour and effort
- Attendance:
  - Percentage of students attending 90 per cent or more of available student days
  - Percentage of student days attended as a proportion of available student days.
- Suspensions:
  - Percentage of students suspended as a proportion of total enrolments
  - Increase or decrease in percentage of students suspended compared to previous year.<sup>76</sup>

3.17 In its submission, the DoE used the information collected via the SPMS to “consider the engagement and performance of students in both IPS and non-IPS”.<sup>77</sup> Four key data sets were used:

1. **Attendance** – including the attendance rate, the percentages of authorised and unauthorised absences and the percentage of regular attenders (attendance of 90 per cent or more).

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72 Australian Tertiary Admission Rank.

73 Vocational Education and Training.

74 ‘The WAMSE assessment in Science, and Society and Environment is delivered by the School Curriculum and Standards Authority to participating Western Australian public, Catholic and independent schools. WAMSE reports on the performance of Years 5, 7 and 9 students in Science, and Society and Environment’ - <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/accountability/detcms/navigation/school-performance/school-and-student-performance-data/?page=2> accessed 1 August 2016

75 Department of Education 2014, *The School Performance Monitoring System: Interpreting Displays*, p6.

76 Department of Education 2014, *The School Performance Monitoring System: Interpreting Displays*, p7.

77 Department of Education 2014, *The School Performance Monitoring System: Interpreting Displays*, p17.

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2. **NAPLAN Reading** – including means and the percentages of students at or above the national minimum standards for years 3, 5, 7 and 9.
  3. **NAPLAN Numeracy** – including means and the percentages of students at or above the national minimum standards for years 3, 5, 7 and 9.
  4. **Year 12 Outcomes** – including the percentages of year 12 students achieving the WACE and the percentages of students achieving the DoE's standard for 'Attainment' – an ATAR of 55 or greater and/or a VET Certificate II.
- 3.18 In response to the Committee's request for information, the DoE provided a summary of attendance and NAPLAN data to demonstrate the impact of the IPS initiative on student outcomes. The DoE requested an extension of time to provide 'disaggregated' data on student outcomes for individual cohorts of students. This indicates that the DoE does not currently consider student outcomes for specific cohorts of students. This is despite the WA public education system's overarching goal of providing equity of education for all students, and a particular focus on Aboriginal students, and students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. The DoE should be doing more to monitor the progress of these students.
- 3.19 The Committee was not provided with any evidence to suggest that the DoE monitors the affect the IPS initiative is having on student outcomes, either to determine whether outcomes have improved for IP Schools following their transition, or whether IP Schools are improving more than non-IP Schools.

### Finding 8

The Department of Education does not sufficiently monitor student outcomes to analyse the effect of the Independent Public Schools initiative.

### Finding 9

The Department of Education does not sufficiently monitor student outcomes for particular cohorts of students, such as those with additional needs.

## The Independent Public Schools initiative has had no measureable effect on student outcomes

- 3.20 The DoE acknowledges that IPS has had limited effect on student outcomes. Other submissions were also consistent in recognising this:<sup>78</sup>

*Yet there is no clear evidence that the IPS program has led to an improvement in the performance of students.*<sup>79</sup>

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78 Submission No. 13 from Mr M Harries, 9 April 2016, p1; Submission No. 27 from United Voice, 20 April 2016, pp9-10; & Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, 15 April 2016, p16.

## Overall performance<sup>80</sup>

### Box 1: Department of Education summary

2015 attendance data showed:

- No substantial difference in the overall attendance data for schools which become IPS.
- No major change in the attendance rate for the 2011 to 2014 intakes of schools since they became IPS.
- A very marginal decline in attendance rate and regular attenders for schools that have never been IPS.

2015 NAPLAN Reading data showed:

- NAPLAN reading results in years 3, 5 and 9 have improved for both IPS and non-IPS.
- Where NAPLAN reading results decline in year 7, it is more evident in non-IPS.

2015 NAPLAN numeracy data showed:

- NAPLAN numeracy results indicate marginal improvement for IPS.
- In year 5 there is some improvement in the last two years evident for both IPS and non-IPS.
- In year 7 there is no evident difference between IPS and non-IPS.
- In year 9 the strong improvement trend is somewhat more evident in IPS.

2015 WACE results data showed:

- The percentage of students achieving the WACE in year 12 has been very stable for both IPS and non-IPS.
- Attainment rates (the percentage of students achieving an ATAR or 55+ and/or a VET Certificate II or higher) have improved substantially and in a similar manner for both IPS and non-IPS.

79 Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, 15 April 2016, p6.

80 Data in Box 1 from Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, pp18-19. Data in Box 2 and Figure 1 from Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, 14 April 2016, p17.

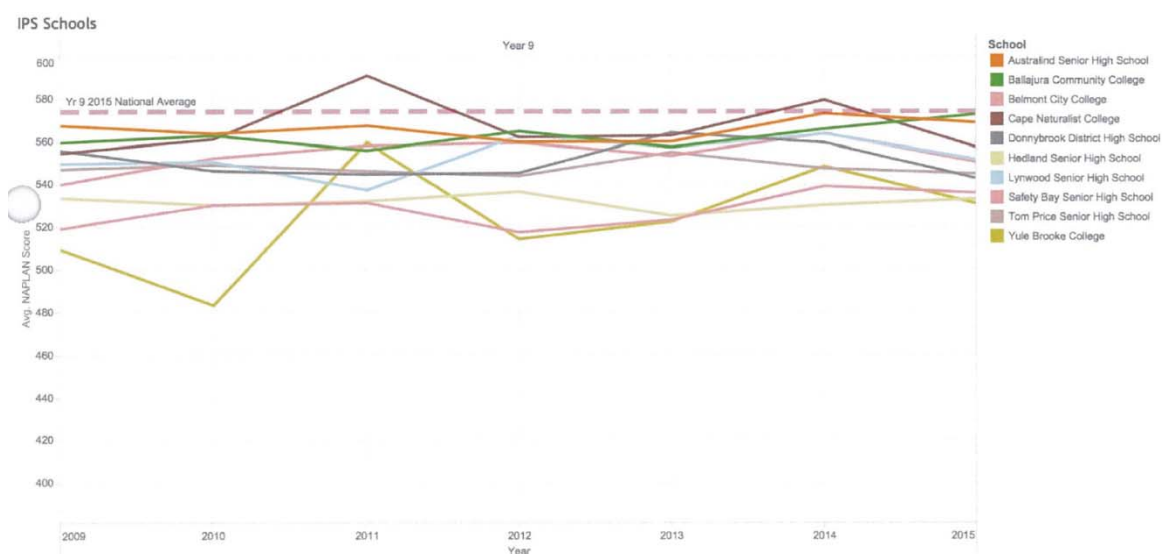
### Box 2: State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia summary

In a comparison of NAPLAN results for schools who became IPS in 2010 and with an ICSEA score of lower than 1,000, and therefore with higher disadvantage, there is no linear improvement in outcomes across the indicators of reading, persuasive writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation and numeracy.

The majority of schools show that their student outcomes are ad-hoc in their results; improving some years and becoming worse in others.

For instance, in an analysis of year 9 results across a range of IPS schools, the below graph shows that average NAPLAN scores increased and decreased from year to year, with no correlation showing consistent improvement.

Figure 1: Average NAPLAN scores for year 9 IPS students



- 3.21 Upon request, the DoE also provided average NAPLAN reading data for the 2010 intake of IP Schools compared with non-IP Schools and all schools for 2008 to 2015. Schools becoming IPS in this first intake have had a longer period of time over which IPS impacts on student outcomes may have eventuated. This data is consistent with other data that autonomy has negligible effect on student outcomes.
- 3.22 The data for years 5, 7 and 9 indicates that IP Schools began with higher NAPLAN scores. This is to be expected given that mostly high-performing schools were encouraged to become IPS initially.
- 3.23 For years 5, 7 and 9 data, IP Schools and non-IP Schools followed similar trends, with IP Schools' scores remaining above non-IP Schools' scores in consistent proportion. One difference between IPS and non-IPS scores can be seen in 2015 year 7 reading scores,

where IPS scores rose markedly, while non-IPS scores fell. On the other hand, year 3 data indicates non-IP Schools performed slightly better than IP Schools from 2009 to 2011. Since 2013, there has been little difference between scores for IPS and non-IPS.

- 3.24 These findings are consistent with the University of Melbourne Evaluation. It found that IP Schools were generally high-performing before transition, and there had been no substantive increase in student achievement after becoming IPS.

### Finding 10

There are no consistent trends in outcomes of students at schools that have transitioned to become Independent Public Schools, or between Independent Public Schools and non-Independent Public Schools.

**Aboriginal students, students at disadvantaged schools, students in remote and regional schools and English as an additional language students<sup>81</sup>**

#### Box 3: Department of Education summary

For students with particular characteristics:

- Attendance data for Aboriginal students, students in disadvantaged schools, students in country schools and EAL students has declined. This appears to be mainly attributable to those in schools that have never been IPS.
- NAPLAN reading results for Aboriginal students, 'disadvantaged' and country students show that similar patterns are generally evident in both IPS and non-IPS.
- The year 3 NAPLAN reading data for 'disadvantaged' and country students suggests some improvement for IPS and relatively stable results for non-IPS.
- The year 12 WACE outcomes data for Aboriginal, 'disadvantaged', country and EAL students can be volatile due to small numbers but generally displays very similar patterns for IPS and non-IPS.

For 'disadvantaged' students:

- the year 3 NAPLAN numeracy data suggests improvements for the 2010 and 2011 intakes of IPS but not for subsequent intakes or non-IPS, otherwise the patterns are quite similar.

81 Data in Box 3 from Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, pp18-20. Note: the data includes MAZE schools (MAZE is a school management system). Data in Box 4 from Submission No. 29 from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 21 April 2016, pp3-4.

### **Department of Education summary (continued)**

For country students:

- For country students in non-IPS year 3 results have generally declined with the IPS results being reasonably consistent, otherwise the patterns are quite similar.

### **Students with English as an additional language**

Students qualify as EAL students if they are in their first two years of primary schooling, or their first three years of secondary schooling. Students holding refugee or humanitarian visa subclasses qualify as EAL for an additional year. The number of EAL students has substantially increased since 2010.

Attendance data shows:

- EAL students have higher attendance than students generally.
- Over the course of IPS, EAL students' attendance rates have declined slightly.
- The percentage of regular attendance has also declined.
- This decline is slightly more evident in non-IPS than IPS.

NAPLAN data for EAL students is highly volatile. It suggests substantial improvement in all NAPLAN year levels in reading and in years 3, 5 and 9 in numeracy for students attending IP Schools. Most EAL students attend IP Schools, particularly secondary schools.

There is insufficient data to draw conclusions about year 12 outcomes. It is evident that attainment has substantially improved in both IPS and non-IPS.

### **Box 4: Department of Aboriginal Affairs summary**

#### **Aboriginal students**

For Aboriginal students:

- NAPLAN numeracy results for Aboriginal students are generally volatile with patterns that are similar for both IPS and non-IPS.
- Year 7 non-IPS NAPLAN numeracy percentages at or above the national minimum standard for Aboriginal students have improved, but there is no common trend based on level of autonomy.



### Students with a disability

- 3.25 In relation to students with a disability, the DoE stated:

*Because of the vast range of serious disability and the significant complexity of measuring and aggregating educational outcomes for these students, it is not possible to make valid and reliable system-wide comparisons in respect to these students' performance.<sup>82</sup>*

- 3.26 The Committee appreciates that the diverse range of disabilities that students have, combined with varying levels of severity, makes it difficult to assess the achievement of this group as a whole. However, the Committee is concerned that this difficulty may mean that some groups of students are not effectively monitored, either by the school or the central office, and that these students are not given the opportunity to improve. All students have the right to receive an education, and should have the opportunity to improve their achievement within the bounds of their capabilities.

#### Finding 11

The Committee is concerned that the Department of Education's monitoring of outcomes of students with disabilities is insufficient to allow the assessment of the Department of Education's performance in delivering services to these students.

#### Finding 12

The Independent Public School initiative has not had any discernible effect on the outcomes of students at Independent Public Schools, nor non-Independent Public Schools, for both students with additional needs, and those without.

### Factors impacting student outcome data

- 3.27 The DoE submits that the limited impact the IPS initiative has had on student outcomes can be explained by a number of factors.
- 3.28 Firstly, the IPS initiative has only been in operation for a relatively short period of time. Its impact is unlikely to be felt this soon. This is particularly the case as only a small number (34) of schools have been autonomous since 2010. Of the 445 IP Schools, 178 have been autonomous since 2015.
- 3.29 The Committee highlights that the student outcomes data for the first schools to transition to IPS in 2010 has followed the same trends as non-IP Schools. The first intake of IP Schools are now in their seventh year of IPS which, according to the University of Melbourne Evaluation, should have been long enough for any impact on student outcomes to become apparent.

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82 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p20.

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- 3.30 Secondly, the DoE argues that it is difficult to assess the impact of the IPS initiative on student outcomes as there are many variables at play; for example, teacher quality, teacher experience, community context and family background. All of these impact student outcomes, so it is difficult to attribute changes in outcomes to the IPS initiative alone.
- 3.31 The Committee disagrees with this argument. While these variables do undoubtedly affect student outcomes, they would continue to affect these outcomes in a similar way before and after the implementation of IPS, except to the extent they are affected by the IPS initiative. For example, the preferential staffing selection of IP Schools may lead to improved teacher quality at IP Schools, which may affect student outcomes. Changes to student outcomes would therefore be attributable to the effects of the IPS initiative.
- 3.32 Thirdly, DoE states there are a number of other factors which will affect the data used to assess student performance. Key factors include:
- Performance levels of both IPS and non-IPS reflecting the impact of student socioeconomic background.
  - The move of year 7 to secondary in 2015 (and earlier in non-government schools) which impacts on the attendance and NAPLAN data and provides a data series break for year 7 data as different schools are involved.
  - The half cohort of students impacting on all data sets at different times.
  - The one day teacher strike in 2014 impacting on attendance data;
  - The introduction of OLNA<sup>83</sup> in 2014, positively impacting on the NAPLAN performance of year 9 students.
  - The implementation of the Australian Curriculum with somewhat higher expectations for primary students.
  - Changes in the data collections during the series including:
    - the introduction of a new unauthorised vacation code
    - the inclusion of former students and pre-primary students in the attendance data
    - aberrant (unusually high) NAPLAN results for reading in years 3 and 5 in 2013
    - a tightening of the requirements for WACE achievement (greater number of C or higher grades required) from 2013.

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83 Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment.

- 3.33 The DoE concluded that:

*data for both IPS and non-IPS are significantly impacted by factors other than the autonomous status of the school and, in general, it is these other factors that are explaining performance differences.<sup>84</sup>*

- 3.34 The Committee accepts that these factors may have impacted the data sets provided. However, these factors were felt by IP Schools and non-IP Schools alike so, again, if there had been a variation between the data of IP Schools and non-IP Schools, this would likely be attributable to the IPS initiative.

### **Auditor General 2009 and 2015 reports**

- 3.35 In 2009, the Auditor General reported on student attendance levels in WA public schools in *Every Day Counts: Managing Student Attendance in Western Australian Public Schools (OAG 2009)*. In 2015, a follow-up audit was conducted to see if there had been any change, and reported in *Follow-On: Managing Student Attendance in Western Australian Public Schools (OAG 2015)*.

- 3.36 In his earlier report, the Auditor General found that in 2008 almost 28 per cent of students in years 1 to 10 were at educational risk due to their regular non-attendance.<sup>85</sup> The report also found that that attendance was not used to monitor schools' performance. The Auditor General recommended that this be rectified, and that the (then) Department of Education and Training:

*improve the use of attendance as a key indicator of educational risk, including as an early signal of changes in student behaviour and academic performance.<sup>86</sup>*

- 3.37 The Auditor General further recommended that the DoE set student attendance targets, including a state target, and monitor them.<sup>87</sup>
- 3.38 In 2015, the Auditor General assessed the DoE's progress in addressing student non-attendance. He concluded that there had been no improvement since 2009.<sup>88</sup>
- 3.39 The report found that the DoE reported the average whole-of-system attendance rate in its annual report. However, this measure could mask attendance problems.

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84 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p19.

85 Office of the Auditor General of Western Australia, *Every Day Counts: Managing Student Attendance in Western Australian Public Schools*, Report 9, August 2009, p6.

86 Office of the Auditor General of Western Australia, *Every Day Counts: Managing Student Attendance in Western Australian Public Schools*, Report 9, August 2009, p23.

87 Office of the Auditor General of Western Australia, *Every Day Counts: Managing Student Attendance in Western Australian Public Schools*, Report 9, August 2009, p23.

88 Office of the Auditor General of Western Australia, *Follow-On: Managing Student Attendance in Western Australian Public Schools*, Report No. 16, August 2015, p6.

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- 3.40 In 2013, the DoE introduced a Student Attendance Reporting application to standardise how schools reported why students are not attending school. The 2015 audit found that the DoE's analysis and reporting of this information was inadequate. The DoE did not:

*routinely assess or report on how many students do not attend regularly and are at levels of educational risk, or how many schools have significant non-attendance issues.*<sup>89</sup>

- 3.41 The Auditor General further found that the DoE did not have a process to gather successful attendance strategies from schools nor to easily distribute such best practice examples to other schools.<sup>90</sup> This was despite the DoE regarding innovation and flexibility as the basis of productive change in the education system (and, indeed, using IP Schools as a way to implement this change).

- 3.42 The audit recommended that the DoE increase the quality and transparency of student attendance information. This would include:

- setting and reporting on targets for attendance at school level
- reporting student attendance by category of risk
- reporting the numbers of schools meeting target levels of attendance
- trends in performance.<sup>91</sup>

- 3.43 The DoE supports the findings of the Auditor General and welcomes the recommendations for improving its monitoring and addressing attendance. The DoE's progress in actioning these recommendations is set out in Appendix Six.

### Recommendation 3

That the Minister representing the Minister for Education reports to the Legislative Assembly on the Department of Education's progress implementing the recommendations made by the Auditor General in the report *Follow-On: Managing Student Attendance in Western Australian Public Schools*.

- 3.44 The University of Melbourne Evaluation concluded:

*Essentially, the evaluation found that that the IPS is in its early phase, and while it has not been without challenges, the IPS initiative has yet to realise changes in student achievement or attendance at school.*

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89 Office of the Auditor General of Western Australia, *Follow-On: Managing Student Attendance in Western Australian Public Schools*, Report No. 16, August 2015, p7.

90 Office of the Auditor General of Western Australia, *Follow-On: Managing Student Attendance in Western Australian Public Schools*, Report No. 16, August 2015, p8.

91 Office of the Auditor General of Western Australia, *Follow-On: Managing Student Attendance in Western Australian Public Schools*, Report No. 16, August 2015, p9.

*However, the initiative has set the scene for school improvement and it is on track to bring about whole system reform.*<sup>92</sup>

- 3.45 Whilst a limited number of measurements indicate outcome improvements for students in IP Schools, no strong causal link can be identified to support the proposition that IPS leads to an improvement in student outcomes.

### **Has the Independent Public School initiative created the conditions necessary for student outcomes to improve in the future?**

- 3.46 Ultimately, it is still too early to tell whether the IPS initiative has created the conditions necessary to improve student outcomes in the future. The University of Melbourne Evaluation suggested that improved student outcomes were expected in time, once the IPS initiative changes “became embedded in schools.”<sup>93</sup> Autonomy provides schools with the opportunity to address student needs innovatively which then has the potential to improve student outcomes in the longer term. The success of the IPS initiative in doing this can only be assessed if changes in student outcomes become evident over time.
- 3.47 However, as discussed in Chapter 2, there are several mediating factors that link student autonomy to improved outcomes and student achievement. These include:
- Principal capacity building
  - Intelligent accountability mechanisms
  - An empowered mindset amongst principals and teachers
  - Collaboration within and between schools
  - A focus on improving the quality of teaching and the educational experience of students
  - A commitment and capacity within the central authority to actually deliver and supporting meaningful authority and not circumscribe it in such a detailed way that schools gain little benefit.<sup>94</sup>

It is worthwhile considering whether the changes offered by the IPS initiative support these factors.

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92 University of Melbourne 2013, *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*. A report for the WA Department of Education, Melbourne, Victoria, p66.

93 University of Melbourne 2013, *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*. A report for the WA Department of Education, Melbourne, Victoria, p38.

94 Hamilton Associates 2015, *School Autonomy: Building the conditions for student success*. A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia, p11.

### Positive indications of the potential for improved student outcomes

- 3.48 Overall, the majority of schools appear to have found that the IPS initiative allows them to better meet the needs of students.<sup>95</sup> Submissions provided to this Inquiry were generally hopeful that the autonomy provided to schools, and particularly to principals, would result in improved student outcomes in the future. One submission noted that:

*IPS has certainly allowed schools to use their budgets more flexibly and in theory create learning environments that suit the cohort of students they cater for... IPS school leaders are now better placed to work with their communities to implement local solutions to local challenges but the actual benefits to students are hard to quantify as there are many variables in play.*<sup>96</sup>

- 3.49 The empowerment mindset of principals is one factor which appears to be well supported by the IPS initiative. The University of Melbourne Evaluation concluded that IP School principals felt empowered and motivated to lead their staff in improving the teaching, resources and climate of their schools. Consequently, there has been a more targeted focus on the specific needs of students.<sup>97</sup> The IPS transition process has also been adapted to prepare potential IP Schools in adopting an empowerment mindset (see Chapter 7).

- 3.50 Numerous examples were also cited to the Committee of innovative ways in which IP Schools have used their flexibility to focus on improving the educational experience of students, particularly students with additional needs. One submission spoke of the improved relationship between a co-located college and a facility for students with additional needs:

*Having community members on their Board had increased their knowledge about special needs and the students' ability to cope with educational practises. This in turn had an impact on the wider community who became more aware of the work of the centre by having Board member who spoke up for the centre and its programs within the community. This then opened up increased opportunity for employment or ongoing training for students.*<sup>98</sup>

- 3.51 For one submitter, the success of specially designed programs to support their students has been demonstrated by the increased number of students offered university places.

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95 Submission No. 20 from the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations (WACSSO), 15 April 2016, p9.

96 Submission No. 22 from the Western Australian Secondary Schools Executives Association, 15 April 2016, p3.

97 University of Melbourne 2013, *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*. A report for the WA Department of Education, Melbourne, Victoria, pp27, 66.

98 Submission No. 7 from Emeritus Professor J Barker, 25 March 2016, p4.

The submitting school has also been able to enter into partnerships with community organisations to implement programs for its students. For example, a number of programs are provided to support Aboriginal students. Students participating in these programs have experienced high levels of success in terms of graduating from programs.<sup>99</sup>

3.52 It is worth noting that some submissions claim the introduction of the SCFM has had a greater impact on school flexibility than the IPS initiative. The SCFM allows schools to arrange resources to suit their specific challenges, particularly in catering for students with additional needs, which supporters argue leads to improved outcomes and performance.<sup>100</sup>

3.53 The Committee was pleased to hear the recent announcement by the Minister for Education, Hon Peter Collier MLC, of additional support to be offered to students with autism spectrum disorder at 16 schools across the state by 2020. Facilities at 22 education support schools and centres for students with disability are also being improved, and extra funding is being provided to better support students with learning difficulties such as dyslexia and speech disorders.

#### **Weak accountability mechanisms may compromise student outcomes**

3.54 An overarching priority of this Inquiry has been to examine the balance between the autonomy afforded to IPS and accountability. The Committee has been concerned by examples of how the autonomy provided by the IPS initiative, as well as the introduction of SCFM, have failed to benefit some schools and students, particularly those with additional needs. In these cases, there seems to be a lack of appropriate accountability to ensure the autonomy is used for the benefit of all students.

3.55 Prior to the IPS initiative, a school's support staff allocation was determined centrally. Under IPS and the SCFM, an IP School receives funds as a one-line budget and has the capacity to determine its own staffing profile. The DPA contains a clause requiring that funds allocated for a particular student are used for that particular student:

*student and school characteristics funding is used to implement appropriate teaching and learning adjustments to support demonstrated outcomes of students for whom it is provided.*<sup>101</sup>

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99 Closed Submission, April 2016.

100 Submission No. 14 from the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association, 12 April 2016, p3.

101 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, *Attachment 2 - Independent Public Schools Delivery and Performance Agreement Template 2015-2017*, p6.

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- 3.56 The Committee was provided with various examples which suggest that this does not always happen, and there are limited mechanisms for reviewing how funding has been spent. It is a particular issue for students allocated funding according to social disadvantage as the school is not told the identity of the students for whom funding is provided.<sup>102</sup>
- 3.57 One submission noted with concern that a school with significant Aboriginal population may not have any Aboriginal employees.<sup>103</sup> This was despite Aboriginal students being allocated money based on Aboriginality, and recognition of the important role that Aboriginal and Islander education officers have as role models and to provide culturally appropriate education.
- 3.58 Another example was given to the Committee of a student diagnosed with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome who qualified to receive support from an education assistant (EA) 80 per cent of the time.<sup>104</sup> As this was an IP School, the student received support from an EA for only half her allocated time. The EA was 'flexibly' used elsewhere for the remaining half.

*Flexibility disguised as forced choice between limited resources or absence of alternatives is disingenuous use of English – it is NOT flexibility.*<sup>105</sup>

This 'flexible' use of EAs not only impacts the education outcomes of the child who requires one, but also of other children in his or her class. A student requiring extra attention or with behavioural problems will take up additional time of the classroom teacher, leaving less time for other students.<sup>106</sup> Further, mainstream classroom teachers are often not equipped to teach children with additional needs.<sup>107</sup>

- 3.59 Another submission noted the hugely varied treatment of a child with additional needs at two IP Schools. This child did not have a full diagnosis for his disability. At his first school, teachers reacted to issues as they arose and did not follow through even after a strategy was developed. The child subsequently moved to a different school. This school had a far more proactive approach, organising initial meetings with the child's parents, implementing strategies to approach the child's education, and following

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102 Submission No. 22 from the Western Australian Secondary Schools Executives Association, 15 April 2016, p1.

103 Ms C Smith, Secretary, United Voice, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 June 2016, p 5.

104 Full-time equivalent.

105 Submission No. 8 from Mr A Acciano, 1 April 2016, pp2-3.

106 Mrs T Sumner, Education Assistant with the Department of Education, United Voice, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 June 2016, p13.

107 Mr S Breen, President, the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p13.



through with those strategies.<sup>108</sup> It is concerning that a child can receive such different levels of care at two different IP Schools.

- 3.60 The DoE stated that the SCFM funding agreement is an accountability mechanism for ensuring funding provided for individual students is used appropriately:

*... you have got this money for, say, students with disabilities; it is intended that you have to spend the money on those students with a disability and also then report to your board through the annual report and to us through other information we collect about whether or not that has occurred. There is an accountability side built into it to make sure that the money is directed to the students who have generated those funds for the school.*<sup>109</sup>

- 3.61 Parents were also cited as an “important accountability check”, given that parents of students with a disability are “usually pretty engaged in the school program and they are usually very aware.”<sup>110</sup> The Committee does not agree that parents should be given such a large responsibility to ensure accountability in a public education system.
- 3.62 It seems to the Committee that an issue arises due to a school’s flexibility to determine how the funds allocated for a particular student are spent ‘on’ that student. There may be a considerable difference between how two IP Schools choose to spend funding ‘on’ a particular student. It is easy to see how much-needed funds for students with specific needs could be inappropriately diverted.

#### **Recommendation 4**

That the Department of Education implements greater accountability and transparency measures to ensure that schools are using funding allocated for students with additional needs for those students, and not for other purposes.

#### **Conclusion**

- 3.63 While there are some positive indications that the IPS initiative is creating the conditions necessary to improve student outcomes, it is by no means clear at this stage whether it will achieve this desired result. The submission from academics at Curtin University, led by Dr Scott Fitzgerald, notes that:

*If the promoted potential of the IPS initiative is to be achieved, and for it to act as a ‘trigger mechanism’ for better school outcomes and*

108 Submission No. 6 from Mr A Pearson, 23 March 2016, p1.

109 Mr P Titmanis, Executive Director, Innovation, Performance and Research, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p21.

110 Ms S O’Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p21.

## Chapter 3

*better school experiences for all students, the issues raised by the interviewees in our research will need to be fully addressed.*<sup>111</sup>

### Finding 13

It is unclear whether the Independent Public School initiative creates the conditions needed to improve future student outcomes.

### Recommendation 5

That the Department of Education monitor student outcomes in relation to the Independent Public School initiative and report the results of this monitoring in its annual report. This data should include:

- Comparison between student outcomes in Independent Public Schools and non-Independent Public Schools
- Separate consideration of outcomes for students who receive additional funding including:
  - Aboriginal students
  - Socially disadvantaged students
  - Students with English as an additional language
  - Students from remote and regional schools
  - Students with a disability.

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111 Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, 15 April 2016, p2.

# Chapter 4

## A two-tiered system

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**The Independent Public Schools initiative has reinforced an existing two-tiered system in Western Australia’s public education system.**

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### **The Independent Public Schools initiative has reinforced a two-tiered system of public education**

- 4.1 A two-tiered system widens the divide between schools. Already high-performing schools will improve, while lower-performing schools will be further disadvantaged. Many witnesses to this Inquiry described the current public education system as two-tiered.<sup>112</sup> The IPS initiative has contributed to the two-tiered system through its differences in staffing selection, funding, professional development and public perception.
- 4.2 The DoE rejects that the IPS initiative has “attempted or indeed created a two-tier system”,<sup>113</sup> though it acknowledges pre-existing inequalities within the sector. The Committee disagrees. The IPS initiative, and in particular the staged implementation, has reinforced these pre-existing inequalities. High-performing schools are getting better, and struggling schools are becoming more ‘residualised’:<sup>114</sup>

*The provision of less support funding and less professional development to 47% of schools is highly questionable and will lead to a greater level of residualisation of hard-to-staff schools and a reinforcement of the geographies of marginalisation within the state.*<sup>115</sup>

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112 Submission No. 14 from the Western Australian Primary Principals’ Association, 12 April 2016; Submission No. 15 from Mr K Dullard, 12 April 2016; Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, 15 April 2016; Submission No. 20 from the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, 15 April 2016; Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers’ Union of Western Australia, 15 April 2016; & Submission No. 27 from United Voice, 20 April 2016.

113 Ms S O’Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p4.

114 Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 June 2016, p3.

115 Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, 15 April 2016, p4.

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### Finding 14

The Independent Public School initiative has reinforced the existing inequalities within the public education sector.

## Staffing

### Merit selection

- 4.3 The IPS initiative has changed public schools' staffing processes. Prior to the introduction of the IPS initiative in 2010, public schools were staffed using the DoE's centralised placement process. Under the IPS initiative, schools have the flexibility to recruit, select and appoint their own staff.<sup>116</sup> This is informally called 'merit selection'. The DoE described this as the "single most significant human resources reform in public education".<sup>117</sup>
- 4.4 Merit selection is no longer limited to IP Schools. In 2012, the DoE rolled out the *Staff Select* merit selection recruitment process to all schools.<sup>118</sup> However, the process differs between IP Schools and non-IP Schools.<sup>119</sup> Non-IP Schools must first assess, select and appoint redeployees where available. The same requirement is not placed on IP Schools, and is the primary staffing difference between IP Schools and non-IP Schools.

### What is a redeployee?

- 4.5 Most redeployees are permanent DoE employees who, for various reasons, no longer have a substantive position.<sup>120</sup> The DoE must find these redeployees new positions, as they continue to be paid by the DoE while awaiting deployment to new schools.

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116 Hamilton Associates 2015, *School Autonomy: Building the conditions for student success*. A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia, p3.

117 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, p28.

118 University of Melbourne 2013, *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*. A report for the WA Department of Education, Melbourne, Victoria, p14.

119 Department of Education "Recruitment, Selection and Appointment Policy, Recruitment, Selection and Appointment of School Administrators Procedures", "Recruitment, Selection and Appointment of Staff Other than Teachers and School Administrators Procedures" and "Recruitment, Selection and Appointment of Teaching Staff Procedures", all dated Effective 30 September 2014

120 Department of Education 2009, <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/definitions/redeployee.en>. Accessed 4 August 2016.

4.6 There are several different types of redeployees:<sup>121</sup>

- Registrable employees
- Registered for redeployment
- Employees requiring placement.

4.7 An employee's category depends on the stage of redeployment.

**Stage 1:** An employee who no longer has a position, or is surplus to requirements, is a registrable employee. An employee may remain a registrable employee for an unlimited time whilst a new position is sought.

**Stage 2:** If an employee cannot be allocated to a suitable position, the employee will be registered for redeployment. An employee can remain registered for up to six months. No DoE employees have been registered to date.

**Stage 3:** If a registered redeployee is not redeployed within six months of registration, their employment will be terminated and they will receive a redundancy payout.

4.8 Some employees require placement outside these stages. These are 'employees requiring placement.'

4.9 For the purpose of this report, the term redeployee will be used to apply to all staff requiring placement.

### **Staffing structure re-profiling**

4.10 An IP School has a one-off opportunity to 're-profile' its staffing structure. This can occur during the first six months of a school's transition to IPS.<sup>122</sup> Re-profiling means that the school principal sets the school's staffing structure. The DoE bears the cost of this process – the DoE will pay the salary of a redeployee created from this process out of central office funds. By comparison, a redeployee created by a non-IP School, or an IP School after the initial re-profiling opportunity, remains the responsibility of the school.<sup>123</sup>

4.11 The Committee expresses concerns that the process of re-profiling is not transparent to the school community. Further, to receive the benefit of the DoE funding, re-profiling

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121 Public Sector Management (Redeployment and Redundancy) Regulation 2014.  
<http://www.det.wa.edu.au/careers/detcms/navigation/school-support-staff/redeployment/>  
 accessed 6 July 2016; &  
<http://det.wa.edu.au/careers/detcms/navigation/school-support-staff/deployment/>. Accessed 5  
 August 2016.

122 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p9.

123 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p28.

## Chapter 4

must occur early in the transitioning process, before the school board is established and a business plan has been adopted.

### Effects of staffing autonomy

- 4.12 The primary motivation for schools to become IP Schools is the freedom and responsibility for staff selection.<sup>124</sup> IP School principals enjoy the ability to select staff that best suit the needs of the school.<sup>125</sup> For example, an IP School can recruit a maths teacher to fill a maths department vacancy. Previously, a school may have been allocated someone with limited maths experience. A teacher whose skill set does not suit their position is less likely to be effective.
- 4.13 The major factor in improving student outcomes, besides socioeconomic status, is having high-quality teachers.<sup>126</sup> Better performing schools in more desirable locations have always been able to attract better teachers. Now IP Schools can do more to attract quality teachers and other staff, using merit selection processes to ensure they employ the staff they want.<sup>127</sup>
- 4.14 Submissions suggest that merit selection of staff is beneficial for the staff, their students and the broader school community. As one submission stated:

*As an IPS principal, I have benefited from being able to select my staff. While I am not convinced that actually gives us better teachers, I think what it does is bind, bond and commit our teachers to the school vision, purpose and strategies for improvement, and the school community.*<sup>128</sup>

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- 124 University of Melbourne 2013, *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*. A report for the WA Department of Education, Melbourne, Victoria, p7; Submission No. 14 from the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association, 12 April 2016, p1; Submission No. 20 from the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, 15 April 2016, p9; Submission No. 22 from the Western Australian Secondary Schools Executives Association, 15 April 2016, p4; Mr S Breen, President, the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p14; & Ms P Byrne, President, State School Teachers' Union of WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p9.
- 125 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p2; & University of Melbourne 2013, *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*. A report for the WA Department of Education, Melbourne, Victoria, p25.
- 126 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p2.
- 127 Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 June 2016, p4.
- 128 Mr D Lee, School Leaders' Project Consultant, State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p2.

- 4.15 Comfortable staff are more likely to remain where they are and this greater stability benefits students.<sup>129</sup> Staff also feel empowered by merit selection. Teachers feel more professional, accountable and in control of their careers which has led to improved feelings of self-worth.<sup>130</sup>

### Finding 15

Independent Public Schools are provided with the opportunity to recruit the best teachers for their circumstances, while non-Independent Public Schools are not.

- 4.16 However, this empowerment disguises the shifting burden placed on IP School staff to do more with less. Many IP School staff experience a significant increase in their workload, and are subject to greater pressure to improve student outcomes.<sup>131</sup> Business managers, with responsibility over the one-line budget, feel this most keenly. Although it should be noted that, as all schools now operate under SCFM, the increased workload of business managers would be present across all schools.
- 4.17 Non-IP Schools are disadvantaged by the “preferential staffing treatment”<sup>132</sup> afforded to IP Schools. Control over staffing decisions is limited as non-IP Schools have less opportunity to merit select as they must accept redeployees. Non-IP Schools have less flexibility, less choice and less equity.<sup>133</sup>

*Although non-IPS schools have some autonomy over staff selection, some principals are of the opinion that the initiative has created a two-tiered system whereby high performing teachers are increasingly attracted to IPS and non-IPS are mandated to employ inexperienced and low performing teachers.*<sup>134</sup>

- 4.18 The Auditor General raised this concern in 2011 in his *Right Teacher, Right Place, Right Time: Teacher Placement in Public Schools* report (OAG 2011):

*IPs have a number of perceived advantages in the open market that could result in a concentration of particular types of teachers in those schools, while other schools find it difficult to attract diverse or high quality teachers. There is the concern that some schools attract and*

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129 Hamilton Associates 2015, *School Autonomy: Building the conditions for student success*. A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia, p21.

130 University of Melbourne 2013, *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*. A report for the WA Department of Education, Melbourne, Victoria, pp7-8.

131 Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, 15 April 2016, pp7-8.

132 Closed Submission, March 2016.

133 Closed Submission, March 2016.

134 Submission No. 14 from the Western Australian Primary Principals’ Association, 12 April 2016, p4.

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*retain the 'best' teachers, and that these schools are often good candidates for IPS status.*<sup>135</sup>

- 4.19 Only 98 schools were IPS at the time of the OAG 2011 report and *Staff Select* had not yet been rolled out across all public schools. With 445 schools now IP Schools, non-IP Schools carry a greater burden.

### Finding 16

Non-Independent Public Schools are disadvantaged by the requirement to accept redeployees who may not be most appropriate for the school's circumstances.

### Recommendation 6

That the Department of Education provides sufficient training opportunities and support to staff, particularly in their early years at an Independent Public School, to help them manage the additional pressures.

### Issues with the placement of redeployees

- 4.20 Teachers are redeployed for a variety of reasons, which may have nothing to do with skill or ability.<sup>136</sup>
- 4.21 However, there is a persistent perception that there is an oversupply of lesser qualified staff on redeployment lists. Despite DoE evidence to the contrary,<sup>137</sup> the Committee received and heard evidence that schools redeploy less effective staff rather than training and performance managing them.<sup>138</sup>

*There is no doubt highly incompetent teachers, administrators and support staff were over-represented in the redeployees shunted into non-IPS schools – and many of these had been artificially profiled out of IPS schools. These staff will remain at these schools, many until they eventually retire, effectively reducing the school's capacity to deliver a quality education, soaking up the energy of colleagues and administrators and debilitating the reputation of the school.*<sup>139</sup>

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135 Office of the Auditor General of Western Australia, *Right Teacher, Right Place, Right Time: Teacher Placement in Public Schools*. Report 6, August 2011.

136 Submission No. 20 from the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, 15 April 2016, p8.

137 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p8.

138 Ms P Byrne, President, State School Teachers' Union of WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, pp16-17.

139 Closed Submission, April 2016.



- 4.22 IP Schools choose to employ only 11 per cent of redeployees.<sup>140</sup> The vast majority are placed with non-IP Schools. This reinforces the negative perception that non-IP Schools provide lower quality education because they have to accept redeployees.<sup>141</sup> IP Schools are therefore more attractive to parents than non-IP Schools.<sup>142</sup>

*WASSEA is opposed to a system that causes any schools to be perceived as less important, capable or worthy than others and we feel that staffing constraints for non IPS can be a significant barrier to school improvement, student outcomes and community acceptance.*<sup>143</sup>

- 4.23 Staff members are redeployed using a localised approach. That is, staff will be redeployed within a similar location. However, the number of schools available to take redeployees is small and diminishing.<sup>144</sup> Over 70 per cent of staff now work in IP Schools. Of the approximately 100 senior high schools in WA, only six metropolitan and four country high schools are not IPS.<sup>145</sup> It will become increasingly difficult to place staff locally given the shrinking number of non-IP Schools.<sup>146</sup>
- 4.24 The DoE's evidence states that the number of redeployees and staff requiring placement, at approximately 100 people, is at historically low levels.<sup>147</sup>

### **Increasing challenges faced by remote and regional schools**

- 4.25 The tyranny of geography has, historically, required a centralised staffing system to ensure remote and regional schools are staffed.

*Spread over more than 2.5 million square kilometres, Western Australia is one of the most geographically dispersed education districts in the world.*<sup>148</sup>

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140 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p9.

141 Submission No. 20 from the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, 15 April 2016, p8.

142 Submission No. 20 from the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, 15 April 2016, p8.

143 Submission No. 22 from the Western Australian Secondary Schools Executives Association, 14 April 2016, p4.

144 Submission No. 22 from the Western Australian Secondary Schools Executives Association, 14 April 2016, p4.

145 Ms P Byrne, President, State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p11.

146 Ms P Byrne, President, State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p11.

147 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p28.

148 Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Curtin University, 15 April 2016, p7.

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- 4.26 Incentives are provided for people willing to work at remote and hard-to-staff schools. Teachers who undertake a remote teaching placement are rewarded with preferential and permanent placement upon their return to Perth.
- 4.27 As more schools become IPS, less placement options are available for teachers returning from remote locations. Teachers may be less motivated to teach remotely, potentially further disadvantaging remote schools.<sup>149</sup>
- 4.28 A study undertaken by Curtin University found that:

*Some of the respondents we interviewed in relatively small regional non-IPS schools expressed a high level of despondency that the IPS system was only increasing the challenges they faced. When asked if it was likely that the Department would move to reduce the distinction between school types in the WA public education system, one interview responded “yeah possibly but the problem that I can see at the moment is that they still need the non-IPS to place certain staff”.<sup>150</sup>*

### Finding 17

There is an unreasonable burden placed on non-Independent Public Schools required to accept redeployees. This burden will only increase over time as more schools become Independent Public Schools.

### Finding 18

Harder-to-staff remote and regional schools will find it increasingly difficult to attract staff as incentives for working remotely become less effective due to the smaller number of schools where teachers returning from non-metropolitan service can be placed.

### Recommendation 7

That the Department of Education changes its policy so that Independent Public Schools and non-Independent Public Schools have the same responsibilities towards redeployee staff.

### Redeployees from other departments

- 4.29 IP Schools are not exempt from taking redeployees from another government department.

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149 Closed Submission, March 2016.

150 Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, 15 April 2016, p8.

*It defies logic that the Government would require a school to employ surplus staff from other agencies, who may have no background in education, but not from within its own agency.<sup>151</sup>*

- 4.30 It is concerning that staff of other departments may receive preferential treatment over DoE staff.

### **Education support staff**

- 4.31 Education support staff provide essential services that are vital for the sustainability of a quality public education.<sup>152</sup> Submissions raised particular concerns about the poor treatment of education support staff as a result of one-line budgets. As all schools now operate under the SCFM, many of these concerns are applicable across all public schools. However, these concerns are included in this Report due to their potentially greater impact in IP Schools as they can re-profile their staffing structure when transitioning to IPS.
- 4.32 Submissions stated that re-profiling a school's staffing structure negatively affects school support staff. A variety of impacts were noted, including:
- Capping the maximum hours of EAs.
  - Employing temporary staff rather than offering extra hours to existing staff
  - Converting temporary staff to a minimum of five hours per week, while the balance of hours remains temporary.<sup>153</sup>
- 4.33 It was noted that despite there being between 465 redeployee EAs as at 31 March 2015,<sup>154</sup> 893 new EAs were recruited during 2015. It is unclear the number of EAs who took redundancies as a result of being redeployed.<sup>155</sup>

### **Support staff contracts**

- 4.34 Submissions raised concerns about the overuse of fixed-term contracts for education support staff. Under industrial agreements, fixed-term contracts should only be used in certain circumstances. For example, to backfill a person on long service leave, or for a short-term project.<sup>156</sup>

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151 Submission No. 27 from United Voice, 20 April 2016, p14.

152 Submission No. 27 from United Voice, 20 April 2016, p5.

153 Submission No. 27 from United Voice, 20 April 2016, p12.

154 Hon P Collier (Minister for Education), Western Australia, Legislative Council, *Parliamentary Debates* (Hansard), 21 April 2016, p2376.

155 Ms C Smith, Secretary, United Voice, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p7.

156 *Education Assistants' (Government) General Agreement 2016*, s14 – this agreement covers Education Assistants, Education Assistants Special Needs, Ethnic Assistants, Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers, and Home Economics Assistants

## Chapter 4

- 4.35 Increased use of fixed-term contracts may lead to greater staff turnover which may negatively impact education quality.<sup>157</sup> Affected staff can become stressed about job security, particularly as many are low income earners. By contrast, permanency can increase productivity in the workplace.<sup>158</sup>
- 4.36 United Voice believes that too many staff are on fixed-term contracts. As at April 2016, 1,314 Education Assistants, 366 cleaners and 115 gardeners were on fixed-term contracts.<sup>159</sup> This is over 10 per cent of the total workforce.<sup>160</sup> Since January 2016, an additional 176 cleaners, 68 gardeners and 658 EAs have been retained on fixed-term contracts.<sup>161</sup> United Voice argues that IP Schools use fixed-term contracts unnecessarily, rather than making permanent appointments. This breaches industrial agreements. A breach of these agreements carries a financial risk for the DoE.<sup>162</sup>
- 4.37 However, information requested from the DoE shows that the number of full-time equivalent (**FTE**) EAs has increased over the last five years, while the proportion of FTE EAs on contracts has decreased since 2012, though increased on 2014 and 2015 numbers. The number of FTE cleaners has grown since 2012, as has the proportion of FTE cleaners on contracts. The number of FTE gardeners has lessened slightly, while the proportion on contracts has increased slightly (see Appendix Seven). Overall, there does not seem to have been much variation in the use of fixed-term contracts.<sup>163</sup>
- 4.38 Fixed-term contract use may increase over time. Other jurisdictions with similar school autonomy initiatives have begun contracting out some support services.<sup>164</sup> This may be seen as a natural extension of the current IPS model in WA. If the situation in other jurisdictions is any indicator, this may lead to lower pay and worse conditions for staff.<sup>165</sup>

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*Government Services (Miscellaneous) General Agreement 2016*, s12 – this agreement covers Cleaners, Gardeners, and Home Economics Assistants  
*School Support Officers (Government) General Agreement 2014*, s15 – this agreement covers School Support Officers (Primary Registrars, School Officers, Laboratory Assistants, and Library Officers)

157 Submission No. 27 from United Voice, 20 April 2016, p14.

158 Submission No. 27 from United Voice, 20 April 2016, p14.

159 Supplement to Submission No. 27 from United Voice, 6 July 2016.

160 Submission No. 27 from United Voice, 20 April 2016, p14.

161 Ms C Smith, Secretary, United Voice, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p7.

162 Submission No. 27 from United Voice, 20 April 2016, p14.

163 Supplement to Submission No. 30 from Department of Education, 1 August 2016, p17.

164 Fitzgerald S & Rainnie A 2011, *Putting the Public First? An examination of the implications of the 2009 EAC Report. Part Two: Independent Public Schools*, Curtin Graduate School of Business, report commissioned by Unions WA, p6.

165 Fitzgerald S & Rainnie A 2011, *Putting the Public First? An examination of the implications of the 2009 EAC Report. Part Two: Independent Public Schools*, Curtin Graduate School of Business, report commissioned by Unions WA, p6.

### **Increase in the principal's power and risk of breaching legal requirements**

- 4.39 While school autonomy necessarily increases the authority and power of the principal, staff and board members alike have expressed concerns that principals now wield too much power, without sufficient oversight.
- 4.40 The devolution of human resource management to school level will potentially lead to more instances of breaches of industrial instruments.<sup>166</sup> Any principal may appoint, or not appoint, staff based on irrelevant matters due to lack of guidelines and oversight of the selection process. There is a particular risk when principals and staff responsible for recruitment have not been properly trained in recruitment processes. This concern was noted in OAG 2011.<sup>167</sup> It is unclear whether it has been addressed.
- 4.41 The DoE stated that:
- public sector standards apply to all schools
  - appeal and grievance processes are available to all staff
  - all the same industrial relations protections still apply.<sup>168</sup>
- 4.42 However, the Committee received evidence of alleged breaches of regulations and guidelines. One submission spoke of a principal who employed mainly men and specifically would not employ women of child-bearing age.<sup>169</sup> Other submissions spoke of age,<sup>170</sup> gender,<sup>171</sup> and sexuality<sup>172</sup> discrimination. As an IPS principal reports directly to the Director General of the DoE, staff placed in these challenging situations have limited options available to them if they dispute the principal's actions.

### **Recommendation 8**

That the Department of Education ensure all school principals and staff involved in staff recruitment are appropriately trained and comply with all human resources legislative requirements and responsibilities.

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166 Fitzgerald S & Rainnie A 2011, *Putting the Public First? An examination of the implications of the 2009 EAC Report. Part Two: Independent Public Schools*, Curtin Graduate School of Business, report commissioned by Unions WA, p6.

167 Office of the Auditor General of Western Australia, *Right Teacher, Right Place, Right Time: Teacher Placement in Public Schools*, Report No. 6, August 2011, p22.

168 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p11.

169 Closed Submission, April 2016.

170 Submission No. 5 from Mr M Gulberti, 29 March 2016.

171 Submission No. 8 from Mr A Acciano, 1 April 2016, p4.

172 Closed Submission, April 2016.

## Professional development

- 4.43 Developing and improving school leaders and teachers is the paramount mechanism for improving student outcomes as "it is only through improved teaching practice that student achievement levels will rise".<sup>173</sup> Yet teachers and principals at IP Schools receive different levels of professional development. Indeed, one of the stated benefits of being an IP School is:

*access to targeted leadership development programs to build Principal capacity in getting the most impact in classrooms from autonomy.*<sup>174</sup>

- 4.44 Professional development opportunities which are only available to IP Schools' leadership reinforce the two-tiered system. IP Schools are provided with greater opportunity to improve performance and student outcomes by having better training.
- 4.45 Training courses have been developed specifically for IP School principals, staff and boards.<sup>175</sup> For example, the 'Advanced Leadership Program' is aimed at building the capacity of IP School principals to use autonomy to improve school performance. School board members can attend the newly introduced 'School Board Development Program' aimed at improving the capacity of boards to exercise their functions.<sup>176</sup>
- 4.46 Professional development opportunities should be available to all principals. Principals of schools which have applied but not been selected to become an IP School would surely benefit from improved leadership skills that would support a subsequent application to become an IP School.

*(Maximising a principal's capacity to enable teachers to teach more effectively) should not be restricted to IPS; all principals regardless of their level of autonomy need to be supported to use their authority as leaders to improve the effectiveness of their teachers.*<sup>177</sup>

- 4.47 Without access to training and opportunities for collaboration, non-IPS principals are becoming more isolated and their schools more residualised.<sup>178</sup>
- 4.48 Conversely, staff at IP Schools have complained about the lack of professional development opportunities afforded to them. Principals at some IP Schools are not prioritising staff development, rather choosing to allocate funding elsewhere.<sup>179</sup>

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173 Hamilton Associates 2015, *School Autonomy: Building the conditions for student success*. A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia, p4.

174 Submission No. 30 from Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p2.

175 Department of Education, [www.education.wa.edu.au](http://www.education.wa.edu.au). Accessed on 4 August 2016.

176 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p10.

177 Hamilton Associates 2015, *School Autonomy: Building the conditions for student success*. A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia, p5.

178 Mr D Lee, School Leaders' Project Consultant, State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p3.

- 4.49 In some cases, a person who becomes a principal of an existing IP School has not had training available to her or him as training had already been received by the principal who oversaw the school's transition to IPS.<sup>180</sup> In response to this issue, the DoE has just introduced a mandatory four-day bridging program for principals newly appointed to IP Schools.<sup>181</sup>
- 4.50 Training can also be difficult to access, particularly in non-metropolitan areas. The Committee was told that training programs will not be run in non-metropolitan areas unless schools in the area can gather together enough staff to take part, potentially amplifying the disadvantage those schools already face.<sup>182</sup> However, the DoE disputes this claim, saying that training is offered by the DoE centrally or at schools, networks or regional locations.<sup>183</sup>

### Finding 19

There is a discrepancy in the level of professional development available to Independent Public School principals and staff by comparison with non-Independent Public School principals and staff.

### Recommendation 9

That the Department of Education makes professional development opportunities available to all public school principals and staff, regardless of whether or not the school is an Independent Public School.

### Funding

- 4.51 IP Schools receive \$25,000 to \$50,000 in ongoing annual funding to assist with the increased administrative burden of being an IP School. Yet, all schools now have an increased administrative burden following the 2015 introduction of SCFM and the one-line budget. The Committee questions why assistance is only provided to non-IP Schools to deal with this additional burden.

179 Ms P Byrne, President, State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p7; & Fitzgerald, S & Rinnie, A 2012, "Failing Forward: Public Schools and New Public Management", *Public Policy*, vol. 7, no. 2, p175.

180 Submission No. 15 from Mr K Dullard, 12 April 2016, p1; & Mr K Dullard, School Leaders' Organiser, State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p6.

181 Supplement to Submission No. 30 from Department of Education, 1 August 2016, p4.

182 Office of the Auditor General of Western Australia, *Right Teacher, Right Place, Right Time: Teacher Placement in Public Schools*, Report No. 6, August 2011, p25;

Mrs J Gee, President, Western Australian Secondary Schools Executives Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p3; &

Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, 15 April 2016, p7.

183 Supplement to Submission No. 30 from Department of Education, 1 August 2016, p15.

## Public perception

- 4.52 IP Schools are perceived as better than non-IP Schools. It is not difficult to see how this perception exists as IP Schools benefit from greater staffing selection, additional professional development and extra ongoing funding. That, combined with the promotion of the IPS initiative by the DoE<sup>184</sup> and by individual schools (including signage), makes IP Schools more attractive to parents and potential staff.<sup>185</sup> While the DoE notes that there have always been more desirable schools, the Committee considers that the IPS initiative has exacerbated the perceived differences between schools.<sup>186</sup>
- 4.53 This perception may become self-perpetuating reality. If IP Schools are perceived as better, teachers and support staff are more attracted to work there. IP Schools will find it easier to recruit the best staff for their school, while non-IP Schools will find recruitment more challenging. Parents will also choose to send their children to IP Schools, rather than other local non-IP Schools. With greater numbers of students, schools will receive more funding which can then be used to implement programs, recruit staff and ensure quality facilities are available for the benefit of students. Less well-attended non-IP Schools will receive less funding and be less capable of providing opportunities for their students.

### Finding 20

There is a persistent public perception that Independent Public Schools are better than non-Independent Public Schools. This perception is exacerbated by recruitment policies and the State Government's promotion of the Independent Public School initiative.

### Finding 21

The State Government's promotion and marketing of the Independent Public Schools initiative has led to the perception that Independent Public Schools have greater capacity to better educate students than non-Independent Public Schools, reinforcing the two-tiered public education system.

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184 Government of Western Australia, *Independent Public Schools: A New Beginning*. <http://biggerpicture.education.wa.edu.au/news-independent-public-schools.asp>. Accessed on 9 August 2016.

185 Mr K Dullard, School Leaders' Organiser, State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, pp12-13; Submission No. 11 from the Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia, 7 April 2016, pp4-5.

Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 June 2016, p3.

186 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p6.



# Chapter 5

## School boards

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**School boards provide an opportunity for community governance expertise to be shared with schools to guide their vision, strategy and decision making. The benefits of this structure are not realised when school boards are relegated to an advisory role.**

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### What is a school board and how does it work?

- 5.1 IP Schools have a school board instead of a school council. The school board is not legislatively different from a school council. Indeed the *School Education Act 1999* and *School Education Regulations 2000* continue to refer to school councils and make no reference to school boards. A school board retains all of the functions of a school council.
- 5.2 A school board has additional responsibilities under the DPA. The school board must endorse the DPA, the one-line budget, the business plan and the annual report. The board must also participate in DES reviews, and monitor school performance via quarterly reporting provided by the principal. It is also involved in the selection of a new principal.
- 5.3 Boards are not involved in the day-to-day running of a school. Boards do not participate in re-profiling, staff employment, curriculum decisions, performance management of school staff, or the management of facilities.<sup>187</sup>

### School board members

- 5.4 School boards can have between five and 15 members, although most have six to eight.<sup>188</sup> A membership term is for a maximum of three years, but members can be reappointed more than once.<sup>189</sup>
- 5.5 Boards must also have at least one parent member.<sup>190</sup> Principals are automatically board members.<sup>191</sup> Other board members are appointed as follows:

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187 Department of Education, *Independent Public Schools: Roles, responsibilities and operations of an effective school board*, Powerpoint presentation, p12. [http://kooranaps.wa.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/School\\_Board\\_Introduction.pdf](http://kooranaps.wa.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/School_Board_Introduction.pdf). Accessed 4 August 2016.

188 *School Education Regulations 2000*, s106(1)(a); & Gilchrist, DJ & Knight, P 2015, *Research into Developing Highly Effective School Boards for Independent Public Schools*. A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia, p3.

189 *School Education Regulations 2000*, s110.

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- Parent representatives are elected by parents or caregivers<sup>192</sup>
- Staff representatives are elected by staff<sup>193</sup>
- Student representatives are elected by students (this only applies to secondary schools' boards and both student members and student voters must be 15 years old or turning 15 years old in that calendar year)<sup>194</sup>
- Community members are appointed by the board.<sup>195</sup>

- 5.6 The DoE stresses that effective boards actively manage their composition “to ensure the board has the depth and diversity of skills needed.”<sup>196</sup> Submissions echoed this sentiment, emphasising the connection between highly-skilled and diverse board members and the effectiveness of IPS.<sup>197</sup> Schools can “leverage that knowledge and experience to enhance that IPS”.<sup>198</sup> The board chair is of particular importance. A chair with previous experience and “good community links” can “support strategic decision making.”<sup>199</sup>
- 5.7 The DoE-commissioned report *Research into Developing a Highly Effective School Boards for Independent Public Schools (Boards Report)* was released in June 2016. The study assessed the operations of 20 school boards across WA, including from metropolitan and regional schools, and primary and secondary schools.
- 5.8 The Boards Report found that many school boards seem to be adding significant value to their schools.<sup>200</sup> Board members' previous governance experience was a particularly important contributing factor to a successful board. Experienced boards tended to set

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190 *School Education Act 1999*, s127(4); *School Education Regulations 2000*, s107(2); & Department of Education, *Independent Public Schools Briefing Day*, Powerpoint presentation, 2016, slide 14.

191 *School Education Act 1999*, s127(2).

192 *School Education Regulations 2000*, s109(1). The Act and regulations do, however, differentiate between schools where the majority of students are 18 years or older and schools where the majority are younger than 18 years old. In cases where the majority of students are 18 years and above, students who are enrolled at the school and 15 years or older are eligible to vote. See s109(2).

193 *School Education Regulations 2000*, s109(3).

194 *School Education Act 1999*, s127(1)(d); & *School Education Regulations 2000*, ss105, 108(2)(d), 109(4).

195 *School Education Regulations 2000*, s108(2)(b).

196 Department of Education 2016, *Independent Public Schools Briefing Day*, Powerpoint presentation, slide 14.

197 Department of Education 2016, *Independent Public Schools Briefing Day*, Powerpoint presentation, slide 2; &

Submission from the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association, 15 April 2016, p3.

198 Closed Submission , April 2016.

199 Submission No. 7 from Emeritus Professor J Barker, 31 March 2016, p3.

200 Gilchrist, DJ & Knight, P 2015, *Research into Developing Highly Effective School Boards for Independent Public Schools*. A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia, pp ii-iii.

higher standards for themselves, whereas inexperienced boards tended to not have a clear understanding of best practice so had difficulty assessing their own effectiveness.<sup>201</sup> Principals have also noted a huge variation in the quality of school board members and the amount of work required to make some board members effective.<sup>202</sup>

- 5.9 The recruitment of highly skilled members can be difficult for certain schools. Principals in remote, regional and lower socioeconomic areas may struggle to find “credible” board members.<sup>203</sup> At least one other submission spoke of the difficulties that some boards had in filling positions.<sup>204</sup>
- 5.10 The capacity and expertise of board members is lost from a school upon the expiration of the board member’s three-year term. These former board members could form a natural pool of talent which the DoE could make available to assist other IP Schools.

### **Relationship between the principal and the school board**

- 5.11 Effective IP Schools benefit from a productive and positive working relationship between a school’s principal and its board, each operating effectively in its designated role. Unfortunately such effectiveness does not always occur. A principal’s lack of recognition of the merits of a board’s contributions can undermine its effectiveness. Personality clashes, disagreements over the principal’s leadership style, and concerns over a lack of information sharing can lead to strained relationships.
- 5.12 The Boards Report found that in some circumstances principals relegated the board to an advisory role. It stated:

*in some schools the Principal is, in effect, running the board, and the board is taking only an advisory or notional role in decision-making, school evaluation or business planning.*<sup>205</sup>

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201 Gilchrist, DJ & Knight, P 2015, *Research into Developing Highly Effective School Boards for Independent Public Schools*. A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia, p11.

202 Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 June 2016, p2.

203 Submission No. 14 from the Western Australian Primary Principals’ Association, 15 April 2016, p3.

204 Closed Submission, April 2016.

205 Gilchrist, DJ & Knight, P 2015, *Research into Developing Highly Effective School Boards for Independent Public Schools*. A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia, p iii.

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- 5.13 The accumulation of highly skilled members on boards that are essentially run as advisory boards by principals creates a tension:

*despite the considerable expertise, depth and variety of skill around the Board table, it is hard to escape feeling disempowered and as a result, increasingly disengaged from what should be a unique opportunity to substantially contribute to an IPS.*<sup>206</sup>

- 5.14 Submissions echoed this issue, raising concerns that some principals lacked transparency about the operation of schools.<sup>207</sup>
- 5.15 Some principals take the view that board meetings are no more than a formality, failing to consider the board's input. For example, a submission stated that a principal ignored a board's request for information to be provided in a timelier manner to allow for appropriate consideration.<sup>208</sup> When the board challenged the same principal's decision to spend several million dollars on a new building that had not appeared in the business plan, the principal responded "It's my decision. The Board doesn't need to approve it."<sup>209</sup>
- 5.16 Some principals neither engage in meaningful consultation with the board nor adequately inform its members of matters about which they are concerned. In one case, a principal called for nominations to fill a staff position on the board only two days before the next board meeting. The board chair was unaware of the subsequent appointment and, when he later asked the principal for information about the voting process, did not receive a response for at least two weeks.<sup>210</sup>
- 5.17 The point of the board is questioned as there is no requirement for the principal to act on the board's recommendations, or even consider them. A number of submissions stated that the role of the board was to "rubber stamp" the principal's decisions.<sup>211</sup> One submission said that the management team at his school largely used the board as a "tick a box exercise in meeting their requirement under the independent public school terms of reference".<sup>212</sup> The submission also stated that if the school management team did not agree with board recommendations it would disregard the recommendations by claiming that it related to "operational procedure".<sup>213</sup>

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206 Closed Submission, April 2016.

207 Submission No. 13 from Mr M Harries, 9 April 2016; & Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, 14 April 2016, p13.

208 Closed Submission, April 2016.

209 Closed Submission, April 2016.

210 Closed Submission, April 2016.

211 Closed Submissions, April 2016.

212 Submission No. 13 from Mr M Harries, 9 April 2016, p2.

213 Submission No. 13 from Mr M Harries, 9 April 2016, p1.

- 5.18 IPS principals become “much like a CEO of a company, with increased control over the organisation”.<sup>214</sup> This means that the degree to which boards can influence change in their schools is reliant on the willingness of a principal to listen to their views:

*With a good Principal the voice of the community will be regarded, but our processes and procedure should not be reliant on just having a good Principal with a personal disposition and approach towards community engagement and feedback.*<sup>215</sup>

- 5.19 One submission raised a concern that principals may misuse their power by influencing board members, in particular school staff members on boards.<sup>216</sup> The DoE needs to ensure that staff board members are able to contribute without undermining their employment security.

### **Finding 22**

School boards have significant experience which can benefit the governance of a school, yet some principals can relegate boards to an advisory role.

### **Recommendation 10**

That the Department of Education manage principals in relation to their interaction with, and responsiveness to, the school board.

### **Recommendation 11**

That the Department of Education establish appropriate mechanisms for school board members to resolve disputes with principals about board engagement and participation in governance.

## **Lack of communication between the school board and the Department of Education**

- 5.20 There is an absence of direct communication channels between school boards and the DoE. Communications between the DoE and the board are generally required to go through the principal. For example, board initiatives are often limited by guidelines that cannot easily be accessed by non-departmental staff. The board must rely on the principal to faithfully report on the requirements of the guidelines.
- 5.21 In some cases this lack of communication appears to be more deliberate, or at least a significant oversight on the part of the DoE. On at least one occasion, the DoE recruited a new IP School principal without involving the school board in the recruitment

214 Submission from Mr P Mutton, Roleystone Community College Board, 15 April 2016, p1.

215 Submission from Mr P Mutton, Roleystone Community College Board, 15 April 2016, p3.

216 Closed Submission, April 2016.

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process, despite the DPA providing that the school board chair will be involved in the process.<sup>217</sup>

- 5.22 Other submissions are less critical of the DoE, recognising that it must “walk a very narrow line” in order to enable the autonomy of school boards while ensuring that the IPS initiative is being correctly implemented.<sup>218</sup>
- 5.23 The Committee is sceptical of the DoE’s claim that it had not received any complaints from school board members who felt that they were not be heard by the DoE.<sup>219</sup> Perhaps this is because the DoE actively discourages boards from approaching the DoE<sup>220</sup>, and a failure by the DoE to engage when disputes were brought to its attention.<sup>221</sup> The DoE did state, however, that it will appoint an officer to assist if there is disagreement between a school board and principal regarding the DPA.
- 5.24 Board members do not have a representative body so there is no one organisation to advocate on their behalf. The DoE should consider creating an IPS Board Members’ Group, similar to the IPS Principals’ Group, to provide system-level advice and feedback. This group could provide beneficial insight to improve the operation of the IPS initiative.
- 5.25 Board members should also be provided with a departmental contact who they talk to in the event of a dispute. Where tensions cannot be eased, an appropriate dispute resolution mechanism should be put in place.

### Finding 23

There is reluctance on the part of the Department of Education to directly engage with school board members.

### Recommendation 12

That the Department of Education create a Board Members’ Advisory Group, taking on a role similar to the Principals’ Advisory Group, to provide an opportunity for school board members as a group to provide feedback on the Independent Public Schools initiative.

## Is there confusion about the role of the school board?

- 5.26 The Boards Report found that the formal role of boards is not well defined, scattered between legislation, regulations and DoE policy. Boards can therefore interpret their

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217 Closed Submission, April 2016.

218 Submission No. 7 from Emeritus Professor Jo Barker, 31 March 2016, p3.

219 Ms S O’Neill, Director General and Mr D Price, Director, School Improvement and Support Unit, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p15.

220 Closed Submission, April 2016.

221 Submission No. 21 from Mr P Mutton, Roleystone Community College Board, 15 April 2016, p2.

role differently, depending on members' governance experience and the way the existing board operates.<sup>222</sup>

- 5.27 Despite this, the Boards Report found that more boards and principals have defined their role as:

*to work with the Principal to determine the overall strategic directions of the school, prepare the business plan, monitor the school's performance and support the school to achieve its objectives.*<sup>223</sup>

- 5.28 School board members are generally sticking to their overarching governance role, and not involving themselves in operational matters. The rare occasions in which boards do participate in operational matters were done knowingly and "for sound reasons".<sup>224</sup> When confusion about the line between operational and governance-related matters did exist, it usually occurred in the years immediately following a school's transition into an IP School and was described as the board "finding its feet".<sup>225</sup>
- 5.29 Submissions to the Inquiry raised confusion about the role of the school board. A submission from the Western Australian Primary Principals Association noted that it was receiving an increasing number of calls for assistance from its members regarding "the delegation of authority of operational management of the school". It was generally thought that board members' mistakenly believed they could guide operational matters.<sup>226</sup>
- 5.30 Other submissions contradict this position. School board members seem to generally understand the parameters of the board's authority, and do not suggest they should have authority over financial or staffing matters. Board members do question the point of the school board when principals do not take their views into consideration when making these decisions.<sup>227</sup>

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222 Gilchrist, DJ & Knight, P 2015, *Research into Developing Highly Effective School Boards for Independent Public Schools*. A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia, p12.

223 Gilchrist, DJ & Knight, P 2015, *Research into Developing Highly Effective School Boards for Independent Public Schools*. A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia, p iii.

224 Gilchrist, DJ & Knight, P 2015, *Research into Developing Highly Effective School Boards for Independent Public Schools*. A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia, pp iii, 22.

225 Gilchrist, DJ & Knight, P 2015, *Research into Developing Highly Effective School Boards for Independent Public Schools*. A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia, p22.

226 Submission from the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association, 15 April 2016, p2.

227 Closed Submission, April 2016.

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- 5.31 Updates have been made to the DPA which appear to address some concerns.<sup>228</sup> The most recent version provided to the Committee (2015–2017) included amendments to clarify the role of the board, its training requirements and dispute resolution process:
- The DoE must ensure that the board chair or representative is invited to participate in the selection of the new principal.
  - The principal must ensure that an effective board is in place, and that the board understands and fulfils its functions.
  - The principal must ensure that the board communicates with the broader school community regarding the board’s function and activities.
  - If a principal and board cannot agree on “areas of significance”, the principal and/or board ask the Director General of the DoE to make a decision. The Director General must consult with both parties before making a decision.<sup>229</sup>
- 5.32 It is hoped these changes will address some of these concerns and result in a more rewarding experience for board members and school communities alike.

### Finding 24

School board members and principals generally have a good understanding of the role of the board.

### Recommendation 13

That the Department of Education provide all Independent Public School principals and school board members with appropriate written guidance outlining the role of the board. This guide should detail the board’s authorities and responsibilities, and dispute resolution mechanisms. The guide should be publicly available to the school community.

### Inadequate school board member training

- 5.33 The DoE provides board member training when a school transitions to IPS, and offers ongoing training for board members on an as needs basis.<sup>230</sup>
- 5.34 The accessibility of training is an issue.<sup>231</sup> Board members are volunteers and often have full-time employment, yet training is only available during business hours. Many

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228 Attachment 2 of Submission No. 30 from Department of Education, 26 April 2016.

229 Department of Education, ‘Independent Public Schools Delivery and Performance Agreement’ [2015-2017] in Attachment 2 of Submission No. 30 from Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p9.

230 Mr D Price, Director, School Improvement and Support Unit, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p. 14.



board members cannot attend due to work commitments.<sup>232</sup> School board members are often not notified of upcoming training.

- 5.35 Training is also predominantly offered in the metropolitan area, making it difficult for regional and remote schools to access. Schools outside the metropolitan area must generally coordinate a large enough group, often from multiple schools, prior to training being held.<sup>233</sup>
- 5.36 The length of board training is considered inadequate. Training sessions are too short for board members to digest the amount of information they received.<sup>234</sup> Training should be ongoing and the content focused on “strategic planning, oversight, compliance and risk management” in order for boards to be effective.<sup>235</sup> Principals should not be expected to train board members.<sup>236</sup>
- 5.37 It was suggested that the adequacy of training was hampered in recent years due to the large intake of 178 schools in 2014–2015. Since then, many schools have found it difficult to understand the different roles of the board and the P&C. Schools are failing to realise the opportunities that result from a well-run and well-structured board.<sup>237</sup>
- 5.38 It is important that training is made available outside of work hours, and in suitable locations (or online) for all board members across the state. Mandatory participation is also recommended. Training should preferably be undertaken prior to joining a board.
- 5.39 The new School Boards Development Program has recently been announced<sup>238</sup> and will be rolled out to IP School boards during the second half of 2016. The training program is aimed at strengthening the influence and effectiveness of school boards.<sup>239</sup> It will be more intensive and advanced than what is currently provided, and will be supported

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231 Mrs J Gee, President, Western Australian Secondary Schools Executives Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p3.

232 Gilchrist, DJ and Knight, P 2015, *Research into Developing Highly Effective School Boards for Independent Public Schools*, a report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia, p iv

233 Mrs J Gee, President, Western Australian Secondary Schools Executives Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p3.

234 Closed Submission, April 2016.

235 Submission from the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association, 15 April 2016, p3.

236 Submission from the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association, 15 April 2016, p3.

237 Submission No. 7 from Emeritus Professor Jo Barker, 31 March 2016, p2.

238 Hon P Collier, MLC (Minister for Education), *Training to increase influence of IPS boards*, Media Statement, Perth, Western Australia, 3 June 2016.

239 Department of Education, *School Board Development Program*, <http://www.education.wa.edu.au/home/detcms/navigation/about-us/programs-and-initiatives/independent-public-schools/?page=5#toc5>. Accessed 4 August 2016.

Gilchrist, DJ and Knight, P 2015, *Research into Developing Highly Effective School Boards for Independent Public Schools*, a report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia.

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with online materials.<sup>240</sup> It seems that findings and recommendations of the Boards Report have informed the development of this training.

- 5.40 The Committee hopes that this training will address the issues raised by board members in submissions.

### **Finding 25**

It can be difficult for school board members to access training and absorb all relevant information in the limited time available.

### **Recommendation 14**

The Department of Education should ensure sufficient opportunity for all school board members to attend training, including members with work commitments and those who live outside the metropolitan area.

### **Recommendation 15**

The Department of Education should evaluate the effectiveness of its new School Board Development Program in due course, including seeking the feedback of attendees that the course has assisted them in being effective school board members.

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240 Mr D Price, Director, School Improvement and Support Unit, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p14.

# Chapter 6

## Transitioning to IPS and other issues

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The Independent Public Schools initiative places too great an emphasis on ‘independent’ and too little on ‘public’. Many Independent Public Schools are burdened by too much responsibility without receiving the benefits of operating within a public system.

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### Transitioning to become an Independent Public School

#### Process

6.1 Schools wanting to become an IP School must follow four mandatory stages:

- **Briefing:** The principal, chair of the school council, and one other staff member attend a one-day briefing about the “philosophy, nature and requirements of autonomy” in WA IP Schools.<sup>241</sup>
- **Development:** The principal and members of the school community attend workshops and participate in “readiness development activities” and “on the job learning activities”.<sup>242</sup> The development program became available to potential IP Schools in 2013, and became compulsory from 2015.<sup>243</sup>
- **Selection:** The principal and a community member make up to a 30 minute presentation to a panel of “specially chosen and trained” IPS principals. The selection process is “independently moderated by respected educators”.<sup>244</sup> The key selection criteria to be demonstrated are:
  - The capacity to work in autonomous environment
  - A high level of community support
  - A clear benefit to the school.<sup>245</sup>

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241 Department of Education 2016, *Opportunity to become an Independent Public School in 2017: Prospectus*.

242 Department of Education 2016, *Opportunity to become an Independent Public School in 2017: Prospectus*.

243 University of Melbourne 2013, *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*. A report for the WA Department of Education, Melbourne, Victoria, p12.

244 Department of Education 2016, *Opportunity to become an Independent Public School in 2017: Prospectus*.

245 Ms S O’Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p7.

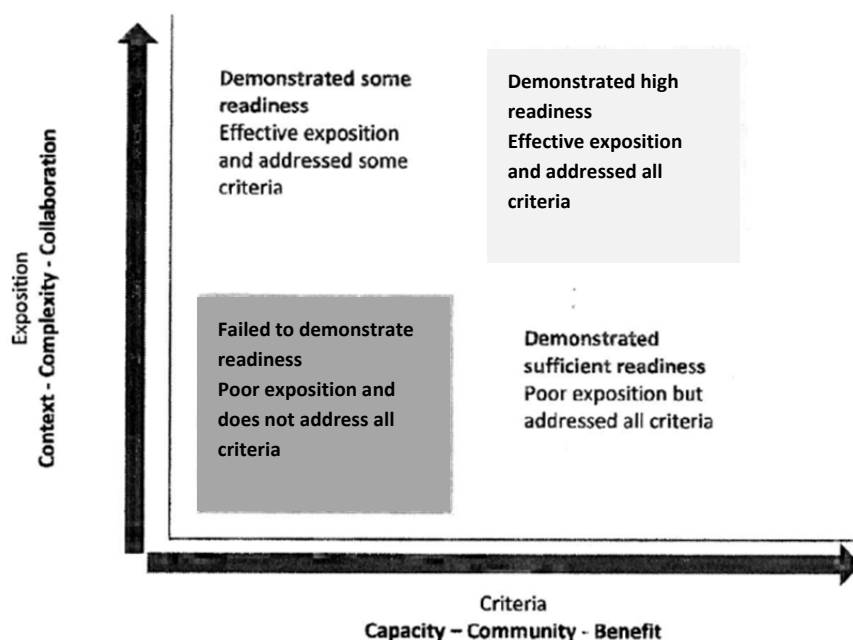
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- **Transition:** Key school staff and community members participate in a “comprehensive transition training program” to equip the school to use its autonomy effectively. The transition program focuses on “effective governance, self-assessment, review processes, ethical leadership, and human and financial resource management.”<sup>246</sup>

### Improvements to the transition process

- 6.2 It is unclear what the three selection criteria substantively involve and how they are demonstrated by schools and measured by the selection panel. The DoE spoke of a ‘selection matrix’ against which a school’s selection presentation is assessed (see below); however it is unclear just what the selection panel will consider sufficient to demonstrate readiness.

Figure 2: Department of Education’s Independent Public Schools selection matrix<sup>247</sup>



- 6.3 For example, schools must provide evidence of community support during the selection process. The DoE states that the type of evidence considered appropriate will depend on the nature of the school community e.g. literacy levels and cultural backgrounds, and the scope of its stakeholder base e.g. parents, community, and staff.<sup>248</sup> However, the Committee received evidence about the varied level of community consultation engaged in by each principal about the decision to become an IP School. Witnesses

246 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p6.

247 Figure 2 from Supplement to Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 1 August 2016, p9.

248 Supplement to Submission No. 30 from Department of Education, 1 August 2016, p9.

spoke of their principal's lack of consultation with the school community about the decision to apply to become an IP School.<sup>249</sup>

- 6.4 This lack of transparency is concerning. It is more concerning that two schools assessed as suitable to become IP Schools were subject to a review by the Expert Review Group (ERG) about one year after becoming IP Schools. The Committee questions how a school with identified performance issues was considered capable of operating with increased autonomy.
- 6.5 Several witnesses have stated that aspiring and transitioning IP Schools have often lacked an understanding of the real workload involved in becoming an IP School. It was suggested that the DoE had not adequately prepared schools during the application process.<sup>250</sup>
- 6.6 For each intake, there have been far more schools applying to become IP Schools than schools accepted. Some schools have applied, and been rejected, several times.<sup>251</sup> This rejection is disheartening for the school and its community. However, as the DoE's Director General notes:

*from our perspective, we are just not prepared to put people into the initiative who cannot demonstrate that they have the expertise to manage it.*<sup>252</sup>

- 6.7 Common deficiencies in unsuccessful IPS applications include:

- No explicit link between the school's narrative and the selection criteria
- Insufficient or inexplicit evidence of community support
- Unable to connect strategies for improvement directly to IPS status
- Outlined a series of actions rather than strategic directions
- Unable to explain how IPS status would benefit students, staff and community.<sup>253</sup>

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249 Ms D Baker, Head Cleaner, Warwick Senior High School, United Voice *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 June 2016, p9; University of Melbourne 2013, *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*. A report for the WA Department of Education, Melbourne, Victoria, p34; & Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, 14 April 2016, p13.

250 Teacher interview, cited in Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, 15 April 2016, p5.

251 Ms K Catto, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p3.

252 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p7.

253 Supplement to Submission No. 30 from Department of Education, 1 August 2016, p10.

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- 6.8 The DoE is limited in the support it can provide to transitioning IP Schools. The Development Program, introduced in 2014 and mandatory since 2015, was introduced in response to a recommendation arising out of the University of Melbourne Evaluation to develop a more structured assessment of a school's and principal's readiness to engage in autonomy.

### Finding 26

The Independent Public School selection process lacks transparency and it is unclear on what basis schools are assessed as meeting selection criteria.

### Transition funding

- 6.9 Each school receives one-off funding of between \$20,000 and \$40,000 to assist with transition.<sup>254</sup> Each school also receives additional annual funding of between \$25,000 and \$50,000 to assist with the ongoing increased administrative costs.<sup>255</sup> Some witnesses stated that the additional funding is inadequate to deal with the associated administrative burden.<sup>256</sup>

### Transition support

- 6.10 The DoE supports schools transitioning to IPS in a number of ways. The central office based School Improvement and Support Unit (**SISU**)<sup>257</sup> provides ongoing support during and after the transition period.<sup>258</sup> Principals, staff, managers of corporate services and school council representatives may attend an Operational Training Program.<sup>259</sup>
- 6.11 Conflicting evidence was received by the Inquiry as to the quality of this support. Some submissions stated that the initial IPS transition training was well managed, and had improved in recent years.<sup>260</sup> The training has a strong emphasis on operational matters such as SCFM and the one-line budget.<sup>261</sup> While there were some issues with the

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254 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p7.

255 Department of Education 2016, *Opportunity to become an Independent Public School in 2017: Prospectus*.

256 Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, 15 April 2016, p2.

257 Formerly the School Innovation and Reform Unit.

258 Department of Education 2016, *Opportunity to become an Independent Public School in 2017: Prospectus*.

259 Department of Education 2016, *Opportunity to become an Independent Public School in 2017: Prospectus*.

260 Submission No. 7 from Emeritus Professor J Barker, 25 March 2016, p2; & Mrs J Gee, President, Western Australian Secondary School Executives Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p2.

261 Mr D Lee, School Leaders' Project Consultant, State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2017, p2.

'punishing' schedule in early years,<sup>262</sup> the modified timetable is more flexible and accessible throughout the year.<sup>263</sup>

- 6.12 Other evidence suggested that later intakes have experienced less support.<sup>264</sup> Changes to the regional offices structure (see 6.21) led to less support for IP Schools which became IPS prior to 2011.<sup>265</sup> Later intakes were likely to have less experienced leadership, be in lower socioeconomic areas and have less community support, therefore requiring more support to adapt to new responsibilities. Yet they received less support. It is likely that the later larger intakes may have impacted the DoE's capacity to provide support.

### The changing role of principals

- 6.13 Principals are generally supportive of the IPS initiative and the greater autonomy it provides. However, they have expressed concerns about the significant increase in their workload.<sup>266</sup>
- 6.14 A principal's ongoing workload increases significantly when a school becomes an IP School.<sup>267</sup> This may be considered as one of the biggest IPS challenges.<sup>268</sup> With a significantly increased administrative role, IP School principals are performing an increasingly CEO-like management role, with less time spent as an educator.<sup>269</sup>

*Increased administrative demands on principals, as functions once provided by district offices have been devolved to school level, has reduced the time they can devote to educational leadership.<sup>270</sup>*

- 6.15 This increased workload is affecting work-life balance. Fewer qualified people are now interested in becoming an IP School principal,<sup>271</sup> due to the additional workload and

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262 Ms J Gee, President, Western Australian Secondary School Executives Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p1.

263 Mrs J Gee, President, Western Australian Secondary School Executives Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p2.

264 Submission No. 14 from the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association, 12 April 2016, p1.

265 Gobby, B 2013, 'Enacting the Independent Public Schools program in Western Australia', *Issues in Education Research*, vol. 23, no. 1., pp29-30; & Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, 15 April 2016, p4.

266 Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, 15 April 2016, p5; & Gobby, B 2013, 'Enacting the Independent Public Schools program in Western Australia', *Issues in Education Research*, vol. 23, no. 1., p30.

267 Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, 15 April 2016, p5; & Gobby, B 2013, 'Enacting the Independent Public Schools program in Western Australia', *Issues in Education Research*, vol. 23, no. 1., p30.

268 University of Melbourne 2013, *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*. A report for the WA Department of Education, Melbourne, Victoria, p35.

269 Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, 15 April 2016, p5.

270 Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, 15 April 2016, p7.

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stress.<sup>272</sup> Evidence was provided that during the recent recruitment process for the principal position at a 'leafy green' school, only four people applied whereas "there would have been 120 applicants five years ago."<sup>273</sup> The DoE disputes this idea, stating that, on average, there has been no reduction in the number of applications for principal positions in the last five years.<sup>274</sup>

- 6.16 The DoE states that principals have always had a substantial leadership role, but acknowledged that IP School principals, particularly in the first year, did take on an increased management role.<sup>275</sup> Further, it is difficult to see how IP Schools can be provided with greater autonomy over administrative decision making without an increase in principal workload, and a corresponding change in the nature of their work. Submissions note that the additional workload reduces overtime, as principals become more familiar and at ease with their changed role.

### Finding 27

Principals of Independent Public Schools are burdened with greater administrative responsibility during the transition process and beyond. Principals therefore have less opportunity to focus on being educators.

### Reduction in ongoing central and regional office support

- 6.17 One of the Committee's primary concerns with the IPS initiative is the abrogation of responsibility for IP Schools on behalf of the government. Cost cutting and devolution of power shifts responsibility, and blame, from central office to each school principal. This initiative has pushed the burden of doing more with less onto schools and their communities.
- 6.18 The IPS initiative places too great an emphasis on the 'Independent' aspect of IPS, and too little on the 'Public' aspect. IP Schools continue to operate within the WA public education system, yet the benefits of working within a system are being lost. IP School principals are given increasing responsibility for making decisions for their schools, yet the support provided by DoE to these principals is less and less.
- 6.19 In devolving power from the DoE to each individual IPS principal, the IPS initiative shifts responsibility as well.

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271 Mr D Lee, School Leaders' Project Consultant, State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p3.

272 Mr S Breen, President, WA Primary Principals' Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p9.

273 Mr K Dullard, School Leaders' Organiser, State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p6.

274 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, and Mr Cliff Gillam, Executive Director, Workforce, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p16.

275 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p16.



*I've come to conclusion, nothing has changed except the district office and the central office have been decimated because of a \$180 million have been taken out of recurrent funding in 2013/14. All of those duties, all of those accountabilities have been handballed to the principal, delegation to the principal, that's the problem.*<sup>276</sup>

- 6.20 There has been a loss of balance between accountability and support. IPS principals are held increasingly accountable for their decisions. Whilst accountability is welcomed, it should not be at the expense of centralised support for those being held accountable. Particularly when in relation to decisions which are mostly out of their control. For example, when funding decisions are questioned, fingers are pointed at the IP School principal as the decision-maker. However, this obscures the larger issue of funding inadequacy.<sup>277</sup> IP School principals have little control over their total budget, yet are saddled with total responsibility for allocating their limited funding.
- 6.21 In 2011 the DoE's district structure was replaced with a regional structure. Fourteen education districts with 25 district directors<sup>278</sup> were replaced with eight education regions each with one Regional Executive Director (RED).<sup>279</sup> REDs became the line managers for principals in their region. In the metropolitan area, split into two regions, each RED oversaw around 230 schools.<sup>280</sup> This has reduced significantly as more schools have become IP Schools.
- 6.22 Similar to the IPS initiative, this new structure was touted as a great opportunity to provide schools and regions with the flexibility to respond to local issues in local communities.
- 6.23 Line management changes combined with regional restructuring has led principals to view that they have less support than was previously available to them.<sup>281</sup> One principal was quoted in research as lamenting that "autonomy equals abandonment".<sup>282</sup> Other school staff have complained that there is now insufficient DoE oversight in IP Schools.<sup>283</sup>

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276 Mr S Breen, President, Western Australian Primary Principals' Association, cited in Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, 27 June 2016, p5.

277 Submission No. 20 from Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, 15 April 2016, p9

278 Mr K Dullard, School Leaders' Organiser, State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, pp5-6.

279 Department of Education, *Our Organisation*.  
<http://www.education.wa.edu.au/home/detcms/navigation/about-us/public-education-at-a-glance/our-organisation/?page=1>. Accessed 5 August 2016.

280 Mr K Dullard, School Leaders' Organiser, State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, pp5-6.

281 Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, 27 June 2016, pp4-6.

282 Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, 27 June 2016, p5.

283 Submission No. 27 from United Voice, 20 April 2016, pp3-4.

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*While IPS was designed to empower Principals from the constraints of the Department of Education, and Principals are taking up the flexibilities offered by the program, some Principals may be experiencing a lack of support and resources that imposes constraints in their capacity to innovate and problem solve.*<sup>284</sup>

- 6.24 The DoE rejects the implication that there is less support for IP Schools. It states that all existing central office support remains available to schools that transition to IPS. This includes school psychologists, legal advice, regional services, inductions and specialist services.<sup>285</sup> The DoE has also introduced a new Student Support Services Directorate to provide centralised service support,<sup>286</sup> and the Principal Professional Support Team provides coaching and mentoring for principals.<sup>287</sup>
- 6.25 Though principals are managed directly by the DoE's Director General, principals can still consult with REDs. The DoE remarked that schools know in what circumstances they would seek support from REDs.<sup>288</sup> Other evidence suggested that some principals regularly consult with REDs, while others rarely do.<sup>289</sup> When support is sought, this is a far more collegiate relationship than previously, given REDs are no longer line managing the principals.
- 6.26 The Committee questions how the DoE can continue to make all pre-existing support available to all schools given the significant reduction in staff numbers at the DoE's central office. The number of central office staff has decreased from 1,290 as at May 2012, to 995.7 as at May 2016. This is a 22.8 per cent reduction in central office staff.
- 6.27 In his OAG 2015 report, the Auditor General has stated that there has been a reduction from 662 district office staff in 2009 to 150 regional office staff.<sup>290</sup> The DoE advises that some district office staff were moved into schools but acknowledges that there has

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284 Gobby, B 2013, 'Enacting the Independent Public Schools program in Western Australia', Issues in Education Research, vol. 23, no. 1., p19.

285 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p9.

286 Office of the Auditor General of Western Australia, *Follow-On: Managing Student Attendance in Western Australian Public Schools*, Perth, Western Australia, Report 16, August 2015, p8.

287 Department of Education, *Principal Professional Support*.  
<http://www.det.wa.edu.au/professionallearning/detcms/professionallearning/professional-learning-website/for-school-leaders/principal-professional-support.en?cat-id=10850889>.  
Accessed 5 August 2016.

288 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p18.

289 University of Melbourne 2013, *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*. A report for the WA Department of Education, Melbourne, Victoria, pp48-49.

290 Office of the Auditor General 2015, *Follow-On: Managing Student Attendance in Western Australian Public Schools*, p19.

been a 38 per cent reduction in regional staff since 2012.<sup>291</sup> This has coincided with a cut of \$180 million from district and central office recurrent funding.<sup>292</sup>

- 6.28 Though the DoE has stated that the staff members from central and regional offices have been moved into schools,<sup>293</sup> there are clearly less staff members available centrally to provide the same level of support to all schools.

*District office closures and central office reductions have resulted in the loss of professional development, student services, operations management, professional consultancy and facilities management.*<sup>294</sup>

### Finding 28

Due to the reduction in numbers of central and regional office staff, there is less support, guidance and training available to Independent Public School principals.

### Finding 29

The level of support principals receive should not be entirely dependent on the principals having the time and being willing to access available support.

### Recommendation 16

The Department of Education should ensure that appropriate levels of support are available to all Independent Public School principals.

- 6.29 The Department points to the creation of IPS clusters and networks that provide peer support amongst principals and school staff.<sup>295</sup>

### Regional networks

- 6.30 Introduced in 2011 concurrent to the regional office restructure, regional networks provide the opportunity for schools to collaborate and share information and resources.<sup>296</sup> Each network of up to 20 schools has a 'host school' which takes responsibility for using funding for network purposes, including professional learning events. The 'Network Principal' is appointed to lead the network concurrently with

291 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Hansard*, Assembly Estimates Committee B, 25 May 2016, pE363.

292 Mr S Breen, President, Western Australian Primary Principals' Association, cited in Submission No. 18, Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, 15 April 2016, p5.

293 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Hansard*, Assembly Estimates Committee B, 25 May 2016, pE363.

294 Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, 14 April 2016, p7.

295 Mr L Hale, Executive Director, Statewide Services, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p19.

296 Department of Education, *Independent Public Schools*.

<http://www.education.wa.edu.au/home/detcms/navigation/about-us/programs-and-initiatives/independent-public-schools/?page=3>. Accessed 5 August 2016.

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leading their school.<sup>297</sup> In regional areas, geographic isolation may mean a Network Principal will be employed on a full-time basis without being attached to a particular school.<sup>298</sup>

6.31 Regional networks are open to all schools. The DoE stated:

*one of the important things that has happened parallel to IPS and greater flexibility across schools has been the establishment of networks of schools. There is actually a very powerful base now of peer support amongst Principals and school staff, and often when they tap into our services, they do not just tap in on a school-by-school basis; they actually tap in as a network.*<sup>299</sup>

6.32 The DoE provides regional networks with establishment and ongoing funding. Regional offices may provide additional funding to establish a network or to meet ongoing costs.<sup>300</sup> Though it has been suggested that funding is “no longer sufficient for a fully functional network operating in the current environment.”<sup>301</sup>

6.33 This peer support has been established to offset the reduced central office support received from the DoE.<sup>302</sup> Although peer support is valued, principals regret the loss of pre-existing regional support structures.<sup>303</sup> This is a further shifting of responsibility from the DoE to individual schools.

6.34 Further, difficulties with these networks were also described as they rely on voluntary participation and therefore do not consistently work well.<sup>304</sup> An experienced administrator told the Committee he was “dismayed” at how collegiate networks broke down under IPS and that schools were operating in isolation:

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297 Department of Education, *Ashdale Cluster Network*. <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/detcms/district-education-offices/north-metropolitan-education-region/pages/regional-school-networks/ashdale-cluster-network.en?page=1#toc1>. Accessed 5 August 2016.

298 Department of Education, *Education networks and regions: New ways of supporting schools*, Perth, Western Australia, September 2010, p3.

299 Mr L Hale, Executive Director, Statewide Services, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p19.

300 <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/detcms/district-education-offices/north-metropolitan-education-region/pages/regional-school-networks/ashdale-cluster-network.en?page=3#toc3>

301 Mr D Lee, School Leaders’ Project Consultant, State School Teachers’ Union of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p2.

302 Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers’ Union of Western Australia, 14 April 2016, p7.

303 Submission No. 14 from the Western Australian Primary Principals’ Association, 12 April 2016, pp2-3; &

Submission No. 18 from Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, 15 April 2016, pp5-6.

304 Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers’ Union of Western Australia, 14 April 2016, p12.

*This was fine if the leaders were competent, however, I watched in horror as I noticed the less able leaders fall by the wayside, have their schools ERG'd and generally disconnect themselves from the group.*<sup>305</sup>

### Independent Public School clusters

- 6.35 Schools can apply to become IP Schools as part of a 'cluster'. Clusters are generally comprised of three or four schools located within close proximity.<sup>306</sup> Often the cluster will be comprised of local primary schools and the secondary school that the students will attend.
- 6.36 Schools that apply to be IPS as part of a cluster will work closely together. Cluster schools will develop common goals and processes and make collective decisions about curriculum, human resource management, financial management and student support. DES will also assess the performance of a school and its cluster as part of the DPA review.<sup>307</sup>
- 6.37 As one school cluster states:
- As a collaborative partnership we have a developed shared identity assisted by geographical proximity and a strong sense of being an inclusive community. As a cluster we have a common purpose, a joint vision for the improvement, attainment, achievement and progression of young people.*<sup>308</sup>
- 6.38 The development of clusters is one mechanism that the DoE has used to replace the support previously received from the central and regional offices. Stronger schools within the cluster will help less capable schools to improve. However, schools must commit both the time and resources to work together to ensure effectiveness and sustainability.<sup>309</sup>

### Finding 30

The development of networks and clusters is part of the continued devolution of the Department of Education's responsibility to individual schools. Whilst peer support and collaboration are important, the Department of Education's ultimate responsibility for supporting schools should not be avoided. The benefits of being part of a public school 'system' will be lost when the 'system' aspects disappear.

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305 Submission No. 15 from Mr K Dullard, 12 April 2016, pp1-2.

306 Submission No. 28 from the Department of Education Services, 20 April 2016, p4.

307 Submission No. 28 from the Department of Education Services, 20 April 2016, pp4-5.

308 Landsdale Primary School – Ashdale Cluster. <http://www.landsdaleps.wa.edu.au/site2/>. Accessed 5 August 2016.

309 Ashdale Cluster and Ashdale Secondary College, *Annual Report 2012*, p2.

## The declining role of Parents and Citizens' Associations

- 6.39 Despite one of the objectives of IPS being to encourage greater community involvement in IP Schools, the role of the Parents and Citizens' Associations (P&Cs) seems to be declining in importance.
- 6.40 P&Cs have an important fundraising and community engagement role, governed by legislation.<sup>310</sup> The majority of P&Cs are incorporated associations, and obtain funds for the benefit of the school. They often manage or operate facilities at the school, such as the school canteen, which includes employing staff.<sup>311</sup>
- 6.41 The Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, the body representing P&Cs, has expressed concerns that the DoE is no longer supporting P&Cs, leading to them being sidelined and disempowered. As principals must consult with the school board (though the utility of this is questioned), they are now neglecting to engage with the P&C.<sup>312</sup> There is no requirement for the P&C to be represented on the school board.

### Recommendation 17

That the Department of Education amend its guidelines to allow for the Parents and Citizens' Association to nominate a parent member to the school board.

## Use of 'Independent' in Independent Public Schools

- 6.42 Several independent school organisations expressed concerns over the use of the word 'independent' to describe the IPS initiative. 'Independent' is misleading as IP Schools remain government controlled and operate within the public education system.<sup>313</sup> By comparison, independent schools are separately governed with their own constitution and adhere to different state and federal legislation and standards.<sup>314</sup>

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310 *School Education Act 1999* and the *Associations Incorporation Act 1987*.

311 Supplement to Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 1 August 2016, Attachment 1.

312 Submission No. 20 from Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, 15 April 2016, pp8-9.  
Ms Kylie Catto, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p3.

313 Submission No. 9 from the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia, 5 April 2016, p1.

314 Submission No. 9 from the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia, 5 April 2016, p2;  
Submission No. 11 from the Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia, 7 April 2016, pp3, 6.

- 6.43 The term ‘independent’ has created confusion in the community. Parents and teachers have been contacting independent schools associations with queries relating to IP Schools.<sup>315</sup> Other parents have challenged independent schools about their right to charge fees. This confusion also has the potential to impact the marketing of WA independent schools internationally.
- 6.44 Independent schools also note their market share has decreased, while public schools have increased.<sup>316</sup> This may negatively affect staffing and teaching conditions in independent schools.<sup>317</sup> This decrease may be related to confusion about the independent status of IPS. However, there are potentially other contributing economic factors.
- 6.45 As the majority of public schools are now IP Schools, and a large proportion of non-IP Schools expected to transition in the coming years, it may become unnecessary to distinguish schools as IP Schools as this would be the default expectation.

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315 Submission No. 11 from Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia, 7 April 2016, p6; & Submission No. 9 from the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA), 5 April 2016, p3.

316 Ms S O’Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p7; & Submission No. 24 from the Independent Education Union, 15 April 2016, p4.

317 Submission No. 24 from the Independent Education Union, 15 April 2016, p2.





## Chapter 7

# Monitoring and reviewing Independent Public Schools

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Under the Independent Public School initiative, accountability relies on a combination of self-review, internal departmental review and external review. While the requirements of accountability shouldn't equate to a burden which distracts from the core business of education, public confidence in Independent Public Schools can only be assured where the balance in this combination is correct.

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### Ways in which Independent Public Schools and the initiative are monitored and reviewed

- 7.1 IP Schools, IP School principals and the IPS initiative are reviewed and monitored in several ways:
1. Individual IP Schools are subject to:
    - a. DES reviews conducted in the final year of the DPA
    - b. Ongoing self-review
    - c. Central monitoring by the DoE
  2. IP School principals are subject to performance reviews.
  3. The DoE reviews and evaluates the overarching initiative.
- 7.2 As a party to the DPA, IP School boards are involved in the DES review process and their participation in the school's governance is assessed. This chapter also discusses whether there is room for boards to extend their function by participating further in the principal's performance management process.

### Review of individual Independent Public Schools

- 7.3 The DoE claims that the accountability regime imposed on IP Schools is more rigorous and comprehensive than that of non-IP Schools.<sup>318</sup> IP Schools demonstrate accountability for the quality of their learning environment and standards of student learning through a combination of self-assessment and independent review. The DoE also centrally monitors school performance.

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318 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p12.

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### Central monitoring of Independent Public Schools by the Department of Education

- 7.4 The DoE's SPMS centrally monitors the IP School's student performance, human resources and financial management. SPMS data is reviewed to identify poor performance, patterns and inconsistencies.<sup>319</sup> IP Schools are also subject to DoE's usual financial audit processes.<sup>320</sup>
- 7.5 Inconsistent performance or underperformance in any area can prompt the Director General to request a response from a school regarding performance concerns. If these concerns are significant and not appropriately addressed by the school, the Director General can initiate intervention by the ERG. Conversely, schools demonstrating areas of exemplary practice can also be reviewed by the ERG.<sup>321</sup> To date, five remedial ERG reviews have been conducted on IP Schools.
- 7.6 ERG review findings form the basis for a Performance Improvement Agreement (**PIA**). This agreement prescribes the support the school will receive and the actions the school will take in response to the findings. In the case of IP Schools, the PIA is appended to the DPA. This creates a direct link between the school's performance and the Principal's Professional Review agreement with the Director General.<sup>322</sup> The PIA is published along with a de-identified summary report to protect the identity of individuals contributing to the review.<sup>323</sup>
- 7.7 Where the Director General considers that an IP School is "dysfunctional", the Director General may request that the DES bring forward the school's next three-yearly DPA review. To date this option has not been exercised.<sup>324</sup>

### Self-assessment requirements

- 7.8 All schools are required to conduct continuous self-assessment processes to evaluate their performance. Principals, in collaboration with school staff, self-assess the standards of student achievement and the effectiveness of school processes in maximising student achievement. A key component of this is critically assessing data

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319 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p22.

320 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p. 12.

321 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p. 14.

322 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p. 14.

323 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p. 14. See also Letter from the Director General, Department of Education, 4 July 2016. Where the ERG conducts a school performance enquiry targeting a specific aspect of school performance (rather than a full review), it is departmental policy that there is no online publication.

324 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, pp21-22.

and other evidence related to student achievement, both academic and non-academic, and school operations.<sup>325</sup>

7.9 Ideally, each school will consider the questions:

- What did we intend to achieve?
- What did we achieve?
- What can we improve?
- How are we going to sustain and improve on our successes?<sup>326</sup>

7.10 A school's self-assessment of their performance is included in its annual report, presented to and endorsed by the school board, which is made public.<sup>327</sup>

7.11 While self-assessment is a useful tool by which IP Schools can reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses, the Committee is of the view that the overarching principle of accountability demands that this self-assessment be verified independently. The DES currently performs this role although the Committee holds some reservations, articulated below, that this is not done thoroughly enough.

### Finding 31

The overarching principle of accountability demands that self-assessment is verified independently and thoroughly.

### Independent review by the Department of Education Services

7.12 In addition to their self-assessment, each IP School is subject to an independent review conducted by the DES during the final year of the school's DPA. This independent review verifies, or otherwise, the self-assessment. The school's performance is measured against the DPA, business plan, principal's reports to the board and the school's annual report.<sup>328</sup> The DES gave evidence that IP Schools have a "strong preference" for an independent body such as itself to conduct these reviews, rather than the DoE.<sup>329</sup>

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325 Department of Education, *School Improvement and Accountability*, 17 February 2009, p4, Attachment 8 to Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016.

326 Department of Education Services, *About IPS Review – Purpose*.  
<http://www.des.wa.gov.au/schooleducation/independentpublicschools/review/purpose/Pages/default.aspx>. Accessed 5 July 2016.

327 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p. 15.

328 Department of Education Services, *Independent Public School accountability*.  
<http://www.des.wa.gov.au/schooleducation/independentpublicschools/review/accountability/Pages/default.aspx>. Accessed on 5 July 2016.

329 Mr Richard Strickland, Director General, Department of Education Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p5.

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7.13 The DES review produces findings to assure the principal, school community, board, the Director General of the DoE and the Minister for Education of the extent to which the school staff and board have met the commitments of the DPA and associated business plan.<sup>330</sup> These findings are intended to complement each school's self-review by:

- Validating the school's conclusions about their achievement of intended goals and targets
- Commending excellence in relation to standards of achievement and improvements made
- Recommending areas for improvement.<sup>331</sup>

### Independent review process

7.14 The DES' independent review looks at whether a school has achieved its stated business plan targets, which are usually couched in terms of improving students' academic and non-academic performance. The review focuses on:

- The effectiveness of the school's self-assessment process in accounting for its performance
- Improvements in student achievement, progress and engagement – including analysis of *Schools Online* Student Performance Data and NAPLAN results
- The quality of the learning environment – whether the school environment and culture promotes learning and well-being
- The sustainability of practice.<sup>332</sup>

7.15 The DES has a team of 43 reviewers, many of whom were district directors and principals in both government and non-government schools.<sup>333</sup> The DES provides ongoing professional development and moderation for the reviewers to ensure that the reviews adhere to similar standards.

7.16 The independent review process conducted by the DES comprises three stages.<sup>334</sup>

### Stage 1

7.17 The principal provides the DES reviewers with the school's self-assessment electronically about one month before Stage 2.<sup>335</sup> Reviewers conduct an initial analysis

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330 Submission No. 28 from the Department of Education Services, 20 April 2016, p1.

331 Department of Education Services, *About IPS Review – Purpose*.

<http://www.des.wa.gov.au/schooleducation/independentpublicschools/review/purpose/Pages/default.aspx>. Accessed on 5 July 2016.

332 Submission No. 28 from the Department of Education Services, 20 April 2016, p3.

333 Dr P Wood, Assistant Director, Department of Education Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p2.

334 Submission No. 28 from the Department of Education Services, 20 April 2016, pp3-4.

of the self-assessment conclusions and supporting evidence. Reviewers also consider school performance data from departmental and external sources.

- 7.18 Reviewers form lines of inquiry to discuss with school personnel and board members during the next stage of the review. A review agenda is negotiated with the principal.

### **Stage 2**

- 7.19 Reviewers attend the school for up to two days, depending on the school size, to verify the school's self-assessment claims about their performance. They meet with the principal and board chair to form an understanding of the school's context, self-review process, key achievements, improvements and future directions. Reviewers also meet with school leaders, teaching and non-teaching staff, students, parents and board members to confirm information gathered from the school's self-assessment.
- 7.20 An exit meeting with the principal and board chair allows reviewers to discuss their preliminary observations and seek any necessary clarification before compiling their findings.

### **Stage 3**

- 7.21 Reviewers forward their draft findings to the principal and board chair to check the factual accuracy of the information. The findings comment on the extent to which the DPA commitments have been met, and identify areas for commendation and improvement. These findings inform lines of inquiry for subsequent reviews, to determine how commended actions have been maintained and areas for improvement acted upon. There is also an expectation that the findings will inform future school and board planning.<sup>336</sup> However there does not seem to be any mechanism, other than the next DES review, to ensure that this occurs.
- 7.22 The most commonly identified areas for improvement are in business planning, the extent of board involvement in oversight of the school, and "the extent to which the community that the school is in knows about the school and what it stands for."<sup>337</sup>
- 7.23 The review findings are documented in the review report which is endorsed by the reviewers and the Director General of the DES. The report is presented to the principal, the board chair, the Minister and the Director General of the DoE.

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335 Prior to 2015, reviewers made a half-day information gathering visit to the school during which they were presented with the school's self-assessment analysis and conclusions. This process ceased due to Principals' concerns about the duration of the review being spread across a number of weeks and cost efficiencies that could be achieved by reducing the number of school visits. See Submission No. 28 from the Department of Education Services, 20 April 2016, p3.

336 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p15.

337 Mr R Strickland, Director General, Department of Education Services, *Hansard*, Assembly Estimates Committee B, 25 May 2016, pE380.

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- 7.24 Following tabling of the review report at a board meeting, the review report is published online.<sup>338</sup> The Committee notes from its own research in the course of this Inquiry that publication of these reports has not been consistent, likely due to unspecific wording in earlier versions of the DPA.<sup>339</sup> A specific requirement is included in the most recent DPA that the report be “placed on the Department’s Schools Online website, and school website where available.”<sup>340</sup>

### Feedback on the independent review process

- 7.25 Although the DES does not seek to rate, rank nor compare individual IP Schools, it does seek feedback on the independent review process from principals and, latterly, board chairs. This is done by invitation to complete a survey several weeks after completion of the review.<sup>341</sup>
- 7.26 The survey feedback is overwhelmingly affirmative, with most aspects of the review process attracting a positive response from at least 90 per cent of respondents. The area of least satisfaction relates to the review of IP School clusters.<sup>342</sup> Response rates from the 84 schools reviewed in 2015 were 59 per cent from principals and 72 per cent from board chairs.<sup>343</sup>
- 7.27 Further, while the DES notes that schools often do not meet the targets set in their DPA, this is merely an indicator of an area for improvement or a target that was too ambitious. It does not equate to an “overall failing”.<sup>344</sup> Ultimately, the DES reports that 100 per cent of schools meet the overall service and delivery requirements of IP Schools.<sup>345</sup>
- 7.28 The Committee is concerned that the survey is not anonymous. It is possible that the overwhelmingly positive response from IP Schools could be indicative of reluctance to prejudice any future reviews. The Committee would be interested to see whether there was any difference in the results of an anonymous survey.

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338 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p15.

339 Department of Education, *Independent Public Schools Delivery and Performance Agreement 2010-2013*, Section 4, Attachment 2 to Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016.

340 Department of Education, *Independent Public Schools Delivery and Performance Agreement 2015-2017*, p5, Attachment 2 to Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016.

See also Dr P Wood, Assistant Director, Department of Education Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p6.

341 Submission No. 28 from the Department of Education Services, 20 April 2016, p6.

342 Submission No. 28 from the Department of Education Services, 20 April 2016, pp7-8.

343 Submission No. 28 from the Department of Education Services, 20 April 2016, p8.

344 Mr R Strickland, Director General, Department of Education Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p5.

345 Mr R Strickland, Director General, Department of Education Services, *Hansard*, Assembly Estimates Committee B, 25 May 2016, p380.

**Recommendation 18**

The Department of Education Services should conduct biannual surveys, inviting principals of Independent Public Schools which have been reviewed in the previous six months to complete the survey anonymously.

**Benefits of the review system for Independent Public Schools**

- 7.29 Proponents of the IP Schools' review system claim that the self-assessment and independent review processes are complementary and ultimately combine to achieve a high level of accountability for the performance of IP Schools. The independent review provides IP School with the opportunity to independently validate their self-assessment.

*"We know what we are charged with; this is our responsibility now as an independent public school; we have got control of the reins; what are we good at, and what needs to be fixed up, and what are we going to do to fix it up; and how will we then tell our community, our board and our parents", and [the DES is] just another slice in there that says, "We will find out that information", and we will validate that and whether or not they have got it right."*<sup>346</sup>

- 7.30 While the independent review is not intended to be "inspectorial",<sup>347</sup> an upcoming independent review can also prompt a school to prioritise self-review and perform it more rigorously. This can be "quite revelatory" and "a good educative process in terms of how to run their school."<sup>348</sup>
- 7.31 Each IP School is asked to examine its context and set its own targets accordingly. The review process then "asks how the school is going on its own terms."<sup>349</sup> The DES gave evidence that principals of early adopting IP Schools have admitted setting low targets that could be easily achieved to "get a good mark" in their DES review. However, as IP Schools have become more familiar with the independent review process, they have realised "it is not a catch-out mentality" and become more confident in setting their targets.<sup>350</sup>

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346 Mr R Strickland, Director General, Department of Education Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p11.

347 Mr R Strickland, Director General, Department of Education Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p11.

348 Mr R Strickland, Director General, Department of Education Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p10.

349 Mr T Werner, Director, Higher Education and Legislative Review, Department of Education Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p4.

350 Dr P Wood, Assistant Director, Department of Education Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p7.

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### **The independent review lacks rigour, is unsustainable and fails to prescribe common standards**

- 7.32 Despite positive feedback on the independent review process, criticisms persist that the overall review system for IP Schools lacks rigour, is unsustainable, and fails to prescribe common criteria or standards against which all IP Schools are assessed.

#### ***Risk of unaddressed bias in self-review***

- 7.33 The review system has been described to the Committee as:

*At best it lacks rigour and allows principals to self-assess without any input from other staff. At worst it is open to downright dishonesty.*<sup>351</sup>

- 7.34 The Committee received evidence that “principals are by and large left to monitor their own performance in any way they choose, unless a serious issue arises”<sup>352</sup> and IP Schools are “really left to their own devices as long as they met what they said they were going to do in the three-year plan”.<sup>353</sup>

#### **Finding 32**

The accuracy of the self-review is at risk from bias and selective inclusion of information.

#### ***The inconsistency between being selected to be an Independent Public School, Department of Education Services reviews and Expert Review Group reviews***

- 7.35 Further, it has been suggested that the current review system is not able to identify IP Schools at risk, which is demonstrated in the inconsistency between DES and ERG reviews. The Committee was referred to examples of IP Schools receiving a positive DES review, only to be the subject of a “brutal” ERG review later.<sup>354</sup> It is worth noting that the Director General of DoE did not cite DES reviews as a tool for identifying underperforming IP Schools in need of ERG intervention,<sup>355</sup> nor does the DES state that this is a purpose of its reviews.

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351 Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers’ Union of WA, 14 April 2016, p12.

352 Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers’ Union of WA, 14 April 2016, p12.

353 Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 June 2016, p8.

354 Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers’ Union of WA, 14 April 2016, p12.

355 Ms S O’Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p22.



- 7.36 Of the five ERG reviews conducted on IP Schools since the start of the initiative in 2010, only three schools had completed a DPA cycle and been subject to DES review before ERG intervention occurred. The time periods between the endorsement of the DES findings report and the ERG report were as follows:

**Table 2: Time difference between DES and ERG reviews**

	DES review report	ERG report	Time difference
School A	October 2013	June 2015	20 months
School B	July 2013	May 2015	22 months
School C	May 2014	September 2015	16 months

- 7.37 The other two schools became IP Schools in 2015 and were subject to ERG review in April 2016. These time differences, while not as small as originally suggested to the Committee, indicate that at least some of the problems warranting ERG intervention would have been present at the time of the DES review or at the time the school became an IP School. This is despite “demonstrable readiness” being a key element of the IPS selection process, which is intended to exclude schools experiencing significant risk from the initiative.<sup>356</sup> The DoE has stated that:

*in the case of these five schools, the panel did not identify any issues that would preclude them from becoming Independent Public Schools.*<sup>357</sup>

- 7.38 The IPS selection criteria are described as “rigorous”, yet they are only broadly outlined as:

- Capacity of the school to assume greater responsibility for its own affairs
- Level of local support, including staff support
- Potential benefits to students and the broader school community.<sup>358</sup>

The Committee would have expected to see a specific performance-based criterion which ensured that schools transitioning to IPS status were in a strong position to do so successfully.

- 7.39 In any event, the difference in the tone and focus of the ERG and DES reports cannot be overstated. For example, the DES review of School A was generally very positive and contained only two recommendations relating to the processes of the board and content of the annual report. All other aspects of the school’s performance were “commended” or “affirmed”.

<sup>356</sup> Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, pp4-5.

<sup>357</sup> Supplement to Submission No. 30 from Department of Education, 1 August 2016, p10.

<sup>358</sup> Department of Education, *Opportunity to Become an Independent School in 2017*, p4, Attachment 1 to Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016.

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- 7.40 Many of the DES review findings for School A were contradicted by the ERG findings. Both the DES and ERG reviews noted the school's history of "below expected" performance in NAPLAN. Where the DES noted that the school had enjoyed some recent significant improvements and was "well placed to improve its performance", the ERG found that limited analysis of performance data had compromised targeted intervention through an explicit focus on literacy and numeracy. Other findings are compared in the table below:

**Table 3: Comparison between DES and ERG review findings**

DES review finding	ERG review finding
The school is implementing strategies to strengthen the leadership of curriculum, pedagogy and academic rigour.	Shared understandings of the foundations of teaching and learning are lacking. Curriculum pathways have not been developed, restricting the prospects for a genuine emphasis on rigour and continuity of learning.
The next iteration of the business plan includes specific targets that describe what improves, for whom, and by when.	The strategic intent of the business plan is unclear and no dedicated improvement agenda is evident.
The school has committed resources to professional learning to enhance teaching and learning.	Resources are not always allocated strategically to maximise improvements in student learning.

### Finding 33

It is concerning that the Expert Review Group determined a need to review several schools not long after they were reviewed by the Department of Education Services and/or transitioned to become Independent Public Schools.

### Finding 34

The Committee questions the rigour and efficacy of the Department of Education Services' review process and the Independent Public School selection process.

### Finding 35

The findings of the Expert Review Group are inconsistent with the findings of the Department of Education Services' reviews.

### *Impression management*

- 7.41 The DES review has been described as "a staged affair"<sup>359</sup> which doesn't amount to much more than "impression management".<sup>360</sup> The DES told the Committee that "[i]t is not [the] job of just the principal to do the review and talk to the reviewers, but everyone has a stake in it."<sup>361</sup> However, the Committee has been told that staff and

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359 Mrs T Sumner, Education Assistant, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 June 2016, p10.

360 Dr S Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 June 2016, p8.

361 Dr P Wood, Assistant Director, Department of Education Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p12.

board members interviewed as part of the review are hand-picked by school leadership and “prepped” on what to say – “some were even given time to practise their scripts.”<sup>362</sup>

- 7.42 Further, there are claims that some schools selectively report or misreport their performance in order to meet the requirements of their DPA.<sup>363</sup> It has been suggested that this tendency to manipulate the review process may be an example of “resultant pressure” on IP Schools to meet the standard of expectation set by the government’s “overt championing” of IPS as an improved education system.<sup>364</sup>

### **Finding 36**

The Department of Education Services’ reviews are at risk of manipulation by school principals selectively providing information to be considered by reviewers.

### ***Independent review sustainability***

- 7.43 As the number of IP Schools increases, questions have been raised about the efficiency, cost and sustainability of the current independent review system. In the 2015–16 financial year, DES conducted 106 reviews, and 177 reviews are scheduled for the 2016–17 financial year.<sup>365</sup> An alternative review cycle has been proposed whereby proven high-performing schools are subject to less frequent reviews.<sup>366</sup> While this proposal has merit, the Committee considers the current review frequency appropriate until the IPS initiative is well-established.

### ***Incorporating review outcomes by the school***

- 7.44 There are discrepancies in how IP Schools respond to and act on review outcomes. DoE has stated that the Director General writes to an IPS principal and board chair to acknowledge review outcomes and requires the school to consider these as part of its next cycle of business planning. The DPA also requires that the principal ensure that the business plan runs for the same term as the DPA and consideration is given to the recommendations of the DES review in the forward business planning cycle.

### **Finding 37**

The Committee has concerns about how the Department of Education holds schools accountable and monitors schools’ progress in implementing Department of Education Services’ review outcomes.

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362 Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers’ Union of WA, 14 April 2016, p13.

363 Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers’ Union of WA, 14 April 2016, p12.

364 Submission No. 23 from the State School Teachers’ Union of WA, 14 April 2016, p13.

365 Hon L Harvey MLA, Minister for Police representing the Minister for Education, *Hansard*, Assembly Estimates Committee B, 25 May 2016, pE380.

366 Submission No. 14 from the Western Australian Primary Principals’ Association, 12 April 2016, p4.

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### Finding 38

It is unclear to the Committee how the Department of Education provides support to Independent Public Schools to implement outcomes arising from Department of Education Services' reviews.

### Finding 39

It is insufficient that the only mechanism for monitoring action to implement outcomes is for these outcomes to be considered by the next Department of Education Services' review in three or more years.

### *Publication of independent review findings*

- 7.45 It has been suggested to the Committee that DES review findings should not be made public, as negative findings can undermine school leadership and boards, as well as affecting enrolments and students' pride in their school.<sup>367</sup> Having reviewed numerous DES review reports, none of them could be described as negative. Further, withholding publication of these reports could only be viewed as a lack of accountability.

### *Lack of common review criteria*

- 7.46 Although the performance of an IP School is primarily reviewed against the targets set by itself in its DPA and the business plan, there are concerns that the lack of common criteria for review across all IP Schools leaves the overall quality of review reliant on the perspective of individual reviewers:

*I think [the quality] varies depending according to who the reviewer is. Back to my leadership example: some are highly sophisticated and very knowledgeable people. They know how schools work. Others are not quite so clued-in, so you do get a variation in not only the quality of the reviewer but the quality of the checks and balances, the inquiry approach that they use to gain their evidence, and then in the quality of the report<sup>368</sup>.*

### Finding 40

While taking account of a school's context and local knowledge is important when reviewing a school's performance, public education requires uniform standards.

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367 Submission No. 14 from the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association, 12 April 2016, p4; &

Submission No. 22 from the Western Australian Secondary Schools Executives Association, 15 April 2016, p3.

368 Mr D Lee, School Leaders' Project Consultant, State School Teachers' Union of WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, pp14-15.

**Recommendation 19**

The Department of Education Services should incorporate standardised review criteria into its review process.

**Principals' Professional Review performance management process**

- 7.47 An additional element of IPS accountability is the Principals' Professional Review performance management process. This process reflects that, while the Director General of the DoE holds principals to account for their performance, principals themselves must take personal responsibility and professional actions to seek further improvement.<sup>369</sup>
- 7.48 Every IP School principal is subject to a formal performance agreement with the DoE's Director General which explicitly links their performance to their ability to ensure school adherence to the terms of the DPA.<sup>370</sup> The expectations on IP School principals as outlined in the DPA are:
- Maintaining appropriate standards of academic and non-academic achievement
  - Effective educational leadership, operation and management of the school
  - Delivering programs that meet the needs of students within a safe environment
  - Operating within the specified parameters, ensuring financial, human and physical resources are managed effectively and efficiently.<sup>371</sup>
- IPS principals are also required to develop a Leadership Action Plan (**LAP**) and identify their own areas for further improvement and action.
- 7.49 The Director General assesses each principal's performance based on information collated from the DES review findings, feedback from the 360-degree review process,<sup>372</sup> National School Opinion Surveys and the SPMS.<sup>373</sup> This is conveyed to the principal in an annual performance letter from the Director General.<sup>374</sup>
- 7.50 Where the Director General has concerns regarding a principal's leadership, she will require the principal to provide a copy of their LAP and work with the Director General and/or her nominees to address the issues. The principal is also provided with targeted support, through the SISU and other business units.<sup>375</sup>

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369 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p12.

370 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p12.

371 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p13.

<sup>372</sup> See Glossary for definition.

373 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p13.

374 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p18.

375 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p13.

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- 7.51 Failure to meet the terms of the DPA can result in further substandard performance processes. However, the DES is yet to determine that any IP School has failed to meet its DPA requirements.

### **A new concept of line management**

- 7.52 The Director General of the DoE is now the line manager for 445 IP School principals. This has required the DoE, in consultation with the Public Sector Commission, to reconsider the notion of traditional line management and implement a system that was “embedded with the spirit of professional accountability in an autonomous environment and more explicitly linked to contractual agreements”.<sup>376</sup>
- 7.53 Notably, the Director General gave evidence that a traditional notion of line management didn’t operate within the DoE even prior to the introduction of the IPS initiative:

*Education has never had the command and control arrangement that other agencies have had, by its sheer size. With 800 sites, if you had your best practice line management, which is one line manager to about five or six people, that has never been done in Education, because they have always been so distributed.*<sup>377</sup>

- 7.54 As the Committee would expect, the Director General delegates some of her managerial duties to the REDs but it is “absolutely crystal clear” that IP Schools and principals are directly accountable to the Director General.<sup>378</sup>

### **Effectiveness of the line management arrangement**

- 7.55 The Committee heard evidence that some comfort could be derived from having the ability to elevate concerns directly to the Director General:

*The big plus for having the director general being responsible for our schools, say my school, is that I can write to her direct... and then she will pass that on to somebody in that system to look at it. I think there is a certain quality assurance for us, or certainly for me, in knowing that the DG is actually doing that.*<sup>379</sup>

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376 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p12.

377 Ms S O’Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p17.

378 Mr M Gillett, Principal, Western Australian Secondary School Executives’ Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p15.

379 Mr M Gillett, Principal, Western Australian Secondary School Executives’ Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p13.

- 7.56 Nonetheless many question the ability of one person to effectively line manage hundreds of IP School principals, describing such a notion as “unrealistic”,<sup>380</sup> “dysfunctional”,<sup>381</sup> “ridiculous”<sup>382</sup> and “a dereliction of duty”.<sup>383</sup> The lack of individual face-to-face contact is a significant concern, with many believing this is integral to an effective managerial relationship:

*Because of the numbers of people involved, meaningful leadership and feedback for school management during the term of their DPA is simply not possible.*<sup>384</sup>

*... there are now principals of large primary schools who have come up through the ranks from deputy principal to Local Public School leaders, during the recent structures, that have never... had a face to face performance management discussion with a line manager.*<sup>385</sup>

*... there is no doubt that while people want autonomy, they also want to be able to talk to their boss and have some recognition, and run things past them—all those sorts of normal things that you do, which I guess you get from having collegiate groups now. The director general does run groups that she meets with every year, and you can speak quite openly within those groups as a principal—go up and raise concerns or whatever—but it is certainly not a performance management.*<sup>386</sup>

- 7.57 The DoE told the Committee that the advent of IPS has seen a “massive” rise in collaboration across collegiate groups or networks, as referred to in the final quote above.<sup>387</sup> However, as described above, the voluntary nature of these networks can limit participation and their effectiveness. In any event, these networks are for peer support and are not intended to play any role in the management of IP Schools or their principals.

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380 Submission No. 14 from Western Australian Primary Principals’ Association, 12 April 2016, p3.

381 Closed Submission, March 2016.

382 Ms P Byrne, President, State School Teachers’ Union of WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p5.

383 Dr S Fitzgerald, Researcher, Curtin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 June 2016, p. 11.

384 Submission No. 23 from State School Teachers’ Union of WA, 14 April 2016, p12.

385 Closed Submission, March 2016.

386 Mrs J Gee, President, Western Australian Secondary Schools Executives Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p12.

387 Mr L Hale, Executive Director, Statewide Services, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p19.

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- 7.58 The Director General told the Committee while “the traditional line management question” persists, the current arrangement is, in her mind, “adequate”:

*... most of [the IPS principals] either maintain a relationship with the regional executive director, because they find that conversation useful—some of them ask them to be much more directly involved in their schools—and there is another group that use them when they need to, but none of those people feel like they need to restore a one-to-one line-management relationship. I guess the success of that, and the reason why I negotiated that with the Public Sector Commission and the success I point to it, is that on no factor do we have more performance problems with principals, we do not have any more conduct problems with principals, and the performance management is compliant with the public sector standards, so there has not been any dip in service or support, as far as has been pointed out to me.*<sup>388</sup>

- 7.59 Nonetheless, the Committee is concerned over the ability of both the Director General and the REDs to maintain meaningful managerial relationships with the sheer number of principals under their guidance. This is particularly so in the case of the two metropolitan regions, which each comprise over 230 schools.<sup>389</sup>

- 7.60 The Committee also heard concerns that coaching and mentoring for IP School principals is not mandated. Devolving responsibility for professional improvement to IP School principals meant that many missed out on the “developmental”<sup>390</sup> aspect of performance management:

*A lot of school leaders and teachers do not know what they do not know, and basically we learn from other people. Education is about role modelling...*<sup>391</sup>

*I think our top principals, our top leaders, are self-reflective. I think they have got that level of self-awareness. But there is a group that will still need to be coached on how to go about that process if they are going to seek, for their own development, the required professional learning, the coaching and the mentoring that goes with*

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388 Ms S O’Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p18.

389 Mr K Dullard, School Leaders’ Organiser, State School Teachers’ Union of WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, pp5-6; &

Mr S Breen, President, Western Australian Primary Principals’ Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p6.

390 Ms P Byrne, President, State School Teachers’ Union of WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p5.

391 Mr S Breen, President, Western Australian Primary Principals’ Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p7.



*it... You still need the professional responsibility to look after your own professional learning requirements, but you might need some help to be able to do that, and I am not sure that we have a mechanism by which we can clearly identify which people are struggling and which people need professional learning, and then have the professional learning that is mandated for them to help improve their business plan.*<sup>392</sup>

- 7.61 The DoE told the Committee that the Principal Advisory Team within the SISU are “people who act more as coaches and mentors” from whom principals can access support if they wish.<sup>393</sup> While SISU may provide support when actively sought, a good line management relationship involves the line manager proactively offering support when they see it is needed. SISU are not in a position to offer such proactive support to hundreds of principals across the state as it is not their role to be aware of principal’s concerns unless these approached by the principal.

#### **Finding 41**

The line management arrangement between Independent Public Schools and the Director General of the Department of Education is ineffective. It does not allow for the appropriate level of oversight of principals’ actions, nor provide sufficient support for principals seeking guidance.

#### **Recommendation 20**

A formal line management arrangement should be reintroduced to provide appropriate oversight of and support for school principals in a more manageable ratio than 445 to 1.

### **Review of the Independent Public Schools initiative**

- 7.62 The DoE retains responsibility for monitoring and review of the overall IPS initiative. This is done through a combination of internal review mechanisms and external review.

#### **Internal review mechanisms**

- 7.63 The SISU is the primary internal body responsible for review of the IPS initiative. In addition to other duties, it provides advice on the implementation of the initiative and emerging issues, collates and analyses independent review findings from the DES, and enlists support from business units to address broader system issues. It also works

392 Mr D Lee, School Leaders’ Project Consultant, State School Teachers’ Union of WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2016, p4.

393 Ms S O’Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p17.

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alongside the DES to share findings and initiate improvements to the review process itself.<sup>394</sup> There are 10 staff members, six of whom are principals.<sup>395</sup>

- 7.64 Additionally, the formally constituted IPS Principals' Group, made up of principals elected by their peers, represents IP Schools at a departmental level. IP School principals can "go to them as advocates into the system."<sup>396</sup> The group provides regular advice to the Director General and the DoE's senior executive on issues that impact schools' ability to exercise autonomy effectively. This usually relates to processes and policies that contribute to inordinate or unnecessary bureaucracy or diminish decision-making at the local level.<sup>397</sup>
- 7.65 The Director General also hosts meetings with IPS principals in groups of about 20 participants, twice per year. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss system wide priorities and issues specific to the IPS initiative. The forums are designed to provide the Director General with unfiltered feedback from the field on the challenges and opportunities offered by the IPS initiative.<sup>398</sup>

### External review

- 7.66 The review findings from the DES are an important part of external review of the IPS initiative. These findings have stimulated independent research and adjustments of the initiative by DoE, including changes to the DPA.<sup>399</sup>
- 7.67 The DES review reports have informed each subsequent IPS intake's transition training program, particularly in areas such as business planning, school self-assessment and board readiness. The DoE recently introduced the Advanced Leadership Program in response to numerous recommendations from DES that schools need to demonstrate their progress against the business plan via effective self-assessment models. This program seeks to build the capacity of principals to convert autonomy into meaningful changes in classrooms.<sup>400</sup>
- 7.68 The DoE has commissioned several pieces of independent research on the IPS initiative. Although the findings of this research are discussed elsewhere in this Report, a summary of the implementation of their recommendations is included below:

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394 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p24.

395 Mr D Price, Director, School Improvement and Support Unit, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p19.

396 Ms S O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p18.

397 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p15.

398 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p15.

399 Supplement to Submission No. 30 from Department of Education, 1 August 2016, p12.

400 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p24.

- *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*, University of Melbourne, May 2013

In 2014, the DoE changed the process by which schools demonstrated their readiness to transition to IPS. The new process emphasises the importance of preparing school communities for more autonomy and adopting an empowerment mindset. This is done through a program of workshops, leadership development exercises and practical, school-based activities. Each school also has access to its own specially trained IPS Principal Advisor for ongoing support and guidance.<sup>401</sup>

This research also identified that further work was needed to understand how principals could use their increased flexibility and autonomy to make a difference in classrooms. This led to the commissioning of the Hamilton Associates report.

- *School Autonomy: Building the conditions for student success*, Hamilton Associates, October 2015

This research contributed to the development of a comprehensive leadership strategy and associated Advanced Leadership Program. These are planned for implementation in Semester 2, 2016.<sup>402</sup>

- *Developing Highly Effective School Boards for Independent Public Schools*, Curtin University, November 2015.

The DoE has used this research to inform the development of the School Board Development Program, scheduled to begin in Semester 2, 2016. The program will involve training IP School board members to build the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles more efficiently, particularly in relation to school accountability.<sup>403</sup>

## Finding 42

While the Department of Education has reviewed and evaluated the Independent Public Schools initiative, the implementation of recommendations for improvement has been slow and only realised in Semester 2, 2016.

## Recommendation 21

That the Department of Education regularly review the Independent Public Schools initiative to ensure continual improvement and evaluate progress towards improving student outcomes.

401 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, pp26-27.

402 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p26.

403 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p26.

## **The role of boards in monitoring and reviewing Independent Public Schools**

- 7.69 The Committee has received submissions that the role of boards in overseeing the performance of IP Schools and principals should be expanded. The role of boards in the independent review process conducted by DES has been outlined above. As of 2016, board chairs were given the opportunity to complete a post-review survey on their satisfaction with the independent review process and this elicited overwhelmingly positive feedback.<sup>404</sup> Additionally, the school annual report is endorsed by the board and is a key instrument against which school performance is measured.
- 7.70 However, analysis of the DES' review findings found that 27 per cent of the recommendations related to the need for well-functioning governance models. As a result, in Semester 2, 2016, the DoE introduced the School Boards Development Program as described above. This program is designed to enhance school governance, particularly in the areas of planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting.<sup>405</sup>
- 7.71 The Committee is generally satisfied with the extent of the role performed by boards in this regard. This is despite concerns about the lack of anonymity in the post-review survey, which are similar to those expressed above. The Committee recognises that, if allowed to perform its role fully, an IP School board acts as an effective accountability mechanism in the IPS system.
- 7.72 The Committee was told that the DoE does not seek feedback from the board on the principal's performance.<sup>406</sup> However, the DoE has provided additional information to the Committee to confirm that a principal must seek performance feedback from the school board chair as part of the principal's 360-degree review.<sup>407</sup>
- 7.73 As noted above, IPS principals are required to develop a LAP and identify their own areas for further improvement and action. The DoE said in its submission that although the LAP is not made public, and is only provided to the Director General on request, the document is to be shared annually with the board chair to assist them to understand that:
- Principals are responsible for their own development which is based on feedback from a wide variety of sources, including the community

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404 Submission No. 28 from the Department of Education Services, 20 April 2016, p7.

405 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p24.

406 Submission No. 21 from Mr P Mutton, Roleystone Community College Board, 15 April 2016, p3.

407 Supplement to Submission No. 30 from Department of Education, 1 August 2016, p11.

- Such development is part of principals' direct line relationship with the Director General.<sup>408</sup>

This statement is a clear indication of the review hierarchy in place for IP School principals and the limited extent to which the DoE expects boards to participate in this process.

#### **Finding 43**

Introducing a school board into Independent Public Schools has provided the school community with no additional input than exists for school councils.



DR G.G. JACOBS, MLA  
CHAIRMAN

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408 Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 26 April 2016, p13.



# Appendix One

## Inquiry Terms of Reference

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That the Education and Health Standing Committee inquire into and report on the Department of Education's Independent Public Schools initiative.

1. In particular the Committee will examine:
  - a) The implementation of the initiative, including support provided to schools transitioning to become Independent Public Schools and the use of Delivery and Performance Agreements.
  - b) The ongoing role of the Department of Education, and other agencies, supporting Independent Public Schools.
  - c) How Independent Public Schools are monitored through informal and formal review processes and the transparency of reviews for the school community.
  - d) The impact on the engagement and performance of students, in particular those with additional needs.
  - e) The outcomes of formal and informal reviews of Independent Public Schools.
  - f) The process and extent to which the Department of Education incorporates review outcomes into its management of the Independent Public Schools initiative and ensures that Independent Public Schools act on review outcomes.
  - g) The impact of Independent Public Schools on staffing arrangements.
2. The Committee will report by 16 August 2016.





## Appendix Two

### Committee's functions and powers

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1. The functions of the Committee are to review and report to the Assembly on:
  - a) the outcomes and administration of the departments within the Committee's portfolio responsibilities;
  - b) annual reports of government departments laid on the Table of the House;
  - c) the adequacy of legislation and regulations within its jurisdiction; and
  - d) any matters referred to it by the Assembly including a bill, motion, petition, vote or expenditure, other financial matter, report or paper.
2. At the commencement of each Parliament and as often thereafter as the Speaker considers necessary, the Speaker will determine and table a schedule showing the portfolio responsibilities for each committee. Annual reports of government departments and authorities tabled in the Assembly will stand referred to the relevant committee for any inquiry the committee may make.
3. Whenever a committee receives or determines for itself fresh or amended terms of reference, the committee will forward them to each standing and select committee of the Assembly and Joint Committee of the Assembly and Council. The Speaker will announce them to the Assembly at the next opportunity and arrange for them to be placed on the notice boards of the Assembly.



## Appendix Three

### Submissions received

No.	Name	Position	Organisation
1	Ms K Murray		
2	Mr G Williams		
3	Mr R Clarke		Education Research Solutions
4	Closed submission		
5	Mr M Gulberti		
6	Mr A Pearson		
7	E Prof J Barker		
8	Mr A Acciano		
9	Ms V Gould	Executive Director	Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia
10	Closed submission		
11	Mrs K Spiller and Mr D Gee	AHISA Nation Chair 2015-17 and Acting AHISA WA Branch Chair	Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia
12	Closed submission		
13	Mr M Harries		
14	Mr S Breen	President	Western Australian Primary Principals' Association
15	Mr K Dullard		
16	Closed submission		
17	Closed submission		
18	Dr S Fitzgerald	Senior Lecturer	Curtin University
19	Closed submission		
20	Ms K Catto	President	Western Australian Council of State School Organisations
21	Mr P Mutton	Chair	Roleystone Community College Board
22	Mrs J Gee	President	Western Australian Secondary Schools Executives Association
23	Ms P Byrne	President	State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia
24	Ms A Briant	General Secretary	Independent Education Union
25	Closed submission		

26	Ms L Sudlow	President	Isolated Children's Parents' Association
27	Ms Carolyn Smith	Secretary	United Voice WA Branch
28	Mr R Strickland	Director General	Department of Education Services
29	Mr C Weeks	Director General	Department of Aboriginal Affairs
30	Ms S O'Neill	Director General	Department of Education
31	Mr C Pettit	Commissioner	Commission for Children and Young People
32	Closed submission		

## Appendix Four

### Hearings

Date	Name	Position	Organisation
16 May 2016	Mr S Breen	President	Western Australian Primary Principals' Association
16 May 2016	Ms K Catto	President	Western Australian Council of State School Organisations
16 May 2016	Ms P Byrne	President	State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia
	Mr K Doherty	Organiser	
	Mr K Dullard	School Leaders' Organiser	
	Mr D Lee	School Leaders' Project Consultant	
16 May 2016	Mrs J Gee	President	Western Australian Secondary School Executives Association
	Mrs K Shearing	Associate Principal	Churchlands Senior High School
	Mrs M Griffiths	Principal	Armadale Senior High School
	Mr M Gillett	Principal	Department of Education
	Mr A Kassab	Teacher	School of Special Educational Needs: Disability
16 May 2016	Mr R Strickland	Director General	Department of Education Services
	Dr P Wood	Assistant Director	
	Mr T Werner	Director, Higher Education and Legislative Review	
18 May 2016	Ms S O'Neill	Director General	Department of Education
	Mr L Hale	Executive Director, Statewide Services	
	Mr C Gillam	Executive Director, Workforce	
	Mr D Price	Director, School Improvement and Support Unit	

	Mr P Titmanis	Executive Director, Innovation, Performance and Research	
27 June 2016	Ms C Smith	Secretary	United Voice
	Mrs P Clarke	Research Officer	United Voice
	Mrs D Baker	Head Cleaner	Warwick Senior High School
	Mrs T Sumner	Education Assistant	Department of Education
	Mrs Naomie Treloar	Education Assistant	Department of Education
27 June 2016	Dr S Fitzgerald	Senior Lecturer	Curtin University

## Appendix Five

### Glossary

Annual report	An annual report is a comprehensive report on a school or a department's activities, including operational and financial performance, for the preceding year.
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
Business plan	A business plan sets out a school's plan for the duration of the Delivery and Performance Agreement. It is tailored to a school's particular circumstances, resources, priorities areas and overarching vision. It sets targets for the school to achieve in line with and for the duration of the DPA. These targets, and how they are measured, are determined by each school.
Cluster	A small number of schools that become Independent Public Schools as a group. The cluster will often have an overarching vision applying to all schools, and may share resources. Schools will prepare individual and cluster annual reports, and cluster performance will be reviewed as part of each school's Department of Education Services' end of Delivery and Performance Agreement review.
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DoE	Department of Education
DES	Department of Education Services
DPA	Delivery and Performance Agreement
EA	Education Assistant
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ERG	Expert Review Group
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent staff This is a measurement of the total level of staff resources used or available. Part time staff members are represented as a proportion of the full-time load. For example, 100 different people may be employed, however as some work part time, this may equate to only 75 full-time equivalent staff.
Hamilton Report	Hamilton Associates 2015, <i>School Autonomy: Building the Conditions for Student Success</i> . A report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia.

ICSEA	<p>Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage.</p> <p>This was created by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority specifically to enable meaningful comparisons of National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy test achievement by students in schools across Australia. Key factors in students’ family backgrounds (parents’ occupation, school education and non-school education) have an influence on students’ educational outcomes at school. In addition to these student-level factors, research has shown that school-level factors (a school’s geographical location and the proportion of Indigenous students a school caters for) need to be considered when summarising educational advantage or disadvantage at the school level. ICSEA provides a scale that numerically represents the relative magnitude of this influence, and is constructed taking into account both student- and school-level factors.</p> <p>The lower the ICSEA value, the lower the level of educational advantage of students who go to the school. The average ICSEA is 1000.</p>
IPS/IP Schools	Independent Public Schools
LAP	Leadership Action Plan
OAG	Office of the Auditor General
OAG 2009	Office of the Auditor General of Western Australia, <i>Every Day Counts: Managing Student Attendance in Western Australian Public Schools</i> , Report 9, August 2009
OAG 2011	Office of the Auditor General of Western Australia, <i>Right Teacher, Right Place, Right Time: Teacher Placement in Public Schools</i> . Report 6, August 2011.
OAG 2015	Office of the Auditor General of Western Australia, <i>Follow-On: Managing Student Attendance in Western Australian Public Schools</i> , Report 16, August 2015
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLNA	Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
One-line budget	<p>The ‘one-line budget’ describes the way in which the Department of Education provides schools with their funding allocation, initially for Independent Public Schools, and now for all schools under Student-Centred Funding Model. The budget does not mandate where schools spend funding. Rather a total amount of funding is provided and schools have discretion as to where it is allocated, with the restriction that funding allocated for particularly students with additional needs must be spent on those students.</p>



NAPLAN	<p>National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy</p> <p>NAPLAN tests assess the literacy and numeracy levels of all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in Australia. NAPLAN is designed and delivered by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), an independent statutory authority responsible for national curriculum and the national assessment program aligned with that curriculum.</p> <p>To enable more fair comparisons of test results between schools than might otherwise be the case, ACARA has created the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA – defined above). This recognises that educational achievement is not attributable to the school alone, but is influenced by factors such as students’ family backgrounds.</p>
NSW	New South Wales
P&C	Parents and Citizens’ Association
PIA	Performance Improvement Agreement
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RED	Regional Executive Director
Redeployee	Redeployees are permanent Department of Education employees who no longer have a substantive position. The employee continues to be paid while the Department of Education finds that employee a new position.
Regional networks or networks	A regional network is a group of up to 20 schools, usually within geographical proximity, which provide support to each other. This may include sharing knowledge and resources, undertaking professional development or participating in mentoring or coaching. Networks receive some funding from the Department of Education, but are largely operated at the school level.
Re-profile	Re-profiling is when a school changes its staffing structure.
Residualised	To be remaining or leftover; not part of the majority.
SCFM	Student-Centred Funding Model
SISU	School Improvement and Support Unit
SPMS	School Performance Monitoring System
Strategic Plan	Department of Education’s <i>Strategic Plan for WA Public Schools 2016–2019: High Performance – High Care</i>
Student outcomes	Student outcomes encompass a wide variety of academic and non-academic achievement. For the purpose of this Inquiry, the Committee focused on attendance data to measure engagement, and academic achievement to measure performance.
University of Melbourne Evaluation	University of Melbourne 2013, <i>Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative</i> . A report commissioned by the WA Department of Education to review the IPS initiative.
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WA	Western Australia
WACE	Western Australian Certificate of Education

WAMSE	<p>Western Australian Monitoring Standards in Education</p> <p>The WAMSE assessment in Science, and Society and Environment is delivered by the School Curriculum and Standards Authority to participating Western Australian public, Catholic and independent schools. WAMSE reports on the performance of Years 5, 7 and 9 students in Science, and Society and Environment.</p>
WASSEA	Western Australian Secondary Schools Executives Association
360-degree Review	<p>360-degree review is a process by which employees receive a confidential anonymous appraisal of their work related behaviour and/or work related performance from work peers, managers, direct reports and other key stakeholders.</p> <p>For Independent Public School principals the confidential 360 degree review process must include feedback from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A teacher</li> <li>○ A member of the school's leadership team</li> <li>○ A support staff member</li> <li>○ Another principal</li> <li>○ The board chair</li> <li>○ A community member</li> <li>○ A nominee of the Director General (usually the Regional Executive Director)</li> </ul>

## Appendix Six

### *Follow-On: Managing Student Attendance in Western Australian Public Schools – Progress of Recommendations*

Recommendation	Status as at July 2016 <sup>409</sup>
<p>The Department of Education should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>regularly evaluate and report to executive management on the effectiveness of its student attendance strategies and initiatives</li> </ul>	<p>Work in progress</p> <p>An evaluation is being undertaken of Attendance Panels and Attendance Officers to determine the efficacy of these legislative strategies and how the Department of Education can target support to make them more effective. The findings and recommendations will be used to develop greater support to schools through the Attendance Toolkit.</p> <p>Program Governance Group has endorsed the Evaluation Proposal and Plan. This is scheduled for Corporate Executive meeting on 29 July 2016.</p> <p>A procurement process to select the independent evaluation and determine the methodology is scheduled for Term 3.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clearly identify, communicate and provide training and assistance to schools on effective follow-up processes and procedures for managing unexplained and unauthorised absences</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>The Department of Education is developing an Attendance Toolkit to provide principals with strategies to build school capacity to increase the level of engagement and attendance of students. It will include advice and practical suggestions for follow up processes and procedures.</p> <p>The Toolkit will be published online in Term 4, 2016.</p>

<sup>409</sup> Supplement to Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 1 August 2016, pp6-8.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review absence codes and guidance to schools on using them, to make sure the codes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ are used consistently</li> <li>○ are mutually exclusive</li> <li>○ distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absences</li> <li>○ include all major forms of school absenteeism</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Work in progress</p> <p>Professional learning took place in Term 4, 2015 and Term 1, 2016. This learning encompassed school attendance requirements and guidance on the purpose and use of attendance codes. A self-guided online module will be included in the Attendance Toolkit.</p> <p>Attendance codes will be considered during the development of the School Information System replacement in Term 4, 2016.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide better and more transparent information on student attendance, including in its annual report. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ setting and reporting on targets for attendance at school level</li> <li>○ reporting student attendance by category of risk</li> <li>○ reporting the numbers of schools meeting target levels of attendance</li> <li>○ trends in performance</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Work in progress</p> <p>The Department of Education's 2014/15 annual report included expanded attendance reporting. This will continue for 2015/16.</p> <p>A review into target setting will be conducted throughout the development of online modules for Data Analysis and Target Setting, which will be published as part of the Attendance Toolkit.</p> <p>The 2016 School Report Checklist will be reviewed internally in Term 4, 2016, to investigate the inclusion of more explicit guidance to strengthen school reporting attendance.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide greater assistance to schools to build and maintain partnerships in their local area that can help address student attendance issues.</li> </ul>	<p>Complete</p> <p>A new model of support to improve student engagement and behaviour began in 2016.</p> <p>The new Student Support Directorate will unify existing services with expanded services, including Engagement centres in each region, to provide targeted, coordinated and more efficient support to schools and at-risk students. The services incorporate local intra- and inter-agency partnerships.</p> <p>Research was conducted into best practice community and interagency engagement in schools and in other jurisdictions.</p>

# Appendix Seven

## Support staff numbers

Paid FTEs for Education Assistants, Gardeners and Cleaners, as at the last pay in June each year<sup>410</sup>

Sum of # Paid FTE		Labour Award		
Fiscal Year Name	Employee Class	Teacher Aides Award	Cleaners & Carotakers Award	Gardeners (Government) Award
2012	Permanent	5,283	1,480	522
	Fixed Term	1,105	151	65
	Casual	526	89	27
2012 Total		6,915	1,720	614
2013	Permanent	5,775	1,515	529
	Fixed Term	1,199	177	70
	Casual	547	93	24
2013 Total		7,521	1,785	623
2014	Permanent	5,838	1,522	527
	Fixed Term	909	183	66
	Casual	564	97	24
2014 Total		7,311	1,802	617
2015	Permanent	5,719	1,556	532
	Fixed Term	907	204	61
	Casual	591	99	22
2015 Total		7,217	1,860	615
2016	Permanent	5,755	1,558	508
	Fixed Term	1,094	211	71
	Casual	791	131	27
2016 Total		7,640	1,899	607

Note: Education Assistants are reflected in the above table under the column 'Teacher Aides Award'.

Paid FTE includes all staff paid on the fortnight pay period, including Casual payments /appointments.

The fixed-term information provided is based on employment contracts (i.e. jobs) in the Department's Human Resources system, and as a result an employee included as fixed-term may also hold a permanent position, for example:

- An Education Assistant (EA) holds a part time permanent position in School A and a part time fixed-term contract in School B.
- An EA is permanently employed as a Mainstream EA but in a fixed-term contract as a Special Needs EA for the year.
- A Cleaner is permanently employed but also holds a fixed-term contract as a Gardener in another Labour Agreement Group.

<sup>410</sup> All information from Supplement to Submission No. 30 from the Department of Education, 1 August 2016, p17.