

41ST PARLIAMENT



Education and Health Standing Committee

Report 1

ANNUAL REPORT 2020–21

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Presented by  
Mr C.J. Tallentire, MLA

September 2021

## *Committee Members*

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Chair	Mr C.J. Tallentire, MLA Member for Thornlie
Deputy Chair	Ms L.L. Baker, MLA Member for Maylands
Members	Ms L.A. Munday, MLA Member for Dawesville
	Ms C.M. Collins, MLA Member for Hillarys
	Mr K.J.J. Michel, MLA Member for Pilbara

## *Committee Staff*

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Principal Research Officers	Ms Renée Gould (until 16 July 2021) Ms Catie Parsons (from 19 July 2021)
Research Officers	Ms Franchesca Walker (until 28 May 2021) Ms Rachel Wells (from 1 June 2021)

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# Education and Health Standing Committee

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## Annual Report 2020–21

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Report No. 1

Presented by

**Mr C.J. Tallentire, MLA**

Laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly on 16 September 2021



## Chair's Foreword

This is the first annual report of the Education and Health Standing Committee (EHSC) in the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament. This report covers the Committee's activities in the final months of the previous parliament (from July to November 2020) and the current Committee's activities from its formation on 12 May 2021 until 30 June 2021.

The Committee's areas of responsibility cover some of the most important sectors of state government activity. Indeed, in terms of government expenditure the health and education portfolios are the two largest – justifiably so. Keeping our community as healthy as possible while providing educational opportunities that allow individuals to flourish and contribute to the betterment of Western Australia are natural priorities for the government. Using the powers and functions of the Committee we will assist the parliament in its scrutiny and lawmaking functions by holding inquiries into complex issues.

The COVID-19 pandemic has dominated the lives of Western Australians since February 2020. By all measures, Western Australia's success at keeping COVID-19 infection rates at such low levels has been a brilliant achievement. The work of the Western Australian health services is to be acknowledged as a major contributor to our success. During the 40<sup>th</sup> Parliament and since the pandemic, our predecessors on the EHSC were judicious in their draw on the resources of the health services, but where they felt it necessary sought advice from health officials including the Chief Health Officer. In many ways our successful handling of the pandemic has been a direct result of good government decision-making occurring in unison with strong community support and respect for measures instigated by the McGowan Government.

The Committee of the previous parliament, in the period encompassed by this annual report, undertook an inquiry into the effect COVID-19 had on our education delivery. Report 11, *Lessons From Remote Learning: COVID-19 follow-up to the Inquiry into Digital Innovation in Secondary Education*, recognised COVID-19 as the biggest disruptor to education in recent history. The findings and recommendations from the report provided valuable guidance to our education system in adjusting to the challenges of this new pandemic environment.

Many sectors have had to adapt to the changing circumstances brought about by the pandemic. This has been clear in the initial departmental hearings held to gain an overview of the functions of the Department of Education, the Department of Health and the Mental Health Commission. In his evidence Dr Tarun Weeramanthri, the independent public health consultant and author of the *Climate Health WA Inquiry: Final Report*, noted the speed with which COVID vaccines have been developed, saying similar haste could be applied to climate change responses. Chief Scientist Professor Peter Klinken highlighted the need for a massive transformation of the structure of WA's

tertiary education sector, proposing the merger of all four public universities into a single entity.

I look forward to working productively with my fellow committee members in this 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament. On their behalf I would also like to acknowledge the work of committee staff, both past and present.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the previous chair of the Committee, Ms Janine Freeman, who retired from the parliament at the state election held on 13 March 2021. Under Ms Freeman's leadership the EHSC honoured the tradition of parliamentary committees to undertake independent, well researched inquiries and investigations, further demonstrating that they are a valuable feature of our parliamentary system.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Chris Tallett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE, MLA  
CHAIR

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# Chapter 1

## Committee Activities

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### Introduction

The 2020–2021 reporting period encompasses two parliamentary sessions. The 40<sup>th</sup> Parliament was dissolved by the Governor on 29 January 2021. This dissolution terminated the parliament and its committees. The Education and Health Standing Committee of the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament was established on 12 May 2021.

A summary of the activities of the Committee during the course of this reporting period – 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 is detailed in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1: Summary of the activities of the Committee, 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021**

Description	Activity
<b>40<sup>th</sup> Parliament</b>	
Deliberative meetings	6
Formal evidence hearings	7
Witnesses appearing	21
Reports tabled	2
Report findings tabled	9
Report recommendations tabled	6
<b>41<sup>st</sup> Parliament</b>	
Deliberative meetings	4
Formal evidence hearings	1
Witnesses appearing	9

### Portfolios

The four portfolio areas of the Committee as determined by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly are:

- Education and Training
- Health
- Mental Health, and
- Medical Research.

### Public Hearings

Pursuant to Assembly Standing Order 264, the Committee has power to send for persons, papers and records. During the period 1 July 2020 to 29 January 2021, the Committee

conducted seven public hearings, taking evidence from 21 witnesses to assist with its investigations. During the period 12 May 2021 to 30 June 2021, the Committee conducted one public hearing, taking evidence from nine witnesses to assist with its investigations.

**Table 1.2: Public Hearings of the Committee, 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021**

Date	Witness	Position	Organisation
<b>40<sup>th</sup> Parliament</b>			
12 August 2020	Mr Michael King	President	Education Computing Association of Western Australia (Inc)
	Ms Shaloni Naik	Professional Development Coordinator	
	Ms Lisa Rodgers	Director General	Department of Education
	Ms Melesha Sands	Executive Director, Recovery	
	Mr Martin Clery	Assistant Executive Director, Statewide Services	
	Mr David Dans	Chief Information Officer	
	Mr Stuart Percival	Acting Director, Disability and Inclusion	
	Mr Caleb Jones	Principal, School of Special Educational Needs: Medical and Mental Health	
	Mr Allan Blagaich	Executive Director, School Curriculum and Standards Authority	
19 August 2020	Dr Debra Sayce	Executive Director	Catholic Education Western Australia
	Mr Matthew Ferrinda	Team Leader, Digital Learning	
	Dr Edward Simons	Director, Governance and Digital Technology	
	Ms Valerie Gould	Executive Director	Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia
14 October 2020	Dr Andrew Robertson	Chief Health Officer	Department of Health
	Dr Robyn Lawrence	Deputy Chief Health Officer, Clinical Health, and State Health Incident Controller	
	Dr Paul Armstrong	Deputy Chief Health Officer, Public Health	
4 November 2020	Ms Vicki O'Donnell	Member	Aboriginal Advisory Council of WA
	Ms Gail Reynolds-Adamson	Member	
	Mr Jonathan Ford	Member	
	Mr Kevin O'Keefe	Principal Adviser	Department of Education
	Mr Jim Bell	Executive Director, Strategy and Policy	

41st Parliament			
23 June 2021	Ms Lisa Rodgers	Director General	Department of Education
	Mr Jim Bell	Deputy Director General, Student Achievement	
	Mr Jay Peckitt	Deputy Director General, Education Business Services	
	Ms Raechelle Lee	A/Executive Director, Strategy & Policy	
	Mr John Fischer	Executive Director, Infrastructure	
	Mr Allan Blagaich	Executive Director, School Curriculum and Standards Authority	
	Mr Chris Gostelow	Chief Psychologist	
	Mr Caleb Jones	Principal, School of Special Educational Needs: Medical and Mental Health	
	Mr Stuart Percival	Director, Disability and Inclusion	

## Reports Tabled

The Committee of the 40<sup>th</sup> Parliament tabled two reports between July and December 2020, including the annual report.

[Lessons from Remote Learning: COVID-19 follow-up to the Inquiry into Digital Innovation in Secondary Education](#) was tabled on 24 September 2020. This was a short report to assess WA's preparations for remote learning, drawing on the findings of a previous inquiry into opportunities to make better use of digital technology. The Committee found that the ease with which schools transitioned to online learning was dependent on the resources within the school and student access to the internet and a suitable device. Socio-economically disadvantaged students and those in regional areas experienced the most challenges. The report noted that many teachers had to learn digital skills very quickly, highlighting previous concerns about low rates of participation in professional learning. The Department of Education acknowledged that the new modes of teaching applied during remote learning opened the way to explore flexible delivery more broadly.

## **Other Activities**

### **Briefings**

No briefings were held by the Committee during the period 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021.

### **Investigative Travel and Conferences**

No investigative travel was undertaken, or conferences attended, by the Committee during the reporting period.

### **Current Activities**

The Committee held its first meeting on 26 May 2021. The Committee has commenced agency review hearings within its relevant portfolio areas in order to gather information to inform possible future inquiries.

## Chapter 2

### Financial Statement

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The Committee does not have its own formal budget and is funded out of the budget of the Legislative Assembly. Approval for major expenditures is required on a case-by-case basis and is entirely at the discretion of the Speaker.

The Committee's expenditure for the financial year 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021 (in accordance with Standing Order 276) is detailed below:

**Table 2.1: Expenditure items of the Committee, 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021**

Expenditure Item	Amount (\$)
Printing	144
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>144</b>

Notes:

Figures are rounded to nearest dollar.

Salaries of committee staff and the costs of shared administration expenses, including lease costs for committee accommodation, are not included.



MR C.J. TALLENTIRE, MLA  
CHAIR



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