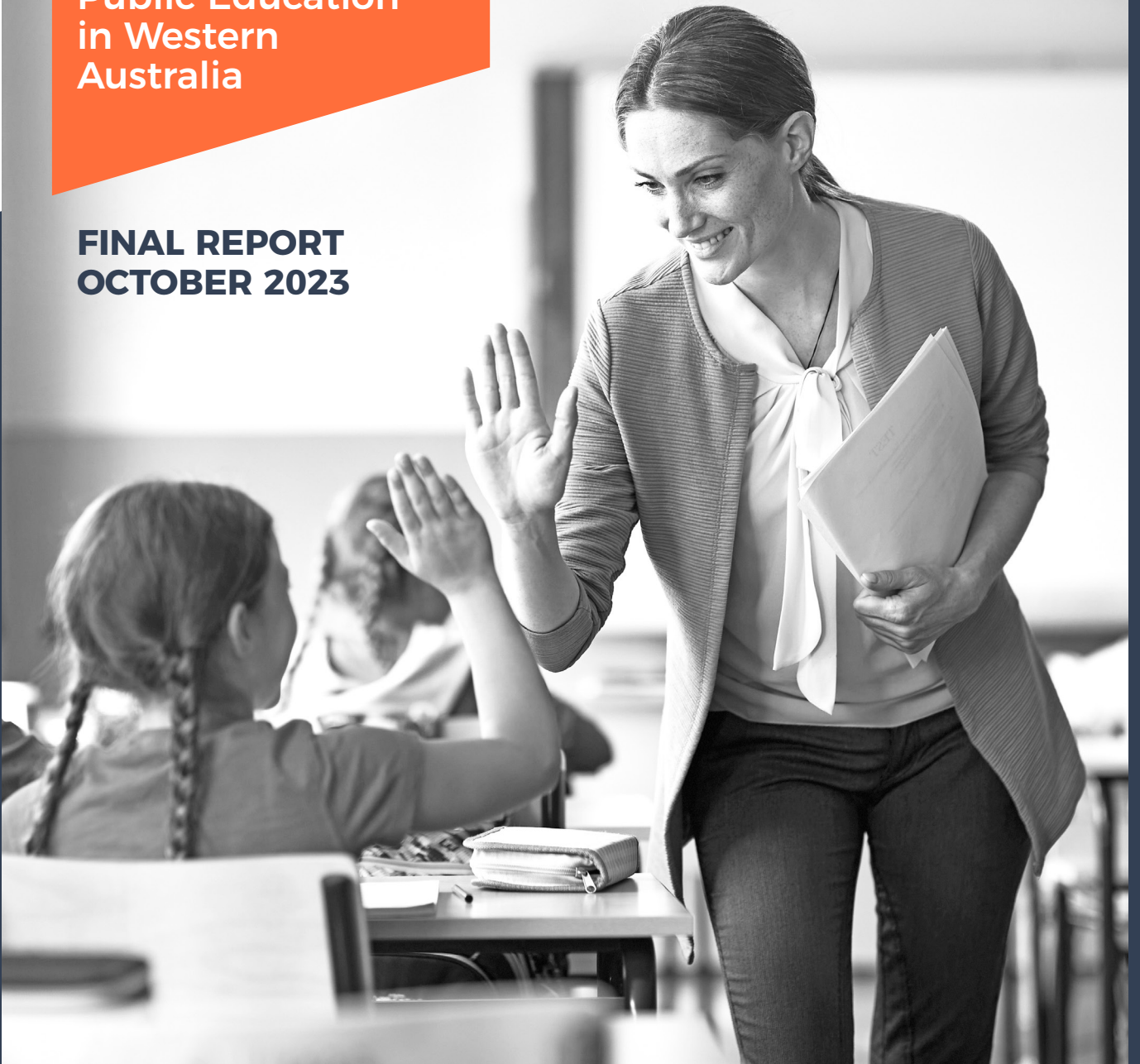# Facing the Facts

A review of Public Education in Western Australia

**FINAL REPORT
OCTOBER 2023**

Panel:
Dr Carmen Lawrence, Chair
Dr Scott Fitzgerald
Colin Pettit
Dr Robyn White
Pam Pollard, Executive Officer

CONSULTATION SESSION LOCATIONS

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Albany	Manjimup
Armadale	New Norcia
Broome	North Metro East (Belmont)
Busselton	North Metro West (Hillarys)
Esperance	Northam
Geraldton	South Metro East (Meadow Springs)
Kalgoorlie	South Metro West (Fremantle)
Karratha	State-wide Zoom meeting x 2
Katanning	Yanchep

SSTUWA DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETINGS

Albany	Katanning
Broome	North Metro East (Belmont)
Bunbury	North Metro West (Hillarys)
Geraldton	South Metro East (Meadow Springs)
Kalgoorlie	South Metro West (Fremantle)
Karratha	

SCHOOL-BASED COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Ashdale PS
Atwell PS
Broome SHS
Morley SHS
Mt Lawley SHS
Perth Modern School
Safety Bay SHS

SSTUWA MEMBER GROUP MEETINGS (HELD IN PERTH)

Early Childhood Education Committee
School Leaders Reference Group x 2
State Council, November 2022

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Broome Broome SHS
Karratha
Geraldton
New Norcia
Northam
Perth SEE INSET MAP
Bunbury
Busselton Katanning
Manjimup
Albany
Kalgoorlie
Esperance

PERTH METRO AREA

Yanchep
North Metro West (Hillarys)
Ashdale PS
Morley SHS
Mount Lawley SHS
Perth Modern School
Perth
North Metro East (Belmont)
South Metro West (Fremantle)
Atwell PS
Armadale
Safety Bay SHS
South Metro East (Meadow Springs)

CONTENTS

Mr Matthew Jarman
President SSTUWA

Dear Mr Jarman,

Last year the SSTUWA commissioned an independent review into the state of public education in Western Australia, with a particular focus on the changes that have occurred since 2010 and the effects they have had on teachers' professional standing, workload, roles, and responsibilities. The explicit request was to suggest measures to improve teachers' working environments and job satisfaction so that more choose to stay in the profession and others see teaching as an attractive career.

In addition to receiving submissions from teachers, school leaders, parents and professional associations, members of the Panel appointed to undertake the review travelled throughout Western Australia and met with staff, parents, and community members to discuss their responses to the terms of reference. We were impressed by the dedication teachers and school leaders showed toward their students and their deep concern about the detrimental effects of some recent education policies. They were keen to offer solutions. In addition, the Panel examined peer-reviewed research relevant to the terms of reference as well as numerous government documents and inquiry reports.

As Chair of the Panel appointed by the SSTUWA to conduct this review, I am pleased to present the final report, *Facing the Facts: A Review of Public Education in Western Australia*. You will find that we are agreed that significant change is urgently needed if we are to continue to provide quality public education suitable for all students and satisfying and rewarding careers for teachers in Western Australia. We also believe the recommendations we have made are practical and achievable.

I would like to place on the record my sincere thanks to my colleagues on the Panel: Scott Fitzgerald, Colin Pettit, Robyn White and Pam Pollard, Executive Officer to the Panel. Their commitment to the task and their invaluable educational experience made our deliberations engaging and productive.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Carmen Lawrence

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By any measure, public school staff in Western Australia continue to deliver high standards of education for our children. Our discussions with teachers and school leaders also reveal their passion and dedication for the task of educating our children. However, the significant and growing pressures they face mean that many have reached breaking point and are planning to leave the profession, which would exacerbate the existing teacher shortage.

Recent discussions of flatlining national test results and declines in international test ranking have generated a flurry of national proposals to improve education standards in Australia. Much of the discussion has focussed on teacher quality, including, most recently, teachers' preparation and tertiary education. Even analyses of the chronic and growing teacher shortages have tended to focus on teacher attributes divorced from the environment in which teachers operate.

In our view, after reviewing the relevant literature and consulting with the education workforce in Western Australia, this focus is largely misplaced, although we agree that teachers are a most important influence – after their families – in shaping children's lives. For the last two decades, at least, public school teachers have been subject to the twin pressures of declining real terms funding and the increasing volume and complexity of the teaching task. Public schools have been starved of funds and support while coping with accelerating demands on the curriculum and the challenge of educating many more disadvantaged students and students with increasingly complex needs. The cumulative impact of frequent policy changes, including the increased isolation of schools generated by the Independent Public Schools initiative, has steadily increased both the intensity and complexity of workloads, lowered morale, increased burnout and created an environment in which teachers feel undervalued and disrespected. Many teachers, particularly in disadvantaged schools, are paying a high personal price for staying in the profession.

While this conclusion may sound grim, the Panel was encouraged by the commitment teachers have to high quality education and the fact that many have given careful thought to how schooling could be improved for both them and their students. Many pointed to the need for a significant increase in public school funding, together with a better distribution of those funds to help teachers narrow the achievement gaps created by socio-economic disadvantage and disability. In teaching classes of children who are not developmentally ready for school or who display behavioural and mental health problems, teachers need smaller classes and adequate, locally available, professional support services. To deliver engaging classes for their students, they need access to quality curriculum materials, time to prepare and assess, and a minimum of time-consuming paperwork.

Changes are also needed to the way appointments are made so that rural and remote schools, who often have the most difficult education tasks, are ensured access to the best and most experienced staff. Guaranteeing teachers right of return to their previous, permanent positions would be a good place to start.

There is a clear need to improve teachers' and school leaders' access to quality professional development across the board and to re-connect schools with the central administration and regional offices, so they have a sense of belonging to a coherent system. Reducing the volume and complexity of teachers' work is essential to ensuring their good health and to maintaining their commitment and invaluable experience to public school teaching. At the same time, such improvements will attract new entrants when they see teaching is a rewarding, creative and satisfying career. Critically, highly motivated teachers who feel respected and supported will also produce better outcomes for their students and for their communities.

THE REVIEW PROCESS

The Panel was established by The State School Teachers Union of Western Australia (SSTUWA) to independently review the state of public education in Western Australia. The terms of reference are outlined in Appendix 1. To address the issues detailed in the terms of reference, the Panel canvassed the views of teachers, school leaders, parents and professional education organisations through formal submissions and face-to-face meetings.

Thirty-five meetings were held across the state from the Kimberley to Esperance. At least one panel member attended each of these meetings, facilitating conversations based upon the terms of reference of the review. In most locations, two meetings were held - the first with District Council members of the SSTUWA, followed by a second meeting open to all staff and members of the local community. Two online state-wide meetings were held for participants who were unable to attend face-to-face meetings.

One hundred and twenty-seven oral and written submissions were received from individuals and groups from metropolitan, regional, and remote areas within the state. These submissions came from all types of public schools and from all school-related staff classifications as well as from parents, community members and university staff. Twenty-nine written submissions were received from professional associations, SSTUWA school branches, unions, parent associations and universities (see Appendix 2).

PANEL MEMBERS

Dr Carmen Lawrence AO, Chair
Former WA Premier and Treasurer, Minister for Education and Aboriginal Affairs; former Federal Minister for Health and Human Services; Professor Emerita at the University of Western Australia.

Dr Scott Fitzgerald
Associate Professor in the School of Management and Marketing at Curtin University. A key focus of Scott's recent research has been the changing nature of governance, professionalism and work in the education sector.

Colin Pettit
Former Commissioner for Children and Young People of Western Australia and former Secretary of Education, Tasmania.
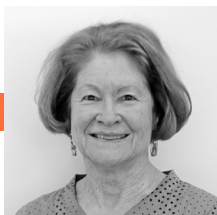
Dr Robyn White
Former secondary school teacher, Head of Department, Deputy Principal, project manager (Central Office) and Principal. Former lecturer and education consultant.

Pam Pollard, Executive Officer
Former primary school teacher, former Curriculum Manager, former Principal of independent public primary schools and Principal Fellow, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1   THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION POLICY

Recommendation 1

Improving student outcomes[1] should be the principal and explicit objective of any changes to education policies and practice.

Recommendation 2

Policies should be routinely and regularly subject to independent evaluation.

1.3   THE INDEPENDENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS (IPS) INITIATIVE

Findings:

There is no evidence of a link between school autonomy in staffing and resource allocation and improved student outcomes.

There is no evidence that the Independent Public School (IPS) initiative has improved student outcomes.

The IPS system has amplified the growing inequality in the WA education system.

Local selection of staff is valued by some school leaders because they believe it enables them to better provide for their schools' needs.

Local selection of staff has reduced teachers' ability to move between schools, created difficulty in staffing regional and remote schools, and generated perceptions of unfairness in the recruitment process.

The decision to attach teachers' positions (permanent or contract) to individual schools rather than to the WA Department of Education has produced inequities in schools' access to experienced staff.

School leaders need more information about where and how school funds should be spent to achieve system priorities.

Current systems of school accountability do not adequately monitor the allocation of expenditure for specific student needs.

Recommendation 3

The Western Australian (WA) Department of Education's priorities for school decision-making and expenditure should be made explicit and clearly communicated to schools.

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1   The current Ministerial agreement proposes that schooling should result in students becoming (1) successful lifelong learners, (2) confident and creative individuals and (3) informed members of the community. In reality, measures of educational outcome are typically based in results in literacy, numeracy and science tests. Students' performance in the broader range of subjects and skills and indices of social development are less often referenced (See Section 5).

Recommendation 4

The WA Department of Education should undertake annual reviews of each school's spending to ensure that funds are appropriately spent and in compliance with Departmental priorities.

Recommendation 5

With a view to identifying the key structural changes needed to improve the functioning of the school system in W.A., a thorough, independent review of the Independent Public School (IPS) system should be undertaken to achieve:

- Improved student outcomes

- Greater educational equality

- Equity and probity in teacher and school leader selection and promotion

- Accountability, including the use of funds for designated purposes

- Better access to support services and curriculum resources

1.4 CHANGES TO REGIONAL AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Findings:

The centralization of services has not met the needs of schools for administrative and educational support.

Teachers and school leaders prefer well-resourced local services over centralized services to support schools; they are seen as more responsive and useful.

Recommendation 6

The WA Department of Education should redesign support services to ensure they are more accessible, more responsive to local needs and better resourced to support schools' administrative and educational needs.

1.5 SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Finding:

More support for students with special needs is needed, especially in disadvantaged schools.

Recommendation 7

In conjunction with education authorities, the WA Government should design and fund dedicated, cross-portfolio services to support the learning of children with special needs.

Recommendation 8

In the context of the W.A. Government's disability strategy, the WA Department of Education should, after consultation with teachers and parents, provide clear system-wide guidelines and a process for making decisions on the optimum placement of students with special needs.

1.6 THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM – LITERACY AND NUMERACY (NAPLAN)

Findings:

The introduction of NAPLAN has not resulted in any sustained improvements in aggregate educational outcomes or in reducing educational inequality.

The benefits for teachers from NAPLAN have not materialised and many have experienced increased workload and a loss of professional standing as a result.

Individual national testing has narrowed the curriculum for children while teachers spend more classroom time "teaching to the test."

Recommendation 9

National, State and Territory ministers should consider replacing NAPLAN, a census assessment, with a sample assessment like PISA, conducting tests less frequently and without publicly identifying schools in the results.

1.7 SCHOOL REPORTS TO PARENTS

Findings:

Schools assess students frequently using a variety of testing regimes.

Parents now receive frequent and accurate reporting about their children's progress.

Recommendation 10

The WA Department of Education should clarify what reporting to parents is expected by the Department and required by the state and national government policies.

1.9 THE EXTENSION OF COMPULSORY SCHOOLING AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Finding:

Vocational Education in Schools (VETiS) funding in schools is not adequate to meet the needs of students seeking vocational education.

Recommendation 11

The WA Department of Education should assess the quality of VET programs offered in schools and ensure they are funded to provide for all the students who choose to study VET courses.

1.10 CURRICULUM SUPPORT AND COMMERCIALISATION

Findings:

Over the period covered by this review, the WA curriculum has undergone extensive, continuous change.

WA teachers are critical of the widespread use of costly, commercial curriculum support materials and would prefer Department of Education or School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) designed, flexible curriculum materials to be made available.

Recommendation 12

The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) should be given sufficient resources to create and extend the availability of quality, flexible curriculum resource materials in a form suitable for all schools.

Recommendation 13

SCSA should be funded to create appropriate programs of professional learning about curriculum and pedagogy for teachers at all stages of their careers.

Recommendation 14

This professional learning should be made available to teachers by the WA Education Department in face-to-face- settings at a local level.

1.11 DOCUMENTED PLANS

Finding:

Many teachers and school leaders are not being provided with adequate resources to develop and implement meaningful, individually tailored plans for students with special educational and behavioural needs.

Recommendation 15

The WA Department of Education should clearly define the criteria for documented plans, including for whom they are intended and how to manage an equitable distribution of the additional workload entailed. The Department should ensure that schools fully understand the requirements of the plans and consider the impact on teachers' workloads.

Recommendation 16

Where a student with complex needs requires a Documented Plan, that student should "count" for 2 or 3 students when determining class size, thus reducing the numbers in the class.

1.12 YEAR 7 TRANSITION

Findings:

The transition of year 7 students from primary to secondary school resulted in increased costs, staff dislocation and additional workload for teachers and school leaders.

The costs and benefits to students of moving year 7 to secondary school have not been publicly evaluated**.**

1.13 THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC ON SCHOOLING

Finding:

While teachers and school leaders responded effectively and co-operatively to the changes required during the COVID-19 epidemic, their workloads increased dramatically, and they felt undervalued.

2.1 RECURRENT FUNDING

Findings:

Real income per student has declined in public schools, which provide for more educationally disadvantaged students, and increased in private schools, which provide for more advantaged students.

Funding to public schools in Western Australia has been cut in real terms since 2010.

Measured against the Schooling Resource Standard, WA public schools are significantly underfunded while private schools are either fully funded or over-funded.

Recommendation 17

Using the opportunity presented by the National Schools Resource Agreement (NSRA) to determine funding over the next quadrennium, the Commonwealth and Western Australian governments should reach an agreement to increase per student funding to public schools to restore previous cuts and to reduce the inequitable underfunding of public compared to private schools.

Recommendation 18

WA public schools should be funded to 100% of the SRS as a minimum standard.

Recommendation 19

The discount for depreciation applied to public schools should be discontinued.

2.2 CAPITAL FUNDING

Recommendation 20

A program to provide for additional capital works in public schools should be agreed between the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments, particularly for high needs areas.

Recommendation 21

Funds provided to schools should be adequate to provide for regular repair and maintenance to a quality standard and should take account of the age and condition of the buildings**.**

2.3 THE DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Finding:

Educationally disadvantaged schools are not receiving adequate funds to provide for the complex needs of their students and the additional educational support they require.

Recommendation 22

The loadings in the Student-Centred Funding Model (SCFM) for disadvantage and concentrations of disadvantage should be increased to better reflect the additional work required of teachers in these schools and to improve student outcomes.

2.4 ACCOUNTING FOR FUNDS

Recommendation 23

Funds provided under the funding formula for children with disabilities should be quarantined and used for their education and support**.**

2.5 CLASS SIZE and 2.6 CLASS SIZE AND STUDENT-TEACHER RATIOS

Findings:

Class sizes are higher in WA than in other states and have not changed despite the increasing complexity of student needs.

Smaller class sizes result in better educational outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged groups.

Teachers' workloads increase and their capacity to provide individual attention to students is diminished in larger class sizes**.**

Recommendation 24

To reduce teacher workloads and improve student outcomes, class sizes in WA public schools should be reduced, with the most substantial reductions to be made in the early years of schooling and in schools with significant proportions of students who are educationally disadvantaged.

2.7 SMALL GROUP TUTORING

Finding:

Small group tutoring run by experienced teachers provided with appropriate training and support may assist in improving student outcomes for disadvantaged students. These would need to be in addition to the normal staff complement.

Recommendation 25

Small group tutoring run by experienced teachers provided with appropriate training and support should be considered to assist in improving student outcomes for disadvantaged students. These would be in addition to the normal staff complement.

3.2 DEVELOPMENTAL READINESS FOR SCHOOL

Finding:

An increasing proportion of children are not developmentally ready for school and more of these children are from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Recommendation 26:

Federal and State governments should ensure universal access to affordable, quality early learning opportunities.

Recommendation 27:

Federal and State governments should develop policies to support the successful learning of children from disadvantaged backgrounds through play-based education in small groups conducted by qualified educators.

Recommendation 28

Federal and State governments should develop coherent policies to reduce family and child poverty and reduce educational disadvantage.
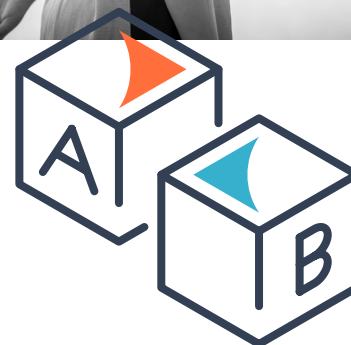
3.3 MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Findings:

Both available evidence and teacher and student reports suggest that poor mental health is a significant and possibly increasing problem among young people.

Many teachers and school leaders feel poorly prepared and under-resourced to manage the increasingly complex mental health problems of their students.

Specialist support for teachers to provide for the needs of children with mental health difficulties needs to be improved.

Recommendation:

See recommendations 6, 7, 8, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24 and 25.

3.4 ANTI-SOCIAL, AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR AND BULLYING TOWARDS STUDENTS

Finding:

A significant number of young people feel unsafe at school.

Recommendation:

See recommendations 6, 7, 8, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24 and 25.

3.6 SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND SCREEN TIME

Finding:

Systematic research and teachers' reports indicate that higher rates of social media use and increasing screen time are adversely affecting the academic performance and behaviour of many students.

3.7 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND AGGRESSION TOWARD STAFF

Findings:

A small, but apparently growing, number of children engage in aggressive and disruptive behaviour at school.

Teachers and school leaders exposed to such behaviour report elevated stress levels and poorer mental health.

Recommendation:

See recommendations 6, 7, 8, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24 and 25

4.1 OVERVIEW: THE EFFECTS ON TEACHERS OF THESE CHANGES: WORKLOAD, SATISFACTION, TURNOVER AND PERFORMANCE

Finding:

Over the period covered by this review, concerns around workloads in WA schools have not been adequately addressed despite a raft of policy initiatives designed to "free up" the work of school-based staff.

Recommendation 29:

The implementation of further change in public schools and the Department of Education should be based on more effective system-level planning and prior consultation with teachers to prevent imposing growing and competing workload demands on staff.

Recommendation 30:

All policy changes should be assessed for possible impacts on staff workload before their implementation.

4.2 HOURS WORKED BY THE TEACHER WORKFORCE

Finding:

Workloads for the majority of the WA public school teaching staff have reached unsustainable levels. This is having a detrimental impact on the attraction and retention of teaching staff to the public education system.
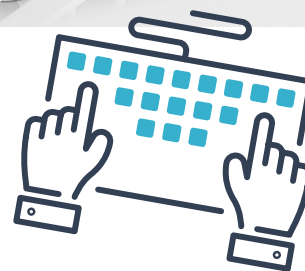
Recommendation 31:

To attract new employees to public schools and retain experienced staff, the Department of Education should implement measures to reduce teaching workloads.

4.3 WORKLOAD COMPLEXITY

4.3.1 Administrative and data related tasks as non-core work

Finding:

Over the period of this Review, WA teachers' capacity to develop and sustain quality teaching has been adversely affected by time-consuming paperwork which is not viewed as core to the teaching role.

Recommendation 32:

In consultation with teachers, the WA Department of Education should increase the proportion of their total working time available to focus on matters viewed as core to the job of teaching. Time devoted to general administration duties should be reduced to at least the international average for such tasks, as identified by the OECD.

4.3.2 Curriculum demands and support

Finding:

WA teachers' workloads and workload complexity would be improved by free, WA based and high-quality shared curriculum resources and well-supported professional development.

Recommendation:

See recommendations 12-14.

4.3.3 Growing complexity of student cohorts

Finding:

WA teachers' workloads and workload complexity has been increased by the growing complexity of student cohorts, including special learning needs and behavioural issues.

Recommendation 33:

The WA Department of Education should provide adequate levels of local support to address the workload implications of the growing student complexity as a high priority strategy.

See also recommendations 6, 7, 8, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24 and 25.

4.3.4 Challenges for teachers working out-of-field

Finding:

WA teachers' workloads and workload complexity are exacerbated by the demands associated with out-of-field teaching, an issue that contributes to early career teacher attrition.

Recommendation 34:

The Department of Education should approve the practice of out-of-field teaching only where it can ensure that adequate training, mentoring, and support is provided to teachers, irrespective of regional or remote status of the school where they work. The workload of teachers working out-of-field should properly reflect the added work demands associated with this practice.

4.4 HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: STAFF SELECTION

Findings:

Frequent teacher and school leader movements between schools increase staff workload and disrupt student learning, particularly in rural, remote, and disadvantaged schools.

Staff instability has increased following policy changes which allow teachers and leaders to be replaced at any time in the school year.

School leaders and teachers can move from school to school without any requirement to fulfil a specified period of service to the school.

Current staff selection processes favour teachers "known" to school leaders rather than teachers from more diverse backgrounds.

The advent of teachers and other school officers being employed by the school (rather than the Department) has resulted in a decrease in the number of permanent appointments and many teachers feeling insecure in their employment.

Where school leaders and teachers or school officers feel unfairly treated in their school, there appears to be no clear process for independent mediation and resolution.

Recommendation 35:

To enable education programs and student learning to be conducted without undue interruption or discontinuity, the WA Department of Education should require that, except in unavoidable circumstances, teachers and school leaders do not move schools during the school year and commit to a minimum of 2 years appointment in a given school.

Recommendation 36:

Decisions on teacher appointments, conditions and entitlements should revert to central office administration in the WA Department of Education.

Recommendation 37:

The Occupational Health and Safety Division and the Standards and Integrity Directorate of the WA Department of Education should work together and with teachers' and school leaders' representatives to devise a fair form of mediation to ensure a safe working environment for teachers, leaders and school officers.

4.5 WORKLOAD: BURNOUT, SATISFACTION, AND INTENTION TO LEAVE

Findings:

During the period under the review, there has been an ongoing deterioration in the career intentions of teachers, driven by increased workload demands and by a decline in teachers' mental health and wellbeing.

The attraction of staff to the WA public education system, including both new graduates and former teachers, will be greatly facilitated by the Department's public support for a reduction of workloads and the championing of teachers' professionalism.

The increased job demands experienced by education staff are surpassing the current level of job resources offered to staff by schools and the Department of Education, including mental resilience training and support.

The rising level of attrition among the teaching workforce – resignations and retirements – has both contributed to the reported teacher shortages and been driven by these workforce shortages**.**

Recommendation 38:

As a high priority strategy, and in line with National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, the Department of Education should seek to significantly reduce teacher workload as a means to more effectively attract and retain teachers and school leaders.

Recommendation 39:

Notwithstanding recent pilot initiatives announced by the Department to address "red tape" and provide attraction and retention payments, this strategy should include a systemic review and wide-ranging initiatives to provide sustainable workloads for teachers focused in the core job of teaching.

Recommendation 40:

While providing remedial initiatives, the Department of Education should prioritise strategies that reduce workplace psychological hazards and the triggers of teacher burnout.

5.1 STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SATISFACTION: OVERVIEW

Finding:

Many parents and educators are concerned that the way we measure achievement is too narrow**.**

5.2 STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: TEST RESULTS

Finding:

WA students' performance on national and international tests has not shown any consistent improvement over the last decade.

5.3 STUDENT PARTICIPATION: SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Finding:

WA students' school attendance and retention rates have been declining.

5.4 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT: YEAR 12 COMPLETION AND ATAR QUALIFICATIONS

Finding:

ATAR completion rates in Western Australia are significantly lower than the national average and are declining.

5.5 EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Finding:

A variety of measures point to increasing inequality and stagnating educational performance in Australia's education system, including in Western Australia.

5.6 STUDENT SATISFACTION

Finding:

A significant minority of students report little enjoyment of and satisfaction with their school experience.

Please note: All the recommendations in the previous sections have been crafted with the goal of improving the educational and social outcomes for public school students and apply to findings in this section.

5.7 ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

Findings:

Apart from influencing cultural responsiveness, the Aboriginal Education Teaching and Learning Directorate has a limited role in the selection and training of staff and the development of Aboriginal education.

Staff indicate that they have not had sufficient support, either prior to or after taking up appointments, to help them understand the cultural, emotional, and learning needs of diverse disadvantaged groups.

A variety of indicators show that Aboriginal students' achievement has not improved despite a myriad of often expensive programs (frequently introduced without rigorous evaluation or consultation).

Staffing arrangements for remote and very remote locations require an immediate rethink of what is needed to train, attract, and retrain suitable teachers.

Recommendation 41:

A dedicated Aboriginal Unit should be established as a matter of urgency. It should be well funded with the clear goal of supporting schools to implement the Aboriginal Standards Framework with appropriate resources and face-to-face support at the local level.

Recommendation 42:

An elite Aboriginal Education Team comprised of experienced and highly trained educators should be developed to staff schools with significant numbers of Aboriginal students.

Recommendation 43:

Teachers competitively appointed to this Team should have extensive cultural and educational training to understand and support local needs prior to taking up their roles.

Recommendation 44:

Teachers in this Team should be highly paid while in situ and guaranteed placements in preferred locations after three years' good service or, if they prefer, a return to their previous positions. They should also be provided with well-maintained accommodation and guaranteed regular flights to their usual hometowns or cities.

Recommendation 45:

The WA Department of Education should report annually on the implementation and outcomes for Aboriginal students in line with the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework, including achievement and attendance levels of Aboriginal students by city, regional, remote and very remote indicators.

A FINAL COMMENT

Findings:

The teaching profession is calling for immediate and sustainable change to the public school system.

The profession is at breaking point and requires immediate steps to support improved education delivery and morale.

Recommendation 46:

To implement the recommendations suggested in this report, a Change Management Steering Committee, led by the Director General and the President of the SSTUWA, should be established to develop an implementation plan, agreed milestones, a timeline and establish a resourcing approach.

SECTION 1: MAJOR EDUCATIONAL POLICY CHANGES SINCE 2010

1.1   The purpose of education policy

The last several decades have seen a steady stream of policy initiatives designed to improve Western Australia's education system. It is fair to say that schooling has undergone systemic change on an unprecedented scale (See Appendix 3). Some of these changes are national in design and reach [e.g., national assessment (NAPLAN)]; others are the result of WA government policy (e.g., Independent Public Schools). Many are influenced by political ideologies (e.g., competitive school comparisons); others reflect contemporary educational preoccupations and trends (e.g., reading instruction). However, the evidence to support these changes has not always been adequate or undisputed, and it is rare that comprehensive, dispassionate evaluations are undertaken, made public and acted upon. In some instances, the mandated changes have not been accompanied by adequate resources or professional development (e.g., inclusive education). In addition, the cumulative impact of these changes on teachers, school leaders and students appears not to have been seriously evaluated by policy makers, although there are signs that teacher shortages may be forcing more careful consideration.

However, most people – including education professionals – would agree with the very basic premise that education policies should be designed and implemented to improve the education of our children, as indicated by both the formal outcomes as well as the less easily measured personal and social benefits of schooling. At the very least, we should expect that they should do no harm, including to the teachers and support staff who are expected to implement these changes. However well-intentioned, policies which have the effect of undermining professional competence, unreasonably intensifying workload and removing needed support are unlikely to lead to improved educational outcomes.

Contemporary educational goals are captured in the current declaration endorsed by all Australian governments:[2] To provide an education system that promotes excellence and equity and opportunities for all young Australians to reach their full potential, becoming (1) successful lifelong learners, (2) confident and creative individuals and (3) informed members of the community. These objectives clearly envisage an education for children which encompasses more than narrowly defined basic skills. Many educators

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2 The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. Council of Australian Governments (2021). National School Reform Agreement. Canberra: Australian Government Department of Education. Retrieved from https://www.education.gov.au/qualityschools-package/resources/national-school-reform-agreement

have also emphasised the need to recognise that schools need to provide for the positive experiences of childhood – play, wonder, naïve curiosity – and value them for their own sake.[3]

The agreed national goals are accompanied by the implicit recognition that our education systems are failing some of our children who, to their cost, are not achieving their full potential. Identifying the reasons for these failures and implementing needed reforms to reduce them should be among the foremost concerns of education decision makers. A significant opportunity to improve educational outcomes, particularly for those currently missing out, is provided by the impending revision of the National Schools Resource Agreement (NSRA) which has generated a series of investigations into what needs to be done to improve schooling in Australia. The consultation paper requested by education ministers[4] addresses five key areas for action (but explicitly excludes funding): lifting student outcomes; improving student mental health and wellbeing; attracting and retaining teachers; data collection; and transparency of and accountability for school funding.

To achieve such improvements, policies may target all schools and students, or they may be directed at selected groups, particularly those at risk or who are disadvantaged in some way. Policies may also be designed to target intermediate processes such as teacher education or workload, which enable teachers to teach more effectively and to be sustained in the profession. Objectives, such as achieving greater efficiency in the use of resources or gaining broad community and political acceptance, are also relevant but secondary to the goal of student benefit.

Recommendation 1

Improving student outcomes should be the principal and explicit objective of any changes to education policies and practice.

Recommendation 2

Policies should be routinely and regularly subject to independent evaluation.

1.2   Major policy changes

(Major changes and a timeline of these changes since 2010 are summarised in Appendix 2.)

1.3   The Independent Public Schools (IPS) initiative.

The most significant and far-reaching policy shift in Western Australian education since 2010 was the introduction of the Independent Public School (IPS) initiative by the Barnett government and its subsequent expansion under successive governments (See Appendices 3 and 4 for details and a timeline). Owing much to the Charter School movement in the United States and Academy Schools in the United Kingdom, the core of the program is the transfer of previously centralised and regional responsibilities to individual schools. In general, the emphasis shifts from collaboration to competition.

Changes to legislation and relevant policy were enacted over several years to enable IPS principals to enter into commercial contracts (up to a specified limit), to directly employ non-teaching staff, to select teaching staff, and to decide on the structure of the school leadership team. At the same time, each school was required to establish boards and to develop school business plans and provide

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3 Heller, R. (2017). *Educational Goods: Values, Evidence and Decision Making* (University of Chicago Press, 2018.
4 Better and Fairer Education System - Consultation Paper - Department of Education, Australian Government, 2023.

annual reports. One-line budgets were introduced to IPS schools to enable these changes and later extended to all schools. The quantum of funds provided for each school's budget was then determined by per student allocations and additional loadings based on a Student-Centred Funding Model (SCFM).

Promoted as being more effective and accountable and giving schools greater autonomy to respond to community needs, improved student outcomes were assumed, despite there being little evidence that "increased autonomy" would produce such results. The underlying belief seemed to be that schools would be freed from centralised control and bureaucracy allowing them to better target student needs. Principals were given greater autonomy, but notably over the school's budget and staffing and not curriculum and pedagogy.

The supposed benefits of programs of this kind are not universally agreed. In general, there is little evidence to support the advertised benefits of structural changes like the IPS, and there are serious, well-placed analyses[5] and research[6] which show that they might exacerbate existing inequalities. Critics have argued that the concept of "independent" public schools is at odds with the core values that underpin public education; that public schools belong to everyone and should promote the common good. Concerns have been raised that establishing public schools as quasi-businesses competing with one another for staff and resources would only exacerbate existing inequalities; that funds would be diverted to publicity and marketing at the expense of educational outcomes; that governments could evade their responsibilities by placing the onus on schools for any shortcomings; that workloads would increase as tasks previously done centrally or by regions were devolved to schools; and that the benefits of collaboration and networking as part of a system would be lost.

Despite these concerns and the lack of comprehensive evaluative data, 75% of WA schools (624 of 830) are now IPS schools, not least because to remain outside the program is to risk being marginalised, losing staff and resources. At its inception, the initiative was heavily promoted as desirable, with the most advantaged and prestigious government schools being selected in the initial cohort. Incentive payments of up to $50,000 and enhanced professional learning opportunities (e.g., at Harvard University) were offered to schools joining the program. These are no longer available.

In the event, there were substantial cuts ($250-300 million) to the public education budget in 2013-14 following the introduction of IPS, resulting in significant job losses in the WA Department of Education's head office and in regional offices, as well as reductions in the number of education assistants and family liaison personnel across the state. These changes continue to reverberate through the system and were the subject of many complaints the Panel received from teachers and school leaders. As Keddie and her colleagues have shown,[7] in emphasising the market values of efficiency, competition and choice, programs which provide for greater school autonomy also produce negative impacts, particularly in the form of reduced support, resources and programs previously provided by central and regional education bureaucracies. They described the consequences for small, rural and remote schools in W.A. as "dire".

While it may be argued that independent public schools could potentially promote greater efficiency in resource allocation, there is no solid evidence to suggest they will improve or have improved student outcomes or teacher satisfaction. The only publicly available evaluation of the program – three years after its inception when relatively few schools were IPS – was commissioned by the WA

5 Savage, G (2014) Independent public schools: a dangerous reform path Independent public schools: a dangerous reform path (theconversation. com)
6 Keddie, A., MacDonald, K., Blackmore, J., Gobby, B., Wilkinson, J., Eacott, S., and Niesche, R. (2023). School Autonomy reform and social Justice in Australian public education: Final Report 2023. Deakin University.
7 Keddie et al., 2023, Ibid.

Department of Education from researchers at the University of Melbourne[8]. Despite the fact that the investigators found that many principals supported the program, because it "enhanced the functioning of their school", particularly in terms of "resource efficiency", there was "little evidence of changes to student outcomes" and "no substantive increase in student achievement".

This finding is consistent with international evidence compiled by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2009,[9] before the introduction of IPS in Western Australia. Their report, based on Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data, concluded that, *"In countries where schools have greater autonomy over what is taught and how students are assessed, students tend to perform better,"* but these are precisely the areas where Australian schools, including those in the IPS system, have very little autonomy since all are required to deliver the Australian Curriculum in core subjects and to conduct nationally mandated tests (NAPLAN).[10]

Contrary to the advertised benefits of the IPS, the same OECD report made it clear that when schools had greater autonomy in operational matters such as staffing and budgets, "there is no clear relationship between autonomy in resource allocation and performance at the country level". A recent cross-cultural study[11] of the effect of the degree of decentralisation/autonomy in 49 countries, again using PISA data, added weight to this conclusion, finding that while teacher participation in school management, including curriculum, has a significant, positive effect on student achievement, school autonomy does not.

This conclusion was also supported in the WA Legislative Assembly report of 2016[12] into the IPS in Western Australia. The Committee stated that at that time, "there is no well-established or direct link between autonomy and improved student outcomes". The bipartisan report was emphatic in its conclusion that "the IPS initiative has exacerbated existing inequalities in the public education system ... reinforcing a two-tiered system". They found that the budgetary and staffing autonomy provided to schools through the IPS process "is unlikely to affect student outcomes".

Significantly, there is no evidence of improvements in outcomes as indicated by NAPLAN results over the period the IPS has been in operation (See Section 5).

Finding:

There is no evidence of a link between school autonomy in staffing and resource allocation and improved student outcomes.

Finding:

There is no evidence that the move to IPS has improved student outcomes.

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8 Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative Final Report (2013) Melbourne Graduate School of Education, the University of Melbourne.

9 OECD. (2012). PISA 2012 results: What makes schools successful? Resources, Policies and Practices Vol. 4. Paris.

10 National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).

11 Yuan Teng & Kwok Kuen Tsang (2021) Educational decentralisation and students' academic achievement: a cross-cultural analysis, Educational Studies, DOI: 10.1080/03055698.2021.1942793

12 Parliament of Western Australia, Legislative Assembly, Education and Health Standing Committee: IPS Report Card, The Report of the Inquiry into the Independent Public Schools Initiative, no 8, 2016, p i.

Again, prior to the introduction of IPS in Western Australia, there was abundant educational research[13] showing that such market-based reforms run the risk of worsening rather than diminishing existing inequalities in education. As many of the submissions to our inquiry pointed out, the most worrying outcome of the IPS program is the creation of a two-tiered public school system, exacerbating differences between high and low socio-economic area schools. For example, the Professional Teaching Council of Western Australia[14] submitted to our Panel that IPS has amplified socio-economic differences between schools and has "made teaching in rural and remote schools less desirable, largely because it has become more difficult to secure a teaching post back in urban schools". They noted that, as a result, recruiting and retaining staff in rural and remote schools has become more difficult.

Similar conclusions were reached by the authors of the Australian Research Council Discovery Project, "Autonomy Reform and Social Justice in Australian Education" which included interviews and case studies drawn from Western Australia. They stated that: "The shift in school autonomy reform from socially democratic to market and competition imperatives, has led to increasing levels of residualisation and segregation in Australia's public education systems."[15]
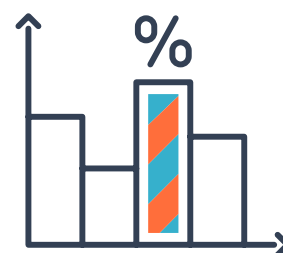
Finding:

The IPS system has amplified the growing inequality in the WA education system.

Many submissions to our Panel pointed to the fact that with the location of control over staffing at the school level, public schools in advantaged areas are better placed to recruit the most experienced teachers, luring them away from where they are most needed: low-performing public schools in disadvantaged areas. Teachers and school leaders in the most disadvantaged areas reported that they have insufficient resources to provide for the complex needs of their students, including finding it difficult to recruit experienced teachers.

In the eyes of many of our informants, the most significant and detrimental component of the current IPS system was the introduction of local selection of staff and the attendant unravelling of the teacher transfer system[16]. Attaching teachers' positions (permanent or contract) to each school rather than the Department has compounded teacher insecurity and inability to re-locate schools. In particular, many (often younger) teachers from disadvantaged schools said they felt trapped by the fact that transfers within the metropolitan area were not permitted. To move schools, they have to apply for and win an advertised position in another school, meeting criteria which require knowledge specific to that school's context, thus placing them at a disadvantage when compared with current staff in that school. Many are sceptical that these processes are truly competitive, with examples being provided to the Panel of job advertisements giving current staff members a distinct advantage over outside applicants. Worse, there were more than a few complaints that local staffing decisions favoured those already known to the school leaders. It appears that teachers in these circumstances are less able to move between public schools and may feel little or no attachment to the public system, looking to the non-government schools to improve their employment conditions.

Many of the teachers who communicated with the Panel also indicated that, in their experience, the shift of many of the responsibilities from regional offices to the school level resulted in a significant loss of support and capacity, less collaboration and cooperation between schools and wasteful duplication in many areas. (For further details see Section 1.4).

13 Matthew P. Steinberg; Does Greater Autonomy Improve School Performance? Evidence from a Regression Discontinuity Analysis in Chicago. *Education Finance and Policy* 2014; 9 (1): 1–35. doi: https://doi.org/10.1162/EDFP_a_00118; Maslowski, R., J. Scheerens, and H. Luyten. 2007. "The Effect of School Autonomy and School Internal Decentralisation on Students' Reading Literacy." *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 18 (3): 303–334. doi:10.1080/09243450601147502; Grosskopt, S., and C. Moutray. 2001. "Evaluating Performance in Chicago Public High Schools in the Wake of Decentralisation." *Economics of Education Review* 20 (1): 1–14. doi:10.1016/S0272-7757(99)00065-5.
14 Submission, Professional Teaching Council of Western Australia.
15 Keddie et al., 2023, Op cit.
16 With the exception of those positions in specified regional areas guaranteed a return to more desirable locations, as stipulated in the General Agreement (Schools).

Teachers and school leaders who witnessed and participated in the transition to IPS status commented extensively on the impact these changes had on them, on other school staff and on students. They noted that the extra demands on school administrative staff and school leaders resulting from the devolved financial management significantly increased workloads, while the new skills required skewed professional development away from curriculum leadership and toward staffing and budget management. The resulting shift in focus was experienced by many teachers as a loss of educational leadership.

While some principals, particularly in more advantaged areas, continue to value the staffing flexibility provided by the IPS model, many of the longer-serving teachers who responded to our call for submissions believed that, in general, the move to IPS had been a retrograde step.

Finding:

Local selection of staff is valued by some school leaders because they believe it enables them to better provide for their schools' needs.

Finding:

Local selection of staff has reduced teachers' ability to move between schools, created difficulty in staffing regional and remote schools, and generated perceptions of unfairness in the recruitment process.

Finding:

The decision to attach teachers' positions (permanent or contract) to individual schools rather than to the WA Department of Education has produced inequities in schools' access to experienced staff.

In their funding agreements with the Department, principals are required to specify what funds are allocated for what purposes and to ensure that this information, together with business plans and information about loadings under the Student Centred Funding Model (SCFM – Section 2.3), is communicated to the school board or council for their consideration and endorsement. Informants to our Panel were generally sceptical about the extent to which members of school boards actually follow the complexities of school expenditure, including allocations under the SCFM, and doubted whether they were in a position to review school leadership decisions. School boards continue to operate under the original Education Act (1999) provision for school councils and there have been no legislative amendments to reflect their changed status. There is also little guidance from the WA Department of Education about exactly what information school principals should report to the school board/council.

People who responded to the Panel frequently questioned the effectiveness of current accountability arrangements. Many observed that the demands on school leaders to manage the new corporate roles were often at the expense of exercising leadership in educational practice. Members of the Panel with extensive experience as school leaders noted that, in the past, teachers almost never mentioned or questioned accountability as they do now.

Finding:

School leaders need more information about where and how school funds should be spent to achieve system priorities.

Finding:

Current systems of school accountability do not adequately monitor the allocation of expenditure for specific student needs.

Recommendation 3:

The Western Australian (WA) Department of Education's priorities for school decision-making and expenditure should be made explicit and clearly communicated to schools.

Recommendation 4:

The WA Department of Education should undertake annual reviews of each school's spending to ensure that funds are appropriately spent and in compliance with Departmental priorities.

Recommendation 5:

With a view to identifying the key structural changes needed to improve the functioning of the school system in W.A., a thorough, independent review of the Independent Public School (IPS) system should be undertaken to achieve:

- Improved student outcomes

- Greater educational equality

- Equity and probity in teacher and school leader selection and promotion

- Accountability, including the use of funds for designated purposes

- Better access to support services and curriculum resources.

1.4   Changes to central and regional support services.

As IPS and one-line budgeting were being rolled out across WA public schools, many previously central responsibilities were transferred to schools, and central and regional support structures were either dismantled or reduced in capacity. The education budget was cut accordingly, and many positions held by experienced professionals were abolished. In addition to those generated by the IPS model, other changes in school support and governance arrangements have been executed since 2010, typically justified by the argument that they would improve the functioning of the system.

Many of those who reported to the Panel indicated that such changes are rarely given time to be fully embedded and are often modified because of limited resources or changes in purpose. The rationales typically offered are that such changes are needed because of "budget repair" or "efficiency dividends"; however, the possible impact on student outcomes or the needs of schools and teacher workload are rarely acknowledged.

The following snapshot demonstrates some of the changes to support services over the past two decades.

2008-2011:

Twenty-four districts were established each with its own District Director of Education. They were funded to provide curriculum support, school psychology services, disability and behaviour support experts and, as appropriate, Aboriginal support teams. The district staff also provided advice on financial and facilities management, maintenance, and other support services for school Business Managers (now Corporate Services Managers).

Within the 11 regional districts and 13 metropolitan districts, the District Directors had responsibility for an average of between 22 and 35 schools. Many decisions were made locally, and direct communication to the central office was maintained through two Executive Directors - one focussed on metropolitan school needs including staffing, funding, and support, the other with similar responsibilities for regional and remote schools. Principal appointments were managed centrally using a merit selection approach.

The introduction of the IPS model was a catalyst for modifying the support for all schools; beginning in 2012, the number of districts was reduced to eight in the regions and two in the metropolitan area. Regional area districts became responsible for between 22 and 150+ schools (depending on location), while the metropolitan districts supported and monitored approximately 250 schools, each team being led by Regional Executive Directors (REDs), who were also members of the central Executive Team. The outcome, as explained to the Panel, was that schools had less direct support and staff had reduced line management, with the impact being more marked in primary schools. For some, this was experienced as abandonment.

Since the IPS model was designed to shift greater responsibility and accountability to the school level, schools were expected to source and provide most of the needed support from their own budgets. After an initial boost to funding for this transfer of responsibility, funds were systematically reduced, placing pressure on schools' capacity to deliver the needed support for their students and staff. In the view of many of those who reported to the Panel, competing priorities within schools and inexperience with the new resource management requirements resulted in fewer resources being applied to students' needs.

2016:

A further reconfiguration was undertaken, with a consolidation of support services - now referred to as Statewide Services - to a location in Padbury. This further diminished local school support, and a number of our respondents said they now find the services inefficient and unresponsive. As a result, some schools have sought alternative commercial solutions and programs, most of which are not based on quality research evidence; nor has their effectiveness or value for money been carefully evaluated. A proliferation of such material has resulted, not because schools prefer such resources, but because local, systemic support is absent or difficult to access.

In 2020, the Education department commissioned Nous[17] to conduct a "form and function review" of Statewide Services. After a brief, ten-week review, the report identified several weaknesses in the system which might explain why teachers report difficulties in accessing appropriate services. These were that:

• the purpose of Statewide Services was unclear;

• the link and alignment to the Department's strategic directions was unclear;

• the services available were not obvious or known to staff;

• there were insufficient resources dedicated to school-facing services;

• there was insufficient clarity on structure within or outside of Statewide Services;

• decision-making could be slow with too many levels of approval required; and

• some processes were inefficient and workflows unclear.

As a result of their enquiry, the Nous Group proposed a revised statement of purpose, viz that "Statewide Services provides the services and supports required by schools to enable student achievement, with a focus on those students and schools that need it most", as well as recommending a new service delivery model. It's unclear to the Panel whether any of the recommended changes were adopted. However, it is clear from our recent consultations with school communities that teachers and school leaders are voicing the same complaints as those the Nous team identified when reviewing the agency in 2020.

Informants indicated that, in their experience, the shift of many responsibilities from district and regional offices to schools resulted in a significant loss of support and capacity, less collaboration and

17 Nous Group | Form and function review of Statewide Services | 14 December 2020

cooperation between schools and wasteful duplication in many areas. As one city CSM said, *"I've spent hours and hours over fifteen months looking for a school gardener – with still no applications. I used to call District Office and they would have a list for me to choose from. What a waste of my time – weekends and holidays!!"*

School leaders, teachers and administrative staff repeatedly pointed to the loss of oversight and support from local officers to provide tailored, targeted and Department ratified, professional learning and support. They reported that regional officers now rarely visit and have limited capacity to provide support except in critical situations. Central office directors who do visit are typically seen to have a narrow focus – e.g., for school review – and rarely maintain connection. The handling of complaints was a particular cause for concern for many schools, since complaints now go directly to the Standards and Integrity Directorate in the WA Department of Education, often before the school even understands a complaint exists.

A repeated request from teachers and school leaders during our consultations was for the creation of locally based services able to provide professional education, particularly in regional and remote areas where travel costs can be prohibitive. They suggested that such places could assist schools by providing clarification about administrative processes and facilities management, best practice pedagogy, curriculum updates and Departmental priorities, all tailored to the needs of schools in the region.

Finding:

The centralization of services has not met the needs of schools for administrative and educational support.

Finding:

Teachers and school leaders prefer well-resourced local services over centralized services to support schools; they are seen as more responsive and useful.

Recommendation 6:

The WA Department of Education should redesign support services to ensure they are more accessible, more responsive to local needs and better resourced to support schools' administrative and educational needs.

1.5 Support for students with special needs.

The steady loss of professional and student support was frequently identified by our informants as a major pressure on morale and workload. As regional offices were reduced in size and number, teachers and school leaders reported that they were no longer able to request and receive timely support in managing students with problem behaviours or in managing difficulties with parents and other community members. Family liaison officers who worked to ensure high levels of student attendance were lost as part of this "reform" and, perhaps as a result, attendance rates have continued to deteriorate (See Section 5). Professional development suffered too, especially in country areas, with school-by-school resourcing reducing opportunities for collaboration and resource and information sharing.

As a result of these changes, teachers and school leaders experienced a loss of effective support in dealing with difficult student behaviour, despite this being one of the most frequently identified areas of concern for schools. The SSTUWA submission acknowledged that while the WA Department of Education has introduced and expanded some initiatives, for example in dealing with aggressive

behaviours, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) program support, and the establishment of Alternative Learning Settings (ALS), "the gap between current system capability and what is actually required remains significant." This conclusion aligns with the views of many who took part in our consultation meetings, particularly in rural areas; they reported that there is now virtually no student service support from regional offices.

At a time when many are calling for greater attention to be paid to student mental health and well-being, including in the NSRA discussion paper[18] (and see Section 5), the loss of dedicated, professional staff to help address student well-being was one of the main reasons given to the Panel for the reported rise in discipline problems. While it is understood that students' learning is influenced by many out-of-school factors largely beyond schools' influence,[19] teachers and school leaders accept that they have a responsibility to support student learning regardless of students' circumstances or background. However, to do this well, schools need help: well-funded programs which identify and address students' additional needs and timely access to appropriate services and resources which prevent problems developing and help remove barriers to students reaching their potential. Teachers currently receive little or no professional learning focussed on supporting students with special needs. Without tailored assistance, teachers find it difficult to meet the needs of these students and experience disappointment and discouragement, feeling that they are failing in their professional responsibilities and failing the children.

Of note is that fact that the School Psychology Service (SPS) is currently operating at a ratio of one school psychologist to 1,500 students. Waiting times for students in need sometimes extends to months, with teachers having to do the best they can in the meantime with minimal or no support. Some country schools report waiting times of up to two and a half years. Further, the use of the SPS is optional – a principal can choose to access a private provider if the budget allows, or to buy additional SPS time, again if the budget allows. The consequence of this is that larger schools are better positioned to be able to do this, adding to the inequity within the system and increased burdens on school budgets.

Both parents and teachers also observed that support and therapy for their children from agencies and services outside the education system were often unavailable or difficult to access. Paediatric, speech pathology and child mental health services were often mentioned as having long waiting lists or being too expensive.

Finding:

More support for students with special needs is needed, especially in disadvantaged schools.

Recommendation 7:

In conjunction with education authorities, the Western Australian Government should design and fund dedicated, cross-portfolio services to support the learning of children with special needs.

Recommendation 8:

In the context of the WA Government's disability strategy, the WA Department of Education should, after consultation with teachers and parents, provide clear system-wide guidelines and a process for making decisions on the optimum placement of students with special needs.

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18 Better and Fairer Education System - Consultation Paper - Department of Education, Australian Government, 2023.
19 Productivity Commission 2022, Review of the National School Reform Agreement, Study Report, Canberra , Figure 5.1.

1.6 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

One of the most discussed and publicised changes to school policy Australia-wide (including W.A.) was the introduction in 2008 of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). Under this program, schools are required to participate every year in uniform tests of students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in reading, writing, language conventions and numeracy. Its introduction required significant involvement by teachers and school leaders, many of whom were unconvinced of the purported benefits said to flow from its introduction.

While the publicly stated purposes of NAPLAN have changed over time, they are described in a review commissioned by several state governments as, "monitoring progress towards national goals, school system accountability and performance, school improvement, individual student learning achievement and growth, and information for parents/carers on school and student performance".[20] However, the 2021 evaluation by Gonski Institute researchers of the extent to which NAPLAN achieved these goals concluded that "even when NAPLAN is assessed against these dated and poorly oriented aims, it fails to live up to expectations".[21] As noted by many of the teachers we contacted, the feedback about individual students, classrooms and schools is too narrowly focused and error prone to be of much use.

While there are clearly some benefits for system wide and trend assessments, it is obvious that even the objectives outlined above have not been fully met and, indeed, that there have been unintended and adverse consequences. For example, the decision to publish NAPLAN test results, facilitated inter-school comparisons which took no account of marked differences between schools in resources and student populations. Although this practice has been, belatedly, modified so that results are corrected for SES, it may have accelerated the movement of students from public schools to low fee independent schools. In addition, this "weaponizing" of competition between school sectors was seen by many teachers as pushing schools to focus on test results above other considerations. Richer sources of information which might inform judgements of schools and systems came to be overlooked.

Teachers told the Panel that the publication of schools' results online led some schools to request less able students to absent themselves from testing so the school could maintain or improve its position compared with other schools of similar socio-educational status (ICSEA).[22] They also reported that school administrators pressured them to teach the learning points known to be assessed in the NAPLAN test – in time for the tests. Or they took the initiative themselves since they wanted their students to score well. "Teaching to the test" has become the norm for many teachers and, as a consequence, schools and teachers have reported a narrowing of curriculum and a loss of time for other parts of the curriculum.

20 NAPLAN Review Final Report
21 Wilson, R., Piccoli, A., Hargreaves, A., Ng, P. T., & Sahlberg, P. (2021). Putting Students First: Moving on from NAPLAN to a new educational assessment system (The Gonski Institute Policy Paper #2-2021). Sydney: UNSW Gonski Institute
22 The Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA) is a scale of socio-educational advantage that is computed for each school.

A survey of over 8000 teachers conducted through the Whitlam Institute[23] revealed that, following the introduction of NAPLAN, teachers had observed:

- a narrowing of teaching strategies and curriculum;

- negative impacts on student health and wellbeing;

- deterioration in staff morale; and

- negative impacts on public schools' reputations (particularly in disadvantaged areas), and, hence,

- their capacity to attract and retain students and staff.

For example, in his submission to the Panel, education researcher Gardner observed that:

> "In a paper published in 2017,[24] (Gardner, 2017) in which I compared the Primary English curricula of England and Australia, I concluded that the Australian curriculum was more in line with the linguistic and communicative needs of citizens in the 21st Century. However, since publication, my observations of more than 30 primary schools across the State lead me to the view that NAPLAN undermines the curriculum. In order to appear successful, schools narrow the curriculum in line with NAPLAN assessment criteria thereby subverting the breadth and depth of the English curriculum. This tends to lead to a mono-pedagogic approach framed around the acquisition of skills allied to assessment criteria. Ironically however, the inadequacy of this approach is realised in deteriorating NAPLAN results, particularly in writing and inferential comprehension from the middle years of schooling (Gardner, 2018)."[25]

Similar observations were made in submissions to our Panel and by many of the 2400 teachers surveyed in 2019 by researchers at Monash University.[26] They too reflected on some of the undesirable consequences of NAPLAN, including increased workload pressure and stress on classroom teachers and school leaders. Some identified this extra stress as one of the reasons they were considering leaving the profession. "It takes the joy out of school and teaching" was a comment the Panel heard several times.

A common perception among teachers was that NAPLAN was essentially a vote of no confidence in teachers' professionalism and quality, underestimating their ability to assess their own students' progress and remedy any identified problems. It is worth emphasising that teachers who interact with their students throughout the year have a more profound and detailed knowledge of their students' capacities and weaknesses than can ever be attained by a single point in time test on a narrow range of skills. The Gonski Institute team reached similar conclusions, stating that "the design and implementation of the program did not include teachers' perspectives sufficiently and many teachers are now disillusioned with NAPLAN."

Teachers who spoke to us were also concerned about the detrimental effects on students' learning and mental health of NAPLAN and similar testing regimes, and there are indications of a link between NAPLAN testing and decreased student

23 An Educator's Perspective: The impacts of high stakes testing on school students and their families — Whitlam Institute
24 Gardner, P. (2017) Worlds Apart: a comparative analysis of discourse of English in the curricula of England and Australia. English in Education, 51 (2), 170-187.
25 Gardner, P. (2018) NAPLAN: The Writing is on the Wall but Who is Actually Reading It? English in Australia. 53(1) 15-23.
26 Heffernan, A., Longmuir, F., Bright, D. & Misol. K. (2019).Perceptions-of-Teachers-and-Teaching-in-Australia-report-Nov-2019.pdf (monash.edu)

wellbeing,[27] although such effects may be more general responses to all testing situations.[28] Parents have also expressed similar concerns.

It is notable that, despite the significant resources deployed in the introduction and subsequent management of NAPLAN, the expected improvement in educational outcomes has not eventuated; indeed, in international comparisons over that period Australia's performance has declined (See Section 5). Nor is it evident that federal government funding decisions have been influenced in any significant way by the educational needs revealed in NAPLAN results. In WA, however, some weight is given in the student funding model to the proportion of students falling below specified NAPLAN levels (See Section 2).

Some of these problems can be remedied by making NAPLAN a sample assessment like PISA rather than a census assessment, conducting tests less frequently and without publicly identifying schools in the results. Feedback to parents and students could then be based on timely and broader assessments devised by teachers and school leaders to better reflect a broad range of desired outcomes. The Gonski Institute has stressed that the primary focus for an assessment system should be the students, whose needs and interests have often been overlooked in the process of designing and implementing NAPLAN. They have suggested that a series of questions which need to be addressed in any revised design, including its power to: monitor national, state and territory programs and policies; ensure system accountability and performance; produce school improvement; foster individual student learning and growth; and provide information for parents on school and student performance.

Finding:

The introduction of NAPLAN has not resulted in any sustained improvements in aggregate educational outcomes or in reducing educational inequality.

Finding:

The benefits for teachers from NAPLAN have not materialised and many have experienced increased workload and a loss of professional standing as a result.

Finding:

Individual national testing has narrowed the curriculum for children while teachers spend more classroom time "teaching to the test."

Recommendation 9:

That National, State and Territory ministers consider replacing NAPLAN, a census assessment, with a sample assessment like PISA, conducting tests less frequently and without publicly identifying schools in the results.

27 Rice S., Dulfer N., Polesel J., O'Hanlon C. (2015). NAPLAN and student wellbeing: Teacher perceptions of the impact of NAPLAN on students. In Lingard B., Thompson G., Sellar S. (Eds.), *National testing in schools: An Australian assessment*. Routledge.

28 Dowley, M. & Rice, S. (2022) Comparing student motivations for and emotional responses to national standardised tests and internal school tests: The devil in the detail, *Australian Journal of Education*, 66:1, 92-110.

1.7 School reports to parents

After testing and assessing students, teachers provide reports to parents or carers. In the past, these reports were provided twice a year – mid-year and at the end of year. However, with the availability of increasingly sophisticated technology, many schools now report to parents on an ongoing basis. In primary school, software such as *See-saw* means very frequent contact between teachers and parents – some teachers report exhaustively!

Similarly in secondary schools, Education Department-provided software means that parents can now be given frequent updates. Yet the semester reporting process continues to be just as intensive as in the past and time consuming for teachers. Many questioned the need for additional comprehensive comments alongside grades when assessment results had already been presented to parents – often on a parent reporting evening or day. Those who questioned current practice, argued that the extensive comments should now be unnecessary given the frequent communication between teachers and parents. At two secondary schools, where reporting is now via digital software, staff members indicated that in one case, only 52 percent and, in the other, fewer than 50 per cent of parents had opened the school report document. They questioned the time, energy and thoughtfulness going into such reports when many parents did not read them.

Finding:

Schools assess students frequently using a variety of testing regimes.

Finding:

Parents now receive frequent and accurate reporting about their children's progress.

Recommendation 10:

The WA Department of Education should clarify what reporting to parents is expected by the Department and required by the state and national government policies.

1.8 National curriculum

During 2008, the states and territories agreed with the Commonwealth Government to establish an independent statutory curriculum body, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to drive the introduction of a national curriculum. It was argued that Commonwealth involvement in what is constitutionally a state-based responsibility was needed to reduce the supposed difficulties created for children moving between states because of people's increasing mobility. In 2009, ACARA became operational, with a brief to develop an Australian Curriculum as the basis for education practice in every State and Territory. Following consultation with education bodies (as well as politicians), the Australian Curriculum (F-10) for English, Mathematics, Science and History was endorsed in 2010 by all States and the Commonwealth. ACARA was given a brief to review the Australian Curriculum on rotation every six years and by 2023, it had delivered version 9.0 of the Australian Curriculum, incorporating changes which had been made to the original statements.

Within this national framework, the Curriculum Council of WA was replaced in 2012 by an independent body, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA), to oversee the curriculum for all schools in Western Australia. SCSA sets out "the knowledge, understanding, skills, values and attitudes that students are expected to acquire and guidelines for the assessment of student achievement" (Oct 2019). For teachers, it effectively prescribes the curriculum they are expected to teach and consults widely with teachers before introducing new curriculum.

In the period covered by this review, changes to school curriculums have been frequent – both through policy changes as well as local adjustments.

Policy changes include (but the list is not exhaustive):

- On entry assessment for pre-primary students (2010),
- Gifted and Talented in Public Schools Policy 2.2 (2010),
- Year 7s moved to secondary schools (announced 2011 for 2015),
- Sign off implementation of phase one of the Australian Curriculum,
- Pre-primary school made compulsory in WA,
- ACARA consults on Phase 2 and 3 of the Australian Curriculum (2013),
- Phase 1 Australian Curriculum for the senior years of schooling (2013),
- WACE changes announced (2013),
- Healthy food and drink in public schools' policy 2.0 (2014),
- NAPLAN online trialled (2016),
- Changes to WACE graduation (from 2016),
- School based programs for students with autism launched (2-17),
- State STEM strategy developed (2018),
- Embed Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework in classrooms (2018)
- Individual assessment of student progress (2018),
- Student online policy (2019),
- Curriculum Assessment and Reporting in Public schools v4.0 (2019),
- VET reforms in secondary schools (2019),
- Students Online in Public Schools v3.1 (2019),
- New options for Year 11 students from 2020, Year 12 students 2021 (2021),
- Enhanced transition to school project (2021),
- NAPLAN online trial extended (2021),
- Vaping toolkit launched (2022),
- Cyber security policy v1.0 (2022),
- Changes to Australian curriculum

Typically, only limited additional professional learning or support has been provided to schools and educational professionals to implement these changes.

1.9 Extension of compulsory schooling and Vocational Education in Schools (VETiS)

The decision to extend compulsory schooling to Years 11 and 12 resulted in significant changes to school curriculum offerings and to schools' organisation to cater for students who previously would have left school to enter vocational education or employment. Schools were now expected to offer courses for both university entry and vocationally related courses. This created increased demands on the budgets, organisation, facilities and workload for leaders and teachers in secondary schools, especially those with smaller enrolments.

The culmination of achievement of senior secondary school education is the attainment of a Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE). It is the graduation certificate for Western Australian students. The WACE is recognised nationally by universities, industry and other training providers through the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). Students who achieve the WACE have successfully completed two years of senior secondary schooling and have achieved the required standard in their course selection. While secondary schools have traditionally catered for students aspiring to university entry, the advent of a broader population of senior school students required an extended school curriculum to include vocational skills and training. Teaching skills as well as appropriate facilities and partnerships to enhance student success, were required to expand curriculum offerings.

In accessing curriculum and funding for Vocational Education Training in Schools (VETiS), schools were confronted with a wide variety of course choices: traineeships and workplace learning; pre-apprenticeships; Certificate II or III level qualifications and others. The decision by SCSA that Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) requirements[29] should include either the attainment of a Certificate II or better, or a minimum ATAR[30] score, did help clarify the extent to which schools should adopt VET platforms. However, according to those who made submissions to the Panel, and as found by the WA Parliament's Education and Health Standing Committee Inquiry,[31] there continue to be major differences in the way academic subjects are delivered and assessed compared to what is required by the VET competency framework. In addition, the legislation governing VET means there is limited scope for schools to adjust programs to suit their students' needs. Adding to the complexity and cost, teachers of Certificate II students are required to have a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment as well as the appropriate level of vocational competencies. These requirements increase costs to the school (for additional workplace and professional learning) and place additional pressure on teachers.

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29 Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) is awarded to senior secondary school students who satisfy its requirements. It is a senior secondary certificate recognised nationally in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). Generally, students will complete two years of senior secondary study to achieve the WACE, although the School Curriculum and Standards Authority allows students to meet the WACE requirements over a lifetime. The WACE is recognised by universities, industry and other training providers. Achievement of a WACE signifies that a student has successfully met the breadth and depth standard, the achievement standard and the literacy and numeracy standard in their senior secondary schooling. Years 11 and 12 | WACE Requirements (scsa.wa.edu.au).

30 The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) is a number between 0.00 and 99.95 that indicates a student's position relative to all the students in their age group.

31 Parliament of Western Australia, Education and Health Standing Committee (2017) Putting VET to the test: An assessment of the delivery of Vocational Education and Training in Schools.

Coincident with move to VETiS, the WA Department of Education suffered significant budget cuts, compounding difficulties with its implementation. The funds for VETiS are now provided to schools through a targeted initiative based on the number of students whose NAPLAN scores fall within the lowest 10% across the state, implying that only lower achieving students might be suitable for studying trade-related skills and, in the process, diminishing the perceived value of such courses. In most schools, this does not represent the actual number of students enrolled in VETiS; students who score above this level and choose vocational education are not funded for VETiS at all. We were told that, consequently, schools have struggled to offer VETiS courses based on student choice since they are constrained by the school's capacity to pay.

While VETiS is a system-wide initiative, it seems that the WA Education Department provided limited advice and support to guide its implementation. There also appears to be no routine auditing process, with the result that there is considerable inequity in the implementation of the program. This is especially so in rural communities. The SSTUWA submission also questioned the reasoning behind the establishment of senior campuses and colleges exclusively for Year 11 and 12 students, sometimes in competition with the local secondary school. The result in their view was that "the senior colleges draw enrolments from nearby secondary schools, resulting in reduced staffing and therefore reduced curriculum offerings in those schools."

A recent decision by SCSA that non-ATAR students may complete a general studies pathway as an alternative to the Certificate II and still achieve a WACE resulted in a significant drop in the numbers of students choosing a VET pathway. It is noteworthy that in WA it appears that one of the consequences of the introduction of VETiS courses has been a drop in the proportion of students completing an ATAR pathway. It now stands at 42% compared with 58% in 2016.

Finding

Vocational Education in Schools (VETiS) funding in schools is not adequate to meet the needs of students seeking vocational education.

Recommendation 11:

The WA Department of Education should assess the quality of VET programs offered in schools and ensure they are funded to provide for all the students who choose to study VET courses.

In addition to those outlined above, concerns were raised by some teachers about their inability to provide a significant minority of students with an exit certificate. In WA, 81% of students achieved a WACE in 2021, leaving many students without recognised achievement on leaving secondary school. As well as achieving in senior courses (ATAR or VET), the WACE includes a minimum literacy and numeracy achievement requirement. Students demonstrate this minimum through achieving Band 8 in the reading, writing and numeracy components of the Year 9 NAPLAN. Alternatively, students successfully complete the Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (OLNA). Some students who remain in the school system until the senior years and may be successful in their skills-based courses are unable to demonstrate literacy and numeracy through these assessments. The plight of these young people (typically students from regional, remote and very remote areas; or for whom English is a second language, or have suffered trauma, mental health problems or have special needs) is that they frequently leave school without any qualification at all. It is yet another indication of the inequalities which characterise the education system. Currently there are limited alternative opportunities or pathways for these students.

1.10 Curriculum support and commercialisation

Many reports to the Panel referred to the crowded curriculum, the frequent changes in curriculum content and changing expectations about students' mastery of various concepts. When the curriculum is changing regularly, the availability of WA Department of Education approved (or led) curriculum materials and credible, quality professional learning is critical.

The Department's Institute for Professional Learning does provide support for graduates and those new to the Department, but no systematic professional learning for current teachers; we were repeatedly told there is little or no support for the adoption of new curriculum or pedagogy in schools. School leaders who were early adopters of IPS were provided with extensive professional training – including face-to-face opportunities - but most recall this as being focussed on corporate software and business financial skills.

Clearly, the Australian Curriculum – developed by ACARA, reviewed and adapted by SCSA and incorporated into the WA curriculum – has resulted in frequent changes in curriculum content which teachers are required to master. For most of the years since 2010, schools and teachers have been required to manage these changes at the school level. However, when curriculum and assessment changes are made, teachers told us they believe that professional development is required to ensure that they are "doing it properly."

Statewide Services does employ some curriculum support personnel to assist schools, but it seems that they have no authority to visit schools without an explicit invitation (via email) from the school principal. From reports at meetings with the Panel, few teachers are aware of these services, a finding also made by the Nous review of these services in 2020 (see Section 1.4 on the changes in support services for teachers and school leaders). In some regions teachers need to travel hundreds of kilometres (assuming travel time is provided by the school), to access support, reducing their opportunities to work face-to-face with experienced practitioners. Curriculum support for most teachers has disappeared.

In the absence of system-provided support, many schools responded to these changes by turning to commercial products. A common response from teachers was that this meant they were faced with a plethora of commercial products. They observed that without Departmental leadership on strategies for enhancing student achievement, but with continuous school improvement expected, school leaders have resorted to purchasing off-the-shelf commercial products that seem appropriate – often at great cost to each school. Generally, none comes with a rigorous and independent evaluation.

Teachers were concerned at the cost and effectiveness of such commercial products, suspicious of their value and noted that, in some cases, whole school adoption of such products meant a loss of flexibility and curriculum innovation to suit their own students. To complicate matters further, some schools now advertise for new teachers familiar with a particular commercial, curriculum product.

The commercialisation of curriculum products, especially in the field of literacy education was almost universally seen as detrimental. Formulaic products, even when they claim to be 'evidence-based', are often premised on flawed or skewed evidence, or no evidence at all. For example, one program is supported by 'research' undertaken by

the originators of the program and its staff. Teachers and principals are often unaware of such conflicts of interest and are unwittingly spending tens of thousands of dollars on products which may be premised on dubious research findings.

This and several other widely used products were criticised by our informants for their narrowly framed view of language, pedagogy and the learner. Language was seen as being reduced to an assemblage of discrete skills to be taught sequentially by means of direct instruction (DI). The agency of both the teacher and the learner was seen as being negated, and creativity and imagination stifled by formulaic model texts and turgid strategies for writing.

This commercialisation extends to teachers' professional development (PD) with advocacy groups and commercial organisations filling the vacuum caused by the Department of Education's rationalisation of PD. Such organisations promote the very programs referred to above by providing PD tailored specifically to those programs. This creates a powerful dominant discourse that beguiles novice teachers and undermines the knowledge and confidence of experienced teachers.

Submissions to us from many experienced teachers decried this development. They recalled the Department of Education Curriculum Branch being at the forefront of educational practice research and the extensive professional learning and quality materials available to all schools without cost. Teachers also cited the years of support for new curriculum practice provided through each local District Office when Central Office staff were unable to visit.

Questions were asked about what commercial products were approved by the Department and on what basis decisions to endorse were made. Teachers were puzzled that the Department does not specifically support and direct appropriate curriculum development and delivery through experienced teachers. In the Pilbara and Kimberley, teachers who spoke to us did not understand why certain professional learning (adopted across many schools in the region) was not organised and operated by Department personnel rather than individual schools paying large sums to private organisations.

Many teachers voiced their preference for Department or SCSA created flexible curriculum materials as well as additional professional learning for teachers. Clearly schools would prefer that more materials and local and face-to-face professional learning were available – resources for local teachers and by local teachers. Many reported that the consistent statewide curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting practice of the past ensured consistency and greater equity across the state – in city, rural and remote schools. For teachers, such supports enhanced the highly valued perception of being part of a system.

As part of the last Government-SSTUWA Enterprise Bargain Agreement, SCSA provided some WA based and free curriculum materials; in effect, a flexible scope and sequence. Teacher submissions reported that these are very valuable, but more are needed. Some schools (particularly rural ones) complained that the unreliability of their internet connections mean that the resources delivered via ICT at a web address are sometimes inaccessible. However, there was general agreement that these curriculum materials were a significant improvement on paying for materials that often do not have any local content. Where teachers have been able to make use of these materials, they considered

them a positive addition to their resources and wanted more. However, despite additional funding, many schools did not provide teachers with direct time to access these resources, in part, because of the COVID-19 relief difficulties of the time.

Until recently, the WA Department of Education gave no indication about which commercial materials or programmes schools might best use. Although there is now a "Buyers' Guide", it does not provide independent evaluation of materials and no list of approved providers, leaving many principals and senior decision-makers at the mercy of sales talk from commercial suppliers. Many school leaders do not have the experience to adequately evaluate such products. Several school leaders mentioned their difficulty in identifying best practice materials for their school and circumstances.

Teachers also reported the additional difficulty they now face when applying for a position in another school when appointment decisions appear to favour teachers already familiar with a particular commercial product rather than being based on merit. Other teachers reported that the high cost of commercial packages effectively excluded funding other school priorities such as smaller class sizes.

Findings:

Over the period covered by this Review, the WA curriculum has undergone extensive, continuous change.

WA teachers are critical of the widespread use of costly, commercial curriculum support materials and would prefer flexible, Department of Education or School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) designed curriculum materials to be made available.

Recommendation 12:

The School Curriculum and Standard Authority (SCSA) should be given sufficient resources to create and extend the availability of quality, flexible curriculum resource materials in a form suitable for all schools.

Recommendation 13:

That SCSA be funded to create appropriate programs of professional learning about curriculum and pedagogy for teachers at all stages of their careers.

Recommendation 14:

This professional learning should be made available to teachers by the WA Education Department in face-to-face settings at a local level.

1.11 Documented plans

To ensure that students with disabilities, complex and challenging behaviours or other forms of educational disadvantage (See Section 3) are provided with quality education suited to their needs, principals (teachers) have been required by the Education Department since 2015 to develop "documented plans" for such students or groups of students. After consultation with parents or

carers, the school staff are advised to develop a plan that documents "personalised adjustments and modifications to curriculum, to support students with identified needs". Such documented plans can include:

- individual education plans
- individual behaviour support plans
- individual transition plans
- risk management plans

See Appendix 6 for an example of an Independent Education Plan.

The relevant Departmental statement (reviewed in December 2021) advises principals that they should "support teachers to develop, monitor and review plans" and that they should also "manage the impact of the plan on staff workload and wellbeing".

It is clear from many of the submissions we received and in discussions with school leaders and teachers around the state that many of them are struggling to develop, but more importantly, implement such plans and that for teachers in the more disadvantaged schools, the impact on workload is immense. In fact, there has been a proliferation of "Individual Education Plans" which has resulted in some teachers being required to teach large classes where over half the students are on individually tailored plans – clearly an impossible task.

Teachers we spoke to were distressed that they were simply unable to respond to these diverse needs, even with the support of Education Assistants, who also needed to be supervised. A common observation was that the funds allocated to the school to support students with disabilities and behavioural and learning problems were not always applied to support the teachers working with these students and were, in any case, manifestly inadequate.
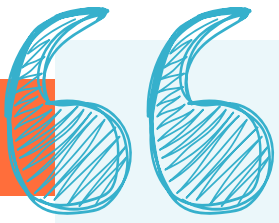
Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

I am a teacher who is in their 20th year working in a primary school. I have 23 students in my Year Three class and 15 are on an Individual Education Plans (IEP). My fellow Year Three colleague has 10 out of 23 students on IEPs. Our school requires all students who are not working at the 'expected standard' to be on an IEP. This means students who are receiving a 'D' or 'E' grade for a subject. This is for accountability. The workload of such documents is astronomical.

Each IEP takes at least half an hour to physically write in the SEN program. Further time is taken as test scores are collected and collated to monitor specific progress. Appointments and follow up reports from specialists such as Speech Therapist, Paediatricians, Occupational Therapists or the School Psychologist are all sorted and used to update any specific recommendations on the IEP that are required. This can take a further half an hour depending if the child has had a recent appointment or is undergoing a specific diagnosis. Some students just require the same educational goals as they haven't achieved their targets.

Parents are then contacted to have a meeting about their child's new IEP goals and differentiation strategies. These meetings can take up to an hour depending on what information needs to be conveyed. The average meeting lasts 30 minutes. Specialist subject teachers may request a copy of an IEP. The IEP is then put in the student's file. This cycle is then repeated every term as the IEPs get updated.

Students on an IEP need the goals monitored and assessed termly. Formal reporting in the Reporting To Parents (RTP) portal is completed every semester as parents receive this as an additional report. We have received whole school PD 5 years ago to show us how to use the SEN Planning Tool. We have not received any PD on how to use the RTP element. We just learn from each other.

Just because the student is on an IEP does not mean that you get extra classroom support unless the students have a formal diagnosis. The school is given funding depending on the diagnosis given. There are several students with imputed disabilities/ disorders. There is no Schools Plus funding for majority of the diagnosis that children are given therefore the teacher is left to provide additional differentiation and resources in the classroom on their own.

There is also something called Group Education Plans (GEPs). GEPs are created in addition to IEPs that are less formal, however, equally as time consuming. This is where there is a group of students who are all working on the same educational goals. These can be Word documents and are not stored on the SEN Planning Tool.

To add to this, there are Individual Behaviour Management Plans (IBPs). This is where students require a specific plan to manage behaviour difficulties or social skills. Some students who are already on an IEP can also have an IBP. These are just as time consuming to write and depending on the social/behaviour goal, can take even more time to review as these are done in 4-week cycles. I personally have a student on an IEP and IBP who requires an email to be sent to the parent every break time. This constant communication and reporting is extremely time cumbersome.

All of these plans are on top of your regular curriculum planning (term overview and daily workpad plan) we do. There are just not enough hours in the day!

Good quality differentiation happens in the classroom in every lesson for every student as they all learn differently. This is part of a teacher's job. Documenting this differentiation for students is time consuming and is only for accountability.

Finding

Many teachers and school leaders are not being provided with adequate resources to develop and implement meaningful individually tailored plans for students with special educational and behavioural needs.

Recommendation 15:

The WA Department of Education should clearly define the criteria for documented plans, including for whom they are intended and how to manage an equitable distribution of the additional workload entailed. The Department should ensure that schools fully understand the requirements of the plans and consider the impact on teachers' workloads.

Recommendation 16:

Where a student with complex needs requires a Documented Plan, that student should "count" for 2 or 3 students when determining class size, thus reducing the numbers in the class.

1.12 Year 7 transition

During 2015, year 7 was transferred from primary to secondary schools, the justification being to achieve uniformity in the high school transition age across Australia and to give students access to specialist teachers. Although this was not often mentioned as a source of increased workload, this shift did result in increased costs and additional time and effort at the time to modify school facilities and staffing (predicted to be $340.7 million by the Auditor General),[32] and to prepare suitable programs for the students. For some schools the addition of the year 7 cohort of students meant that extra classrooms were needed, either purpose built or demountable.

The move inevitably produced a surplus of primary teachers and an increased demand for secondary teachers. While the Department of Education provided professional learning for primary teachers who wanted to qualify as secondary teachers, those wishing to remain in primary schools were placed in a more difficult position. Since IPS schools were not required to accept redeployees, teachers had to apply through the school selection processes, despite already having permanent employment status with the department. This obviously produced significant disruption and distress for many of these teachers who stood to lose their permanency. In anticipation of lower projected enrolments, many schools had already begun to increase their use of temporary contracts, adding to job insecurity for many teachers who may otherwise have been granted permanent status.

According to secondary school staff we met, the influx of Year 7 students resulted in an increase in behavioural problems. The SSTUWA observed that student services coordinators have reported that over 90 per cent of issues they now deal with are with students in Years 7 and 8. Teachers attributed this increase to students' immaturity and the inability of many to concentrate for the duration of 60 timetabled minutes. They also reported that parents are often anxious about their children and contact the school more frequently, increasing the pressure on teachers.

Because of these difficulties, some secondary schools have designed the timetables in Year 7 to provide more time for pastoral care while other schools actually separate Year 7 students from the remainder of the school due in part to behavioural considerations. Such strategies are resource intensive and not provided for in the one-line budget.

Surprisingly, there does not appear to have been any evaluation of the educational benefits and costs of this transition, although examination of NAPLAN trends suggests that there have been no obvious gains, even in areas, such as mathematics, where specialist secondary teaching is more likely than in a primary school setting.

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32 WA Auditor General's report: Moving On: The Transition of Year 7 to Secondary School 1616.pdf (parliament.wa.gov.au), 2014.

Finding

The transition of year 7 students from primary to secondary school resulted in increased costs, staff dislocation and additional workload for teachers and school leaders.

The costs and benefits to students of moving year 7 to secondary school have not been publicly evaluated.

1.13 The effects of the COVID-19 epidemic on schooling

During the COVID-19 epidemic, there was significant disruption to schools' operations and a dramatic increase in teachers' workloads as they endeavoured to deliver normal programs to their students. The government's requirement that most parents keep their children at home meant that teachers had to provide for on-line/at home learning as well as maintaining classes for the children of essential workers. Many teachers were required to move the entire curriculum online, modifying techniques and materials to suit. Once schools resumed, high rates of student and teacher illness during 2020 continued to disrupt the normal patterns of school life.

As summarised by the SSTUWA submission to our Panel,

> *Teachers overwhelmingly said they felt unprepared for online learning, did not have access to appropriate materials, and were affected by unreliable technology. Effectively, schools sourced their own professional learning to deliver online programs, irrespective of whether a particular program was approved.*

Teachers made similar observations to us in meetings during 2023.

They also reported feeling that their concerns about their safety and health were discounted. As the SSTUWA submission records it, teachers felt their interests were disregarded "due to the political imperative of needing to provide for the children of essential workers. Teachers' anger was palpable and reinforced a notion of an uncaring employer, treating them as babysitters rather than education professionals."

Major operational changes required by the COVID-19 restrictions were implemented in 2021 and 2022. The pressure on school leaders and teachers was immense, as they were required to rapidly introduce, and communicate with staff and parents about, the mandated changes and rules. While parents and the community were generally appreciative, the toll on teachers and students was high. Principals and teachers reported working on weekends and through school holidays to prepare for and manage the COVID-19 provisions. We were told of instances where school leaders and even central office staff took classes in addition to working their substantive positions. They were also very conscious that some students were missing out because they did not have the necessary technology or parental support.

Submissions to our Panel also noted that education standards suffered, and workloads further ballooned because of collapsed and cancelled classes, the frequent use of relief teachers to replace

those who were ill, and student absenteeism. They also reported that some principals and parents expected that both face-to-face and online learning should continue to be provided. This contributed to workload stresses.

The growing expectation from some parents that online learning is or should be a normal part of a child's education troubles many teachers. In addition to teachers' clearly expressed view that face-to-face learning is superior, they worry that they will be expected in future to develop suitable curricula for multiple learning modes without the necessary resources and support. They fear that policy makers will see on-line learning as a solution to the COVID-19 generated decline in student attendance – across Australia it is estimated that over 100,000 students are no longer attending schools compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Finding:

While teachers and school leaders responded effectively and co-operatively to the changes required during the COVID-19 epidemic, their workloads increased dramatically, and they felt undervalued.

SECTION 2: FUNDING AND STAFFING

Our discussions with teachers and data analysis by various bodies, make it clear that public school funding in Australia, including Western Australia, has not kept pace with the increasing demands placed on schools and the teaching profession. In fact, in real terms, public school funding has declined and falls short of recommended levels. This inevitably places additional pressure on teachers and school leaders and lessens their morale, especially when they see that private schools are so generously funded in comparison.

2.1 Recurrent funding

Both the quantum of funds devoted to education and the way these funds are distributed is critical to achieving the best educational outcomes. While larger education budgets are no guarantee of better student results, funding should be sufficient to ensure well-trained and supported teachers and school leaders, adequate infrastructure, curriculum material, textbooks and information technology and a well-rounded education for students at all levels and from all backgrounds.

There is evidence, however, that the amount of money devoted to education does make a difference to educational outcomes[33], particularly for disadvantaged students. As the OECD points out[34], "School systems have limited financial resources with which to pursue their objectives and the design of school funding policies plays a key role in ensuring that resources are directed to where they can make the most difference." In particular, the design of school funding policies should ensure that available resources support quality teaching and provide equitable opportunities and outcomes for all students.

More than a decade ago, the Gonski report (The Review of Funding for Schooling) made numerous recommendations designed to achieve fairer school funding and better educational outcomes, particularly for the most disadvantaged students. The explicit brief was to devise a funding framework for education that would ensure that differences in children's achievements are not the result of differences in wealth, income, power, or possessions. It was also argued that improving the performance of the so-called "long tail" of underperformance among Australian students would also improve overall education achievement levels.

The key objective was the achievement of needs-based, sector blind funding, ensuring that money was directed to where it was most needed regardless of the type of school. This was to be achieved, in part, by adopting a uniform, minimum Schooling Resource Standard (SRS)[35] to be comprised of a basic amount of funding per student with six additional needs-based loadings for various categories of disadvantage. Bilateral agreements to move in this direction and to share responsibilities for funding were struck between the Commonwealth and each of the States and Territories. It was estimated that an additional $5 billion would be needed to address identified shortcomings and inequities in Australian education funding[36].

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33 Kirabo Jackson, C. & Mackevicius, C. (2021) The Distribution of School Spending Impacts NBER Working Paper No. 28517 February 2021, Revised July 2021 JEL No. H0,I21,I26,J01,J58
34 OECD, "Distributing school funding", in The Funding of School Education: Connecting Resources and Learning, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2017, p 3.
35 Calculated by reference to funding levels in schools in which students had achieved above the national minimum standards for NAPLAN over three years.
36 Australian Government, Review of School Funding, Final Report, 2011.

However, since that time, funding for public education in Australia has declined in real terms per student, including in Western Australia, and the income disparity between the most and least privileged schools has widened. For example, since 2011, public schools, which cater for the most disadvantaged students, have received much lower per student funding increases than independent schools. Between 2009 and 2017 analysis of ACARA data[37] show that total real income per student (i.e., adjusted for inflation) in public schools fell by $58 per student (-0.5%) but increased by $1,888 (17.8%) in Catholic schools and by $2,306 (15.1%) in independent schools[38]. In Western Australia, the ACARA data show that, since 2012, state government funding has fallen by 5.6% in real terms.

Over the last decade, partly because of the divided responsibilities for public and private school systems, funding for private schools (largely a Commonwealth responsibility) has risen at nearly twice the rate of funding for public schools (largely State and Territory responsibilities)[39]; per student funding increased by 52% for Independent Schools, 49% for Catholic Schools and just 27% for Public Schools. A more recent collation of data by the Federal Parliamentary Library show that between 2012 and 2021, funding per student increased by 34% for independent schools and 31% for Catholic schools, while funding for public schools rose by just 17%. These are raw figures uncorrected for inflation.

Data from the My School website in 2017 showed that even the most advantaged public schools (top 20% ranked by socio-educational advantage) operated on approximately half the total income of comparable private schools, down from two-thirds in 2009.[40] This is a perverse outcome since it is generally agreed that extra resources are required to educate disadvantaged students; in Australia, the 2021 OECD study[41] found 41 per cent of government schools in Australia could be classed as disadvantaged, compared with 3 per cent of Catholic and less than 1 per cent of Independent schools.

Despite having the major responsibility for public schools, the states have not delivered any significant funding increases. Indeed, they have cut funding in real terms while increasing funding for private schools. While governments of both political persuasions point to increases in total funding for schools, the headline figures typically do not take account of increased enrolments or inflation. The reality is that over the last decade, funding has not kept pace with increased costs and teachers and schools have to do more with less.

Finding:

Real income per student has declined in public schools, which provide for more educationally disadvantaged students, and increased in private schools, which provide for more advantaged students.

Of particular note in Western Australia is the fact that, following the introduction of the Independent Public Schools Policy (IPS) initiative in 2013-14, the government cut the public education budget by approximately $250-300 million. When expressed in per student terms, increases in total budget allocations[42] for School Services in the decade between 2010-11 and 2023-24 are revealing. Over that period, cost per primary school student,[43] rose from $13,080 to $17,499, an increase of 33.7% just keeping pace with the inflation rate of 32.5%; for secondary schools, the cost per student[44] rose from $17,603 to $20,319, an increase of 15.42% compared with the inflation rate of 32.5% i.e., a significant cut in real terms. And not all of these dollars end up in the classroom.

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37 Cobbold, The Facts About School Funding in Australia – SOS Australia (saveourschools.com.au)
38 Ibid
39 National Report on Schooling in Australia data portal (acara.edu.au)
40 Ting, I., Palmer, A. & Scott, N. (2023) Rich school, poor school: Australia's great education divide - ABC News, 24 April.
41 OECD (2021), Education at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/b35a14e5-en
42 WA Budget Papers
43 This indicator is the total cost of services for primary education in public schools divided by the average full-time equivalent (FTE) of public school primary students across the 2 semesters of the financial year.
44 This indicator is the total cost of services for secondary education in public schools divided by the average full-time equivalent (FTE) of public school secondary students across the 2 semesters of the financial year

Finding:

Funding to public schools in Western Australia has been cut in real terms since 2010.

While the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) defines the expected minimum funding per student, varying by education level, no State or Territory is expected to meet even this modest standard until 2023; Western Australia is required to meet 95% (75% State, 20% Commonwealth) of the minimum SRS by this year, the percentage having actually fallen from 99.7% in 2018, representing a significant funding cut. Recent analysis by the Federal Parliamentary Budget Office[45] indicates that increasing the federal government's share of the SRS to 25% would result in an additional $200 million per year, on average, between 2023 and 2029. The combined underfunding of public schools measured against the SRS is expected to be $27 billion over the four years between 2020 and 2025; for Western Australia, the estimated funding gap over this period would be over $500 million or over $1800 per student every year.[46]

The current funding agreements between the Commonwealth and States and Territories mean that funding for public schools will be below the minimum Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) until the 2030s at the same time as government funding for the private schools is already at or above the SRS standards. (See Table on following page from Rorris[47]). Some private schools now have more than 100% of funds from government sources compared to comparable government schools. ACARA data show that 98% of private schools are already funded above the SRS recommended by Gonski, while more than 98% public schools are funded below it.

This is exacerbated by the fact that the bilateral agreements permit the agreed State/Territory contribution of 75% to public schools to be discounted by up to 4% for capital depreciation and the cost of education standard authorities, effectively reducing their allocations for public schools. Between 2020 and 2023, $868,103,445 was diverted from schools in W.A. by this means[48]. The discount does not apply to private schools.

Finding:

Measured against the Schooling Resource Standard, WA public schools are significantly underfunded while private schools are either fully funded or over-funded.

It is clear that the momentum generated by the Gonski report has dissipated and that funding agreements struck between the Commonwealth and the States have augmented the already substantial and growing inequality between public and private schools, between the advantaged and disadvantaged. The goal of needs based, sector blind funding as recommended by Gonski and agreed by all governments remains unmet.

Recommendation 17:

Using the opportunity presented by the NSRA to determine funding over the next quadrennium, the Commonwealth and Western Australian governments should reach an agreement to increase per student funding to public schools to restore previous cuts and to reduce the inequitable underfunding of public compared to private schools.

Recommendation 18:

WA public schools should be funded to 100% of the SRS as a minimum standard.

Recommendation 19:

The discount for depreciation applied to public schools should be discontinued.

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45 Fully funding Public Schools (pbo.gov.au), advice to Mr Andrew Wilkie, Fully funding Public Schools (pbo.gov.au)
46 Ibid
47 Rorris, A. (2020) The schooling resource standard in Australia : impacts on public schools, AEU : Research Papers (aeufederal.org.au)
48 Rorris, A (2021) Scott Morrison's record on school funding: $6.5 billion every year in public school neglect & $10 billion in private school cash handout.

Annual Public Funding for Schools

ABOVE OR BELOW SCHOOLING RESOURCE STANDARD (SRS)

	2020	2021	2022	2023	CUMULATIVE TOTAL
PUBLIC	**-$4,872,181,854**	**-$4,879,707,969**	**-$4,714,517,971**	**-$4,514,714,035**	**-$18,981,121,830**
NSW	-$1,469,388,458	-$1,425,227,560	-$1,353,904,646	-$1,275,297,677	-$5,523,818,342
VIC	-$1,460,557,476	-$1,419,631,974	-$1,332,984,043	-$1,238,814,907	-$5,451,988,399
QLD	-$1,232,583,193	-$1,256,589,096	-$1,262,016,499	-$1,264,523,232	-$5,015,712,021
SA	-$230,740,185	-$216,430,997	-$206,976,911	-$188,790,247	-$842,938,340
WA	-$265,807,225	-$342,166,498	-$327,208,168	-$288,544,182	-$1,223,726,073
TAS	-$75,567,859	-$74,410,812	-$71,955,975	-$70,271,426	-$292,206,072
ACT	$41,630,692	$34,453,986	$25,435,688	$0	$101,520,366
NT	-$179,168,151	-$179,705,018	-$184,907,417	-$188,472,363	-$732,252,949
PRIVATE	**-$332,390,091**	**-$82,349,522**	**$602,479,656**	**$791,573,805**	**$979,313,848**
NSW	$32,703,364	$106,509,264	$300,768,987	$366,880,256	$806,861,871
VIC	-$177,061,874	-$103,310,735	$53,868,192	$118,362,025	-$108,142,391
QLD	-$30.914.812	$9,180,605	$161,675,842	$180,181,271	$320,122,906
SA	-$57,006,136	-$36,130,363	$13,322,822	$31,483,097	-$48,330,580
WA	-$80,739,873	-$47,472,438	$58,681,535	$75,726,901	$6,196,124
TAS	-$15,341,047	-$10,234,620	$2,795,207	$7,081,927	-$15,698,533
ACT	$24,599,925	$22,192,607	$21,350,778	$17,715,928	$85,859,239
NT	-$28,629,639	-$23,083,842	-$9,983,707	-$5,857,601	-$5,857,601

Note: Orange cells indicate where combined public funding is below SRS minimum funding level.
White cells where combined public funding is above SRS minimum funding level.

2.2 Capital funding

Glaring differences between public and private schools in access to capital funds are also evident. The greatest per student expenditure is in the highest SES Independent Schools[49] and the wealthiest ten per cent of Australian schools account for half of all capital expenditure.[50] Problems flowing from poorly maintained schools and inadequate infrastructure were frequently mentioned in submissions to the Panel, as was the sharp contrast between public school facilities and those funded in well-healed private schools.

The ABC's analysis of ACARA data showed that "Australia's four richest schools spent more on new facilities and renovations than the poorest 1,800 schools combined. They spent $402 million. They teach fewer than 13,000 students. The poorest 1,800 schools spent less than $370 million. They teach 107,000 students".

With the introduction of the IPS system and one-line budgeting, the centralised building maintenance program was abolished. Schools are now expected to use their own funds, mostly those applied through the SCFM, to carry out such works. However, the formula does not take into account the age and condition of school buildings or any heritage restrictions in allocating funding despite the fact that it is clear that older schools will require proportionally more to maintain their facilities to a reasonable standard.

Recommendation 20:

A program to provide for additional capital works in public schools should be agreed between the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments, particularly in high needs areas.

Recommendation 21:

Funds provided to schools should be adequate to provide for regular repair and maintenance to a quality standard and should take account of the age and condition of the buildings.

2.3 The distribution of funds to public schools in Western Australia.

The way school funding is distributed and accounted for is central to ensuring that resources go where they are most needed and can make the most difference. In examining the optimal school funding models in member (wealthy) countries, the OECD[51] found that the most effective school funding formulas provide funds based on: (1) the stage of schooling, (2) the type of student disadvantage, (3) the school site and location, and (4) the curriculum or programs delivered by the school.

Since 2015, funds have been distributed to WA public schools using the Student-Centred Funding Model (SCFM). It encompasses the first three of the components identified by the OECD: per student allocations, student characteristics funding and school characteristics funding. The key objective of the SCFM, consistent with the Gonski principles, is to allocate funding "based on the learning needs of individual students", ensuring that such funding is "responsive to differences in the circumstances

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49   ACARA, 2018
50   Ting, I., Palmer, A. & Scott, N. (2023) Australia's great education divide. Rich school, poor school: Australia's great education divide - ABC News
51   OECD, 2017, OP cit.

of individual schools and their students". It was also intended to shift a larger proportion of available funds to the early school years.

The SCFM allocates funding to schools based on the elements shown in the Figure below (From the Nous report, p v - Figure 2.1) and is provided to the school in the form of a one-line budget.

Figure 2.1: Funding elements in the SCFM

PER STUDENT FUNDING	
SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS FUNDING	
Enrolment-linked base allocation (ELB)	Locality allocation
STUDENT CHARACTERISITICS FUNDING	
Aboriginality allocation	English as an Additional Language (EAL) allocation
Social disadvantage allocation	Disability allocation
TARGETED INITIATIVES	

Funds are allocated for each student enrolled depending on the year level of the student, with additional amounts to meet the specific learning needs of Aboriginal students, students facing social disadvantage, students with English as an Additional Language and students with a disability. A range of targeted initiatives also provides some further funding for strategically important programs and services.

As at the 25 March, in the 2019 calendar year, it was reported that over $3.5 billion was allocated to schools under the SCFM, representing 69% of the Department's total annual budget[52]. The remainder of the budget provides support for schools through centralised services, the delivery of system-wide programs, the regulation of non-government schools, and other functions such as the School Curriculum and Standards Authority. It is not clear from the Department's Annual report whether and by how much the proportion going directly to public schools has changed over time and where it currently sits.

Three years into the implementation of the SCFM, the Department commissioned the Nous Group to review the outcomes to that point. The reviewers found that while the SCFM was based on sound principles, social disadvantage funding was a significantly smaller percentage of total school funding than in other comparable jurisdictions, that "funding for disadvantage through the SCFM is thinly spread and negated by other factors", and that there was insufficient funding for schools with high concentrations of disadvantage.[53]

They found that compared to other jurisdictions, the social disadvantage funding in Western Australia was low. While in WA, just 2.5% of total funding was allocated to social disadvantage, with an additional 1.7% for Aboriginal students. In Victoria, 5.5% of total funding was allocated to social disadvantage and in U.K, 7.6%. In WA, the $78 million that was allocated on this basis was distributed across all schools, thus reducing the amount of funding available to schools with high concentrations of disadvantage.

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52 Nous Group and the CIRES | Evaluation of the Student-Centred Funding Model | 29 August 2018.
53 Nous. 2018, Ibid

They also noted that the SCFM settings at the time did not adequately account for the known compounding of disadvantage. The Nous evaluation explored the relationship between a school's socio-economic status as measured by its ICSEA[54] score and the proportion of students with multiple disadvantages: parental education below Year 12, parents either not working or working in a low skilled job, Aboriginality, refugee status, identified disability, and current or past supervision by the Department of Communities (Child Protection). In Western Australia, as in other parts of the country, the number of students with multiple disadvantages increases as the socio-economic status of the school decreases.

Schools catering for many students with significant levels of disadvantage clearly require additional resources and a different mix of skills compared to other more advantaged schools to meet adequate educational standards. The Nous report emphasised the need to modify SCFM settings to better target funding "to account for multiple compounding factors of disadvantage for individual students and high concentrations of disadvantage within certain schools."[55] They recommended that the SCFM should be improved by either a tighter focus, establishing thresholds for disadvantage funding, or increased loadings for more disadvantaged students, or some combination of both.

It is not surprising, as the Nous Group confirmed, that in WA there is a strong positive relationship between socio-economic status and the amount of additional, locally raised funds per student, especially in combined and secondary schools. Schools in lower socioeconomic areas find it difficult to raise funds[56] from their school communities whether it is fund raising, levies to pay for educational items such as books, stationery and IT devices, and camps. When these differences are taken into account, together with the lower "true" wage costs in low ICSEA Schools[57], the result is a mere 2% differential between the lowest and highest ICSEA secondary school when all resources are taken into account compared to a 24% differential provided for in the SCFM formula.

As part of the 2022 budget, the State Government announced that the student-centred funding model (SCFM) would be "strengthened to provide extra funds for students with complex behaviours and learning difficulties." How much of the modest additional funding announced - $74 million - would be applied to the SCFM and how much to other targeted initiatives relating to "specialist learning programs for students with autism spectrum disorder, and an increase to the educational adjustment allocation to support more students with undiagnosed disabilities and learning difficulties", is not clear. Nor were any details provided about whether school characteristics relating to the concentration of disadvantage were to be included.

Finding:

Educationally disadvantaged schools are not receiving adequate funds to provide for the complex needs of their students and the additional educational support they require.

A further concern raised related to the reduced provision for senior teachers and Level 3 teachers. In the past, these teachers, identified for their experience and expertise, were given time out of the classroom to provide support for less experienced teachers. However, under the SCFM and one-line budgeting, it appears that many teachers are not receiving this time from their school administrators. Its disappearance has caused considerable dissatisfaction, especially since experienced teachers generally receive limited additional pay increases.

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54 ICSEA - Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage.

55 Nouse, 2018, Op cit.

56 Locally raised funds include: voluntary contributions charges and fees, fundraising / donations / sponsorship, fees from facilities hire, Commonwealth Government revenues, other State Government / Local Government revenues, revenue from PLIS, regional offices and other schools, farm revenue (agriculture and farm schools only), camp school fees (camp schools only)

57 As the Nous report explains (P 51), "low ICSEA schools also tend to have lower 'true' wage costs than high ICSEA schools, reflecting the more junior profile of staff in low ICSEA schools."

Recommendation 22:

The loadings in the SCFM for disadvantage and concentrations of disadvantage should be increased to better reflect the additional work required of teachers in these schools and to improve student outcomes.

2.4 Accounting for the funds

Principals are held to account for the way SCFM funds are spent through funding agreements with the Department, but, as the Nous review pointed out, "there is limited line of sight between funding, expenditure and student outcomes." This theme emerged frequently in the submissions to our review. With the increased flexibility given to schools in spending decisions, there is no guarantee that funds will be used to assist those students identified in the formula as needing additional support. Noting this problem, the Nous report suggested that schools (Principals) should not only be held to account for students' educational and other outcomes but also for their use of funding to achieve those outcomes. It does not appear that these recommendations have been acted upon.

For example, approximately 50 per cent of students with a disability are educated in mainstream classes, most without the support of an education assistant[58]. While the SCFM contains an allocation of funding for students with a disability, many teachers and school leaders noted in their submissions to our review that it is inadequate and that there is no regulation to ensure that the funding is employed effectively or for its intended purpose. Over five years ago, the Nous group reached a similar conclusion, finding that "the process to determine funding to support students with disability is perceived to be inconsistent, time-consuming and incomplete."
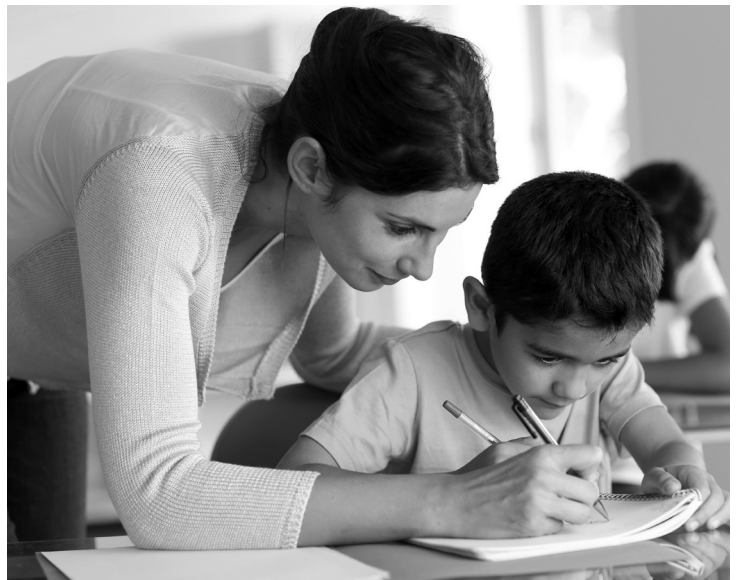
According to the Nous report, in 2018, funding delivered through the SCFM accounted for 95% of total Department funding for public schools. The remaining 5% went to 133 separate targeted initiatives. The Nous Group recommended that, in order to maintain the integrity of the SCFM, it was important to maintain the proportion of targeted initiatives at or below this level. They noted that while targeted initiatives were "both inevitable and desirable", greater reliance on them would undermine the SCFM. The ratio today is not publicly available, but public announcements about funding suggest that the proportion applied to targeted initiatives may be growing.

Recommendation 23:

Funds provided under the funding formula for children with disabilities should be quarantined and used for their education and support.

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58 SSTUWA submission

2.5 Class sizes

A common complaint from teachers in our consultations was that class sizes in Western Australia are too big to enable them to respond satisfactorily to the specific needs of each student, particularly when there are many in a class with significant cognitive and emotional problems. Despite significant increases in the demands placed on teachers by increasing complexity in student needs (see Section 3), the mandated class sizes have not changed in 40 years. For example, in WA, schools are allowed a maximum class size of 32 from years 4-10, the highest in the country and significantly higher than other states e.g., Victoria mandates 25-26 and Queensland, 28.

Class size is one of the most contested and enduring areas of debate in education policy. The positions adopted often take the form of sometimes acrimonious disagreements between teachers and parents who argue that class size does make a difference in teaching and learning, and some researchers and policy makers (and politicians) who claim that the effects are trivial and that reducing class sizes is a waste of money. Given that class sizes largely determine the number of teachers employed and because teachers' salaries are the largest component of spending on schools, it is clear that the financial stakes are potentially significant. However, research on the effects of class sizes on education outcomes has been characterised by limited, narrowly focused data and poor analysis of the available data (see criticisms of Hattie's widely cited analyses, for example)[59,60].

Despite some claims to the contrary, careful assessment of quality research shows that reducing class size does make a difference, with the most significant improvements for the most vulnerable. One of the most convincing demonstrations of class size effects is the STAR research – effectively a controlled clinical trial - carried out in Tennessee. Pupils and teachers were randomly allocated to one of three types of class in the same school: 'small' classes (13–17 pupils), 'regular' classes (22–25 pupils), and 'regular' with full-time teacher aide. Involving 79 schools, over 7,000 pupils were followed from kindergarten (aged 5) to third grade (aged 8). Students in small classes performed significantly better in reading and mathematics than pupils in regular classes. Pupils returned to regular classes at Grade 4 (aged 9), but gains were still evident some three years later[61] and then at later points still[62]. The relatively modest benefits for average performance masked substantial benefits to low SES students.

It is also important to take account of other impacts than those evident in cross sectional analyses of test results or assessments of academic performance. For example, significant findings of class size catalogued by Hagemeister in 2009[63] include research that shows that students in small classes are less likely to repeat a year, play truant less often, are less frequently subject to disciplinary measures and are more likely to remain in education for longer.

A comprehensive review by Zyngier[64] of 112 studies undertaken between 1979 and 2014 in countries with similar education systems to Australia's also concluded that reducing class sizes, particularly

59 Bergeron, Pierre-Jerome, Rivard, Lysanne (2017) How to Engage in Pseudoscience with Real Data: A Criticism of John Hattie's Arguments in Visible Learning from the Perspective of a Statistician, McGill Journal of Education, 52, DO - 10.7202/1040816ar.

60 Hagemeister, V. (2020) (PDF) A critical analysis of the section on class size in Hattie's Visible Learning (researchgate.net) Translated from German: German Version: Eine Analyse der bei Hattie zitierten Klassenfrequenzstudien. Bildungsforschung 2018/1, p. 1-26, DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.25539/bildungsforschun.v0i1.205;https://open-journals4.uni-tuebingen.de/ojs/index.php/bildungsforschung/article/download/205/pdf_1.

61 Finn Jeremy D. Achilles, Charles M. (1999): Tennessee's Class Size Study: Findings, Implications, Misconceptions. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 21 (2), 97-109.

62 Konstantopoulos S., & Chung V. (2009). What are the long-term effects of small classes on the achievement gap? Evidence from the Lasting Benefits Study. *American Journal of Education*, 116(1), 125–154.

63   Op cit, Hagemeister. (2018).

64 Zyngier, D. (2014). Class size and academic results, with a focus on children from culturally, linguistically and economically disenfranchised communities. Evidence Base, 1, 1–23.

in the first four years of school, has significant and lasting benefits, particularly for children from disadvantaged communities. As the number of years these children spend in small classes increases, so do the benefits. It seems perverse that in Australia, class sizes tend to be smallest in private schools serving middle and high- income families, where increased government funding has been used to fund smaller classes, which are then advertised as one of the benefits of private education.

In their recent publication, *Rethinking Class Size: The Complex Story of Impact on Teaching and Learning,* U.K. academics Blatchford & Russell (2020)[65] argue that "class size is important, but that the usual ways of thinking about it miss the way it has an effect." Basing their analysis on their long (20 year) experience in school teaching and research (Class Size and Pupil-Adult Research Project - CASPR), they comprehensively review the literature on class size, including their own extensive research in the field. They conclude that much of the discussion about class size has taken place in ignorance of "the very real effects evident only when one looks closely at what goes on in classrooms." Their results showed clearly that small classes had most beneficial effects in the early years and for those further behind academically at the start of school (that is, those in the lower 25 per cent of baseline assessments in literacy and mathematics). Conversely, large classes were worse at all levels for low-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and disabilities.

Blatchford and Russell point to the importance of carefully observing and analysing the classroom environment in which children and teachers spend most time and which has a critical influence on teaching and learning in the broadest sense, not just on literacy and numeracy tests. Based on their observational and survey research, they argue that smaller classes promote more positive attitudes, enthusiasm and overall learning skills and improve teachers' satisfaction and wellbeing.

In their investigations into classroom behaviour and student and teacher experiences, Blatchford and his colleagues systematically explored what happens in classes of various sizes. For example, using carefully defined and coded observations of on-task and off-task behaviour in classrooms they showed that in primary schools, as class size increased there were statistically significant decreases in on-task and increases in off-task behaviour. And conversely, as class size decreased, the amount of on-task behaviour increased, and off-task behaviour decreased. They reported that in small classes pupils were more likely to initiate interactions, respond to the teacher or sustain dialogue with the teacher. In other words, students were more likely to be on-task in smaller classes, an observation that corresponds to teachers' reports of their experiences in classes of various sizes.

In secondary schools, similar patterns were observed, with the additional finding that for pupils in the lowest of three attainment groups, bigger class size was strongly associated with reduced lesson-task behaviour; a five pupil increase in class size decreased the likelihood of on task behaviour by almost a quarter and increased off-task behaviour by 40 per cent. They also found that most of the Year 6 teachers they surveyed believed that "a large class made learning and behaviour worse, and a small class made them better", due, in part, to the amount of individual attention they were able to give to students.

Finding:

Class sizes are higher in Western Australia than in other states and have not changed despite the increasing complexity of student needs.

65 Blatchford, P., & Russell, A. (2020). *Rethinking Class Size: The complex story of impact on teaching and learning.* UCL Press. http://www.jstor. org/stable/j.ctv15d7zqz.

Finding:

Smaller class sizes result in better educational outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged groups.

One of the conclusions of this research is that it is a mistake not to examine the implications of class size for teaching and teacher workloads. If teaching were simply delivering a lecture, class size might not matter much, but clearly teaching is much more than lecturing. In their observations of teachers, Blatchford and Russell's team documented the fact that large classes adversely affected the quality of teaching by limiting the amount of individual attention and the variety of tasks and activities teachers were able to prepare and implement. They were also less able to set up and monitor high-quality group work and make effective use of education assistance. Finding the time for essential tasks like marking, report writing, and providing ongoing feedback on students' work were all more difficult. Allowing high and growing class sizes is harmful to both students and teachers.

The summary derived from the review of over a hundred studies compiled by Zyngier captures the most important changes in the classroom environment resulting from small classes.

> "Teachers were more able not only to complete their lessons in smaller classes, but to develop their lessons in more depth;
>
> Teachers moved through curricula more quickly and were able to provide additional enrichment activities;
>
> Teachers reported that they managed their classes better, and classes functioned more smoothly as less time was spent on discipline and more on learning;
>
> Students received more individualised attention, including more encouragement, counselling, and monitoring;
>
> Students were more attentive to their classwork;
>
> Students had to wait less time to receive help or have their papers checked, and they had more opportunities to participate in group lessons."

Finding:

Teachers' workloads increase and their capacity to provide individual attention to students is diminished in larger class sizes.

2.6 Class size and student-teacher ratios

Class size and teacher-pupil ratios are sometimes treated as identical. Indeed, the failure to distinguish them may be one of the reasons for some of the contradictory findings in class size research. As defined by ACARA in Australia, full-time equivalent (FTE) student-teacher ratios are calculated by dividing the FTE student number by the FTE teaching staff number. The OECD's 'Education at a Glance' publications calculate class size by dividing the number of students enrolled by the number of classes, a measure which does not necessarily represent the reality in the classroom.

These ratios differ from class size in a number of ways, including the fact that they do not account for non-contact time and are, therefore, smaller than class sizes. Their importance is largely

administrative and tend to track funds spent per child. Much of the comparative research, including internationally, is often only available in terms of such ratios, limiting its usefulness in developing policy. ACARA stresses that student-teacher ratios are an indicator of the level of staffing resources and should not be used as a measure of class size. In Australia, education assistants and other staff who assist in classrooms are not included in the ratio.

> ... cutting class size is an important tool to reduce the substantial inequalities in our education system.

While class size data are not available to enable school sector and state-by-state comparisons, by national standards and compared to private schools, public schools in WA have high student teacher ratios. It's not surprising, given the disparities in funding, that the data show that public schools typically have higher student-to-teacher ratios than private schools. Data released by ACARA[66] show that in 2022 the full-time equivalent student-teacher ratios in Western Australia are 13 for private schools and 14.1 for public schools. The gap is most striking in secondary education, where there are 12.6 students for each teacher at government schools compared with just 10.9 students at independent schools and 12.7 at Catholic schools. Public secondary school ratios increased dramatically in 2014-15. At public primary schools, there are 15.3 students for each teacher, compared with 13.7 at independent schools and 16.4 at Catholic schools. While for WA Primary Schools the ratios have improved over the last decade, they still have the worst ratios in Australia – 15.3 compared to the national average of 14.3.

As Zyngier[67] concluded following his review of the relevant literature, cutting class size is an important tool to reduce the substantial inequalities in our education system. He contends, that while reducing class sizes will increase per student costs, it may be the most cost -effective means of closing the gap between highest and lowest achievers, of reducing the "long tail".

> ... while reducing class sizes will increase per student costs, it may be the most cost-effective means of closing the gap between highest and lowest achievers, of reducing the "long tail".

Recommendation 24:

To reduce teacher workloads and improve student outcomes, class sizes in W.A. public schools should be reduced, with the most substantial reductions to be made in the early years of schooling and in schools with significant proportions of students who are educationally disadvantaged.

66 Student-teacher ratios (acara.edu.au)
67 Zyngier, D. (2014) Class size DOES make a difference: latest research shows smaller classes have lasting effect | EduResearch Matters (aare.edu.au)

2.7 Small group tutoring

Several recent reports[68], including the discussion paper prepared in advance of the new NSRA[69], have pointed to the potential benefits to both students and teachers of small group tutoring added to regular classroom instruction. There is some evidence that small-group tutoring conducted by qualified and experienced teachers is particularly helpful for students who are struggling to keep up. The teachers work with a small group of students in short sessions (up to an hour) held several times a week for one or two terms. Tightly focussed sessions aligned with classroom content and designed in close collaboration with the classroom teacher help students with particular problems.
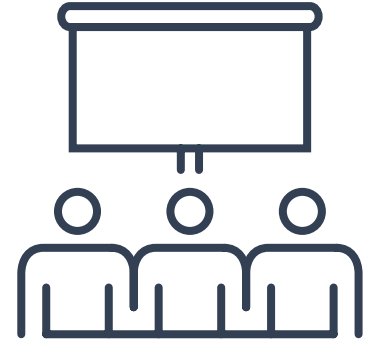
International evidence shows that such small group tuition can be effective, boosting student learning by as much as four months in a year[70]. In a recent systematic review and meta-analysis[71], researchers at the U.S National Bureau of Economic Research found that small group tutoring programs showed consistent, substantial benefits for student learning, with better results achieved by teachers and paraprofessionals than by non-professionals or parents and for groups conducted during school rather than after school. The strongest effects were seen in the early grades, although benefits for mathematics interventions tended to be higher in the later grades. While there is little Australian evidence, the Grattan Institute reports that there are some programs introduced as COVID-19 catch-up initiatives which show promise.[72]

Benefits for students remaining in the regular classes and for their teachers of effectively having a smaller, less disruptive classroom environment have been suggested, but not systematically investigated.

Finding:

Small group tutoring run by experienced teachers provided with appropriate training and support may assist in improving student outcomes for disadvantaged students. These would need to be in addition to the normal staff complement.

Recommendation 25:

Small group tutoring run by experienced teachers provided with appropriate training and support should be considered to assist in improving student outcomes for disadvantaged students. These would be in addition to the normal staff complement.

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68 Sonnemann J and Hunter J (2023) *Tackling under-achievement: why Australia should embed high-quality small-group tuition in schools*, Grattan Institute.
69 Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System - Department of Education, Australian Government
70 Small group tuition | E4L (evidenceforlearning.org.au)
71 Nickow, A., Oreopoulos, P., & Quan, V. (2020) The Impressive Effects of Tutoring on PreK-12 Learning: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Experimental Evidence NBER Working Paper No. 27476, JEL No. I2,J24
72 Sonnemann & Hunter (2023), Op cit.

SECTION 3: SOCIAL CHANGES – CHANGES IN STUDENT ATTITUDES, BEHAVIOUR AND MENTAL HEALTH

Teachers and school leaders operate in a constantly evolving social environment and are often the first to detect significant changes in student wellbeing and behaviour. They are also very aware that systemic changes in education policy, funding and expectations for student achievement may pose significant challenges, not only for them, but also for students and parents. Changes in community and parental expectations often result in additional responsibilities being added to teachers' roles. However, there appears to be a general expectation that teachers will be able to navigate these changes without adequate additional resources or training.

Educational professionals understand the importance of good social and emotional wellbeing for children's development and education. However, many of the submissions made to the Panel argued that the more specialised help required for children with serious problems was simply not available. Ensuring that teachers and school leaders can assist students to cope with the challenges they encounter depends, in part, on the school culture but, significantly, depends on access to the necessary support from specialists in mental health and behaviour management. The school cannot be a therapeutic environment.

3.1 Students

In submissions to the Panel, many teachers, school leaders and parents reported that increasing numbers of children are ill-prepared for school, that more are showing signs of learning problems and poor mental health, such as anxiety, and that anti-social behaviour is increasing, particularly among younger children. A recent paper prepared by the WA Primary Principals Association following consultation with their members concluded that "school leaders have reported significant challenges in adequately catering for the increase in students with complex needs. These needs consist of diagnosed disability, imputed disability, learning difficulties and social and mental health issues. Often, these needs are multi-faceted and

interwoven, yet they attract minimal, or no, additional resourcing."

School leaders have reported and documented many and varied negative outcomes of endeavouring to suitably cater for the recent increase in students with complex needs. More often than not, these complex needs are multi-faceted and interwoven, whilst attracting minimal additional resourcing. These complex issues consist of, but are not limited to, combinations of intellectual and physical disability, poor mental health, imputed disability, unfunded disability such as Attention Deficit Disorder (Inattentive and Hyperactive), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Pathological Demand Avoidance, increasing instances of antisocial and aggressive behaviour, technology addiction, English as an additional language or dialect and family borne issues of neglect, poverty and school avoidance.

The increasing presence of students with combined complex needs, coupled with a significant lack of resourcing and support, has had a profound impact on the way schools now operate and the manner in which they can provide for students' learning needs and the safety of the school community. Critical to the context of this growing concern, is the clarification that school leaders do not attribute a direct correlation between disability and violence, or misbehaviour. Moreso, the growing concern of school leaders is trying to cater for the needs of all students, within any given classroom, when the combination of needs in individual students and across the class, are so varied, interwoven and complex.[73]

73 WAPPA Position Paper, 2023. Supporting Students

> "The behaviour and needs of students is changing, particularly impacted by COVID. This includes more frequent absences, lower attention spans, increasingly violent behaviour and it feels like there is an onus on teachers to accommodate or provide gimmicks to moderate this behaviour."
>
> (Primary teacher, city south)

> "Ranges of complex needs in classrooms makes it extremely challenging to manage classroom behaviour."
>
> (Primary teacher, rural)

> "Number of students with educational and emotional needs that are not recognised and therefore there is no support for them in the classroom. This has a huge impact on student learning and student and staff well-being."
>
> (Primary teacher, city north)

Many, particularly in smaller schools and schools in disadvantaged areas, have described teaching classes with higher proportions of children with special needs and behavioural problems than in the past. This is confirmed by data in the annual reports of the Department of Education - the number of students with complex needs is increasing. Compared to 2017, the number of students in 2021 being supported by School of Special Educational Needs (SSEN)[74], receiving disability support allocations or in the care of the Department of Communities increased significantly. The NCCDS[75] reported that in 2022, 22.5% of total enrolments were students receiving an educational adjustment due to disability, up from 21.8% in 2021 and 18.0% in 2015. Statewide, over 20% students were identified through the same process as having a diagnosed or imputed disability.

Some of those who made submissions suggested that many emotional and behavioural problems accelerated after the lockdown experiences of the COVID-19 epidemic. Others have speculated that uncontrolled social media use is generating more emotional and cognitive difficulties for young people. Many pointed to the additional pressures on young people generated by increasing emphasis on NAPLAN and ATAR testing. There were also reports of increasing parental anxiety, disrespect, and aggression toward teachers. Such reports are consistent with media coverage and some systematic research suggesting increasing rates of emotional and learning problems among young people and the population in general.

For example, according to some researchers the number of children diagnosed with conditions such as ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorder has been steadily rising, both internationally and in Australia. However, they disagree about whether this surge in diagnoses reflects an actual increase in these conditions[76,77], greater awareness and reporting of previously undiagnosed cases or lowered thresholds for diagnosis, meaning less severe deficits are being included[78]. Whatever the

74 School of Special Educational Needs (Disability, Behaviour, Medical and Mental Health and Sensory)
75 Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with a Disability reported by ACARA
76 Kazda L, Bell K, Thomas R, McGeechan K, Sims R, Barratt A. Overdiagnosis of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Scoping Review. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2021;4(4):e215335. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.5335
77 Rødgaard E, Jensen K, Vergnes J, Soulières I, Mottron L. Temporal Changes in Effect Sizes of Studies Comparing Individuals With and Without Autism: A Meta-analysis. *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2019;76(11):1124–1132. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2019.1956
78 Foulkes, L.; Andrews, J.L. Are Mental Health Awareness Efforts Contributing to the Rise in Reported Mental Health Problems? A Call to Test the Prevalence Inflation Hypothesis. *New Ideas Psychol*. 2023, 69, 101010

case, there appears to be increased pressure on parents and schools to diagnose, label and respond. Schools are often seen as the agency of first and last resort to deal with these problems with parents (and school administration) often expecting individually tailored programs for their children.

In fact, it is extremely difficult to estimate the rate and severity of changes over time in cognitive functioning and mental illness among school students or the general population. For example, it may be that while general rates remain largely static, some changes are occurring within certain communities and not others or that more troubled children are being concentrated in some schools, and it is teachers from these areas who are seeing higher rates. It may also be that an increased focus on children's health and wellbeing has lowered thresholds for reporting such problems.

There have been several attempts in Australia to provide long term, population wide assessments of the state of children's health and general wellbeing, as well as many smaller, one-off attempts to track individual indices. Some of them also provide data on geographical variations and some have been prepared specifically for Western Australia.

3.2 Developmental Readiness for School

There is strong evidence that a significant proportion of young children are not developmentally ready for school[79] and that the problem may be growing. The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), for example, provides comprehensive data based on teachers' descriptions of over 96% of pre-primary children using the Early Development Index from 2009-2021 across five domains: Physical Health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills, and communication and general knowledge. While most children are judged developmentally ready using a summary score of these criteria (80.6% in W.A.), with minimal change between 2009 and 2021, there was a significant drop in reported cognitive and language skills between 2015-21. While W.A showed the most marked improvement in child development indices between 2009 and 2015, this was followed by a drop between 2018-21.

The readiness scores are significantly lower for low SES students, those from remote communities and among Indigenous students.[80] As the authors of the AEDC report point out, the linear relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and language and cognitive skills remains marked. At the extremes, children living in the most socio-economically disadvantaged locations were 4.6 times more likely to be developmentally vulnerable than those from the least disadvantaged areas (for other domains the difference is around 2.0 – 3.4 times). The largest difference between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and non-Indigenous children continues to be in language and cognitive skills.

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79 Lamb, S., Huo, S., Walstab, A., Wade, A., Maire, Q., Doecke, E., Jackson, J. & Endekov, Z. (2020). Educational opportunity in Australia 2020: Who succeeds and who misses out. Centre for International Research on Education Systems, Victoria University, for the Mitchell Institute: Melbourne.
80 Ibid

The Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC) at Curtin University has constructed a carefully validated geographical index of Early Learning Disadvantage which enables comparison of the extent of equality of early learning opportunities across WA and Australia. They identified a number of indicators (table 11, p 98) of a well-functioning early learning system – access to preschool, developmental outcomes and the level of resources available to children. [81]

Dimensions of Early Learning Disadvantage

Access	Outcomes	Resources
Attendance at preschool for 3 and 4 year olds	Children developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains in first year of school	Children living in households without access to the internet
Attendance for 15+ hours at preschool in the year before full-time school	Children developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains in the first year of school	Preschool student to preschool teacher ratio

These are mapped in the figure below reproduced from the 2020 BCEC report, *The Early Years: Investing in our Future.*

Early Learning Disadvantage in Western Australia
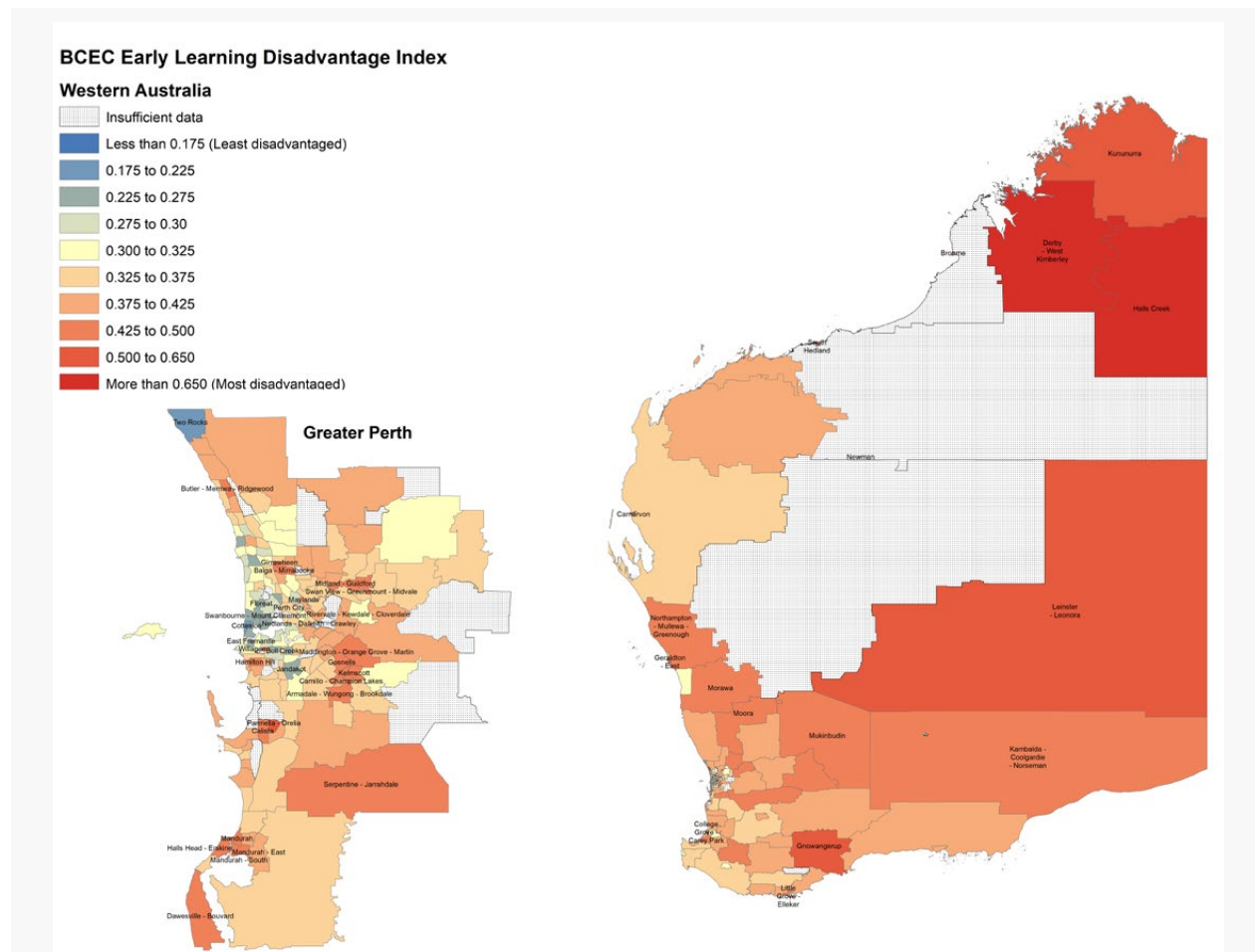
Notes: The Statistical Area level 2 (SA2) classification has been used as the spatial unit to assess early learning disadvantage across Australian regions. Data are broken using natural breaks, which classifies the data by maximising the differences between each class.
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from BCEC Early Learning Disadvantage Index.

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81 Cassells R., Dockery M., Duncan A., Kiely D., Kirkness, M., Nguyen T., Seymour, R., and Twomey C., (2020), 'The Early Years: Investing in Our Future, Focus on Western Australia Report Series, No. 13, August 2020.

The conclusions from this analysis are sobering:

Comparing communities across Australia there is a clear and unambiguous difference in early learning between children living in the most advantaged and disadvantaged regions. The divide between the most advantaged and disadvantaged areas is staggering. Children living in communities with the lowest index score (the most disadvantaged areas) are far less likely to be attending preschool, more likely to be developmentally vulnerable, less likely to have access to the internet at home and if they are attending preschool, are generally facing higher student to teacher ratios." (p 99).

Analysis by researchers at the Australian Institute of Family Studies[82] of cognitive and learning capacity data from a sample of nearly 5000 children aged 4–5 years attempts to dissect the components of this vulnerability. They showed that "many of the risk factors for low school readiness are more common in financially disadvantaged families than they are in other families". For example, within poorer families the father was more often absent or unemployed; mothers were more likely to be unemployed, to be younger, to have an incomplete secondary education and to read to their child less often. One explanation for these differences, the "family stress model", is that financial disadvantage increases children's behavioural problems by "draining parents' psychological and emotional resources", making positive parent–child interactions more difficult. A slightly different approach, the "investment model" proposes that children in low-income families have fewer opportunities because their parents cannot afford to provide stimulating experiences, nutritious food, quality child care and safe living conditions. Working longer work hours also means they may spend less time with their children.

It may be argued that economic policies to reduce family and child poverty are likely to have more substantial benefits for children's educational achievement and well-being than after-the-fact attempts to compensate for disadvantage once the children come to school. As Redman has argued, [83]"The more poverty there is in Australia, the harder education systems and individual teachers have to work to compensate for its effect on student outcomes."

Where children come to school relatively poorly prepared in terms of reading and listening skills, capacity to concentrate, social skills, and cultural knowledge, and more of these children are concentrated in low SES public schools, teachers face a bigger challenge, but limitations in resources—both quantitative and qualitative—make the task of remedying these initial handicaps extremely difficult.

Finding:

An increasing proportion of children are not developmentally ready for school and more of these children are from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Recommendation 26:

Federal and State governments should ensure universal access to affordable, quality early learning opportunities.

82 Edwards, B., Baxter, J., Smart, D., Sanson, A., & Hayes, A. (2009). Financial disadvantage and children's school readiness. Family Matters, 89, 23-31.fm83c-EdwardsEtAl_0.pdf (aifs.gov.au)
83 'I just go to school with no food' – why Australia must tackle child poverty to improve educational outcomes (theconversation.com)

Recommendation 27:

Federal and State governments should develop policies to support the successful learning of children from disadvantaged backgrounds through play-based education in small groups conducted by qualified educators.

Recommendation 28:

Federal and State governments should develop coherent policies to reduce family and child poverty and reduce educational disadvantage.

3.3 Mental Health and Wellbeing

As might be anticipated, poor mental health and emotional wellbeing disrupt children's engagement and their ability to learn and, as a result, their academic achievement and attainment[84]; on the other hand, good mental health predicts better outcomes.[85] Poor mental health leads to children being more frequently absent from school so that by Year 9 they are about 1.5 years to two years behind in literacy and numeracy.[86] Conversely, it has also been shown that people with poor literacy skills will be more likely to suffer poor mental health, such as loneliness, depression and anxiety.[87]

As emphasised in the education ministers' discussion paper, "a positive learning and wellbeing relationship creates a virtuous cycle in which wellbeing supports learning and development, which in turn reinforces good mental health and wellbeing. However, students who struggle significantly with learning gaps that are not addressed can face declining mental health outcomes, which in turn can undermine future learning."[88]

As already discussed, the paucity of systematic trend data means it is not easy to determine whether children's mental health is deteriorating or whether there is simply much more attention being paid to children's wellbeing than in the past. However, there have been attempts to take snapshots of children's mental health at given points in time and there are some data on trends in recent years, most of them based in parent and self-report rather than clinical assessments.

The most comprehensive Australian data since 2010 is contained in the research commissioned by the Commonwealth Government[89] and conducted twice, in 1998 and 2014 (Young Minds Matter). In the later survey, undertaken by the Telethon Kids Institute, over 6000 parents/carers were interviewed about children or adolescents 4–17-years-old. The parent/carer questionnaire was designed to determine the prevalence of mental disorders and their impact. Adolescents aged 11-17 also completed a self-report questionnaire in privacy about their own mental health, their experiences at school, family relationships, self-esteem, protective factors and a range of risk behaviours.

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84 Centre for Community Child Health 2022; Save the Children 2022; National Catholic Education Commission 2022
85 *Review of the National School Reform Agreement: study report*, Canberra: Productivity Commission, 2020, p. 139.
86 Goodsell et al. 2017. Op cit.
87 Hunn L, Teague B and Fisher P (2023, Literacy and mental health across the globe: a systematic review, *Mental Health and Social Inclusion*, doi:10.1108/MHSI-09-2022-0064.
88 Better and Fairer Education System - Consultation Paper - Department of Education, Australian Government, p 23-24.
89 Goodsell B, Lawrence D, Ainley J, Sawyer M, Zubrick SR, Maratos J (2017) Child and Adolescent Mental health and educational outcomes. An analysis of educational outcomes from Young Minds Matter: the second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing. Perth: Graduate School of Education, The University of Western Australia

The 2014 survey found that nearly 14% of 4–17-year-olds were assessed as having mental disorders in the previous 12 months, with males being more likely than females to have experienced mental disorders (16.3% compared with 11.5%). ADHD was the most commonly reported disorder (7.4%), followed by anxiety disorders (6.9%), major depressive disorder (2.8%) and conduct disorder (2.1%). The estimate of the prevalence of major depressive disorder was higher when young people provided the information themselves than when their parents and carers did (7.7% compared with 4.7% of 11–17-year-olds). In addition, 20% of adolescents reported very high or high levels of psychological distress – with female rates being almost twice that of males (25.9% for females and 14.8% for males).

Of the three common disorders measured in the two surveys, only major depressive disorder rates increased. One in thirteen 11–17-year-olds reported having a major depressive disorder. The rate was higher among adolescent girls, who were also more at risk from self-harm and attempted suicide. Based on their self-reported information, one in five adolescents was estimated to be suffering from high to very high levels of psychological distress.

Major depressive disorder also appeared to have the greatest impact on children, particularly adolescents, of all the disorders, with 42.8% of sufferers reporting a severe impact on their lives, including schooling, resulting in high absentee rates.

There were clear demographic and regional variations. Consistent with a growing body of evidence on locational disadvantage, children and adolescents from low-income families, with parents/carers who were less well educated and experiencing higher rates of unemployment were more likely to be assessed as having mental disorders. Children, particularly males, who lived in non-metropolitan areas showed higher rates of mental disorders than those in metropolitan areas. It should be noted that data are nearly a decade old, and they are Australia wide findings, so the extent to which they apply to WA children is not clear, but there is no reason to suppose that they do not.

Some direct evidence for Western Australia is available from the WA Department of Health's "Health and Wellbeing Surveillance System"[90], a continuous data series since 2002 which monitors the health status of the WA population, including children. At regular intervals, a random sample of parents/carers is interviewed about various aspects of the health and wellbeing of children – including chronic health conditions, lifestyle risk factors, school and friendships, protective factors and sociodemographic characteristics. The sample is then weighted to reflect the profile of the Western Australian child population as a whole. The system allows differences between socio-economic groups (quintiles) and metropolitan, rural, and remote areas to be calculated and trends over time to be assessed.

In the most recent data (2021):

- One in three (30.2%) children was reported as having some degree of trouble with emotions, concentration, behaviour or getting on with people, with one in ten (10.7%) children having 'quite a lot of trouble' or 'very much' trouble.

- Of these children, one in three (30.1%) was receiving special help for their trouble.

- The prevalence of children who had ever been treated for an emotional or mental health condition was 12.4%.

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90 Epidemiology Directorate, 2023. Health and Wellbeing of Children in Western Australia 2021. Department of Health, Western Australia

What emerges from the trend data is that the proportion of parents reporting that their child had "quite a lot" or "very much trouble" with emotions, concentration, behaviour or getting on with people increased from 5.9% in 2002 to 10.7% in 2021, while the proportion who reported that their children needed special help for such problems increased by almost ten percent, from 20.6% in 2002 to 30.1% in 2020, peaking in 2019 at 44%. There was also an increase in the percentage of children who had ever been treated for an emotional or mental health condition from 2% to 12.4%, down slightly from a peak in 2020. What these data indicate is that more children are reported as having problems and that the percentage of parents indicating that their children needed help or were receiving help for such problems was higher than the apparent rate of the problems they reported, and that this disparity appears to have increased.

The 2021 survey of young people (4-11 years old) conducted by the Commissioner for Children and Young People in Western Australia shows that around 15 per cent of students rate their health as 'fair' or 'poor'. Among Year 7 to 12 respondents, less than one-half of female students reported a high score for life satisfaction compared with two-thirds of male students. One-in-four girls reported poor life satisfaction. Overall, fewer students rate their life the best possible in 2021 compared to 2019 and more students rate it the worst possible.

Finding

Both available evidence and teacher and student reports suggest that poor mental health is a significant and possibly increasing problem among young people.

There is general recognition that children's experiences of school can have a significant influence on their mental health – either increasing risk or providing protection. While schools cannot be mainly responsible for the mental health and wellbeing of their students, they can play an important role by ensuring that they provide safe environments for all students and use their unique knowledge of children in their care to identify and refer students who need help to suitable services.

The Productivity Commission inquiry into mental health (2020)[91] identified a number of challenges for teachers in providing for the needs of children with mental health problems. While the position in Western Australia was not separately analysed, the challenges outlined are similar to the issues raised with the Panel during our consultations. In summary:

- Teachers feel overwhelmed by the expectation that they can and should solve students' social and emotional problems;

- There is a confusing proliferation of often overlapping policies and programs (few of which are evidence based or evaluated) that have been introduced to try to meet students' mental health difficulties;

- There is a lack of planning, professional development, and guidance to enable teachers to facilitate student wellbeing and respond to the needs of students with social-emotional disorders;

- The responsibilities for providing support are often unclear and access to appropriate services extremely difficult.

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91 *Mental health*, Productivity Commission Report No. 95, Canberra: Productivity Commission, 2020.

The Commission also reported that teachers often described feeling "overwhelmed and under-supported in managing student mental health and wellbeing challenges".[92] Similarly, the Commission noted that a survey of Australian principals in 2019 and 2020 found that, "poor student mental health was one of the top four sources of stress".[93]

In addition, it is clear that there is a paucity of specialist professional support needed to assist teachers and provide appropriate interventions for children with mental disorders. Teachers and school leaders were virtually unanimous in reporting that such support was either simply unavailable or very difficult to obtain in a timely manner. The Auditor General's 2022 report on the delivery of psychological services to schools confirmed that there was inequitable service delivery and that some schools had insufficient support from school psychologists.

Finding:

Many teachers and school leaders feel poorly prepared and under-resourced to manage the increasingly complex mental health problems of their students.

Finding:

Specialist support for teachers to provide for the needs of children with mental health difficulties need to be improved.

Recommendation:

See recommendations 6, 7, 8, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24 & 25

3.4 Anti-social, aggressive behaviour and bullying towards students.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING [94]

Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening. Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records). Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

As emphasised in a research paper by the Safe and Supportive School Communities Working Group[95], "there is no single 'student population' prevalence rate for bullying that can be used across contexts with confidence". In particular, under-reporting may be an issue since research suggests that students may be reluctant to report bullying to adults because they think they will not be believed or that the report will trigger an escalation in the bullying.

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92 Ibid, p. 216.
93 See S, Kidson P, Dicke T and Marsh H (2022) *The Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey 2022 data*, Australian Catholic University, p. 21.
94 infographic-facts-figures.pdf (bullyingnoway.gov.au)
95 Research snapshot - What is the prevalence of bullying in schools? (bullyingnoway.gov.au)

The working group concludes, with appropriate caveats that "the best estimate extrapolated from the research is that one student in four reports bullying occurring in person, and one student in five reports online bullying". They also note that there is still disagreement about whether bullying is actually increasing, or whether there is less tolerance for bullying and a greater likelihood of reporting than in the past.

Of the Year 7 to 12 WA students questioned in the 2019 Speaking Out Survey conducted by the Commissioner for Children and Young People, nearly 41 per cent reported having ever been bullied, cyber bullied or both at school. According to parental reports collected by the WA Health Department in 2021[96], nearly one in three (29.4%) children in Western Australian were reported to have been bullied in the previous 12 months and 6.1% to have bullied. Whatever the exact rate, it is clear that bullying is a significant problem in our schools and one which requires action by school staff and parents. Significant time and effort are required from teachers, school leaders and support staff to respond effectively to bullying, to meet with parents and to develop strategies to reduce the incidence of bullying.

Recommended strategies include those that ensure that anti-bullying responses and prevention are embedded in a whole-school approach. Such approaches should be designed to facilitate positive social interactions between students and teachers, engendering trust. They will also recognise teachers' central role in developing and implementing school policy and practice and ensure that quality professional development is provided to equip teachers with the skills to help them prevent and respond to bullying appropriately.

Despite the evident hard work and dedication of staff to deal with this problem, a significant number of young people are left feeling unsafe. Indeed, the report by the Commissioner for Children and Young People concluded that "there is a clear need for a stronger strategic approach, prioritisation and resourcing for student wellbeing at a state, system and school level," calling for a state-wide strategy for supporting student wellbeing.

This recommendation is reinforced by the findings of a 2021 survey of WA school principals' perceptions of selected behaviour support services[97] , with the emphasis on Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) and Classroom Management Strategies (CMS)[98]. It was shown that while principals generally thought the programs met the needs and expectations of their schools, few believed they were reducing incidents of misbehaviour. Key gaps in delivery of support programs were identified as the difficulty some teachers have in gaining access to training in the support programs (e.g., because of the availability and cost of relief teachers) and the inadequacy of the programs for students with more complex needs and intensive misbehaviour. Noted too was the lack of coherence between the various programs and the absence of good data on the impact of the programs.

Finding:

A significant number of young people feel unsafe at school.

Recommendation:

See recommendations: 6, 7, 8, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24 & 25

96 Epidemiology Directorate, 2023. Health and Wellbeing of Children in Western Australia 2021. Department of Health, Western Australia.
97 Review of selected behaviour support services, Dandolopartners, 2021.
98 The other programs investigated were "Trauma informed practice", "De-escalating and positive handling" and "Keeping our workplace safe."

3.5 Disruptive behaviour

Various reports suggest that there has been an increase in disruptive behaviour in Australian schools. A Senate inquiry is currently underway in response to the reported decline in Australia's ranking in the OECD disciplinary climate index[99], making Australian classrooms amongst the world's most disorderly, ranking 69 out of 76 jurisdictions worldwide. The terms of reference are couched in terms which assume that poor academic performance is the result of disorderly classroom behaviour and consequent reductions in teachers' opportunities to teach.

While there is no dispute that disorderly behaviour disrupts classroom learning – we had many submissions attesting to this problem – at least some of the causal links may flow in the other direction, i.e., that poor literacy and learning difficulties entrenched early in a child's education may lead to further academic underperformance, learner disengagement and disruptive behaviour[100,101]. For example, one longitudinal study[102] found that, after statistically controlling for prior problem behaviours and other potential demographic confounds, problems in reading at year 1 elevated a child's odds of engaging in problem behaviours in year 3.

Similarly, the quality of the school/classroom environment is important in shaping children's behaviour. In one U.S study[103] of classroom learning environments for over 10,000 first grade children, more negative environments, such as those lacking material resources and where teachers were not respected – resulted in more learning and behavioural problems. In addition, children in classrooms with low academic standards and where teachers had excessive administrative paperwork had poorer mental health outcomes.

Recommendation:

See recommendations 6, 7, 8, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24 & 25

3.6 Social media use

Social media use[104] and spending time online are an increasing part of many young people's lives. Some of our respondents commented that they had observed that excessive social media use, particularly mobile phone use, reduced students' wellbeing, attentiveness and cognitive functioning at school.

While there is some evidence that participation in social media may help young people build social networks and express themselves creatively, it may also have negative impacts – distraction, sleep disruption and exposure to bullying, excessive peer pressure, spreading rumours and generating unrealistic views of other people's lives[105,106,107].

99 OECD (2019), PISA 2018 Results (Volume III): What School Life Means for Students' Lives, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/acd78851-en.

100 Maughan, B., & Carroll, J. (2006). Literacy and mental disorders. Current Opinion in Psychiatry, 19(4), 350–354. Morgan, P. L., Farkas, G., Tufis, P. A., & Sperling, R. A. (2008). Are reading and behavior problems risk factors for each other? Journal of Learning Disabilities, 41(5), 417–436.

101 Smart, D., Youssef, G. J., Sanson, A., Prior, M., Toumbourou, J. W., & Olsson, C. A. (2017). Consequences of childhood reading difficulties and behaviour problems for educational achievement and employment in early adulthood. British Journal of Educational Psychology, 87(2), 288–308.

102 Morgan PL, Farkas G, Tufis PA, Sperling RA. (2008) Are reading and behavior problems risk factors for each other? J Learn Disabil. Sep-Oct;41(5):417-36. doi: 10.1177/0022219408321123.

103 Milkie MA, Warner CH. (2011) Classroom learning environments and the mental health of first grade children. J Health Soc Behav. 2011 Mar;52(1):4-22. doi: 10.1177/0022146510394952.

104 The Australian Bureau of Statistics (Summary of IT Use and Innovation in Australian Business, 2014-15) defines social media use as 'web and mobile-based technologies which are used to turn communication into interactive dialogue among organisations, communities and individuals. These include blogs and micro-blogs such as Twitter; content communities such as YouTube; and social networking sites, such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.'

105 Viner RM, et al. (2019) Roles of cyberbullying, sleep, and physical activity in mediating the effects of social media use on mental health and wellbeing among young people in England: A secondary analysis of longitudinal data. The Lancet. Child & Adolescent Health. doi:10.1016/S2352-4642(19)30186-5.

106 Woods HC, et al. (2016) #Sleepyteens: Social media use in adolescence is associated with poor sleep quality, anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. Journal of Adolescence. doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2016.05.008.

107 Hoge E, et al. (2017) Digital media, anxiety, and depression in children. Pediatrics. doi:10.1542/peds.2016-1758G.

Survey research suggests that the risks of harm increase as the amount of social media use increases, although there is debate about whether increased use causes harm or vice versa i.e., that those already experiencing difficulties are more likely to use social media to excess. A 2019 U.S. study of over 6000 12- to 15-year-old found that those who spent more than three hours a day using social media were at heightened risk of mental illness.[108] A similar study in the U.K, of 12,000 13- to 16-year-olds reported that poor mental health and wellbeing were more likely among higher social media users.[109] Higher levels of use have also been associated with poorer school results[110] and increased aggression.[111]

A more recent, longitudinal study[112] of 11,875 children in the United States, aged 9 to 10 years (part of the large Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development Study - ABCD Study®), examined the relationships between screen time and various childhood problems. After statistically controlling for socio-economic status (SES) and race/ethnicity, they found that more screen time is associated with worse mental health, increased behavioural problems, decreased academic performance, and poorer sleep, but improved quality in peer relationships. They noted, however, that the size of the effects of screen time were relatively modest and less than the effects attributable to socio-economic status.

There do not appear to be any comprehensive studies of the long-term effects of high levels of social media use among young Australians. As the Centre for Digital Wellbeing[113] has pointed out, "While the use of social media by Australians, particularly young Australians, has increased dramatically, this has been without guidance or insight into the impacts on their health and wellbeing. The long-term effects of heavy social media usage are yet to be explored."

Finding

Systematic research and teachers' reports indicate that higher rates of social media use and increasing screen time are adversely affecting the academic performance and behaviour of many students.

3.7 Anti-social behaviour and aggression toward staff

There appeared to be general agreement among teachers, school leaders and parents who provided evidence to the Panel that aggression in various forms, both between students and toward teachers, is on the rise. Similarly, the eSafety commissioner warned recently[114] that teachers are experiencing growing levels of abuse from students, including students taking photos of teachers, rating their physical appearance, initiating campaigns to have them removed, and making unsubstantiated and damaging allegations about them. Reports such as this have prompted the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership to develop a national strategy to address the abuse of teachers, school leaders and other school staff[115].

Media reports often focus on extreme events, but it is difficult to collect systematic and unbiased information on this issue and the experiences described vary significantly in seriousness. Most of the studies are based on non-representative, "convenience" samples, so detecting accurate rates and trends is very difficult.

108 Riehm KE, et al.(2019) Associations between time spent using social media and internalizing and externalizing problems among US youth. JAMA Psychiatry. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2019.2325.
109 Viner et al, 2019, op cit.
110 Peiro´-Velert C, Valencia-Peris A, Gonza´lez LM, Garcı´a-Masso´ X, Serra-Año´ P, Devı´s-Devı´s J. (2014). Screen media usage, sleep time and academic performance in adolescents: clustering a self-organizing maps analysis. PLOS ONE. 2014 June 18: 9(6): e99478. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0099478 PMID: 24941009
111 Campbell SB. (1995) Behavior problems in preschool children: A review of recent research. J Child Psychol Psychiatry. 1995 Jan; 36(1):113–49. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.1995.tb01657.x PMID: 7714027
112 Paulich KN, Ross JM, Lessem JM, Hewitt JK (2021) Screen time and early adolescent mental health, academic, and social outcomes in 9- and 10- year old children: Utilizing the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development SM (ABCD) Study. PLoS ONE 16(9): e0256591. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.025659
113 What is the issue? - Centre for Digital Wellbeing
114 Cyber bullying, sexual content against teachers on the rise, eSafety commissioner warns (smh.com.au)
115 national-strategy-to-address-the-abuse-of-teachers-school-leaders-and-other-school-staff.pdf (aitsl.edu.au)

However, there are some longitudinal studies, such as the one by Riley[116] on violence directed toward principals. Principals' health, safety and wellbeing, were surveyed and incidents of violence were documented. The study showed that threats of violence from students towards principals has increased from 17% in 2011 to 32% in 2017. A 2019 survey of 560 teachers across Australia[117] found that 71.4% of teachers who responded reported being bullied or harassed by a student in the previous 12 months. While verbal abuse was the most common form, 10 per cent said they had been hit or punched by a student and nearly 60 per cent reported bullying or harassment by parents.

The seriousness of this problem in Western Australia is illustrated by the number of reports to the Department of Education's online notification system. In 2022, 2275 incidents of assaults and threatening physical aggression against Department of Education employees were reported in WA schools (compared to 2000 in 2017). Of these incidents, 933 were against a school principal or deputy, 919 involved a weapon or physical object, 577 required medical assistance and 242 were reported to police.[118]. This equates to 11 incidents per school day; roughly one every forty-fifty minutes. Note that these data do not include incidents that were not reported to the Department of Education.

An exploratory study by Lowe and her colleagues[119] found that 67% of the small sample of WA teachers (56) who responded to their survey had experienced violence in the previous two years, the most common type being harassment (64.3%), followed by property offences (33.9%), physical offences (33.9%), and obscene remarks (33.9%).

A more comprehensive survey of aggressive behaviours toward school staff was commissioned by the WA Department of Education in 2020[120]. In this case, around 6000 teachers and education assistants responded to online and in-person questions about which of a list of aggressive behaviours they had experienced or witnessed at school. The results were interpreted as showing that "the impact of aggressive behaviours in schools is both widespread and multi-faceted". Responses indicated that almost 90% had experienced verbal threats, intimidation and swearing, 78% objects being thrown and 74% physical intimidation. Some of the behaviours were reported as occurring at a "concerningly high rate." Students with special needs (30%) and primary students (30%) were most likely to be perpetrators. Increased stress, elevated mental health problems and physical injuries were common impacts of experiencing and witnessing this aggressive behaviour.

> **Teachers are expected to do everything (teach, counsel, protect, deal with social concerns, coach sports, dress-up for book week, and Easter etc) and be accountable for every word spoken, every event conducted or not conducted during school time and out of school time. If a student wrecks the room, attacks the staff, disrupts the learning of multiple students – often the parents are called in to take the child out for lunch, blames the teacher/school/staff and then the child returns to the school to the next day to repeat the process."**
>
> *(Primary teacher, city)*

Finding:

A small, but apparently growing, number of children engage in aggressive and disruptive behaviour at school.

Finding:

Teachers and school leaders exposed to such behaviour report elevated stress levels and poorer mental health.

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116 Riley, P. (2018). The Australian principal occupational health, safety and wellbeing survey 2018 data. Fitzroy, Victoria: Australian Catholic University https://www.principalhealth.org/au/2017_Report_AU_FINAL.pdf
117 Billett, P., Fogelgarn, R. & Burns, E. (2019). Teacher targeted bullying and harassment by students and parents: Report from an Australian exploratory survey. La Trobe University. https://www.ttbhau.com/uploads/2/0/8/1/20818406/final_ttbh_report_april_20_2019.pd
118 Parliament of Western Australia, Hansard, Question on Notice, 2022.
119 Lowe, E., Picknoll, D., Farringdon, F., Chivers, P. & Rycroft, P. (2020). Teacher-directed violence by students in Western Australia: An exploratory study. Issues in Educational Research, 30(1), 187-202. http://www.iier.org.au/iier30/lowe.pdf.
120 The Human Link, 2021

SECTION 4: THE EFFECTS ON TEACHERS OF THESE CHANGES: WORKLOAD, SATISFACTION, TURNOVER AND PERFORMANCE.

4.1 Overview

The societal and policy shifts outlined in the preceding sections have driven significant changes in the roles, workloads and working relations of teachers in WA public schools. These issues were extensively addressed in the public submissions our Panel received. To complement the submissions, the Panel also reviewed national and state research on teachers' work and workload conducted by government departments and organisations, university researchers and teacher unions.

The Federal Department of Education's recent *Better and Fairer Education System Review* consultation paper notes that teachers are "the most influential in-school factor in student outcomes".[121] However, following the concerns expressed in the Federal Department of Education's *National Teacher Workforce Action Plan* and the Productivity Commission's report on the National School Reform Agreement (Department of Education, 2022a),[122] the *Review* points to the worsening teacher shortage crisis in Australia which it attributes in part to unsustainable and increasingly complex workloads:

> *Teachers identify work/life balance, unsustainable and increasingly complex workloads, high levels of stress, impact on wellbeing or health, the demands of professional regulation, and changes imposed on schools from outside as key factors in leaving the workforce. High workload continues to be the most significant stress factor identified by school leaders and teachers, with school leaders reporting that increasing workloads are affecting their health and wellbeing.[123]*

A teacher shortage crisis is not a new phenomenon in Western Australia, nor are concerns about the impact of unsustainable workloads on teachers' and principals' work, their health and wellbeing and their career intentions. Over 16 years before the *Better and Fairer Education System Review*, the *Education Workforce Initiatives Taskforce* (2007 – known as the Twomey Report), was commissioned by the WA Minister for Education and Training. It noted that,

> *many teachers have evidenced concerns with the growing workload pressures. Factors contributing include the number of routine clerical and administrative tasks within a school which are not directly related to the core business of teaching and learning, increasing levels of accountability, demands brought about by student management and inclusion of students with disabilities and expectations related to the provision of individualised programs of learning.[124]*

The Twomey Taskforce suggested that concurrent initiatives which were being taken by the Department (under the 2007 *Classroom First* strategy) would allow teachers to devote more of their attention to their prime responsibilities. However, submissions to this Panel indicate that since 2010

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121 Department of Education. (2023a). *Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System - Consultation Paper*. Government of Australia.
122 Department of Education. (2022a). *National Teacher Workforce Action Plan*. Government of Australia., Productivity Commission. (2022b). *Review of the National School Reform Agreement, Study Report*.
123 Department of Education. (2023a). *Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System - Consultation Paper*. Government of Australia.
124 Education Workforce Initiatives Taskforce. (2007). *Education Workforce Initiatives: Report "If you think education is expensive. . .".* http://www.educationworkforce.wa.gov.au

many of these initiatives, such as increased school-level decision-making and a revised public school funding model, have *added* to administrative and accountability workload burdens. Indeed, as discussed in Section 1, the workload of teachers and principals and the work of public schools have been increased by a plethora of policy initiatives. This has led to the description of these changes as a "climate of policy overload and initiativitis".[125]

In considering the current and future needs of the teacher workforce in Western Australia, it is important to examine the ways in which current Commonwealth and State school education policies are affecting, including adding to, the volume of teachers' work. Recent survey responses from teaching staff in WA indicate that they view more effective system-level planning, including consultation with them, as a key strategy to address teacher workload and to prevent imposing competing workload demands on them. This research also indicates that greater consultation, due diligence, and sensitive timing are needed for the implementation of further change in schools.[126] The need for effective system-level planning is aptly illustrated by the following comment: for "Teachers to be valued. Changes in school [should] be done with consultation with staff – not this is what we do, if you don't like it then you can get a job elsewhere – which is what we have been told" and a call to "Make fewer changes (the impractical ones that seem to be just for change sake) so teachers can get on with the job of teaching. Most teachers know where they require help, so ask them before changes are made – not just the latest trends in academics".

Finding:

Over the period covered by this review, concerns around workloads in WA schools have not been adequately addressed despite a raft of policy initiatives designed to "free up" the work of school-based staff.

Recommendation 29:

The implementation of further change in public schools and the WA Department of Education should be based on more effective system-level planning and prior consultation with teachers to prevent imposing growing and competing workload demands on staff.

Recommendation 30:

All policy changes should be assessed for possible impacts on staff workload before their implementation.

4.2 Hours worked by teacher workforce

One measure of high workloads is simply the number of hours teachers are expected to work. At a national level, the Productivity Commission notes that teacher workloads have increased over the preceding decade and the workload of Australian teachers is greater than the OECD average.[127] In reviewing this measure in WA, the Panel had access to research conducted by Fitzgerald and colleagues in 2018, *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools,* which established foundational knowledge about the hours

125 Fitzgerald, S., Stacey, M., McGrath-Champ, S., Parding, K., & Rainnie, A. (2018). Devolution, market dynamics and the Independent Public School initiative in Western Australia: 'winning back' what has been lost? *Journal of education policy*, 33(5), 662-681. https://doi.org/10.1080/026 80939.2017.1412502
126 Fitzgerald, S., McGrath-Champ, S., Wilson, R., & Stacey, M. (2019). *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools*. State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia.
127 Productivity Commission. (2022b). *Review of the National School Reform Agreement, Study Report*.

teachers work in schools.[128] In WA, teachers in public schools reported working on average 53 hours per week, including 10 hours per week at home, plus 13.6 hours per week during term breaks. Overall, 72.7% of respondents noted that their workload had increased over the preceding 5 years (2014-2018).

The *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools* report provides further details (p.15) about self-reported hours of work according to role as follows:

- Principal or Deputy Principal — on average 56 hours per week (48 at school and 8 at home)

- Head of department or program coordinator— on average 52 hours per week (43 at school and 9 at home)

- Full-time classroom and specialist teachers — on average 53 hours per week (43 in school and 10 at home).

It is important to put teachers' and principals' reported work hours in a broader context. The OECD defines "very long work hours" as working 50 hours or more per week in paid work.[129] According to national reports, only a small percentage of Australian employees work such long hours: between January 2019 and July 2021, the percentage of Australian employees working 50 or more hours dropped from 13.2% of employees to 12%.[130] However, the average hours worked by *all* levels of the full time teaching staff in WA public schools is within the "very long work hours" range. Among full-time teaching workforce respondents to the *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools* survey (either permanent or fixed contract), 46.5% reported working 50-59 hours per week and 22.4% reported working 60 hours or more.

The Panel also compared the 2018 findings of the *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools* to those of three surveys of its members conducted by the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia (SSTUWA) in 2016, 2021 and 2023. During the eight year period between these surveys, there was an increase in the number of respondents that rated the work hours as high or very high (from 86.2 to 91.4% of respondents in 2021, and 90% in 2023). While there was a slight increase in the percentage of respondents reporting that they were working 'very long working hours' (i.e., 50 hours or more per week), from 50.9% to 52.6%, there was a larger increase of the number who reported working 60 or more hours a week, from 13.37% in 2016 to 18.52% in 2021. These results included responses from staff who were not full-time (casual and part time staff), a factor that most likely contributed to a lower proportion reporting that they worked 'very long working hours' as compared to *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools* (68.9%); however, the Panel noted with concern that these survey results reinforced the findings that an increasing number of respondents reported working more than 50 hours per week.

The Panel also compared the workload findings of the *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools* report to more recent data available through AITSL's Australian Teacher Workforce Data project. [131] *The Australian Teacher Workforce Data (*ATWD) 2023 report notes that across Australian teachers

128 Fitzgerald, S., McGrath-Champ, S., Wilson, R., & Stacey, M. (2019). *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools*. State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia.

129   https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/work-life-balance/; https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/7d12b0f6763c78caca257061001cc588/0f152d0eab2c88bdca2571b000153da2!OpenDocument

130   https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/indicators/australias-welfare-indicators/work/work?tab=IN.04|Table

131   Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL). (2023a). *ATWD National Trends: Teacher Workforce.* Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL),. Retrieved August 1, from https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/australian-teacher-workforce-data/atwdreports/national-trends-teacher-workforce

surveyed, "Working hours in 2022 remained high, with full time classroom-teachers working 40% more hours than they were paid to work". The report states that in 2022, "full-time classroom teachers were still working more hours than contracted during the term at an average of 53.1 hours per week, equivalent to around 15 hours per week above contracted hours".[132] According to the ATWD survey data, full-time classroom teachers in WA reported working on average 55.2 hours per week (45.9% more hours than they were contracted) in 2020. Reported workhours decreased over 2021 and 2022: from 54.1 hours per week in 2021, full-time classroom teachers reported working 53.5 hours per week in 2022. However, the Panel noted that the average of 53 hours per week contained within the *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools* report, prior to COVID-19, is consistent with the ATWD 2023 report's WA average of 53.5 and the national average of 53.1 hours per week.

The Panel was able to compare the reported workloads of WA public school teachers to those in other States via several sources of information. Nationally, Gavin and his colleagues reviewed recent AEU commissioned state-wide surveys of teachers' work and workload from across five states, including *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools*. All five surveys were conducted between 2016 and 2018 and cover a total sample of 50,245 Australian public school teachers (more than one-quarter of public school teachers).[133] Table 1 below includes the survey findings, plus a subsequent survey conducted on behalf of the AEU in South Australia.[134] All the surveys show independently assessed but consistently high work hours.

Table 1 - Teachers' work hours across six Australian states			
State	**Total average hours per week (Primary, FT)**	**Total average hours per week (Secondary, FT)**	**Hours within total undertaking work activities at home or on the weekend**
NSW	55	55	11
WA	53	53	10
VIC	52.8	53.2	11.5 hours for primary teachers. 13 hours for secondary
TAS	45.8	46.2	90% of primary teachers work 5 hours. 70% of secondary teachers work 3 hours
QLD	44	44	Teachers report spending between 1 and 7 hours 'outside rostered duty time', including weekends, each week
SA	52	52	Not reported

The Panel notes that the work hours reported in *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools* are similar to those reported recently in Victoria and South Australia, although slightly less than those reported in the NSW Study (55 hours). The WA results, together with those from Victoria, South Australia and NSW are, however, considerably higher than those of the OECD, which only measures teachers' *required* hours in Australia overall at approximately 1200 hours per year, inclusive of contact

132 Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL). (2023b). *Australian Teacher Workforce Data: ATWD Key Metrics Dashboard*. Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL),. Retrieved August 1, from https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/atwd-js/march29-2023/atwd-key-metrics-dashboard---march-2023.pdf?sfvrsn=ebd1b03c_2

133 Gavin, M., McGrath-Champ, S., Wilson, R., Fitzgerald, S., & Stacey, M. (2021). Teacher workload in Australia: National reports of intensification and its threats. In S. Riddle, A. Heffernan, & D. Bright (Eds.), *New Perspectives on Education for Democracy: Creative Responses to Local and Global Challenges* (pp. 110-123). Routledge.

134 Windle, J., Morrison, A., Sellar, S., Squires, R., Kennedy, J., & Murray, C. (2022). *Teachers at breaking point: Why working in South Australian schools is getting tougher*. University of South Australia.

hours at around 800 hours per year – which is above the OECD average.[135] The *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools* report notes that WA public teachers are reporting hours of work at school (inclusive of contact and non-contact time) at approximately 1,657 hours per year, suggesting they are high on an international as well as domestic scale.

Finding:

Workloads for the majority of the WA public school teaching staff have reached unsustainable levels. This is having a detrimental impact on the attraction and retention of teaching staff to the public education system.

Recommendation 31:

To attract new employees to public schools and retain experienced staff, the WA Department of Education should implement measures to reduce teaching workloads.

4.3 Workload complexity

4.3.1 Administrative and data related tasks as non-core work

Beyond issues with unsustainable workloads, the increasing complexity of the role confronting the teaching workforce (and of schools) was raised in many submissions to the Panel. This increasing complexity and a lack of appreciation of the challenges of teaching among the wider public, including students, parents and carers, has been found to be highly detrimental to teachers' intention to stay in the profession.[136] The issue of complexity was also investigated by the *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools* researchers who found that 90.2% of respondents said the complexity of their work had increased over a five year period (2014-2018). Submissions to the Panel indicate that the complexity of roles within schools has increased even more in the subsequent period, an unsurprising finding given the challenges thrust on public education during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Panel noted that significant sources of this growing work complexity identified in the *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools* report were administration, and data collection and management. Among the survey responses,

• 63.5 cent said the range of activities undertaken at their work had increased;

• 89.7 per cent said the collection, analysis and reporting of data had increased; and

• 91.4 per cent said that administrative work had increased.

Australian teachers spend less time on teaching tasks and more time on non-teaching tasks than their international counterparts, and national reports indicate that the amount of time spent on administrative tasks continued to increase in the 2018-2020 period. [137] The SSTUWA members' surveys in 2016 and 2021 indicated that respondents viewed reporting and assessments as the top factor contributing to higher workloads in the survey period. Respondents to the *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools* survey viewed administrative activities involving documentation, working with

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135 OECD. (2014). Indicator D4: *How much time do teachers spend teaching? Education at a glance 2014: OECD indicators.*

136 Heffernan, A., Bright, D., Kim, M., Longmuir, F., & Magyar, B. (2022). 'I cannot sustain the workload and the emotional toll': Reasons behind Australian teachers' intentions to leave the profession. *Australian Journal of Education*, 66, 196–209. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/00049441221086654

137 Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL). (2023a). *ATWD National Trends: Teacher Workforce.* Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL),. Retrieved August 1, from https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/australian-teacher-workforce-data/atwdreports/national-trends-teacher-workforce, Productivity Commission. (2022b). *Review of the National School Reform Agreement, Study Report.*

data and accreditation requirements, for instance, as cumbersome, time consuming and not worthy of additional time or resources. In contrast teachers viewed as important those tasks associated with getting to know their students and also planning and delivering teaching and learning so that it meets students' needs. There was a clear tension between this priority and the increasingly complex range of activities staff in WA public schools were expected to undertake. Indeed a large majority of respondents viewed new administrative work (83.2%) and the collection, analysis and reporting of data for policy compliance (77.1%) as hindering their capacity to develop and sustain quality teaching.

The responses in the *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools* survey indicate teachers are not primarily interested in assigning administrative and compliance duties to other staff in schools or the Department of Education. Instead by respecting their professional judgement, much of this administrative work could be streamlined and made less cumbersome, so that teachers have more opportunity for collaborative practice and to be able to attend to their core duties of teaching well.

Finding:

Over the period of this Review, WA teachers' capacity to develop and sustain quality teaching has been adversely affected by time-consuming paperwork which is not viewed as core to the teaching role.

Recommendation 32:

In consultation with teachers, the WA Department of Education should increase the proportion of their total working time available to focus on matters viewed as core to the job of teaching. Time devoted to general administration duties should be reduced to at least the international average for such tasks, as identified by the OECD.

4.3.2 Curriculum demands and support

As discussed in Section 1.10, it is clear that a lack of central curriculum support has added to the complexity of teachers' workloads. However, unlike the majority of administrative and compliance tasks, teachers and school leaders (including Heads of Departments and Heads of Learning Areas) viewed the work of tailoring the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of students as a highly important task that needed to be undertaken daily. Respondents to *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools* survey indicated that this was an area that required more time and resources, especially given that, as discussed in Sections 1.9-1.11, the WA curriculum has undergone extensive, continuous change through policy changes and other adjustments during the period covered by this Review. The curriculum was commonly refered to as 'crowded' in submissions to the Inquiry.

Such changes, adding significantly to workload complexity, have occurred at the same time as a large majority of teachers and school leaders reported no additional support from the central Department of Education; in fact, 43 per cent of teachers, 57 per cent of Heads of Departments/ Heads of Learning Areas and 50 per cent of Principals reported that support for curriculum changes had reduced in the preceding five years. Teachers and schools have been required to manage these changes at the school level and report the added challenge of adjusting to the different learning material, often based on different pedagogic assumptions, being used between schools. In qualitative responses to the *Understanding Work* survey, a clear theme emerged around the perceived inadequacy of professional development time dedicated to pedagogical practices and curriculum, viewed as a core business of teaching and learning.

As discussed in Section 1.10, submissions to the Panel highlighted the value of WA based and free high-quality shared curriculum resources and well-supported professional development training

to support new curriculum developments. The benefits of increased curriculum support have been promoted nationally. The *Better and Fairer Education System Review* consultation paper notes that both the Productivity Commission and the Grattan Institute have recently called for the creation of a "common bank of high-quality curriculum resources for teachers and school leaders to cut teacher workload and support quality teaching".[138] The Grattan Institute's report suggests that such resources could save teachers up to three hours a week.[139] However, to enable teachers and school leaders to leverage the benefits of increased curriculum support, including professional development, it is clear that the burden of administrative and compliance tasks within a school which are not directly related to the core business of teaching and learning should be significantly reduced. It is notable that in the recent consultation surveys for *Better and Fairer Education System Review* consultation paper, 80 per cent of educators indicated that the most effective investments that governments could make to support and retain teachers was a reduction in teacher workload, including by providing administration and education support personnel, whereas 10.7 per cent pointed to increased investment in resources to support curriculum implementation.[140] Aided by increased curriculum support, it is clear that teachers and school leaders need adequate time to use their professional expertise, both individually and collaboratively, to tailor curriculum and learning materials to meet the diverse needs of students. This task has only become more pressing over the period of this Review.

Finding:

WA teachers' workloads and workload complexity would be improved by free, WA based and high-quality shared curriculum resources and well-supported professional development.

Recommendation:

See recommendations 12-14.

4.3.3 Growing complexity of student cohorts

Another source of workload complexity frequently highlighted in the submissions to the Panel is the growing complexity of student cohorts in public schools (an issue addressed in Section 3 of this report). Submissions to the inquiry from the Western Australian Primary Principals Association, Western Australian Secondary School Executives Association and the Western Australian Education Support Principals and Administrators Association all argued that student complexity was one of the major contributors to teacher workloads and teacher shortages. National reports from the Productivity Commission and the Grattan Institute also note that the increase in the diverse needs of students is adding to the complexity of teaching and to school workloads.[141]

The growth in complexity is not evenly spread across and within Australian education systems. As the *Better and Fairer Education System Consultation Paper* notes,[142] "Australia's schools display one of the most socio-economically segregated profiles in the OECD and this process of residualisation, in which mostly public schools teach increasingly complex and disadvantaged student cohorts, is becoming more pronounced". The process has been hastened by marketisation and privatisation, in which private schools are not only often better resourced but have the advantage of being able to select students on the basis of the capacity to pay and/or academic merit. They have also benefited from real and perceived exclusivity, whereas public schools work according to universal service obligations.

Residualisation has also become more evident in the public education system; research on the Independent Public School (IPS) initiative in Western Australia has shown that competition and

138 Department of Education. (2023a). *Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System - Consultation Paper.* Government of Australia.
139 Hunter, J., Sonnemann, J., & Joiner, R. (2022). *Making Time for Great Teaching: How Better Government Policy Can Help.* Grattan Institute.
140 Department of Education. (2023b). *Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System – Initial Consultation Surveys Summary analytical report.* Government of Australia.
141 Productivity Commission. (2022b). *Review of the National School Reform Agreement, Study Report.*
142 Department of Education. (2023a). *Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System - Consultation Paper.* Government of Australia.

choice associated with such school autonomy programs reinforce mechanisms of residualisation.[143] This compounds the challenges and workloads of staff in the State's more disdvantaged schools and reinforces their real and percieved status as 'hard-to-staff'. The Panel reviewed public submissions, as well as research on public school teacher workloads in W.A., which shows clearly that more complex student cohorts, characterised by socio-economic as well as cognitive, behavioural and mental health challenges, have significantly increased the workload burden of teachers.[144] These findings aligned with, and underscore, those of the Gonski report (2011), which over a decade ago noted that as residualisation makes teaching and learning conditions more difficult, it makes it harder for affected schools to recruit and retain teachers. The Panel notes with concern the evidence provided in public submsisions which shows that staff morale in disadvantaged schools is not only compromised by the educational challenges they face but also by the myriad of social and community service activities they undertake as part of their role as teachers.

As mentioned earlier, the issue of increasing student diveristy and complexity was noted by the 2007 Twomey Report, which examined workload issues around the growing use of Independent Education Plans (IEPs). The report noted that "successful teachers find that IEPs are complicated and time-consuming to write and believe they exaggerate and maintain differences within the classroom".[145] At the time the Twomey report called for a review of support by psychologists, therapists and education assistants.

It appears that the number of such support postions in schools has not kept pace with the increasing numbers of IEPs. As noted in Section 1.13, submissions to the Panel suggest that some teachers are now teaching classes with over half of the students assigned IEPs.[146] While IEPs are mandated for students with diagnosed special needs arising from, but not limited to, attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or being on the autism spectrum (Autism Spectrum Disorder - ASD), some schools are also requiring that all students who are not working at the 'expected standard', that is, receiving a 'D' or 'E' grade for a subject, be on an IEP.

It is not surprising that in the *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools* report, the largest percentage of respondents ranked providing *more specialist teacher support for students with special needs* as the top-ranked strategy to support teachers' work given that 'developing other

strategies to meet the learning needs of students (e.g. those with special needs, low-engagement/ attainment etc.)' was ranked by teachers as the work activity that required more time and resources. The SSTUWA members' surveys in 2016 and 2021 indicated that respondents viewed the lack of classroom support as the top factor contributing to higher workloads.

The diversity of student needs within classrooms, and the requirement for teachers to differentiate learning for particular students means many teachers feel they are spread too thinly and seek additional specialists and teacher aides for

143 Fitzgerald, S., Stacey, M., McGrath-Champ, S., Parding, K., & Rainnie, A. (2018). Devolution, market dynamics and the Independent Public School initiative in Western Australia: 'winning back' what has been lost? *Journal of education policy*, 33(5), 662-681. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2017.1412502 , Keddie, A., MacDonald, K., Blackmore, J., Gobby, B., Wilkinson, J., Eacott, S., & Niesche, R. (2023). *School Autonomy reform and social Justice in Australian public education: Final Report 2023*. Deakin University.

144 Fitzgerald, S., McGrath-Champ, S., Wilson, R., & Stacey, M. (2019). *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools*. State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia.

145 Education Workforce Initiatives Taskforce. (2007). *Education Workforce Initiatives: Report "If you think education is expensive. . .".* http://www.educationworkforce.wa.gov.au

146 The Grattan Institute report has suggested that State Governments increase average class sizes to 'buy' more preparation time for teachers, including differentiation of learning material for students. However, as noted earlier in the report, WA public schools have some of the largest actual class sizes in the country and large class-sizes are reported to exacerbate problem of managing and preparing for an increasingly diverse student cohort .Hunter, J., Sonnemann, J., & Joiner, R. (2022). *Making Time for Great Teaching: How Better Government Policy Can Help*. Grattan Institute.

support. This was emphasised in comments such as: "Student complexity has increased dramatically. Student home life impact, lack of readiness, speech and language problems, engagement issues and the number of students with anxiety as well as other special needs have all increased and make a teacher's role so much more complex".

Given this, a common request from teachers and principals was for special programs to be developed for students diagnosed with special needs by specialist staff and training support staff, as well as increasing funding for special needs students and greater inter-agency collaboration systems to support student needs.

Finding:

WA teachers' workloads and workload complexity has been increased by the growing complexity of student cohorts, including special learning needs and behavioural issues.

Recommendation 33:

The WA Department of Education should provide adequate levels of local support to address the workload implications of the growing student complexity as a high priority strategy.

See also recommendations 6, 7, 8, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24 & 25

4.3.4 Challenges for teachers working out-of-field

The challenges posed to teachers and schooling systems by high rates of out-of-field teaching were raised in several submissions to this Inquiry. Indicating a "misalignment between teaching assignments and teachers' disciplinary and education background", out-of-field teaching is symptomatic of the pressing shortage of qualified teachers in Australia, where the practice is more prevalent than other comparable countries.[147] We note that concerns about its impact have also been highlighted in recent national reports from the Federal Department of Education, the Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL) and the Productivity Commission.[148]

AITSL has suggested that at a national level around 1 in 5 teachers are teaching out-of-field across all subjects, but the practice is more frequent in certain subject areas (such as technology mathematics and science). The table below, based on the AITSL's ATWD survey data, compares the percentage of teachers working out-of-field in Western Australia to the national average for each area of specialisation.

Percentage of Teachers Working Out-of-Field									
2020 Results	Arts	English	Health/PE	Humanities	LOTE	Mathematics	Performing Arts	Science	Technology
National Average	27%	27%	36%	35%	30%	35%	33%	28%	44%
WA	37%	23%	35%	39%	0%	27%	31%	30%	39%

Data source: ATWD 2023; Teacher Survey (2018-2022)

Beyond, subject specialisation, students outside the metropolitan area and from low socioeconomic org/10.1007/978-981-16-9328-1_1

148 Department of Education. (2022b). *Teacher Workforce Shortages - Issues paper* Government of Australia.; Productivity Commission. (2022b). *Review of the National School Reform Agreement, Study Report.*

areas are more likely to encounter out-of-field teachers, indicating this workforce management

issue has a clear social justice dimension. Teaching out-of-field is particularly prevalent in schools in regional and remote areas: earlier research indicates that schools in remote locations are more likely to use out-of-field teachers than metropolitan schools (41% of Year 7-10 teachers compared to 24% respectively). In Western Australian schools 22.6% of students are located in regional and remote schools. Moreover, teaching out-of-field is more prevalent in low SES schools compared to high SES schools (31% of Year 7-10 teachers compared to 22% respectively). [149]

While concerns have rightly been raised about the impact of out-of-field teaching on student outcomes, this practice also adds to the demands on teachers "as they familiarise themselves with both the content and the pedagogies associated with the new learning area(s)".[150] The associated work demands and stress is particularly problematic for the high number of early career teachers (ECT) who are called upon to undertake out-of-field teaching, and this is viewed as a key factor driving ECT attrition.[151] The challenges that ECTs face here is also worsened by a lack of support and mentoring: the Productivity Commission reports that more than one-third of early career teachers surveyed say that they do not receive induction training and mentoring.[152]

Finding:

WA teachers' workloads and workload complexity are exacerbated by the demands associated with out-of-field teaching, an issue that contributes to early career teacher attrition.

Recommendation 34:

The Department of Education should approve the practice of out-of-field teaching only where it can ensure that adequate training, mentoring, and support is provided to teachers, irrespective of regional or remote status of the school where they work. The workload of teachers working out-of-field should properly reflect the added work demands associated with this practice.

4.4 Human resource management: staff selection

Employment conditions and job security were frequently raised with the Panel by school leaders and teachers (See also Section 1.3). Where employment is precarious, staff are faced with additional pressures and difficulties. Over the period covered by this review, there have been numerous policy changes and adjustments to human resource management as indicated below.

- Principals having authority to fill vacancies as soon as practicable once vacant, principals approve leave (2011),
- Employee Performance Policy (2016),
- Official Travel Policy (2017),
- WA Public School Leadership Strategy (including Leaders Framework) (2018),
- Bullying in the Workplace Policy (2018),
- Leave Management Policy (2018),
- Secondment Policy (2018),
- Staff Induction Policy (2018),
- Recruitment, Selection and Appointment Policy (2019),

149 Weldon, P. (2016). *Out-of-field teaching in secondary schools.* (Policy Insights, Issue. Australian Council for Educational Research.
150 Productivity Commission. (2022b). *Review of the National School Reform Agreement, Study Report.*
151 Hobbs, L., Plessis, A. D., Oates, G., Susan Caldis, McKnight, L., Vale, C., O'Connor, M., Emily Rochette, Watt, H., Weldon, P., Richardson, P., & Bateup, C. (2022). *National Summit on Teaching Out-of-field: Synthesis and Recommendations for Policy, Practice and Research.* Deakin University
152 Productivity Commission. (2022a). *Review of the National School Reform Agreement, Interim Report.*

- Staff leave management (2020 – COVID),
- Statement of Expectations for Public School Principals (2021),
- Complaints and Notification Policy (2021),
- Teach Australia graduates in secondary schools (2021),
- Staff Conduct and Discipline Policy (2022).

Under the current arrangements, school principals are responsible for managing the selection and appointment of staff, leave entitlements and staff conduct. Taking on these responsibilities at the school level has added significantly to the workload of principals and school-based staff. It also results in wasteful duplication of effort across the system. Principals who spoke to the Panel said that while they valued their capacity to select staff, they were less enthusiastic about managing the broader human resources requirements. Attaching teachers' positions to each school rather than the Department significantly increased their administrative workloads and, as previously discussed (Section 1.3) increased teachers' insecurity. Principals working in lower socio-economic schools and regional and remote schools, were more likely to express dissatisfaction with the arrangements, having found that they were frequently left without preferred teachers who were more likely to accept positions in more comfortable or city school locations.

Since principals may now advertise and fill vacancies as soon as they occur, school staff changes are more frequent, especially in schools in less attractive locations. In addition, there is no requirement for teachers or school leaders who win a position to remain in that position for a specified length of time. Together with the government requirement that teachers take their long service leave entitlements within two years of them becoming available, these policies have resulted in some schools experiencing frequent and numerous staff changes. One school reported having eight principals in six years.

The effect of such rapid changes in leadership and class teachers is significant dislocation of school programs, additional workload pressure and a poorer educational experience for the children, particularly those who are already facing disadvantage. High staff turnover resulting from current policy settings adds to the instability in rural, remote and lower SES schools across the state. Obviously, constant change in the classroom is not conducive to high standards of student achievement but instead produces confusion and disengagement, further undermining teacher morale.

Finding:

Frequent teacher and school leader movements between schools increase staff workload and disrupt student learning, particularly in rural, remote, and disadvantaged schools.

Finding:

Staff instability has increased following policy changes which allow teachers and leaders to be replaced at any time in the school year.

Finding:

School leaders and teachers can move from school to school without any requirement to fulfil a specified period of service to the school.

Recommendation 35:

To enable education programs and student learning to be conducted without undue interruption

or discontinuity, the WA Education Department should require that, except in unavoidable circumstances, teachers and school leaders do not move schools during the school year and commit to a minimum of 2 years appointment in a given school.

Perhaps to compensate for this churn, some principals were reported to give preference to new teachers "known" to the school or senior administrators in an attempt to maintain consistency in the school culture and pedagogy. While ideal for short term stability, this bias inevitably leads to perceptions of unfairness and schools missing out on the new ideas that teachers with more diverse experiences might provide to help schools respond creatively to changing demands.

In many of the consultations arranged by the Panel, school staff expressed scepticism about the quality of the current merit selection process. Many observed that successful applicants often seemed to be friends of the administration or even relatives. In some instances, it appeared that teachers were selected to a position prior to it being advertised.

Finding:

Current staff selection processes favour teachers "known" to school leaders rather than teachers from more diverse backgrounds.

As previously noted (Section 1.3), in IPS schools, staff are made permanent to a school rather than to the Department of Education. This has enabled the Department to significantly reduce the "Staffing Branch" and transfer decisions about permanence to school management. In their efforts to manage one-year budgets, principals have been very conservative in making new staff permanent, since drops in enrolments, for example, leave them with more staff than they need and for which they have no budget allocation. While this is understandable, it seems that until very recently, the Department did not remind principals of the relative stability of enrolment in some schools which would enable them to provide more permanent positions. The most worrying feature of the move to school-based appointments is the general insecurity felt by fixed term teachers and by permanent teachers seeking to move to another school, where only a fixed term appointment may be available. The overall outcome is an increase in the insecurity of teaching staff across the system.

During our consultations, teachers often reported observing increases in the number of teachers "on contract" to their schools and noted various undesirable features of this increase. For example, fixed term teachers are more likely to be requested to teach oversized classes, take additional classes, and take on additional roles in the school without payment or time in lieu. Given their quest for future permanent status, many feel compelled to agree to these extra responsibilities. However, for some young teachers, the combination of job insecurity and work overload while still developing expertise in the classroom, has led to burnout and poor mental health.

Finding:

The advent of teachers and other school officers being employed by the school (rather than the Department) has resulted in a decrease in the number of permanent appointments and many teachers feeling insecure in their employment.

Recommendation 36:

Decisions on teacher appointments, conditions and entitlements should revert to central office administration in the WA Department of Education.

Some teachers we spoke to questioned whether the Department of Education has a clearly communicated and effective process for intervening when bullying, harassment or unfair demands by school leaders are occurring. They told us the processes

for making complaints, initiating follow-up actions and remediation of any damage are not clear to staff. They also saw a direct reference to the Standards and Integrity Directorate as inappropriate since the complaint is returned to the school principal – who may be the one complained about – for mediation.

Finding:

Where school leaders and teachers or school officers feel unfairly treated in their school, there appears to be no clear process for independent mediation and resolution.

Recommendation 37:

The Occupational Health and Safety Division and the Standards and Integrity Directorate of the WA Department of Education should work together and with teachers' and school leaders' representatives to devise a fair form of mediation to ensure a safe working environment for teachers, leaders and school officers.

4.5 Workload: burnout, satisfaction, and intention to leave

Throughout our consultation with school leaders and teachers, it was clear that the high levels of work demands were associated with increasing stress and job dissatisfaction. This appeared to be having a detrimental impact on the career intentions of teachers and school leaders. These factors are also contributing to the teacher shortage on a national level, with the Federal Department of Education's own 2022 modelling forecasting that the demand for secondary teachers will exceed the supply of new graduate teachers by around 4,100 between 2021 and 2025.[153] Statements from Department of Education WA officials indicated WA would need an extra 1300 secondary teachers in 2023.[154] The 2023 SSTUWA members' survey indicated that 73% of respondents said there was a teacher shortage at their school and over two-thirds said this had increased workloads and impacted staff morale (67% and 68% respectively).

Although the Department has focused on immediate measures to increase teacher recruitment, a major factor contributing to the teacher shortage in Western Australia is a rise in the number of public school teachers who have resigned or retired. The WA Department of Education annual reports indicate that the number of teacher resignations as a proportion of total teachers (FTE) in 2010 was 3.2%, down from 6% in 2007 when the State Government set up the Twomey Taskforce to look for long-term solutions to the shortage of teachers.[155] Whilst absolute numbers have increased over the period that the Panel has reviewed, the resignation percentage remained below 3% from 2012 until 2021 when 805 teachers or 3.3% of teachers (FTE) resigned. In 2022 resignations increased to 1,275 or 5.2% of the total teaching workforce, a level similar to the rate during the peak of Western Australia's mining boom in 2007. In 2021, 586 teachers retired, equivalent to 2.4% of the total teachers (FTE), above the average of 2.2% for 2010-2021 period; in 2022, this increased to 2.9% or 729 teachers. Indications are that the number of resignations and retirements continued to increase in the following year: in the first eight months of 2023 it is reported that a further 1021 teachers had resigned.[156]

153 Department of Education. (2022b). *Teacher Workforce Shortages - Issues paper*. Government of Australia.
154 Hiatt, B. (2022, 1 September). Private schools plunder public system in teacher scramble. *The West Australian*.
155 Education Workforce Initiatives Taskforce. (2007). *Education Workforce Initiatives: Report "If you think education is expensive. . .".* http://www.educationworkforce.wa.gov.au
156 Le May, R. (2023, 20 September). WA teachers quitting in droves as workers' compensation claims for mental stress rocket, new figures show. *The West Australian*. https://thewest.com.au/politics/state-politics/wa-teachers-quitting-in-droves-as-workers-compensation-claims-for-mental-stress-rocket-new-figures-show-c-11958202; Hiatt, B. (2022, 1 September). Private schools plunder public system in teacher scramble. *The West Australian*.

The growth in the number of staff leaving public education in Western Australia is in line with reported changes in WA teachers' career intentions. As with data on workloads, information from various sources is not always consistent; however, it does indicate that there has been a deterioration in teachers' intentions to stay over recent years. It should be noted that the issue of diminished career intentions is a national one: for instance recent research from the Black Dog Institute notes that almost half (46.8%) of Australian teachers who took part in a large, nationally representative survey are considering leaving the profession within the next 12 months.[157] Another well publicised 2022 report from Monash University reported that 10.8% of teacher respondents intended to leave the profession within 12 months and 39.4% intended to leave within 10 years.[158] Workloads and mental health and wellbeing were the key factors cited has influencing teachers and school leaders' intention to stay in the profession.

In Western Australia, the SSTUWA's *State of our Schools* surveys give insights into respondents' intentions to stay in the profession and their job satisfaction. In 2016 only 15.21% of respondents said they had *not* considered leaving the profession in the preceding four years, while 77.76% reported they had, and they were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied. In the results for the 2021 survey, approximately 19% of respondents said they had *not* considered leaving the profession in the preceding four years, while nearly 81% of respondents said they had. By the time of the 2023 survey, 86% of respondents indicated that they had considered leaving the profession in the preceding four years. Among the 2021 respondents who signalled that they had considered leaving the profession, 87.15% said this was due to workload, while another 60.34% stated that their intentions were shaped by personal health and well-being concerns (by comparison salary issues were cited as a motivating factor to leave by 16.11%). Workload and work/life balance remained the top motivator to leave in the 2023 survey (cited by 89.5% of respondents) followed feelings of being by burnt out (selected by 84.7% of respondents). With rising cost-of-living pressures in Western Australia, in 2023 27.4% cited salary issues as a reason for considering leaving the profession.

The ATWD 2023 and Teacher Survey (2018-2022) data collated by AITSL shows a similar pattern of deterioration in WA teachers' intentions to stay in the profession. According to those surveys, the percentage of those WA staff surveyed who intended to stay in the profession until retirement dropped from 46.7% in 2020 to 29.3% in 2022, while the percentage who indicated they intended to leave before retirement increased from 20.2% to 36.6% between 2020 and 2022.[159] This intention to leave in 2022 is higher than the national average at 34.5%, and the increase in the 3 year period (2020-2022) was larger than the national average (16.40% as opposed to 13.40%).

The 2023 findings from the Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL)'s *Australian Teacher Workforce Data: ATWD Key Metrics Dashboard* provides a snapshot of teachers' career intentions at a state and national level.[160] A key finding in the report is that between 2018 and 2022 there has been a deterioration in the percentage of teachers intending to stay in the profession[161] and that "'workload and coping' and 'recognition and reward' were both consistently and increasingly cited as the two most common categories of reasons for leaving".[162] In 2022, 89% of those teachers surveyed by AITSL who intend to leave the teacher workforce cited the issues of 'workload and coping' (as compared 71% who cited 'reward and recognition').

157 Black Dog Institute. (2023). *Teacher mental health and burnout could halve workforce, new data by Black Dog Institute*. Black Dog Institute,. https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/media-releases/teacher-mental-health-and-burnout-could-halve-workforce-new-data-by-black-dog-institute/

158 Longmuir, F., Gallo Cordoba, B., Phillips, M., Allen, K. A., & Moharami, M. (2022). *Australian Teachers' Perceptions of their Work in 2022*. Monash University. https://doi.org/10.26180/21212891

159 https://www.aitsl.edu.au/atwd-kmd/key-metrics-dashboard-media/

160 Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL). (2023b). *Australian Teacher Workforce Data: ATWD Key Metrics Dashboard*. Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL),. Retrieved August 1, from https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/atwd-js/march29-2023/atwd-key-metrics-dashboard---march-2023.pdf?sfvrsn=ebd1b03c_2

161 Between 2018 and 2022 the percentage of survey respondents that indicated that they intended to remain in the profession until they retired dropped from 39.1% to 30.8%. Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL). (2023a). *ATWD National Trends: Teacher Workforce*. Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL),. Retrieved August 1, from https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/australian-teacher-workforce-data/atwdreports/national-trends-teacher-workforce

162 Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL). (2023b). *Australian Teacher Workforce Data: ATWD Key Metrics Dashboard*. Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL),. Retrieved August 1, from https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/atwd-js/march29-2023/atwd-key-metrics-dashboard---march-2023.pdf?sfvrsn=ebd1b03c_2

Reasons for intending to leave, National Average vs WA (teacher workforce)								
2022 Results	Intention to Leave	Break from teaching	Not suited to teaching	School culture	Regulatory requirements	Classroom factors	Recognition and reward	Workload and coping
National Average	34.50%	21.90%	22.70%	46.60%	46.90%	59.90%	70.70%	89.50%
WA	36.60%	21.90%	24.00%	49.70%	41.90%	64.20%	71.40%	91.00%

Data source: ATWD 2023; Teacher Survey (2018-2022)

The same top factors motivating the intention to leave were selected by WA respondents – "workload and coping" and "recognition and reward" – albeit at a slightly higher level than the national average for 2022.[163] Whilst "regulatory requirements" were less of a motivating factor for those that intended to leave, "classroom factors" were more significant for the WA teaching workforce (these included 'insufficient support staff'; 'class sizes too large'; student behaviour management challenges). Indeed, among the national teacher workforce results, only Tasmanian staff indicated that "classroom factors" were a more significant factor in their intentions to leave.

Finding:

During the period under the review, there has been an ongoing deterioration in the career intentions of teachers, driven by increased workload demands and by a decline in teachers' mental health and wellbeing.

As in other states, government initiatives in Western Australia have been designed, in part, to attract former teachers to return to the role. The Productivity Commission estimates that nationally just over one in ten registered teachers are not working in education, a percentage that is consistent with figures produced by Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia.[164] The Commission highlights teacher workloads as a fundamental issue and AITSL data also indicate that workload is not only a major factor that shapes intentions to leave the profession but it is a major factor that dissuades former teachers from returning. AITSL ATWD data provide an overview of the intentions of non-deployed registered teachers to return to the profession in WA: although a higher percentage of respondents in WA would consider returning to teaching, over half of respondents cited workloads as the key deterrent.

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163 Workload and coping included survey responses such as: The workload is too heavy; I am finding it too stressful / impacting my wellbeing or mental health; and to achieve a better work / life balance. Recognition and reward covered the following items 'Changes imposed on schools from outside (e.g. by government)' ;'Insufficient pay'; 'Dissatisfaction with performance appraisal processes'; and 'The poor public image of the profession'.
164 Productivity Commission. (2022b). *Review of the National School Reform Agreement, Study Report*, Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia. (2022). *Annual Report 2021–22*. Government of Western Australia.

Non-deployed registered teachers' intentions to return and motivators to return to role.								
2022 Results	Would not consider returning	Would consider returning	No changes	More jobs in area	More jobs in subject	Pathways to leadership	Higher salary	Reduced workload
National Average	47.5%	46.6%	15.3%	9.9%	7.2%	10.8%	28.5%	49.8%
WA	41%	51.4%	10.4%	16.4%	13.1%	16.9%	29.5%	51.9%

Data source: ATWD 2023; Teacher Survey (2018-2022)

Finding:

The attraction of staff to the WA public education system, including both new graduates and former teachers, would be greatly facilitated by the Department's public support for a reduction of workloads and the championing of teachers' professionalism.

While the percentage of teachers indicating that they intend to leave the teaching role within 12 months is much greater than the actual level of year-on-year attrition reported by the WA Department of Education, these intentions highlight the detrimental effect work pressure and stress have on teachers' career intentions and health and well-being and, in turn, on the issue of how teacher burnout affects student outcomes.[165] The Black Dog Institute notes that teaching is consistently rated as one of the most stressful occupations.[166] The Institute's 2023 research indicates that the percentage of teachers reporting stress and anxiety is over five times the rate of the general population (stress, 59.7% to 11.4%; anxiety, 46.2% to 9%) and the percentage of teachers reporting moderate to extremely severe symptoms of depression is over four times the rate of the general population (52% as compared to 12.1%).[167]

The Panel reviewed the findings of the *Understanding Work in WA Public Schools* research and the SSTUWA's *State of our Schools* surveys which indicate that work related stress is also of increasing concern for the WA teaching workforce. The percentage of *State of our Schools* respondents who reported high or very high stress levels increased from 81.8% in 2016 to 88.5% in 2021 and the number of respondents reporting very high stress levels rose to 42.5% from 31% in 2016. In the 2023 survey 89.6% of respondents reported high or very high stress levels (40.1% of respondents reported very high stress levels and only 9.7% indicated that they felt their stress levels were normal).

As reports emerged in 2018 of an increase in worker compensation claims, the WA Department of Education demonstrated its commitment to the mental wellbeing of education staff by introducing a short online training program for school principals and education staff with management responsibilities to help them better assess risks and respond to mental health issues.[168] In the five years since that program was introduced, data from the Insurance Commission of WA's annual reports indicated that new compensation claims from public education workers, covering both physical and mental stress injuries, averaged around 1960 per year. In 2023 the total number of claims increased moderately to 2189, but the proportion of mental stress injuries claims increased 45% from

165 Lee, Y. H. (2019). Emotional labor, teacher burnout, and turnover intention in high-school physical education teaching. *European physical education review*, 25(1), 236-253. https://doi.org/10.1177/1356336X17719559 , Rajendran, N., Watt, H. M. G., & Richardson, P. W. (2020). Teacher burnout and turnover intent. *Australian educational researcher*, 47(3), 477-500. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-019-00371-x

166 García-Carmona, M., Marín, M. D., & Aguayo, R. (2019). Burnout syndrome in secondary school teachers: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Social Psychology of Education*, 22(1), 189-208. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-018-9471-9

167 Beames, J. R., Christensen, H., & Werner-Seidler, A. (2021). School teachers: the forgotten frontline workers of Covid-19. *Australasian psychiatry : bulletin of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists*, 29(4), 420-422. https://doi.org/10.1177/10398562211006145

168 Zimmerman, J. (2018 November 5). WA public school teacher mental health checks as compoclaims rocket. *PerthNow*.

135 to 196.[169] In 2018, the WA public education sector had a lower proportion of mental stress claims than the WA health sector but it now exceeds that sector in terms of the number of such claims. While this increase could in part reflect a greater awareness of mental health risks amongst education staff, it also points to the job resources, including mental resilience training and support, being outstripped by the increasing job demands experienced by education staff.

A comment by a teacher in the recent Department of Education/SSTUWA Red Tape consultation report underscores that education staff's wellbeing, workload and attritions are, of course, linked:

> *Increasing numbers of teachers leaving the profession and retiring early leaves a gap in intellectual capital which is filled by remaining colleagues; this includes marking and preparing curriculum delivery which can only be completed by experienced teachers and rarely by relief teachers; and so, the cycle of compromise to mental health due to workload continues and is exacerbated further.[170]*

Finding:

The increased job demands experienced by education staff are surpassing the current level of job resources offered to staff by schools and the Department of Education, including mental resilience training and support.

Finding:

The rising level of attrition among the teaching workforce – resignations and retirements – has both contributed to the reported teacher shortages and been driven by these workforce shortages.

Recommendation 38:

As a high priority strategy, and in line with National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, the Department of Education should seek to significantly reduce teacher workload as a means to more effectively attract and retain teachers and school leaders.

Recommendation 39:

Notwithstanding recent pilot initiatives announced by the Department to address "red tape" and provide attraction and retention payments, this strategy should include a systemic review and wide-ranging initiatives to provide sustainable workloads for teachers focused in the core job of teaching.

Recommendation 40:

While providing remedial initiatives, the Department of Education should prioritise strategies that reduce workplace psychological hazards and the triggers of teacher burnout.

169 Insurance Commission of Western Australia. (2018-2023). *Annual Reports*. https://www.icwa.wa.gov.au/_;Le May, R. (2023, 20 September). WA teachers quitting in droves as workers' compensation claims for mental stress rocket, new figures show. *The West Australian*. https://thewest.com.au/politics/state-politics/wa-teachers-quitting-in-droves-as-workers-compensation-claims-for-mental-stress-rocket-new-figures-show-c-11958202
170 Yates, S. (2023). *Red Tape Consultation: Teacher Survey Submissions*. Department of Education, WA with SSTUWA.

SECTION 5: STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SATISFACTION

5.1   Overview

It is inevitable that stressful work environments, extreme workloads and poor morale and high staff turnover will affect teachers' ability to deliver optimal education outcomes for children. Typically, we assess the quality of education systems by examining student achievement, participation, and attainment. Student behaviour, satisfaction, and attitudes toward their schooling are also critical, although these attributes are more difficult to measure. Since children spend so much time in school, it is reasonable to expect that school programs and school climates should optimise the chances of students being engaged and feeling a sense of belonging to their schools. In addition, such feelings predict successful learning. Cross country analysis by the OECD[171] of the relationship between PISA results and students' responses to questions about their schooling showed that schools where students have a strong sense of belonging also tend to high levels of academic achievement.

It's instructive that when Australian education ministers meet, they routinely endorse broad objectives for our education systems. As indicated in Section 1 the current agreement commits Australian governments to provide an education system that promotes excellence and equity so that there are opportunities for all young Australians to reach their full potential, becoming (1) successful lifelong learners, (2) confident and creative individuals and (3) informed members of the community.

From our discussions and submissions, it is clear that many educators and parents believe that, in reality, the way we now think about education and measure achievement fails to capture all these facets of young people's lives and that our measures of educational outcomes are too narrow; most of the public assessments and policy discussions focus almost exclusively on test results – typically citing NAPLAN, ATAR or international tests of numeracy, literacy and science (PISA, TIMMS and PIRLS). Many of those who communicated with us observed that a tight test focus, combined with a heavy emphasis on vocational preparation, distorts schools' programs and teaching methods and results in young people being denied the opportunities for genuine intellectual discovery and creativity which come with a less regimented approach.

In addition, several submissions were concerned that such a test focused approach may substitute for more careful evaluation of what our young people are experiencing and undervalue those school experiences which are not obviously linked to performance on numeracy and literacy tests. They argued that the result is that we are likely to be blind to the diverse needs and interests of children and to condemn many of them to a sense of frustration and failure.

They also noted that much of what we value as a community may be eliminated from consideration because of the tight focus on the relatively easily measured – maths, science and literacy. If the rewards to students and teachers all flow from success on these tests, these measures become proxies for educational worth, eliminating other considerations.

In addition, during our discussions with teachers, the view was often expressed that a test-focused approach may undervalue those aspects of the school experience not apparently linked

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171 OECD 2004 Learning for Tomorrow's World – First Results from PISA 2003

to performance on numeracy and literacy tests and generate ill effects for both teachers and children. It is significant that, in various international tests, the OECD measures well-being as well as academic results, reporting that from 2003 to 2012, Australia had the fifth largest decline in school belongingness and engagement of all OECD countries. In the 2015 data, the largest declines were in the number of students who felt like an outsider (8.6% more), felt awkward (6.8% more), and were have trouble making friends at school (6.1% more). In total, 16% more Australian students felt they didn't belong, 15% more felt like an outsider, and 10% felt lonely at school.

Considering that a one unit increase in school engagement has been associated with a 13-point increase in academic performance in some domains, we cannot afford to ignore this fall in school wellbeing for Australian students. Beyond academic implications, there are many psychological, social, and physical health costs arising from this apparent decline.

Finding

Many parents and educators are concerned that the way we measure achievement is too narrow.

5.2   Student achievement: Test results

While measurable achievement on formal tests does not encompass all the objectives of schooling and while all the tests have flaws, both international (PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS) and domestic (NAPLAN) reports tell a similar story of stagnation, even decline.

It is important to recognise that Australia's average scores are slightly above the OECD average, but our position in the educational rankings has been slipping. Performance by Australian students on international tests measuring reading, maths and science (e.g., PISA, TIMMS and PIRLS) has declined in absolute terms and relative to other countries over the last decade. As the most recent (2023) OECD report[172] indicates, while Australia continues to perform at or above the OECD average in PISA, performance has been in steady decline across reading, mathematics and science since first participation in 2000; in 2018, 59% of Australian students attained reading proficiency, down from 69% in 2000. According to the OECD, about two in five Australian students do not meet the Australian national proficiency standard in reading and mathematics by the time they are 15. They note that other national and international assessments show some improvements for younger students but not for older students and that there has been an increase in the percentage of low-performing students. Although the comparative positions of WA students fluctuate, they are generally around the national average and slightly above in the case of maths and science.

Recently released data from the 2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) – an assessment of the reading literacy of students in Year 4 – shows that the proportion of Australian Year 4 students not meeting the proficient standard (20%) has not changed since 2016.

Similarly, over the last decade there has been little change in students' performance as measured by NAPLAN test results for reading, writing and numeracy at years 3, 5, 7 and 9. The WA trends are similar to the national results, and WA students typically perform close to the national average.[173] Because of changes to the proficiency standards and descriptive categories of performance, the 2023 results cannot be directly compared with previous years, but show a similar pattern.

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172 Education Policy Outlook in Australia
173 Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 2022

Nationally, as summarised in the NSRA consultation paper,

> *these assessments tell a picture of broadly improving performance in primary school but stagnating or declining performance in the secondary sector. International assessment indicates that the proportion of low achievers is growing and that there has been no progress in reducing the achievement range, with average student performance for equity cohorts remaining behind the Australian average for all students.*

Finding:

WA students' performance on national and international tests has not shown any consistent improvement over the last decade.

5.3   Student participation: School attendance

Student participation and engagement are fundamental for learning, but difficult to measure. In general, attendance levels are a proxy for participation, typically measured as the proportion of year 1 to 10 students attending school for at least 90 per cent of the time in semester 1.[174]

ACARA national data show that school attendance has been steadily declining since 2015 (when this measure was first adopted), falling from 77.8 per cent in 2015 to 73.1 per cent by 2019. For Indigenous students, the rate was lower: 49.2 per cent in 2015, declining to 46.9 per cent in 2019. Post COVID-19 restrictions, national attendance rates dropped even further - to 71.2 per cent in 2021 and to 49.9 per cent in 2022.[175] School attendance in WA is slightly below the national average and, as in the other States and territories, has fallen post-COVID-19. In addition, in WA attendance rates continue to be lower in rural areas, in low SES schools and among Aboriginal students.[176] This is especially concerning because the level of student disengagement was already high prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nationwide, diminished student engagement is also reflected in declining high school retention rates, from 84.8 per cent to 80.5 per cent between 2017 and 2022.[177] The rates in WA for both public schools and in total are slightly above the national average but declined between 2021 (85.6) and 2022 (82.0).

Finding:

WA students' school attendance and retention rates have been declining.

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174 Attendance rate is defined as the number of actual full-time equivalent student days attended by full-time students in Years 1–10 as a percentage of the total number of possible student days attended over the period. Attendance level is defined as the proportion of full-time students in Years 1–10 whose attendance rate in semester 1 is equal to or greater than 90 per cent. ACARA, National Report on Schooling Data Portal.
175 ACARA 2022.
176 ACARA 2022.
177 ACARA 2022.

5.4 Educational attainment: Year 12 completion and ATAR qualifications.

Generally, educational attainment is measured by year 12 completion rates or gaining a nonschool qualification at Certificate III level or above. Australia wide, average attainment has steadily increased from 80 per cent in 2004 to 90 per cent in 2022.[178] In Western Australia 87.2% of students completed the qualifications, down from the high point of 90.7 per cent in 2020.[179]

The gaps evident in other indicators of educational performance also apply to attainment: in 2017, 83 per cent of high SES students completed high school, increasing to 84.8 per cent by 2021. This compares to 76 per cent in 2017 and a decline to 74 per cent by 2021 for low SES students.[180] While the attainment gap between Indigenous and nonIndigenous students narrowed[181], it still falls below the average.[182]

In 2022, only one third of Year 12s qualified for an ATAR, down from 40 per cent in 2011 and significantly below NSW (57 per cent), Victoria (57 per cent) and South Australia (53 per cent).

ATAR-eligible participation rates (%), 2010-2020.
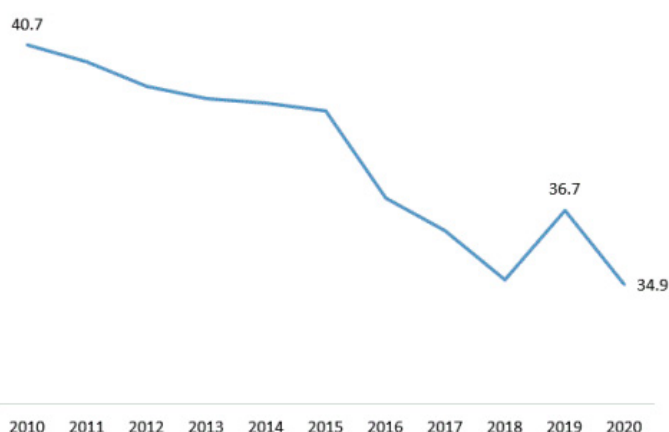
Estimated ATAR participation (%) by state, 2020.
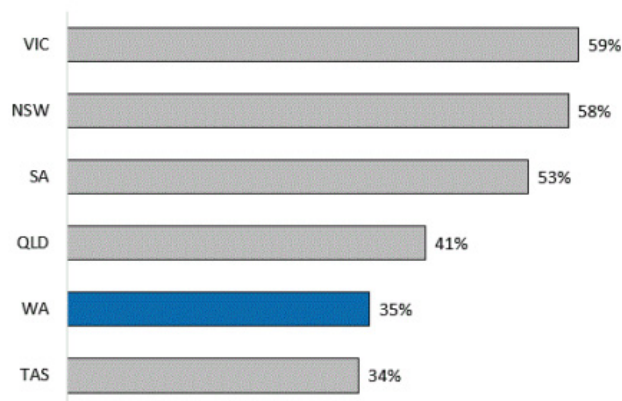
Table from Edith Cowan University Sector Review: Western Australian Universities Discussion Paper, May 2023. university-sector-review-submission-from-ecu.pdf, p15. [183]

Finding

ATAR completion rates in Western Australia are significantly lower than the national average and are declining.

178 ACARA 2022.
179 ACARA 2021.
180 ACARA 2021.
181 Productivity Commission 2020b.
182 Productivity Commission 2021.
183 university-sector-review-submission-from-ecu.pdf, p15

5.5 Broader assessments of educational outcomes – educational inequality

Researchers at the Mitchell Institute have recently attempted to broaden our assessment of educational outcomes and opportunity in Australia beyond the measures outlined above and to summarise inequalities in these outcomes. Using as much published data as they could assemble from a variety of sources, they evaluated the current state of education from school entry to early adulthood with reference to the main objectives set out by our Education Ministers in the declaration. They also report state and territory results.

The results of their inquiry are disturbing. While for many young people our education systems appear to be working well, anywhere from one-fifth to one-third of children are lagging or missing out altogether: they "are not acquiring the lifelong learning skills and not mastering the knowledge and skills needed to become creative and confident individuals and active and informed citizens."[184]

Similar observations have been made by the Panel commissioned by education ministers to provide an assessment of the current state of education in Australia to inform the next NRSA agreement, due in 2024. They noted that, "Overall, Australia has a robust and effective education system that is comparable to or exceeds the performance of many education systems across the OECD.[185] But they also cautioned that, "looking at averages masks important differences in student outcomes" and that there are "persistent challenges for particular groups of students who face historical, cultural and systemic barriers that hinder their ability to reach their full learning potential."

For example, in Western Australia 26.6% (nationally 24.8%) of Year 7s did not achieve the national minimum standard in both reading and numeracy in 2018. Other surveys indicate that around a third of students were not confident in their abilities and were not informed about current events. As the consultation paper puts it: "while there are many examples of excellence in Australian education, there are still too many students who are left behind in their learning."

At each stage of schooling examined in the Mitchell Institute study, large numbers of young people were found not to be reaching even modest benchmarks: and they were more likely to be from poorer families, living in rural and remote parts of Australia, and to be Indigenous Australians. Large gaps based on socio-economic status were evident across nearly all the indicators from the earliest years into adulthood and appear to increase over the schooling journey. As the authors put it, "the education system is mired in inequality". Reinforcing this point, the 2021 PIRLs data on Year 4 literacy shows that the 20% of students not meeting the expected literacy standards are more likely to come from an Indigenous background, to have fewer books in the home, to attend a disadvantaged school and to live in rural and remote area. This gap has not narrowed over 3 cycles of the test.

As the UNSW Gonski Institute report, "Structural Failure" concluded, "Excellence with equity has become the holy grail of schooling, but Australia is not achieving either." In 2018, a UNICEF report ranked Australia 30th of the 38 OECD countries for equitable access to secondary education. Analysis of 2022 NAPLAN data shows that a significant gap separates the achievement levels of advantaged and disadvantaged children in Year 3, and that by Year 9 this learning gap has become a chasm.

184 Lamb, S., Huo, S., Walstab, A., Wade, A., Maire, Q., Doecke, E., Jackson, J. & Endekov, Z. (2020). Educational opportunity in Australia 2020: Who succeeds and who misses out. Centre for International Research on Education Systems, Victoria University, for the Mitchell Institute: Melbourne
185 OECD, 2012, Op cit

Detrimental effects flow too from the concentration of educational disadvantage which characterises the Australian Education system. As Sahlberg and Piccoli point out,[186]

> *No other wealthy nation concentrates disadvantaged children into disadvantaged schools like we do. That concentration effect has increased the socio-economic segregation between schools and has widened the achievement gap between affluent and poorer children that has been evident in international education comparisons and was confirmed by the latest Naplan data.* (See Section 2 on Funding).

Australia is the second most socioeconomically segregated of the OECD countries; over half of students classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged go to school with students from similar backgrounds and such concentrations of disadvantage are increasing.

In attempting to answer the question, "What contributes to poor performance?", the NSRA consultation paper identifies first the fact that "Australia's schools are highly segregated along socio-economic lines," and that this concentration is accelerating. The authors argue that "reducing the concentration of disadvantage in Australian schools could produce better outcomes" noting research which shows that students' results are often better – equivalent to three years of school - when they learn with higher performing students[187].

Local researchers Perry & McConney[188] analysing the PISA data from 2003 found that all students, regardless of their personal SES, benefit from attending schools in which the SES of the school-group is high. Conversely, all students, regardless of their individual SES, perform more poorly on measures of academic achievement when they attend low SES schools. Their later work[189] has confirmed these findings: SES segregated schooling benefits those who are already privileged and harms those at educational disadvantage, from low SES backgrounds.

The gaps in educational outcomes compound pre-existing inequalities. There is abundant research on the effects of physical and social environments on children's wellbeing, showing that many children live in impoverished environments with poor quality housing, greater noise and air pollution; higher crime rates; poorer cultural and community facilities; inadequate public transport, less green space etc.[190] They are more likely to suffer poor nutrition, to experience stress and hardship and to witness or experience violence. Evidence is growing that trauma[191] and poverty[192] both change the way children's brains develop, with apparent shrinking in the parts of the brain critical for memory, planning, decision making and emotional regulation. Most of the children who fail to thrive during their schooling come from these backgrounds and many have had these adverse experiences.

The BCEC Educational Disadvantage Index data (see map on following page)[193] show that in Western Australia, remote areas have the highest levels of educational disadvantage and many of these places have high Indigenous populations. Children in these locations having less access to pre-school, are developmentally vulnerable, have lower attendance levels and lower performance in literacy and numeracy testing. A high proportion do not have access to the internet – 46.7% on average.

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186 No other wealthy nation concentrates disadvantaged children into disadvantaged schools like Australia does | Pasi Sahlberg and Adrian Piccoli | The Guardian.

187 OECD (2018b) *Equity in education: Breaking down barriers to social mobility: Country note: Australia*, OECD Publishing.

188 Perry, L., McConney, A., (2010), *School socio-economic composition and student outcomes in Australia: Implications for education policy*, Australian Journal of Education, 54, 1, pages 72 - 85.

189 Sciffer, M., Perry, L., McConney, A., (2020), *Critiques of socio-economic school compositional effects: Are they valid?*, British Journal of Sociology of Education, 41, 4, pages 462 - 475

190 Lawrence, C. (2019) The effects of physical and social environments on the health and wellbeing of children and young people. Report prepared for the W.A. Commissioner for Children and Young People.

191 McCrory, E., De Brito, S. A., & Viding, E. (2010). Research review: The neurobiology and genetics of maltreatment and adversity. *Journal Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 51, 1079-1095. The effect of trauma on the brain development of children | Australian Institute of Family Studies (aifs.gov.au)

192 Farah, M. J. (2018). Socioeconomic status and the brain: Prospects for neuroscience-informed policy. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 19(7), 428–438. doi: 10.1038/s41583-018-0023-2

193 Cassells R, Dockery M, Duncan A, Gao G and Seymore R (2017), 'Educate Fair Australia?: Education Inequality in Australia', Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, Focus on the States Series, Issue No. 5, June 2017.

Conversely, the most advantaged areas are in Perth, clustered around the river and the coast, from North Fremantle to Hillarys. Higher levels of educational disadvantage are evident in the fringes of the city, from Rockingham and Kwinana in the south, Stirling in the north, along with the Gosnells to the east of the city.

Educational disadvantage in Western Australia

Legend

Western Australia

Educational Disadvantage Index

- 0.0 - 0.08 (Least Disadvantaged)
- 0.09 - 0.14
- 0.15 - 0.18
- 0.19 - 0.23
- 0.24 - 0.26
- 0.27 - 0.31
- 0.32 - 0.37
- 0.38 - 0.45
- 0.46 - 0.63
- 0.64 - 1.00 (Most disadvantaged)
- Insufficient data
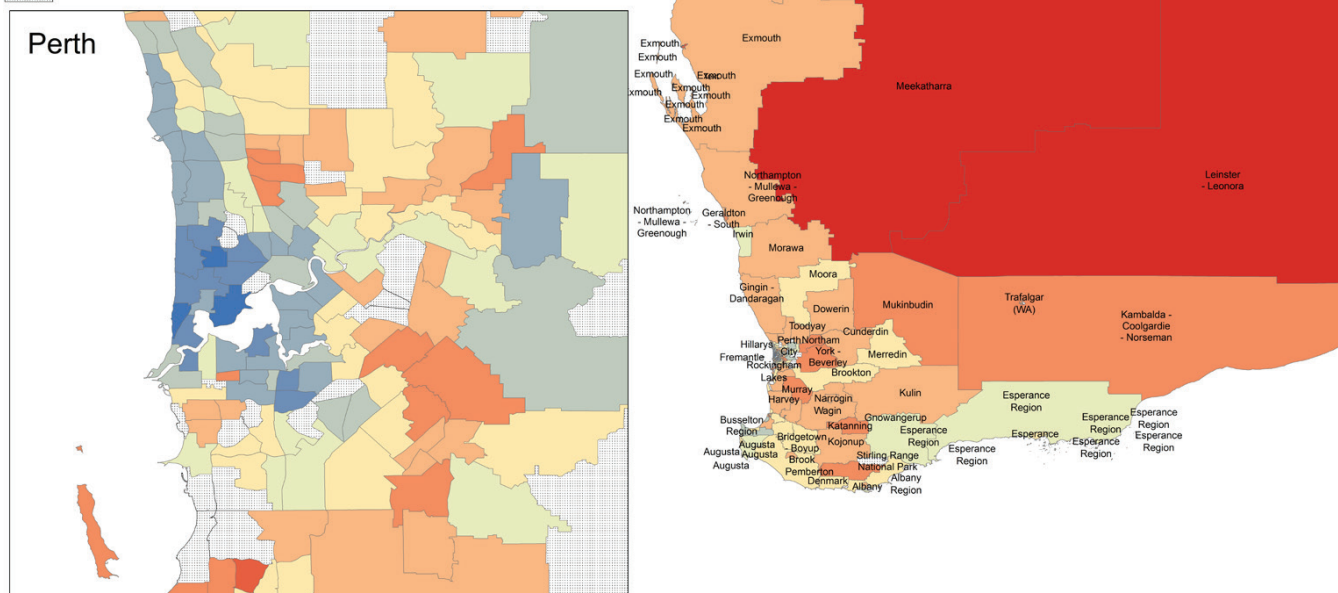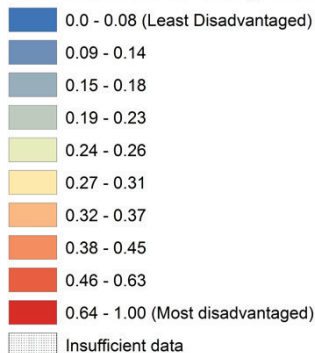
Note: The Statistical Area level 2 (SA2) classification has been used as the spatial unit to assess educational disadvantage across Australian regions. Data are broken using natural breaks, which classifies the data by maximising the differences between each class.

Source: BANKWEST CURTIN ECONOMICS CENTRE | Authors' calculations from numerous data sources

Map from 'Educate Fair Australia?: Education Inequality in Australia', Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, Focus on the States Series, Issue No. 5, June 2017, (p 85).

In Australia, many students progress from primary to secondary school without having the necessary skills in literacy and numeracy. This is hard not only for students, but also for teachers. For example, Grattan Institute analysis in 2016[194] found that in a typical Australian school, the spread in Year 9 achievement is over seven year levels. On current estimates, it seems that typically about 20 per cent of students need additional intensive learning support, on top of universal classroom instruction, to develop foundational literacy and numeracy skills.[195]

A significant amount of international research has identified the characteristics of high performing education systems. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports regularly that the best performing countries are ones which are high in both quality and equity,

194 Goss, P., Sonnemann, J., Chisholm, C., Nelson, L., 2016, Widening gaps: what NAPLAN tells us about student progress, Grattan Institute.
195 Ibid.

where equity is defined by both individual and social dimensions - a minimum level educational accomplishment for all students, and similar education outcomes for different social groups.

Since 2000, Australia has slipped in international rankings from one characterised by high quality/ high equity to one where the gap between the highest and lowest achieving students appears to be steadily increasing, at the same time as the performance of the highest achieving students appear to be plateauing. The OECD and other commentators have attributed this to Australia's inequitable funding system in which the public funding (from state and federal governments) to private schools continues to outstrip the level of funding to public schools. The OECD has noted that, on average, differences in students' backgrounds in OECD member countries accounted for some 55 per cent of the performance differences between schools while the figure for Australia is around 68 per cent.

Given the higher socio-economic status of private schools, it is to be expected that their students achieve higher average scores than in public schools. However, it is significant that the performance declines between 2009 (the first time these sectors were identified separately in PISA data) and 2018 were greater in Catholic and independent schools than in public schools.[196]

Declines in Australian students' academic performance[197]

Between 2000 and 2018 mean scores for reading literacy for Australia declined by 26 (from 528 to 503), while for the OECD average the decline was just 4. (p. 40)

Between 2006 and 2018 mean scores for mathematical literacy for Australia declined by 33 (from 524 to 491), while for the OECD average the decline was just 5. (p. 120)

Between 2006 and 2018 mean scores for scientific literacy for Australia declined by 2 (from 527 to 503), while for the OECD average the decline was just 6. (p. 184)

Between 2009 and 2018:

The mean reading literacy performance for students in public schools did not change. In Catholic schools it declined by 17 points, and in independent schools by 18 points. (p. 56)

The mean mathematical literacy performance for students in public schools declined by 22 points, in Catholic schools by 27 points, and in independent schools by 24 points. (p. 136)

The mean scientific literacy performance for students in public schools declined by 22 points, in Catholic schools by 28 points, and in independent schools by 30 points. (p. 199)

Professor Barry McGaw, former head of education at the OECD, now at the Melbourne University Graduate School of Education, says "Australia is significantly less equitable than the OECD average. We were a high-quality, low-equity performer but our quality is going down and our equity is not improving. What drags (our results) down is we don't look after the lowest performers.

Remarkably, given the imbalance of resources between public and private schools, it is a tribute to public school teachers that research consistently shows that, after controlling for the economic, social,

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196 Thanks to Barbara Preston for highlighting these data in her "Report on a national symposium on Funding, Equity and Achievement in Australian Schools".

197 Thomson, S., De Bortoli, L., Underwood, C., & Schmid, M. (2019). PISA 2018: Reporting Australia's Results. Volume I Student Performance. Camberwell: Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). Retrieved from: https://research.acer.edu.au/ozpisa/35 as summarised by Barbara Preston.

and cultural status of the school population, the type of school attended – public or private - does not predict academic achievement or later employment, occupation, or earnings in early adulthood[198]. However, it is clear that much more could and should be done to reduce the growing disadvantage stemming from socio-educational disadvantage.

Finding

A variety of measures point to increasing inequality and stagnating educational performance in Australia's education system, including in Western Australia.

Finding

This decline in educational achievement is occurring in all socio-economic groups; it appears to be more marked in private schools.

5.6 Student satisfaction

Many factors contribute to students' enjoyment of school and their satisfaction with their educational experiences. While the child's family and community environment are fundamental, what happens at school and in the classroom also shapes these feelings.

According to parental reports collected by the W.A. Health Department[199], nearly one in three (29.4%) children were reported to have been bullied in the previous 12 months and 6.1% to have bullied. In addition, while nearly two-thirds (65.2%) of children 'almost always' looked forward to going to school each day, one in twenty (5.4%) children 'almost never or rarely' looked forward to going to school.

Fewer students in 2021 than in 2019 think being at school every day is very important. Survey responses confirm that more than twice as many students in Years 4 to 6 than in Years 7 to 12 like school a lot. Among Year 7 to 12 students, more than one-third of female students say they do not like learning or do not feel like they belong at school, and more than one-quarter (28%) say they do not like school. Only two-thirds of high school students believe teachers care, believe, and listen to them. More students felt unsafe at school in 2021 than in 2019 and the data suggests this may be related to feelings of anxiety around COVID-19.

Finding

A significant minority of students report little enjoyment and satisfaction with their school experiences.

Please note: All the recommendations in the previous sections have been crafted with the goal of improving the educational and social outcomes for public school students and apply to findings in this section.

198 Chesters, J. (2018). The marketisation of education in Australia: Does investment in private schooling improve post-school outcomes? The Australian Journal of Social Issues, 53(2), 139–157. https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/ielapa.643296090724817
199 Epidemiology Directorate, 2023. Health and Wellbeing of Children in Western Australia 2021. Department of Health, Western Australia.

5.7 Aboriginal education

The issues contained within the report apply to most school settings with system and political policy and programs impacting on the outcomes for all students and staff. Throughout the consultation, the panel noted that some the implications of some of the processes implemented over the past few decades have amplified the lack of equity in regional and remote locations, to the detriment of student outcomes. In particular, the significant impact on Aboriginal Education in regional and remote areas. As such it was deemed appropriate to further investigate the impact on some of our most vulnerable students and their communities.

The panel was regularly informed that many of our most vulnerable communities are predominantly staffed by inexperienced teachers and school leaders. The level of support from a dedicated expert Aboriginal team is very minimal and was reported to have diminished over time. The introduction of commercially driven curricula and professional learning was reported to be the main source of curriculum and pedagogy guidance in each school.

The introduction of the IPS has had a demonstrable negative impact on the attraction and recruitment of teachers and student outcomes in several Aboriginal communities. Some teachers indicated that their work in regional and remote communities did not appear to be valued by teacher selection panels in IPS environments. This created limited opportunities for movement to preferred locations, even a city placement and promoted the notion that appointments to these schools were less important and far less complex. Additionally, some teachers indicated the complicated environments presented in regional and remote schools with limited support, added to their increasingly stressed mental health and well-being. Turnover in these schools created problems for the continuity of program delivery for students.

Aboriginal Education has been a priority for all states and territories for many years with targeted investment to programs and initiatives. The 2020 Closing the Gap National strategy identified four key educational key performance indicators in a total of seven as essential for improving the wellbeing of our indigenous students. These include Early Childhood Education, School Attendance, Literacy and Numeracy and Year 12 Attainment. From 2022 reporting moved to 19 Outcomes.

Despite the level of targeted investment, the 2020 annual report indicates that there has been very little improvement and, in some cases, poorer outcomes for these vulnerable students. When last reported in this manner in 2020, the attendance rates in Western Australia from 2014 – 2019 have demonstrated a steady decline with WA significantly behind states such as SA and QLD who have similar large remote indigenous populations.

Figure 3.3:
Indigenous student attendance rates, by jurisdiction, Semester 1 2014–2019
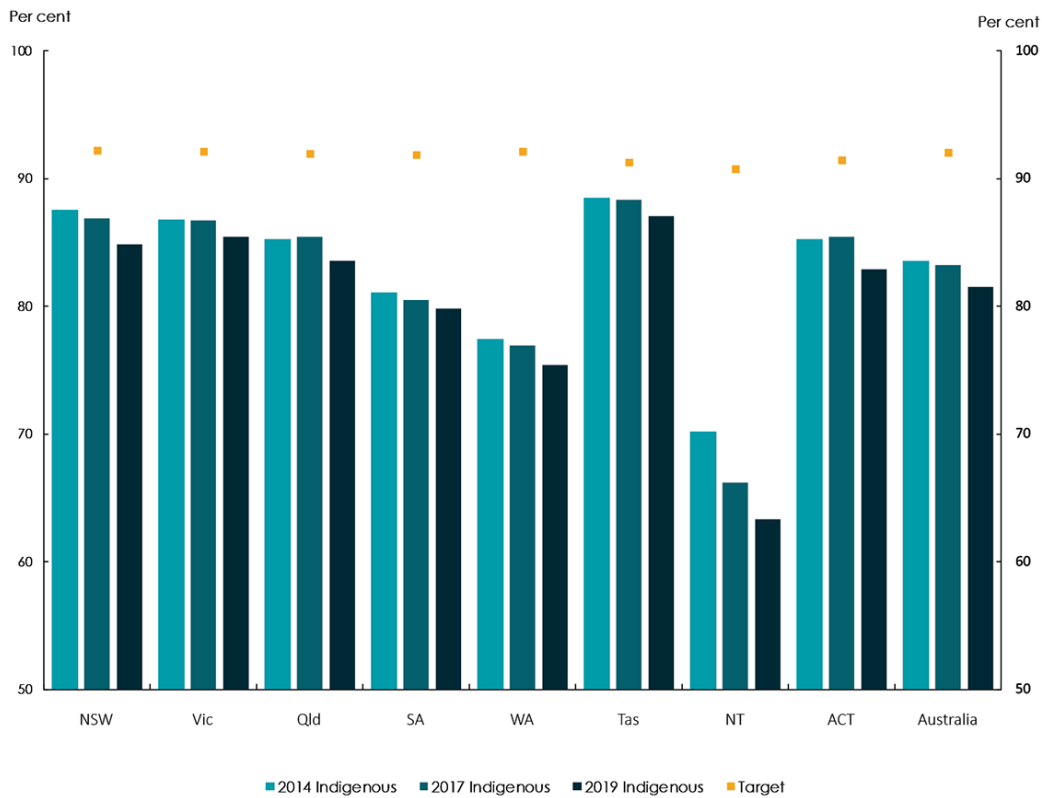
Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2019, unpublished.

The 2022 Annual Report tabled in State Parliament by the Western Australian Department of Education, highlights an extremely serious problem for the system and a need for urgent consideration regarding attendance and achievement levels.

According to the information on Table A17 of the annual report, overall attendance for primary Aboriginal students is 76.8% compared to 91% for all students (including Aboriginal students) with the secondary Aboriginal attendance rate being 62.6% and all students at 84.4%.

A further breakdown of attendance magnifies the issue for Aboriginal students.

Table A18:
Percentage of public-school students by attendance category by subgroup 2021

Attendance category	Aboriginal	All
Regular attendance (90-100%)	29.4	63.3
Indicative attendance risk (80-90%)	21.9	22.0
Moderate attendance risk (60-80%)	21.4	9.5
Severe attendance risk (<60%)	27.3	5.2

(a)   Excludes Kindergarten students, Canning College students and international students.

(b)   Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

(c)   As per National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting.

Source: System and School Performance

These figures indicate that almost 50% of Aboriginal students do not attend sufficiently to receive a rounded education. This non-attendance translates into poor academic and personal outcomes for this vulnerable group.

NAPLAN outcome measures highlight the ongoing concern for the educational development of Aboriginal students in Western Australia. The following excerpt from the 2021 National Report on NAPLAN by ACARA (pg 4) highlights the marked difference in achievement of those in remote and very remote parts of our state.

Table 3.R3:
Achievement of Year 3 Students in Reading, by Indigenous Status, by State and Territory, 2021

State/ Territory	Geolocation	Mean Scale Score	Below national minimum standard (%)	At national minimum standard (%)	Above national minimum standard (%)				At or above national minimum standard (%)
			Exempt	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6 and above	
WA	Major cities	434.4	1.1	2.9	8.1	13.5	20.9	22.7	30.8	96.0
	Inner Regional	407.1	1.1	4.8	12.9	17.0	23.0	21.0	20.3	94.1
	Outer Regional	400.5	0.7	6.4	15.0	17.6	21.2	19.7	19.4	92.8
	Remote	393.4	0.9	8.8	16.0	16.3	20.9	19.6	17.5	90.3
	Very Remote	339.4	0.7	27.5	20.1	16.3	14.5	11.8	9.1	71.9

Table 3.R3:
Achievement of Year 9 Students in Reading, by Indigenous Status, by State and Territory, 2021

State/Territory	Geolocation	Mean Scale Score	Below national minimum standard (%)	At national minimum standard (%)	Above national minimum standard (%)				At or above national minimum standard (%)
			Exempt	Band 5	Band 6	Band 7	Band 8	Band 9	Band 10 and above	
WA	Major cities	521.5	1.4	25.0	27.8	27.1	14.7	3.6	0.3	73.6
	Inner Regional	510.0	1.0	30.9	28.3	23.6	12.8	3.2	0.2	68.1
	Outer Regional	499.4	1.0	35.8	29.9	22.1	10.0	1.3	0.0	63.2
	Remote	494.4	0.3	38.5	28.4	22.6	7.6	2.4	0.2	61.2
	Very Remote	459.3	0.3	59.0	21.9	14.0	4.3	0.5	0.1	40.8

While not all students in remote and very remote locations are Aboriginal there are significant populations of Aboriginal students living in these areas. The figures indicate the need for highly skilled teachers and significant resourcing is required to address the significant differences between city and remote and very remote schools.

Specifically, when comparing achievement in NAPLAN reading scores, an alarming picture emerges. In 2015, 55.4% of Aboriginal Year 3 students in WA were at or below the national minimum standard compared to 11.8% of non-Aboriginal year 3 students. Comparing these figures to 2021, it appears very little has changed. 48.6% of Year 3 Aboriginal students were at or below the minimum standard while 10.9% of non-Aboriginal students were at or below minimum standards.

Equally disturbing are the Year 9, 2015 reading results that demonstrated 64.2% of Aboriginal students were at or below the minimum standard compared to 17.5% of non-Aboriginal students. In 2021, 61.7% of Aboriginal students were at or below the national minimum standard while 14.5% of non-Aboriginal students were at or below the minimum national standard. These figures are significantly distorted when you factor in that at Year 9 in 2021, more than 30% of Aboriginal students were absent for the reading test compared to just over 6% of non-Aboriginal students. This measure alone should be an immediate call to action to rethink our approach to Aboriginal education to include a well-resourced expert unit who access high quality research and is underpinned by culturally appropriate understanding that is required to bring about immediate change.

Unsurprisingly, these data sets translate into poor year twelve outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Table A19:

Apparent secondary retention rate (%) of public school students by subgroup 2017 to 2021

	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
All	**80.1**	**13,856**	**81.4**	**13,925**	**81.6**	**14,041**	**81.5**	**14,189**	**80.4**	**14,329**
Female	83.8	6,927	84.3	6,874	85.7	7.118	84.9	7,154	83.9	7,167
Male	76.7	6,929	78.7	7,051	77.8	6,923	78.2	7,030	77.0	7,145
Aboriginal	**45.3**	**717**	**47.3**	**718**	**47.6**	**768**	**46.9**	**46.9**	**47.5**	**750**
Female	46.7	356	47.3	355	48.4	397	467	46.7	49.5	381
Male	44.1	361	47.3	363	46.8	371	471	47.1	45.6	369

(a) Excludes Canning College and Tuart College students, part-time and international students, and mature-aged students at senior campuses.

(b) All includes gender category 'Other'.

(c) Calculated using the number of students in the Semester 2 student census. 'N' is the number of Year 12 students.

(d) Prior to 2020, the apparent retention rate is from Year 8 to Year 12. From 2020, the apparent retention rate is from Year 7 to Year 12. This change is because the 2020 Year 12 cohort was the first cohort to commence secondary school in Year 7.

Source: System and School Performance

Table A23:

WACE achievement rate (%) of Year 12 public school students by subgroup 2017 to 2021

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
All	**79.5**	**80.5**	**80.7**	**81.7**	**81.1**
Male	77.2	77.9	78.1	80.1	79.9
Female	81.9	83.2	83.2	83.3	82.3
Aboriginal	44.8	47.7	46.9(e)	46.2	42.7

(a) Year 12 full-time students in the Semester 2 student census.
(b) All includes gender category 'Other'.
(c) Year 12 WACE achievement data from the School Curriculum and Standards Authority and taken at a point in time. Data may be updated after this time for a variety of reasons such as students successfully appealing their results.
(d) A few registered training organisations did not complete VET certification for some public-school students in time to be included in the 2018 data. This may have affected the data reported for 2018.
(e) Revised, previously reported as 46.7.

Source: System and School Performance

Many respondents highlighted the incidence of cognitive development issues amongst students being encountered in several communities, often compounded through trauma. They cited their own lack of preparedness and support to manage the diverse needs of students, limiting their ability to offer tailored learning programs. Understanding the impact of special needs and the impact of trauma on development was a significant concern. Further many respondents felt they were unable to address these concerns due to the lack of appropriate levels of resourcing, support, and expertise. The lack of available local and available expert support was also cited as one of the key drivers of teacher stress. Additionally, teachers were concerned they were not sufficiently prepared for the cultural needs of communities, limiting their capacity to influence student learning. This in turn added more stress to the role in remote communities.

In early 2000s the Department abolished its Aboriginal Education Branch indicating the Aboriginal Education was everyone's business and that all related issues would be absorbed across all business units. Several respondents cited that this reduced the systems opportunity to develop expertise to promote and advocate for Aboriginal education or develop culturally appropriate programs that reflect the needs of Aboriginal students in Western Australia.

In response to this, the Department of Education has developed the Aboriginal Quality Standards Framework. The Framework appears to be a high-quality document developed in 2015 with aboriginal expertise, identifying five standards that include Relationships, Leadership, Teaching, Learning Environment and Resources. Each Standard has its own performance descriptors and indicators followed by a very supportive continuum. While the Director General of the time at its release in 2015 indicated that she "expected each principal to lead their school community's engagement with the framework and all staff to use the framework for reflection to drive action", there has not been a systemic approach to ensure the implementation of the framework was consistently applied and publicly reported. In fact, the panel heard teachers express concern and disappointment that this had not occurred and confused as to what they were required to implement or complete to be consistent with the Framework.

In recent years, the Department established an Aboriginal Education Teaching and Learning Directorate. According to the Department's website, the Directorate "leads and influences the development and transformation of cultural responsiveness across the organisation." It also indicates that it provides advice to regions, schools, and other business areas to drive cultural change. Based on its aims it does not appear to have a direct role in selection or the capacity to deliver daily practical support of pedagogy or the development of teaching and learning expertise in every community.

To its credit, the Department has more recently completed a series of workshops to assist principals and teachers understand the framework and their role in implementing it within their communities. The panel was informed that in 2021, the Department has completed almost seventy workshops to over two and a half thousand teachers to raise awareness of the Framework and assist with its implementation to enhance culturally appropriate schools. Given that the Framework was launched almost eight years ago it appears not to have little impact on outcomes for Aboriginal students to date.

Unfortunately, the high turnover rate of staff within many regional and remote schools has resulted in the need to provide this level of professional learning on a regular basis. Adding to pressures on schools to develop staff understanding has been the increasing concern for the provision of suitable and consistent relief teachers to allow staff time to be engaged in such professional learning.

To meet some of the needs of the Framework, schools are required to complete reconciliation plans, engage the local community through cultural understanding and train their staff to work within this

framework. The expectation is that this is done with limited system resourcing and places a further burden on schools to provide high quality education in a very complex environment. Without a concerted and sustained systemic approach to support schools in areas such as cultural awareness training, relevant curriculum development for students in regional and very remote schools and consistent regard for the health and well-being of both staff and students, this approach will only be as good as the personnel within the school.

Over the past decade the department has implemented a significant number of high-profile and expensive programs aimed at improving student outcomes and supporting staff. A number of these are commercially driven. The panel heard from many teachers that some of the programs place increasing demands of training and implementation with their school's limited resources making it very difficult to implement effectively. The lack of relief staff and time to learn and embed these programs have limited their influence on the learning program and placed additional pressure on staff to manage them. There is little evidence that a number of these programs have been rigorously evaluated via a peer reviewed process. Some respondents indicated they believed some of the programs were developed in other states and countries with little initial regard for the cultural differences of the Aboriginal population in this state.

In September 2023, the Department announced the formation of an Aboriginal Advisory Body. When launched it was announced that the Body would " help us create a culturally responsive education system to support the wellbeing, engagement and achievement of Aboriginal students in public schools." The ten person Body has been formed with leading Aboriginal people and will guide the system to work in ways that value the knowledge, expertise, and experiences of Aboriginal people. This has the potential to be a very positive long-term strategy but will need expert educators to develop the practical teaching and learning concepts identified by the Body.

Finding:

Apart from influencing cultural responsiveness, the Aboriginal Education Teaching and Learning Directorate has a limited role in the selection and training of staff and the development of Aboriginal education.

Finding:

Staff indicate that they have not had sufficient support, either prior to or after taking up appointments, to help them understand the cultural, emotional, and learning needs of diverse disadvantaged groups.

Finding:

A variety of indicators show that Aboriginal students' achievement has not improved despite a myriad of often expensive programs (frequently introduced without rigorous evaluation or consultation).

Finding:

Staffing arrangements for remote and very remote locations require an immediate rethink of what is needed to train, attract, and retrain suitable teachers.

Recommendation 41:

A dedicated Aboriginal Unit should be established as a matter of urgency. It should be well funded with the clear goal of supporting schools to implement the Aboriginal Standards Framework with appropriate resources and face-to-face support at the local level.

Recommendation 42:

An elite Aboriginal Education Team comprised of experienced and highly trained educators should be developed to staff schools with significant numbers of Aboriginal students.

Recommendation 43:

Teachers competitively appointed to this Team should have extensive cultural and educational training to understand and support local needs prior to taking up their roles.

Recommendation 44:

Teachers in this Team should be highly paid while in situ and guaranteed placements in preferred locations after three years' good service or, if they prefer, a return to their previous positions. They should also be provided with well-maintained accommodation and guaranteed regular flights to their usual hometowns or cities.

Recommendation 45:

The WA Department of Education should report annually on the implementation and outcomes for Aboriginal students in line with the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework, including achievement and attendance levels of Aboriginal students by city, regional, remote and very remote indicators.

A FINAL COMMENT

The Panel was inspired by both the professionalism and the genuine, heartfelt responses from the many people who attended the forums we organised. We were also very impressed by the depth of knowledge and thought which had gone into the submissions to our Panel, suggesting realistic solutions to the problems confronting the public school system in Western Australia. These voices are important and should not be ignored.

The many findings within this report indicate clearly that there is an absolute need for change. We are aware that history has shown that many reports rich with the voices of experts and supported by reputable research have been ignored or implemented in a way that does not bring about sustainable and relevant change, often because they fail to reflect the views of the profession. If the recommendations and insights we have derived from our discussions are adopted in the spirit in which they were offered, this report has the potential to make a significant difference for generations to come.

Change management theory and practice demands that the recommendations must be deeply considered with a planned implementation process that includes appropriate and agreed levels of resourcing, time, and monitoring. To bring about any sustainable and managed change for our students, their teachers, and our community, any changes should include accountability to stakeholders via regular feedback opportunities and publicly available reports.

To respect the professional responses received and implement sustainable change within our system, the panel unanimously recommends the immediate formation of a steering committee to oversee the process of implementing the report's recommendations. This is an urgent and necessary step forward.

To provide integrity to the process and ensure agreed changes are carefully implemented and routinely monitored, we suggest that the steering committee should be led by the Director General and the President of the SSTUWA. Through negotiation, the committee should also include leading academics, educational leaders, and current teaching staff. Their plans should be made public, and milestones reported annually.

Finding:

The teaching profession is calling for immediate and sustainable change of the public school system.

Finding:

The profession is at breaking point and requires immediate steps to improve education delivery and morale.

Recommendations 46:

To implement the recommendations suggested in this report, a Change Management Steering Committee, led by the Director General and the President of the SSTUWA, should be established to develop an implementation plan, agreed milestones, a timeline and establish a resourcing approach.

GLOSSARY

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACSF	Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
AEU	Australian Education Union
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
ALS	Alternative Learning Settings
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.
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
ATWD	Australian Teacher Workforce Data
BCEC	Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre
Business Plan	A business plan sets out a school's plan for the duration of the Delivery and Performance Agreement.
CMS	Classroom Management strategies
Commonwealth Government	Also known as the Australian Government and is the national government of Australia
COVID	COronaVIrus Disease
DI	Direct Instruction
Documented Plan	A documented plan is an umbrella term describing a range of ways catering for the identified education needs of an individual student and/or small group of students with similar education needs.
DoE	Department of Education
DOTT	Duties Other Than Teaching
DPA	Delivery and Performance Agreement
EA	Education Assistant
EAL/D	English as an Additional Language/Dialect
EBA	Enterprise Bargaining Agreement
ELB	Enrolment Linked Base
ERG	Expert Review Group
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
Gonski Report	Review of Funding for Schooling
GEP	Group Education Plan
IBMP	Individual Behaviour Management Plan
ICSEA	Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage.
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEP	Individual Education Plan

IPL	Institute for Professional Learning
IPS	Independent Public School
MCS	Manager of Corporate Services
My School website	The *My School* website is a resource for parents, educators and the community to find information about each of Australia's schools.
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy NAPLAN tests assess the literacy and numeracy levels of all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in Australia.
NCCD	Nationally Consistent Collection of Data
NSW	New South Wales
NSRA	National School Reform Agreement
NT	Northern Territory
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OLNA	Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
One-line budget	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.
PBS	Positive Behaviour Support
PD	Professional Development
PIRLS	Program in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
Public School Reviews	Public School Reviews (PSR) are a three-year cycle of self-assessment and review for schools to reflect on their performance, identifying both commendations and recommendations against six domains.
QLD	Queensland
RED	Regional Executive Director
Re-profile	Re-profiling is when a school changes its staffing structure
SA	South Australia
SCFM	Student-Centred Funding Model
SCSA	School Curriculum and Standards Authority
SES	Socio Economic Status
SEN	Special Education Needs
SMART targets	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time limited
SPS	School Psychology Service
SRS	Schooling Resource Standard
SSTUWA	State School Teachers' Union of Western Australian
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
Student outcomes	Student outcomes encompass a wide variety of academic and non-academic achievement.
Tas	Tasmania
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
U.K.	United Kingdom
UNSW	University of New South Wales
U.S.	United States (of America)
Vic	Victoria

VET	Vocational Education and Training
VETiS	Vocational Education and Training in Schools
W.A.	Western Australia
WACE	Western Australian Certificate of Education
WACSSO	Western Australian Council of State School Organisations
WADHSAA	Western Australian District High School Administrators Association
WAESPAA	Western Australian Education Support Principals and Administrators Association
WAPPA	Western Australian Primary Principals Association
WASSEA	Western Australian Secondary Schools Executives Association

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Appendix 1: Terms of reference

1.   What is the state of public education in WA currently?

Focus issues:

    a.   How have state government policies regarding the structure of public education since 2010 affected the operation of government schools in WA?

    b.   How have curriculum content, pedagogical expectations and reporting and accountability processes changed during this time?

    c.   What changes have occurred to the community expectations of our school leaders and teachers?

    d.   What has been the impact of COVID-19?

2.   What has been the effect of these changes on school leaders and teachers in WA?

For example:

    a.   Attraction and retention challenges:

       · The recruitment of new teachers to the profession.

       · Appropriate career opportunities.

       · The development and selection of school leaders.

       · Principal and teacher morale and well-being.

       · The changes to teacher and principal workloads.

    b.   Respect for teacher professionalism:

       · The effect of current accountability mechanisms.

       · The ability to apply professional judgement.

       · The commercialisation of curriculum products.

       · The impact of technology.

    c.   The impact on schools'/teachers' capacity to deliver:

       · The core curriculum; and

       · An equitable education provision across diverse student populations and regions.

3.   How do we best respond to the needs of teachers and school leaders in addressing these issues?

Appendix 2: Overview of submissions

NUMBER OF SUBMISSIONS	193
Individual Submissions	114
Group Submissions e.g., school, school Union Branch, School Department, SSTUWA committees	13
Organisations/Expert Witnesses	29
District Council & Community Meetings	37

CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS

1. *Face-to-Face Meetings/Individual Submissions*
   a. School staff - primary, secondary, education support
      i. leaders
      ii. teachers - L3, senior, beginning, relief
      iii. office staff
      iv. education assistants
      v. retired staff
      vi. school psychologists
   b. Public School Support Services
   c. Parents
   d. Concerned local community members, e.g., doctors, business owners
   e. Independent Public School Board Chairs
   f. Local government representatives
   g. Staff from shadow minister's office
   h. TAFE staff
   i. University staff
   j. Union organisers (other than SSTUWA)
2. *Oral and Written Submissions*
   a. Professional Associations - teachers and school leaders
   b. Associations providing services to young people in need of support
   c. School Staff Unions
   d. Parent Associations
   e. Universities
   f. Parents

SSTUWA DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETINGS

Kalgoorlie, Katanning, South Metro West – Fremantle, North Metro East – Belmont, South Metro East – Meadow Springs, Albany, Geraldton, Broome, North Metro West – Hillary's, Karratha and Bunbury.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Kalgoorlie, Katanning, South Metro West – Fremantle, North Metro East – Belmont, South Metro East – Meadow Springs, Albany, Geraldton, Broome, North Metro West – Hillarys, Karratha, Busselton, Northam, New Norcia, Esperance, Armadale, Yanchep and Manjimup.

Meetings were hosted by 4 senior high schools and 2 primary schools in the metropolitan area, and two statewide community meetings were held online.

Organisations that provided Panel with oral/written submissions/papers
State School Teachers' Union of Western Australian (SSTUWA)
United Workers Union (UWU)
Western Australian Primary Principals Professional Association
Western Australian District High School Administrators Association
Western Australian Secondary School Executives Association
Western Australian Education Support Principals and Administrators Association
Education Research Solutions
Australian Library and Information Association
Australian School Library Association
Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors
Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association
Edith Cowan University, School of Education
Education for Sustainable Development
Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Western Australia Inc
Australian Association of Special Education WA Chapter
The Professional Teaching Council of Western Australia
Modern Language Teachers Association of WA
The West Australian Modern Greek Language Teachers' Association Inc.
Level 3 Classroom Teachers Association
WA Public School Alliance
Teach for Australia Organisation
Tertiary Institutions Service Centre Ltd
Square Peg Round Whole
Western Australian Institute for Educational Research
Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australian Council of State School Organisations
Deans of Education
Aboriginal Educators, Department of Education

Appendix 3: Major legislative and policy changes in education in Western Australia

(Retrieved from WA Government website, WA Department of Education website and Australian Government Education Department website).

Year	Originating from	New/changed legislation/policy reports/review/inquiries
2008	Commonwealth Government	National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)
2008	WA Government	Acts Amendment (Higher Schools Leaving Age and Related Provisions) Bill (2005) - compulsory leaving age in WA increased from 16 to 17 years
2008	Commonwealth Government	Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians
2009	Commonwealth Government	National Curriculum and National Partnership Programs for Literacy and Numeracy
2009	Commonwealth Government	Announced National reporting system based upon NAPLAN to be introduced
2009	Commonwealth Government	Development of National Curriculum commenced
2009	Commonwealth Government	Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) introduced
2009	Commonwealth Government	Reporting to Parents using a common five-point scale (such as an A–E scale)
2009	WA Government	Independent Public Schools Initiative (IPS) announced
2009	WA Government	School Improvement and Accountability Framework developed
2009	Commonwealth Government	National Education Agreement formerly MCEETYA four-year plan 2009-2012 commenced
2010	WA Government	First 34 IPS schools began operating
2010	WA Government	Western Australian Institute for Public School Leadership and Professional Learning established
2010	Commonwealth Government	Review of Funding for Schooling (Gonski) established
2010	Commonwealth Government	Early Years Learning Framework introduced
2010	Commonwealth Government	On-entry assessment for Pre-primary students
2010	Commonwealth Government	National Early Childhood Workforce Census introduced
2010	Commonwealth Government	Establishment of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)
2010	Commonwealth Government	*My School* website introduced
2010	WA Government	Performance Management for IPS Principals through Delivery and Performance Agreement

2011	WA Government	Regional Executive Directors (REDs) assume line management responsibility for all schools other than IPS
2011	WA Government	Acts Amendment Bill (2012) - Announced Year 7 move to secondary schools in 2015
2011	Commonwealth Government	ACARA Australian Curriculum F-10 for English, mathematics, science and history Achievement Standards endorsed
2011	WA Government	Support structure for schools changed - 14 districts to 8 regions and 7 local education offices
2012	Commonwealth Government	National Quality Framework implemented
2012	Commonwealth Government	Full implementation of AC Phase 1 commenced.
2012	WA Government	The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) established
2012	WA Government	School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) commenced development of WA Curriculum and Assessment Outline for Phase 1 subjects
2012	WA Government	Funding for Education Assistants (Anaphylaxis) and L3 classroom teacher funding (0.1FTE) allocation withdrawn.
2013	WA Government	Acts Amendment Bill (2012) - Pre-primary commenced compulsory education in WA
2013	Commonwealth Government	Phase 1 of the Australian Curriculum for the senior years of schooling available for states to use. Geography added to the AC.
2013	Commonwealth Government	Universal Access National Partnership commenced - all children have access to at least 600 hours per year of quality early childhood education in the year before full-time school
2013	WA Government	One line budget introduced for IPS
2014	Commonwealth Government	National Educational Reform Agreement 2014-2018
2014	WA Government	Guidelines for Kindergarten developed
2014	WA Government	SCSA adapt Australian Curriculum Phase 2 subject content to develop WA Curriculum and Assessment Outline
2015	WA Government	Student Centred Funding Model (SCFM) introduced to 86% of public schools
2015	WA Government	School Resourcing System for SCFM introduced.
2015	WA Government	Schools will report student achievement in accordance with WA Curriculum and Assessment outline.
2015	Commonwealth Government	Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment inquiry into students with a disability
2015	WA Government	Year 7 move to secondary schools
2015	WA Government	Changes to Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) graduation requirements for Year 11 students.

2015	Commonwealth Government	Nationally Consistent Collect of Data (NCCD) – changes to collection process
2015	WA Government	Schools will report student achievement in accordance with WA Curriculum and Assessment outline.
2015	Commonwealth Government	All F-10 Australian Curriculum subjects revised.
2016	WA Government	Changes to Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) graduation requirements for Year 12 students.
2016	WA Government	Introduction of Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (OLNA)
2016	WA Government	Funding Agreements for Schools introduced
2017	WA Government	School based specialist programs for students with autism launched
2017	Commonwealth Government	NAPLAN moves to online environment
2017	WA Government	A Kindergarten reporting template was created for use.
2018	Commonwealth Government	Changes to Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS) announced
2018	Commonwealth Government	Through growth to achievement: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools (Gonski 2.0)
2018	Commonwealth Government	National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students
2018	WA Government	Science Lab conversions in primary schools commence
2018	WA Government	Three year-cyclical review of all public schools, including IPS, commenced
2018	WA Government	Implementation of Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework
2018	WA Government	State STEM strategy developed.
2018	Commonwealth Government	Closing the Gap - Prime Minister's Report - 10 years of Framework
2019	Commonwealth Government	Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration
2019	Commonwealth Government	National Schools Reform Agreement 2019-2023
2019	Commonwealth Government	No Jab No Play Policy
2019	WA Government	'Let's take a stand together' – Violence in Schools Strategy
2019	Commonwealth Government	VETiS reforms in secondary schools
2019	WA Government	Lead in Drinking Water Direction
2019	WA/Common'th Governments	COVID -19 Government Policies - Attendance, School Operations, staff leave management and communicating with Parents

2020	WA Government	Public School Review Standard implemented
2020	WA Government	Student Centred Funding Model adjusted
2021	WA Government	New options for Year 11 students from 2020
2021	WA/Common'th Governments	COVID -19 Government Policies - Teacher Shortages and vaccinations records (staff)
2021	WA Government	Statement of Expectations for Public School Principals
2021	WA Government	Principal Professional Review introduced for all Principals.
2021	WA Government	New options for Year 12 students in 2021
2021	WA Government	Enhanced Transition to School Project
2021	Commonwealth Government	Early Years Strategy
2021	WA Government	Curriculum Support Materials launched by SCSA (EBA)
2021	Commonwealth Government	Review of the Australian Curriculum commenced.
2021	WA Government	Collegiate Principals Initiative commenced
2022	WA/Common'th Governments	COVID -19 Government Policies - RATS distribution and Ventilation Program
2022	Commonwealth Government	Schools Clean Energy Technology Fund
2022	Commonwealth Government	Changes to NAPLAN announced
2022	Commonwealth Government	National Teacher Workforce Action Plan
2022	WA Government	Free Period Products for secondary schools
2022	WA Government	Anti-Vaping Toolkit launched
2022	WA Government	Changes to school consent education
2022	WA Government	Career Practitioner Initiative
2022	Commonwealth Government	Updated AC (F-10) endorsed.
2023	Commonwealth Government	Changes to NAPLAN implemented
2023	WA Government	Changes to Protective Behaviours Curriculum (consent education)
2023	WA Government	First Aid Learning
2023	Commonwealth Government	Implementation of updated AC - jurisdictions have own timeline
2023	WA Government	Review of post-school options for secondary schools
2023	WA Government	Panel of professional learning programs (Prolearn) provided by external providers available to schools, some fees apply
2023	WA Government	Familiarisation of English (PP-6) phonics and word knowledge programs

Appendix 4: Timeline for Independent Public Schools Initiative

Year	INDEPENDENT PUBLIC-SCHOOLS	NON- INDEPENDENT PUBLIC-SCHOOLS
1998-2008	• Standards (School Performance) Reviews conducted by District Directors (DD). • Expert Review Group reviews schools where DD nominated school of concern.	
2009	Independent Public Schools Initiative (IPS) announced. 3-page EOI process – capacity of school, level of local support (community and staff), and potential benefits for local community.	

2010	• First 34 IPS began operating with:
	  • School Board
	  • Business Plan
	  • Annual Report and self-assessment
	  • 3-year review process for IPS
	• Performance Management for IPS Principals through Delivery and Performance Agreement.	

2011	• Additional 64 IPS commenced operation.
	• IPS Principals given authority to:
	  • fill vacancies as soon as practicable after they become vacant.
	  • appoint staff to each vacant position from established recruitment pools; and approve all leave.
		• Regional Executive Directors (RED) assumed line management responsibility for all schools other than IPS.
		• REDs initiated an enhanced process of Principal Performance Management for non-IPS Principals.

2012	• Additional 73 IPS commenced operation. • Board Training introduced for IPS community and staff. • First Independent Reviews of IPS commenced.	
2013	• Additional 36 IPS commenced operation. • One line budget introduced to IPS. • Increased levels of flexibility to select staff and allocate funds for IPS.	
2014	• Additional 57 IPS commenced operation. • New schools automatically become IPS. • New development and selection process to become IPS – staff and community members part of 4-month training program. • School Resourcing System for SCFM introduced. • SCFM Professional Learning for Principals and Managers of Corporate Services (MCS).	

2015	· Additional 178 IPS commenced operation. · 70/178 new IPS re-profiled as part of process.	
	· Student Centred Funding Model commenced to 86% of public schools. · Workforce Plan introduced as part of process. · Introduction of Schools Resourcing System for all schools.	
2016	· Advanced Leadership Program for IPS principals including Fellowship Program. · School Board Development Program	A three-year cyclic school performance assessment process for schools that are not Independent Public Schools piloted.
	· SCFM adjusted to include: 　· Funding Agreements for Schools. 　· Minimum expenditure requirements.	
2017	· Additional 79 IPS commenced operation. · New Delivery and Performance (triennial) Agreement was developed for new Independent Public Schools and IPS which had completed their previous agreements. · Online School Assessment Application prototype developed.	
2018	· Additional 7 IPS commenced operation. · Application Process for IPS refined.	
	· Evaluation of the Student-Centred Funding Model (Nous Report) · Three year-cyclical review of all public schools (Public School Review), including IPS commenced.	
2019	Additional 42 IPS commenced operation.	
	Director General now line-manager for all Principals.	
2020	Additional 6 IPS commenced operation.	
	· SCFM adjusted as follows: 　· EAL extended to Pre-primary and Aboriginal students, and achievement levels incorporated, 　· Locality allowance increased (distance to Perth), 　· Reviewed some schools Enrolment-linked Based eligible if they have secondary enrolments. · Principal Fellowship Program expanded to include Principals of IPS and non-IPS. · Public School Review Standard implemented.	
2021	Additional 38 IPS commenced operation.	
	· Statement of Expectation introduced for all public schools. · Principal Professional Review introduced for all Principals.	
2022	Additional 4 IPS commenced operation.	
2023	Additional 5 IPS commenced operation.	
	SCFM adjusted to extend educational adjustment from bottom 10% to bottom 15%.	

Year	Version	Other Policies Implemented
2009		Mandatory Reporting of Sexual Abuse
2009	1.12	On Public School Premises
2010	2.2	Gifted and Talented in Public Schools Policy
2010	1.6	Risk and Business Management Continuity Policy
2010	3.2	Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Policy
2012	2.4	Policy Development and Approval Policy
2014	2.4	Use of Animals in Public Schools
2014	1.0	Intellectual Property Policy
2014		HIV-AIDS and Hepatitis Policy
2014	2.0	Excursions Policy
2014	2.8	Healthy Food and Drink in Public Schools Policy
2015	2.0	Information and Communication Technologies Security Policy
2015	3.6	Student Health Care in Public Schools Policy
2015	2.4	Students at Educational Risk in Public Schools Policy
2015	2.2	Asbestos Policy
2016	2.1	Employee Performance Policy
2016	3.0	Advertising in School Policy
2016	4.2	Incoming Sponsorship in Public Schools Policy
2016	2.1	Software Use Policy
2016	1.4	Official Travel Policy
2017	2.0	Injury Management and Worker's Compensation Policy
2018	1.2	Short Term Visits/Study Tours for Overseas Students Policy
2018	3.0	Equal Opportunity, Discrimination and Harassment Policy
2018	3.0	Student Attendance Policy
2018	2.4	Dress Codes for Students Policy
2018	3.0	Councils and Boards in Public Schools Policy
2018	1.0	Vehicle Management Policy
2018	1.0	Alcohol and Other Drugs in the Workplace Policy
2018	3.2	Bullying in the Workplace Policy
2018	4.0	Housing for Country Employees in Public Schools
2018	3.1	Leave Management Policy
2018	4.0	Secondment Policy
2018	4.0	Staff Induction Policy
2019	3.4	Child Protection in Department of Education Sites Policy
2019	3.0	Student Online in Public Schools Policy
2019	2.0	Naming of Public Schools and Facilities Policy
2019	4.0	Curriculum Assessment and Reporting in Public Schools
2019	2.6	Duty of Care for Public School Students Policy (TROs, excursions)
2019	CEO Instruction	Required action when students fighting in schools and/or uploading videos of fighting

2019	CEO Instruction	Recommendation for exclusion when students make physical contact with staff
2019	CEO Instruction	All schools are to implement a Good Standing Policy
2019	3.1	School Security for Public Schools Policy
2019	3.1	Students Online in Public Schools
2019	2.1	Recruitment, Selection and Appointment Policy
2019	4.0	Records Management Policy
2019	4.1	Updated Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Policy.
2020	1.2	Student Mobile Phones in Public Schools Policy
2020	4.0	Home Education Policy
2020	4.0	Incident Management on Department of Education Site Policy
2020	2.0	Community Use of Public School Facilities Policy
2020	2.1	Criminal History Screening for Department of Education Sites Policy
2021	4.2	Student Attendance in Public School Policy
2021	1.1	Complaints and Notifications Policy
2021	2.3	Working With Children Checks in Department Education Sites Policy
2021	CEO Instruction	Vaccination of staff
2021	2.1	Public Interest Disclosure Policy
2021	4.0	Duty of Care for Public Schools Policy
2022	4.0	Managing a Breach of the Public Sector Standards Claims Policy
2022	3.1	Cyber Security Policy
2022	4.1	Work Health and Safety Policy
2022	1.0	Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy
2022	4.0	Staff Conduct and Discipline Policy
2022	3.0	Enrolment in Public Schools Policy
2022	1.0	Conflict of Interest Policy
2023	1.0	National Assessment Program Policy
2023	4.0	Student Health in Public Schools Policy
2023	5.0	Staff Conduct and Discipline Policy
2023	3.0	Student Behaviour in Public Schools
2023	4.0	Student Health in Public Schools Policy

Other initiatives		
2011		Trialled National AITSL standards for teachers and leaders
2013		½ cohort commences Year 11
2014		Hearing Tests
2016		Building Optimal Wellbeing in Leadership and Schools Program
2016		STEM resource kit provided to 655 primary schools
2017		Aboriginal Education Teaching and Learning Directorate was set up
2018		Direct to Market maintenance program introduced

2018		Level 3 Classroom Teacher funding for mental health initiative in 300 schools
2020		School Communities Working Together Communications Protocols
2020		3rd Party licences for Aps, etc
2020		$200 million maintenance package announced for all 780 public schools
2020		WA Police Force and Department of Education MOU – domestic violence
2020		Bandwidth upgrade
2020		Capital Works Programs for administration and toilet upgrades and covered assembly areas for local schools
2021		Teach Australia graduates in secondary schools
2021		Aspirant Principal Preparation Program (APPP) commenced
2022		West Australian Student Council
2023		Phonics Initiative (K-2) commenced.
2023		Quality Teaching Strategy toolkit available to all schools.
2023		25 Quality Teaching Strategy lead schools commence in Semester 2.

Appendix 5:
Timeline for curriculum, assessment, and reporting changes.

Year	Commonwealth Government	WA Government
2008	· Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians. · National Curriculum Board established. · All governments agree for need for national curriculum. · National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) commenced.	· Outcomes Based Education ceased. · ***Compulsory leaving age in WA increased from 16 to 17 years.***
2009	· National Education Agreement formerly MCEETYA four-year plan 2009-2012 includes: 　· Development of National Curriculum. 　· Introduction of National Reporting based upon NAPLAN, Reporting to Parents using Grades and Australian Early Development Index (AEDI). 　· Smarter Schools National Partnership Programs for Literacy and Numeracy, low SES schools, Digital Education Revolution, senior schooling, and early childhood education. · Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) becomes operational.	
2010	· Early Years Learning Framework · ACARA takes over curriculum development. · Australian Curriculum (AC) (Version 1.0) F-10 for English, Maths, Science, and History endorsed and released. · New Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Policy	· Annual On-entry Assessment for Pre-primary students commenced.
2011	· ACARA – Australian Curriculum F-10 For English, Maths, Science, and History *Achievement Standards* endorsed.	· Professional Learning to familiarise schools with Phase 1 of AC commenced.

2012	· Year 11 & 12 added for first four subjects (Version 4.0). · National Quality Framework implemented.	· The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (The Authority) established in WA. · The Authority commenced development of WA Curriculum and Assessment Outline. · Full implementation of AC Phase 1 commenced.
2013	· ***National Partnership on Early Childhood Education (Kindergarten increase to 15 hours)*** · Phase 1 of AC for senior years of available for states to use. · Geography added to the AC. · Commencement of National Professional Standards for Teachers.	· ½ cohort in Year 11 in senior schools. · Pre-primary compulsory in WA schools.

2014	· Additions to the AC - Health and Physical Education, Technologies, the Arts and some subjects in Humanities (Version 6) added as well as some languages.	· The Authority in consultation with teachers:
		
		  · adapted content to form WA Curriculum and Assessment Outline in Phase 2 & 3 subjects,
		
		  · Changed organisation of the AC from bands to year level syllabuses, and
		
		  · included Civics and Citizenship, Economics and Business, and Geography in the HASS curriculum.
		
		· Guidelines for Kindergarten developed.

2015	· All F-10 AC subjects revised (Version 8.4) following independent curriculum review. · Nationally Consistent Collection of Data updated.	· ***Year 7 students moved into secondary schools.*** · The Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline (The Outline) replaces Curriculum Framework and is mandated for all WA schools. · Schools report student achievement in accordance with The Outline in English, mathematics, science and history. · Changes to Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) graduation requirements for Year 11 students. · The Brightpath assessment and reporting software available through The Authority. · The ABLE*WA* program piloted in WA schools.

2016		• Changes to Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) graduation requirements for Year 12 students.
		• Introduction of Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (OLNA) to assess the minimum standard of students required for advance education for Reading and Numeracy.
		• Teacher support materials including teacher resources and achievement standards for Phase 2 and 3 of WA adapted curriculum available for HASS, HPE, Technologies and The Arts for familiarisation.
2017	• NAPLAN moves to online environment. • Full implementation of AC subjects HASS and HPE • Full implementation of AC revised curriculum (Version 8.4) for English, Mathematics and Science	• A Kindergarten reporting template created for use.
2018	• Individually assess student progress. • Full implementation of AC subjects Technologies, The Arts and Languages (Year 3) • Through growth to achievement: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools (Gonski 2.0)	• Embed Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework in classrooms. • State STEM strategy developed.
2019	• VETiS Reforms in Secondary Schools. • Full implementation of AC Languages (Year 4)	• Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting in Public Schools Policy updated. • Western Australian student number introduced. • ABLEWA resources updated.
2020	• New options for Year 11 students from 2020 • Full implementation of AC Languages (Year 5)	
2021	• Review of the Australian Curriculum commenced. • New options for Year 12 students from 2021 • Full implementation of AC Languages (Year 6)	• Updated Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Policy.

2022	• Updated AC (F-10) endorsed (Version 9).	• Anti-Vaping Toolkit launched.
	• New AC website goes live.	
	• 12 other languages being reviewed, to finalised by end of 2023.	
	• Full implementation of AC Languages (Year 7)	
2023	• Implementation of updated AC commenced.	• Changes to Protective Behaviours Curriculum.
	• Changes to NAPLAN implemented.	• Implementation of updated AC – jurisdictions have own timeline.
	• Full implementation of AC Languages (Year 8)	• Pathways to Post-School Review
	• Familiarisation of HPE (PP-10) inclusion of consent and first aid	• Refreshment of WACE.

Appendix 6: An example of an Individual Education Plan

Student: X	D.O.B: X	Gender: X	
Teacher(s): X	Year Group: Year 3	Start Date: 6 April 2023	

Profile/Background
X is having difficulties in Literacy. She has been flagged as a student at educational risk. I have referred her for MacqLit. I have also followed up on her last hearing and vision check. I have met with A and B to discuss her test scores so far. X has been referred to C our school psychologist for further testing. She has been seeing D for speech therapy and assessment. In the report dated August 2022 D noted that X has a moderate delay in expressive language and delays in auditory memory. "Her literacy skills require intervention and she would benefit from a CAPD assessment in the near future."   Test Scores-   2/2/2023 Diana Rigg*- Target 3 (Target 3 homework given, teaching T4 in class)   3/2/2023 Waddington* Reading Test- 7y 11m (chronological age 8y 3m)   Term 2:   23/3/2023 Diana Rigg- Target 4   24/3/2023 Waddington Reading Test- 7y 8m   After being reviewed by the school psychologist, X needs to focus on her language deficits and anxiety.

English

Strategies
Targeted spelling homework
Gradual release model for writing
Environmental print
Desk mat with high frequency words
EA support
MacqLit
Teach Monster To Read App
DSF fact sheet- Strategies to support poor auditory, visual and working memory.
DFS fact sheet- Strategies to support children with oral language difficulties
Explicitly teach vocabulary with high repetitions of the word

Reading and Viewing

Read decodable and predictable texts using developing phrasing, fluency, contextual, semantic, grammatical and phonic knowledge and emerging text processing strategies, for example prediction, monitoring meaning and re-reading

Goals
· *X will use a range of reading strategies to read decodable texts with a focus on fluency and understanding punctuation.*

Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning about key events, ideas and information in texts that they listen to, view and read by drawing on growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features

Goals
· *X will infer meaning in a simple text, with assistance and support.*

Writing

Attempts to use varied punctuation, e.g. full stops, capital letters, exclamation marks, question marks 80% of the time.

Uses a small bank of known words correctly, e.g. Uses words from personal word list correctly in writing 80% of the time.

When re-reading their writing, maintains word sequence and notices when words, phrases and sentences need to be added, deleted or changed to improve meaning, e.g. Self correct when reading a text aloud 80% of the time.

Will move to Stage Two for Spelling by the end of Semester One.

Re-read student's own texts and discuss possible changes to improve meaning, spelling and punctuation

Goals
· *By the end of the semester, X will re-read her own writing and change the text to improve meaning, spelling and punctuation.*

English

Speaking and Listening

Asks questions to further the conversation when interacting with others.

Contributes to class discussions, plays or role plays for a minimum of once a day.

Gives eye contact when speaking to a classmate or teacher 80% of the time.

Engage in conversations and discussions, using active listening behaviours, showing interest, and contributing ideas, information and questions

Goals

X answers simple questions and demonstrates comprehension of what has been asked.

X can correctly structure a sentence when asking for assistance or asking to do something.

X will be able to take part in conversations using appropriate volume and articulation. She will be understood by the majority of unfamiliar listeners.

X will listen during class activities and demonstrate an understanding of the topic by answering or asking questions, making comments or building on the previous speakers comments.

Review/Comment

Mathematics

Strategies

Number and Algebra

Measurement and Geometry

Statistics and Probability

Review/Comment

Playground

Strategies

Review/Comment

Protective Behaviours
Strategies
Big Life Journal Challenge kit to help with self-esteem and wellbeing. Regular appointments with E our school chaplain. Praise for effort and not for outcomes.
Review/Comment

Attendance
Strategies
Review/Comment

Personal Development
Strategies
Review/Comment

Occupational Therapy

Strategies

As per the Audiologist recommendations, X should be prompted multiple times a day to complete activities to equalise middle ear pressure.

-Squeeze nose and swallow

-Blow nose

-Drink through a long straw

Physical Activities

Review/Comment

Speech Therapy

Strategies

Review/Comment

X		
REVIEW		
Review Date:		
Notes:		
SIGNATORIES		
Parent/ Caregiver		Date:
Teacher		Date:
Principal		Date:
Other		Date:

* Names of tests/literacy programs used.