

**WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT  
SUBMISSION**

**TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION'S  
STUDY OF THE SCHOOLS WORKFORCE**



**GOVERNMENT OF  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

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## INTRODUCTION

With Australia's population ageing there is an increasing expectation that the school sector will lift the skills and competencies of tomorrow's workforce, thereby increasing productivity and enabling Australians to maintain their current standard of living.

As a consequence, the key focus area for the school sector is ensuring schools have a highly skilled workforce with the capacity to achieve improvements. Global research concerning student performance highlights the strong relationship between the quality of teachers and student outcomes. It is estimated that a quality teacher can improve student outcomes by as much as 30 per cent.

The capacity to attract and retain quality school staff has been impacted by the decline in the status of both the school sector and the teaching profession within the Australian community. The challenge is to increase the sector's relative attractiveness, particularly in a competitive labour market.

To achieve a higher quality teaching workforce, the reform effort will need to focus on attracting quality entrants, better preparing those who enter the workforce, particularly in teaching Indigenous students, and providing relevant professional learning throughout their careers.

There is a range of long-standing equity issues in low socio-economic status (SES) communities, particularly in rural and remote areas of Western Australia. Students within these communities frequently face multiple and complex health, mental well-being and social problems that need to be addressed before the gap in student achievement can be closed.

Addressing these challenges requires innovative solutions and new ways of working in schools and their communities. Reforms will need to look at the child's education and well-being holistically, supporting students to access a range of education and health professionals and facilitate better engagement of both parents and students. Achieving this broader role of schools within the community will demand new skills and a multi-disciplinary team approach. Attraction, recruitment and retention strategies specific to disadvantaged schools will become even more important.

It is imperative that principals and teachers form productive relationships with their local school communities and understand strategies required to meet students' needs. Policy settings must support school communities in finding solutions at the local level, without being constrained by bureaucratic processes that inhibit innovation.

The existing industrial instruments governing the school workforce constrain the pace in which the necessary workforce reforms can be progressed. New ways of working will create new roles, new staffing classifications, improved incentives, flexible employment options and changes to career paths. These all require negotiation with respective unions or employment advocacy groups and must also be cognisant of workplace relations legislation and regulations.

Achieving improved student outcomes particularly in areas that in the past have appeared intractable, will require increased authority for decision making at the local level and greater flexibility and agility within the workforce. Policy and industrial settings should enable the provision of incentives that encourage:

- continual skills development within the schools workforce;
- improved use of available resources, including skills of other professionals;
- stronger engagement with the community and improved responsiveness to local needs;
- greater innovation and improved use of technology; and
- greater accountability.

The cost of labour for the school sector is likely to increase as reform is focused on attainment of higher skill levels, greater productivity and an increasing role for schools within communities. The sustainability of increasing labour costs, particularly for rural and remote areas of Western Australia, must be considered as the quality agenda is pursued.

Western Australia's workforce supply is closely linked to the performance of what is currently a volatile economy. For example, the peak of economic growth in 2007, the State experienced, for the first time, in excess of 200 teaching vacancies at the commencement of the school year. For this reason, the Western Australian Government has been investing in systemic reform focused on achieving a sustainable supply of quality staff in schools to improve student outcomes.

The Western Australian Government has been:

- progressing an empowerment agenda, through the introduction of Independent Public Schools and the realignment of education regions, enabling local level decision making, innovation and responsiveness to the school community;
- working collaboratively with all jurisdictions to develop and implement National Professional Standards for Teachers and the National Professional Standard for Principals in order to raise both the status and quality of the teaching profession;
- providing incentives to attract people into teaching courses and working with Universities to ensure courses better prepare graduates for the classroom;
- providing up-skilling opportunities that enhance career paths of the schools workforce and improve in-class support; and
- developing world class leadership development programs for current and aspiring school leaders.

## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Productivity Commission:

### **Recommendation 1**

Assesses and reports on the costs and the impact of the new professional and program standards on the supply and quality of the teaching workforce relative to improved educational outcomes.

### **Recommendation 2**

Reiterates the value of investing in the schools workforce, to the broader community.

### **Recommendation 3**

Undertakes a cost benefit analysis of innovative pre-service teacher training models. The analysis should consider the increased investment made by employers, universities, schools, mentor teachers and pre-service teachers in teacher preparation. This work should also include a review of the funding allocations and total investment.

### **Recommendation 4**

Examines the potential for attracting high quality school leaders to challenging schools by more effectively linking pay and conditions to the complexity of school settings.

### **Recommendation 5**

Reiterates the importance of succession planning in schools as a way of addressing an ageing school workforce and maintaining quality leadership.

### **Recommendation 6**

Explores further taxation-based levers that could support improved distribution of quality school staff to rural and remote communities.

### **Recommendation 7**

Advises how support staff and other professionals could be used more effectively to improve student outcomes, specifically in addressing education equality.

### **Recommendation 8**

Analyses the costs and benefits of access to high speed broad band for addressing equity issues in rural and remote areas.

### **Recommendation 9**

Analyses and advises on the nature of industrial instruments that would assist in the move to greater flexibility and agility within the workforce.

### **Recommendation 10**

Evaluates and advises on approaches that encourage achievement of a performance-oriented school workforce culture.

### **Recommendation 11**

Quantifies the additional funding that may be required to sustain the changing demands on a schools' workforce given the increasing role of schools within communities.

## **WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S CONTEXT**

The Western Australian school sector (primary and secondary education) employs over 54 000 people<sup>i</sup>, and represents the largest single cost to the education system. For example, within the public sector alone, employee benefits represent 67.8 per cent of all expenses for the public education system in 2009/10<sup>ii</sup>.

### ***Geographic Diversity***

Western Australia covers almost one-third of the Australian land mass and is approximately 92 per cent of the size of the entire eastern seaboard States. The sheer size of the State and distribution of the student population results in Western Australia having some of the most unique settings and challenges for school education delivery in the world.

Nearly seventy-five per cent<sup>iii</sup> of Western Australia's population lives in Perth. Therefore, close to 25 per cent is spread across some 2.5 million square kilometres.

Approximately 44 per cent of all public schools and 34 per cent of all private schools are located in regional areas. The average distance from a remote school to the nearest town is approximately 300km. With a population density of 0.8 per square kilometre<sup>iv</sup>, Western Australia is responsible for servicing one of the most geographically diverse school sectors in the world. By comparison, New South Wales has a population density of 9.0 per square kilometre and Victoria 24.4 per square kilometre.

The achievement of equity is particularly challenging in Western Australia as a result of its geographic diversity. The State's profile essentially creates an environment that is inherently inequitable and not conducive to the management of schooling in a one size fits all manner.

Attraction, recruitment and retention of quality staff to work in many of these rural and remote locations is significantly more costly and difficult because the lifestyle is not as attractive and conditions for other employees, in other industries, in some regional locations are superior.

In order to address the persistent inequities facing the Western Australian school sector the Western Australian Government's policy agenda is focused toward empowering school communities to meet the needs of all students and systemic reform aimed at improving the quality of the schools workforce.

### ***Aboriginality***<sup>1</sup>

With the exception of the Northern Territory, Western Australia has the highest proportion of Aboriginal persons in Australia at 3.8 per cent<sup>v</sup>. This proportion increases even further in the school sector; 6.4 per cent<sup>vi</sup> of all students in Western Australia are Aboriginal. This is significantly greater than the national proportion of 4.6 per cent<sup>vii</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Aboriginal includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

### ***Population growth***

Over the period 2011 to 2026, Western Australia's growth is predicted to be the second largest in Australia with an increase in population of 42 per cent<sup>viii</sup>. This growth is significantly greater than the 29.6 per cent increase anticipated in Australia's overall population.

The educational consequences of population growth exist in all States and include the provision of adequate school infrastructure (allowing new students to enter the sector) and the ongoing supply of quality teachers. In this context, Western Australia is faced with the significant challenge of not only removing the current inequities in regional areas but attempting to do so during a period when the supply of a quality schools workforce is volatile.

### ***Western Australian economy and labour market***

The state of Western Australia mirrors the broader national economy in that there is very much a two-speed economy with "a resources sector and anything connected to that sector performing strongly against other sectors in the domestic economy which are struggling"<sup>ix</sup>.

The demand for labour in Western Australia is strongly associated with the resources sector. Given the significant resource and infrastructure projects planned for the State<sup>x</sup>, Western Australia is expected to experience a new period of sustained economic expansion over the next four years. Subsequently the forecast for employment growth is strong.

Growth in the resources sector flows to other industries, creating a large number of additional jobs throughout the economy, in ancillary industries such as construction, manufacturing and retail trade.

The supply of the schools workforce, particularly the teaching workforce, fluctuates according to the performance of the broader State economy and labour market.

When Western Australia moves into another growth cycle, the competition for skilled labour will increase, particularly in the context of retiring baby boomers and labour force growth constraints. Therefore, ensuring there is an adequate supply of the schools workforce to meet future service demand will be challenging.

## A QUALITY WORKFORCE

The link between enhanced teacher quality and improved student outcomes has been demonstrated in a meta analysis of over half a million academic studies on the effects of different educational interventions on student learning<sup>xi</sup>.

However, the current age profile of the teaching workforce indicates a significant proportion is at retirement age, refer Attachment A. It is expected that as the economy improves so too will superannuation benefits providing greater confidence for this cohort to retire. The age profile combined with the anticipated increased competition for labour in Western Australian will continue to threaten the sustainable supply of the schools workforce.

Therefore, there will be growing tension for a sustainable supply of the schools workforce whilst progressing with the quality agenda within Western Australia.

Reform to improve the quality of the schools workforce must simultaneously lift the standards of new entrants whilst up-skilling the existing workforce.

The systemic reforms being progressed through the Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership Agreement provide an opportunity and the funding to explore strategies for raising teacher quality and building the foundation necessary to underpin greater workforce productivity at each stage of teachers' careers.

In particular, the *National Professional Standards for Teachers*, the *National Professional Standard for Principals*, the *Standards and Procedures for the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia* are elements that are expected to assist in attracting and developing a quality workforce and improve the status of teaching. Australia is in a unique position, because of its well developed assessment and reporting framework, to measure the effect of improving the quality of teaching on student outcomes as jurisdictions implement the professional and program standards.

**Recommendation 1:**

**It is recommended that the Productivity Commission assesses and reports on the costs and the impact of professional and program standards on the supply and quality of the teaching workforce relative to improved educational outcomes.**

Efforts to attract and retain quality staff have been impacted by the status of the school sector and the teaching profession within the Australian community. This perhaps is a reflection of the value the community places on education.

The school sector's role in improving economic outcomes and the standard of living needs to be more widely understood by the Australian community and reflected in whole-of-government and industry planning and investment.

The nature of workforce reform means that it is unlikely improvements will be visible in either quality or improved student outcomes until the reform has been in place for some time. For this reason, it is necessary to maintain teacher quality at the centre of the COAG reform agenda into the future.

**Recommendation 2:**

**It is recommended that the Productivity Commission's study reiterates the value of investing in the schools workforce, to the broader community.**



### ***Pre-service Training***

Research indicates that more than 25 per cent of early career teachers leave within the first five years<sup>xii</sup>, with graduate teachers often citing ill-preparation for the reality of the classroom. Some highlight they suffered 'transition shock'<sup>xiii</sup> or reality shock<sup>xiv</sup> in the move from university to the classroom.

In an effort to address this high attrition rate, teacher employers are working closely with universities to reduce the gap between theory and classroom practice and provide increased support for early career teachers as they transition into the classroom.

Innovative models are being implemented to better prepare graduate teachers, such as internships or extending practicums. These models also provide training for mentor teachers and on-line delivery of theory. Increasing the investment in teacher training will have long-term benefits, including: improving the readiness of graduates for the reality of the classroom, particularly in managing student behaviour, planning, and engaging parents and caregivers in their children's learning.

Further, alternate pathways such as Teach for Australia and Teach Next, provide the opportunity for Western Australia to attract not only outstanding highly qualified individuals but those with the willingness, attributes and capabilities to work successfully within challenging, disadvantaged communities. Policy direction must accommodate such innovative programs that will work towards benefiting students in disadvantaged communities.

#### **Recommendation 3:**

**It is recommended the Productivity Commission undertakes a cost benefit analysis of innovative pre-service teacher training models. The analysis should consider the increased investment made by employers, universities, schools, mentor teachers and pre-service teachers in teacher preparation. This work should also include a review of the funding allocations and total investment.**

### ***Leadership***

School leaders are pivotal to improved school outcomes and improving teaching quality. School leaders influence the motivations of staff, build the capacity and capability of teachers and engage the broader school community. Effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling.

The typical career path for principals is for the more experienced leaders to gravitate toward the larger metropolitan schools in high SES communities. Schools in metropolitan areas tend to be larger than in regional and remote areas and are classified in ways that provide the highest salaries. Consequently, aspirant school leaders are more likely to go to more challenging and/or remote schools in order to gain experience.

It follows that there is much to be gained from a greater emphasis on developing the vision and values, skills, knowledge and understandings, personal qualities and attributes necessary to lead schools in low SES communities. Similarly, there are benefits to be realised from the adjustment of policy settings and job classification

structures that give greater recognition of the complexities facing leaders in these schools and in establishing the necessary settings and capacity to attract high quality leaders to the more challenging schools.

**Recommendation 4:**

**It is recommended the Productivity Commission examines the potential for attracting high quality school leaders to challenging schools by more effectively linking pay and conditions to the complexity of school settings.**

The age profile of Western Australia's schools workforce indicates there will be a large number of retirements in the short to medium term. This is particularly relevant for school leaders. Not only will Western Australia have a significant reduction in the number of teachers and school leaders but a significant loss in the expertise and knowledge of those school leaders. Succession planning, by ensuring sufficient time and investment is made to identify and develop tomorrow's high quality school leaders and teachers will be challenging, yet critical.

The significance of high quality school leadership is recognised by COAG and has been included as a key reform within the ITQ NP. Under the ITQ NP, Australia developed its first *National Professional Standard for Principals* in July 2011. The Standard is a public statement describing what principals are expected to know, understand and be able to do in order to achieve in their work. This Standard is expected to provide a framework that can be used to develop the skills and knowledge of existing and future school leaders. The Standard has been used as a framework to map leadership development professional learning for aspirant and existing school leaders in Western Australia public schools.

The ITQ NP allocated significant funds toward leadership development; however funding is yet to be distributed to jurisdictions. The funding will provide significant professional opportunities for school leaders within Western Australia.

**Recommendation 5:**

**It is recommended the Productivity Commission reiterates the importance of succession planning in schools as a way of addressing an ageing school workforce and maintaining quality leadership.**

## NEW WAYS OF WORKING

A central challenge for schooling in Western Australia is addressing the inequities in educational outcomes facing students across regions, social backgrounds and those with special needs and disabilities.

Lifting the literacy and numeracy skills of teachers alone will not address the gap in student achievement. Students from low SES families often face multiple disadvantages, which can include poverty, family dysfunction, disability, homelessness and physical and mental health problems.

Reform needs to look at the child's education and well being holistically in order to address barriers to effective student engagement<sup>xv</sup>. Schools therefore, must have the capacity to employ not only highly skilled teachers but also appropriately skilled specialist staff.

Attracting and retaining staff to these schools, particularly in rural and remote areas, is significantly more difficult and costly due to the sheer size of Western Australia. For example, the placement of a teacher in a public school in Karratha comes at a cost of \$195 000 per annum, compared to the placement of a teacher in metropolitan public school of \$115 000 per annum<sup>xvi</sup>. The aforementioned staffing costs do not consider other variables such as the building and maintenance of accommodation, the establishment of core capital and information and communication technology infrastructure.

Approaches to workforce attraction and retention for rural and remote communities need to be broadened, and where possible encourage the workforce to become a part of the local community.

The taxation system has been used previously to bring about desired change within the community and could provide an effective mechanism to assist those jurisdictions facing significant workforce distribution challenges. For example:

- higher duties on Medicare to encourage take up of private health insurance;
- favourable treatment on post and pre taxation superannuation contributions encouraging retirement saving; and
- the fringe benefits tax (FBT) regime that enables employers to provide the necessities of life, in remote areas, without the impost of FBT costs.

Provision of non-cash incentives such as the Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship (MRBS) could also be explored for the education workforce. The MRBS provides one hundred medical students per annum a scholarship worth \$24,000 per annum for six years. Accepting the MRBS commits these students to working for six continuous years outside of a metropolitan area of Australia upon completion of their medical training as a specialist. The Scholarship is currently tax free and indexed annually<sup>xvii</sup>.

Exploration of taxation-based levers, such as further fringe benefit concessions, debt forgiveness, non-cash scholarships and increased superannuation benefits could provide a framework of differentiated taxation that may assist in distribution of quality staff to rural and remote schools.

### **Recommendation 6:**

**It is recommended that the Productivity Commission explores further taxation-based levers that could support improved distribution of quality staff to rural and remote communities.**

The increasing role of the school within the community also means that a mix of staff is required on the schools site, some of whom require very different skill sets to their predecessors. The traditional solo teacher model requires reconsideration in light of the demands placed upon modern teachers to deal with increasing numbers of students with special needs in regular classrooms and the increased concentration of these students in public schools.

The quality and extent of the contribution of support staff within schools is a critical factor in enabling 'teachers to teach'. The requirement for minimum qualifications for support staff is welcomed, similarly to those recently introduced within the early childhood development sector. However, it is important that sufficient flexibility be available for schools to recruit staff from within the local community and then provide access to structured up-skilling programs.

Support staff such as education assistants, Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers and library officers could be more widely and more effectively used within schools and the classroom. To best support teachers, support staff need to be skilled in managing student behaviour, literacy and numeracy and using technology.

The school sector can learn from the health sector in this respect. The health sector introduced various categories of nurses (from enrolled nurses through to nurse practitioners) and increased specialisation of nurses, technicians and other patient support services so that doctors and health professionals are more supported in their work. Education could benefit from rethinking many of the current support roles and provide programs to up-skill this section of the workforce.

**Recommendation 7:**

**It is recommended that the Productivity Commission advises how support staff and other professionals could be used more effectively to improve student outcomes, specifically in addressing education equality.**

## **Information and Communications Technology**

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is embedded within our everyday lives. ICT forms a large part of the modern school curriculum. It is therefore critical that students develop competencies in using ICT and that pre-service education courses recognise the need for pedagogy to integrate technology and education.

Access to ICT is not only critical for the delivery of education but also has a role in the broader community and is now considered core infrastructure within any community.

The lack of access to ICT, low bandwidth and un-reliable service in rural and remote locations not only limits the education opportunities for students but is also a major contributing factor to increased turn over of staff, as staff feel isolated both professionally and socially.

Bandwidth availability for schools and their communities is therefore a priority. The minimum bandwidth for schools should be 10 Megabytes/second (Mb/s) regardless

of school size. Bandwidth availability for smaller regional centres is currently at 4 Mb/s whilst for larger regional centres 20 Mb/s services is now a feasible solution.

The Federal Government's deployment of the National Broadband Network (NBN) is expected to deliver 100Mb/s bandwidth to schools, where feasible, and upwards of 12Mb/s in small population areas within regional Western Australia. However, the NBN is not expected to be completed until 2019.

In the meantime the lack of access to high speed broad band in remote areas of Western Australia exacerbates attraction and retention of staff and impacts the delivery of education to students in these schools.

**Recommendation 8:**

**It is recommended that the Productivity Commission analyses the cost and benefits of access to high speed broad band for addressing equity issues in rural and remote areas.**

## **WORKFORCE AGILITY**

Communities value school autonomy, as evidenced by the growing trend to private schools and the recent enthusiasm for the Western Australian Government's Independent Public School initiative.

Principals and teachers form productive relationships with their local school community and therefore, understand which strategies will meet students' needs. Policy settings must support staff in finding solutions at the school level, without being constrained by bureaucratic processes that stymie innovation.

Autonomous schools require not only flexibility but the ability to respond quickly to the dynamic needs of their school community. Achieving this agility in the school sector should be afforded priority.

The majority of Australia's school workforce is employed under one of a number of collective agreements which are negotiated on a cyclical basis, most spanning a period of three years. Creation of new staffing classifications, roles, introduction of reward structures or improved incentives, flexible employment options and changes to career paths requires negotiation with respective unions or employment advocacy groups.

For the public school sector of Western Australia there are currently ten separate industrial awards and eight separate industrial agreements. Workforce reform in the public school system has to be considered in the context of the Western Australian Government's public sector industrial relations policy settings.

Increased school autonomy, improving the quality of leadership and the quality of the schools workforce, coupled with improved school accountability, are foundation elements to improving whole school performance. Achievement of these elements is difficult without the support of stakeholders such as unions and professional associations.

Within the public sector industrial agreements are negotiated on average every three years. Achievement of workforce flexibility requires a long lead time and is likely to only be achieved over several enterprise bargaining agreement cycles. Employers must also balance tensions that may arise as the pace of change will differ between workforce cohorts and new roles may cross over more than one industrial agreement. For example, workforce reform identified in 2009 may only be feasible to implement in 2015.

Existing industrial instruments constrain the pace to which reform can be achieved. There is a real need to change industrial instruments to enable greater agility within the school workforce.

**Recommendation 9:**  
**It is recommended that the Productivity Commission analyses and advises on the nature of industrial instruments that would assist in the move to greater flexibility and agility within the workforce.**

## **INCENTIVES AND SUSTAINABILITY**

Policy settings must continue to encourage skills development of staff at all levels to achieve greater productivity, encourage innovation and result in improved student outcomes. School autonomy currently, and will increasingly, encourage greater responsiveness to local school communities but also demand greater accountability so that schools can demonstrate that their actions benefit students.

Development and implementation of information systems that support the school communities to better understand student progress and well-being and enable more focused school planning and development of staff to better respond to the information are essential. The Western Australian school sector supports the use of information concerning student achievement to inform school planning and staff development.

However, it is unlikely that a national performance system will take into account the context of an individual school or classroom. A one size fits all approach to performance management appears to be at odds with schools working towards greater autonomy. A national framework could guide consistency however, it should not reduce the capacity of schools to make decisions for their school community.

A performance system that identifies (objectively) the top performing teachers will equally identify teachers who are supposedly underperforming (identified through standardised one size fits all measures). Employers need adequate processes in place to deal with underperforming teachers and any recognition (wanted or unwanted) of underperformance from the community. School leaders must be afforded greater capacity within the industrial instrument to support the management of underperformance.

Linking performance pay to individuals further complicates the implementation of the proposed reform direction. Performance pay for individual teachers is likely to be divisive in a time when education is increasingly moving toward a multi-disciplinary team approach to meeting students' needs. Rewarding schools for achieving targets is preferable.

Western Australia would prefer models of recognition that complement the industrial instrument of each respective sector or employer. For example, career advancement linked to attainment and continued demonstration of competencies. Such a model would encourage both professional development and improved productivity of the workforce. The *National Professional Standards for Teachers* provides a tool for staff and employers to use to reflect on performance and trial various models of competency based-career paths for teachers.

**Recommendation 10:**  
**It is recommended the Productivity Commission evaluates and advises on approaches that encourage achievement of a performance-oriented school workforce culture.**

### ***Sustainability***

The introduction of new professional standards combined with minimum qualifications will undoubtedly lead to an increase in the cost of labour for the school sector. The sustainability of increased labour costs, particularly for rural and remote areas of Western Australia, must be considered as the quality agenda continues.

Schools are increasingly delivering health and social programs that traditionally have been provided outside of the school sector. Typically this is through third parties such as not-for-profit organisations and other government agencies. This expansion of school site services requires coordination by the schools and is likely to require an increased investment within schools.

Schools workforce reform is systemic with outcomes being tangible only over the longer term. Although it is still too early to conclude definitively the outcomes achieved, early indications suggest that Western Australia's Improving Teacher Quality program is yielding positive results. However, sustainability of the programs requires ongoing investment beyond the life of the existing Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership Agreement.

The increasing role and expectation of a school and its workforce within the community, and the associated long-term investment required for workforce reform must be understood by governments, across the school sector, and within school communities.

**Recommendation 11:**  
**It is recommended that the Productivity Commission quantifies the additional funding that may be required to sustain the changing demands on a schools' workforce given the increasing role of schools within communities.**

## **WESTERN AUSTRALIA GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE**

Western Australia has been investing in systemic workforce reform to improve student outcomes. The Western Australian Government's empowerment agenda, through the introduction of Independent Public Schools and the realignment of education regions, will enable local level decision making, innovation and increased responsiveness to the school community. Schools, together with their community, will encourage greater productivity, effectiveness and agility from the workforce.

The Western Australian Government has been working collaboratively with all jurisdictions to develop and implement *National Professional Standards for Teachers* and the *National Professional Standard for Principals* in order to raise both the status and quality of the teaching profession. These Standards will be used as a framework to guide professional development of teachers and leaders. For example, the Catholic sector has embedded the key aspects of the *National Professional Standards for Teachers* in components and elements of the Quality Catholic Schooling improvement framework. The Standards have been used as a framework to map professional learning for educators in Western Australian public schools.

In an effort to manage a sustainable supply of teachers, the Western Australian Government offers a range of scholarships for pre-service teachers in areas of need and provides competitive salaries for graduate teachers.

The Western Australian school sector has been working closely with local universities to ensure courses better prepare teaching graduates for the classroom. Also, professional development opportunities have been made available for all staff to up-skill and further their careers.

Finally, Western Australia acknowledges the significant influence of high quality leadership on the motivation of their staff and achieving improved student performance. Significant investment has been made within Western Australia to develop world-class leadership programs for both current and aspiring school leaders.

### ***Establishment of Independent Public Schools***

The Western Australian Government's Independent Public Schools (IPS) initiative is one example where the State policy settings are supporting the development of a highly skilled and flexible schools workforce, accountable to its school community.

The IPS model provides schools with more freedom and autonomy to control their budget and manage their staffing profile, thereby promoting local decision making. The IPS remain part of the government school sector but are allocated a one-line budget for salaries and contingencies, and are empowered to use their resources to best meet the needs and expectations of the school community.

IPS have more freedom to make decisions about school curriculum, student support, staff recruitment and financial management, subject to compliance with legislation, government policies, and industrial agreements covering government schools. IPS can determine their school's staffing profile within the one-line budget, select and appoint all staff, approve leave (including leave without pay) and fill all associated vacancies, and manage relief costs for staff leave.



Each IPS develops a Delivery and Performance Agreement, endorsed by the Director General of the Department of Education, the principal and the chair of the school board. The Agreement sets out the accountability framework around which IPS can operate with increased flexibility. The Agreement details:

- the performance and accountability expectations of the school including compliance, governance, student achievement targets and programs to be delivered; and
- the resources and support that will be supplied centrally through the Department of Education.

The Agreement is part of a suite of instruments and processes through which IPS will demonstrate accountability for the quality of its learning environment and the standards of student learning. These are as follows:

- delivery and performance agreement;
- business plan;
- school self assessment;
- reports to the School Board;
- annual school report;
- principal performance review; and
- an independent school review.

The human resources recruitment and selection flexibility is cited by IPS principals as being the most significant of the independent public school flexibilities. Having the opportunity to select their own staff through merit processes and establish a workforce with specific skills to meet the needs of their student cohort cannot be underestimated as a strategy to improve a wide range of social and academic outcomes for students.

Some schools have put in place leadership positions to target particular areas of need, other schools have employed finance and human resource assistants, maintenance support and administrative assistants which free up teachers and leaders from administrative tasks.

Another example is having the capacity to recruit teachers with specialist skills. One IPS school employed an additional five specialist staff to support students. By doing so the school was able to increase the number of students receiving specialist support from six to 38.

IPS are able to determine how and when they will use professional development days allocated to all public schools. The flexibility to move away from set days enables staff to organise professional learning and planning days that best suit the school and better suited their needs.

Management of staff leave has also had a positive impact on staff morale and brings clarity to planning processes due to the relatively quick approval process for leave compared to the previous centralised application process.

The IPS initiative is still in its early stages and it is therefore too early to have definitive results about the outcomes of the reform. However, there has been considerable interest from staff who are wanting to work in an IPS and a recent Departmental survey of IPS principals has found that the workforce of IPS has become more invigorated and motivated, taking greater responsibility for their students' outcomes.

Since the establishment of IPS, a total of 23 362 applications have been received across a total of 992 advertisements in IPS. Of these, 16 445 applications were for 470 teaching advertisements. The depth in applications means IPS are able to choose skills and attributes suitable for their school context. These teachers are able to make an immediate difference.

The establishment of IPS has resulted in a departure from the centralised staffing model and resource allocation model determined by a one sized fits all staffing formula and opened new dimension to all aspects of workforce planning across public schools.

The significance of these changes should not be underestimated. For example, the existing industrial agreement and policies were designed to support a model where preferential transfers and management of redeployees for example, were easily accommodated centrally. The move to a system with significant numbers of IPS shifts the process to locally based merit selection.

A total of 207 schools in Western Australia's public school sector will have IPS status by 2013. In 2010, 34 schools commenced operating as an IPS. Another 64 schools joined the initiative in 2011. A third intake was advertised in 2011 and lead to a further 109 schools attaining IPS status; 73 of these commencing in 2012 and 36 in 2013.

The current model of IPS is one strategy in a broader transition to all public schools being empowered to operate with greater autonomy in order to improve the educational outcomes of students. To realise this goal, extensive financial support, greater agility within the workforce as well as an ongoing commitment to research and development will be required. However, the longer term benefits are greater capacity for developing innovative, local solutions to improving outcomes for students and more effective and efficient utilisation of available resources. In terms of professional learning, IPS principals have access to a self reflection and professional learning planning tool based on the National Professional Standard for Principals.

School autonomy is already a feature of both the Independent and Catholic sectors within Western Australia. For example, all decisions for Independent schools rest with the school board and within the Catholic sector, schools have autonomy over staffing up to principal level, financial allocations and resource distributions. Catholic schools also have a school board or council, consisting of parents and community members, which have the capacity to advise on a range of matters. Subsidiarity is a key element of the operation of Catholic schools.

### ***Establishment of Education Regions***

In late 2010, the Western Australian Government announced the establishment of eight Education Regions across the public school sector, for the commencement of the 2011 school year. Regions have been established to support greater decision making at the local level.

It is anticipated that Regions will then establish School Networks. Each Network is anticipated to comprise of up to 20 schools and will be led by a network principal. The network principal is a new position that has been created to enable sharing of expertise and knowledge. Networks will be able to share experiences and resources to ensure improved collegiate support and development. There are very important benefits for students and staff that flow from schools working in networks, including:

- improved collegiate support;
- greater curriculum choice for students;
- increased access to specialist teachers;
- smoother transition between primary and secondary schools; and
- a more consistent approach to behaviour management and discipline across schools.

### ***Performance improvement***

The empowerment agenda being progressed within the public school sector provides the structure that encourages continual school improvement. Improved information systems and revised performance management policies support school leaders to focus school planning and reform, targeting students' specific needs. Further, these systems and processes enable self reflection and formalise conversations concerning staff professional development needs against the framework of professional standards.

The Quality Catholic Schooling School Improvement Framework allows schools and leadership teams to be more responsible for school appraisal and evaluation. The Framework is designed to provide a tool and process for schools to plan for whole school improvement. Schools can use the Framework as a means for dialogue with key office personnel and with other schools. Schools have reported that the Framework is effective and a useful starting point for conversations about school improvement. Components within the Framework have been aligned to the National Professional Standards for Teachers thereby enabling staff to reflect on their professional development.

### ***Better preparation of teachers***

Western Australia's school sector has been working closely with local universities to improve pre-service teacher education courses.

In conjunction with Edith Cowan University, schools in Western Australia have been provided additional resourcing to support both the Residency program and an Internship program. Within both models, pre-service teachers spend a greater length of time in the classroom under the tutelage of an experienced, high quality mentor. Within the Residency program pre-service teachers spend two days per week in schools for the entire school year, whilst the Internship model sees the pre-service teacher complete their final year of university full time in the classroom. Mentors and site coordinators receive training and dedicated time to support the pre-service teacher during their time in school.

Early evaluations are highlighting that these models are producing graduates who are more classroom ready.

In addition, Western Australia has trained specialist coaches to support graduates as they transition into the classroom. Specialist coaches provide up to 20 hours of in class support for early career teachers.

### ***Remote teaching experience***

Better preparation of teachers going into remote schools is a key retention strategy being progressed within Western Australia. Providing pre-service teachers with the

opportunity to gain experience within a rural or remote school, along with ongoing support has many significant advantages.

During 2010, the Department piloted a rural and remote support team with the express purpose of re-invigorating the profile and the uniqueness of the Remote Teaching Service (RTS)<sup>2</sup> and promoting opportunities to join the RTS.

The support team works with universities to identify high quality pre-service students, and with RTS schools to identify suitable mentor teachers to support a practicum placement in the school.

The team promotes the experience of teaching in remote schools and provides support to teachers working in remote schools, particularly with respect to engagement with students and the broader community. The team also ensures all staff have a comprehensive understanding of the context in which their school operates, their role and the service they provide to the community.

### ***Leadership development***

School leaders play a critical role in encouraging development and improvement within a school, increasing the capacity of staff, providing opportunities to access professional development, providing mentoring and support to the school and engaging with the local school community. For this reason, developing high quality school leaders is a policy priority within Western Australia.

Significant investment has been made toward leadership development by each of the school sectors in Western Australia:

- The Department, in 2010, established a new professional learning entity– the Institute for Professional Learning (the Institute), which includes a Public School Leadership Program (PSLP). The PSLP has been established, in partnership with a higher education provider, to ensure high quality sustainable leadership across public schools. It offers aspirant and experienced leaders and managers the opportunity to complete post-graduate qualifications including a Masters of Public School Leadership. The Institute and the PSLP represent an integrated strategy to professional learning that is consultative, collaborative and responsive to the professional learning needs of all Department staff, including public sector employees supporting schools. offer an array of leadership programs that are aligned to the new National Professional Standard for Principals.
- The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia has established a Quality Teaching and Leadership Development Centre that provides professional development opportunities for leaders, aspiring leaders and teachers. The investment aims to support these individuals to generate improved outcomes for all students, to ensure every child progresses successfully through their schooling.
- The Catholic Education Office of Western Australia has used the Quality Catholic Schooling Framework as a tool for school leadership development and change management.

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<sup>2</sup> The Remote Teaching Service (RTS) is a program offered by the Department of Education. Teaching within the RTS attracts significant financial incentives, additional leave and improved opportunities for permanency.

- Representatives from the three sectors meet regularly to plan leadership development cross-sectoral professional learning opportunities suitable for school leaders.

## ATTACHMENT A

### WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S SCHOOL WORKFORCE

The Western Australian school sector (primary and secondary education) employs over 54 000 people<sup>xviii</sup> and represents the largest single cost to the education system. For example, within the public sector alone, employee benefits represent 67.8 per cent of all expenses for the public education system (2009/10)<sup>xix</sup>.

Ensuring there is an adequate supply of the workforce to meet future service demand of the school sector will be challenging over the next five years as the supply of the education workforce, particularly the teaching workforce, fluctuates according to the overall performance of the Western Australian economy.

The Western Australian labour market has been characterised as volatile over the last five years, with the opposing impacts of strong resources growth and the global financial crisis. When the State moves to another growth cycle, the competition for skilled labour will increase, particularly in the context of retiring baby boomers and labour force growth constraints.

#### ***Demand***

Demand for the school workforce is predominantly determined by the number and distribution of students, based on the projected student aged population.

The anticipated rapid growth in the student population is due to:

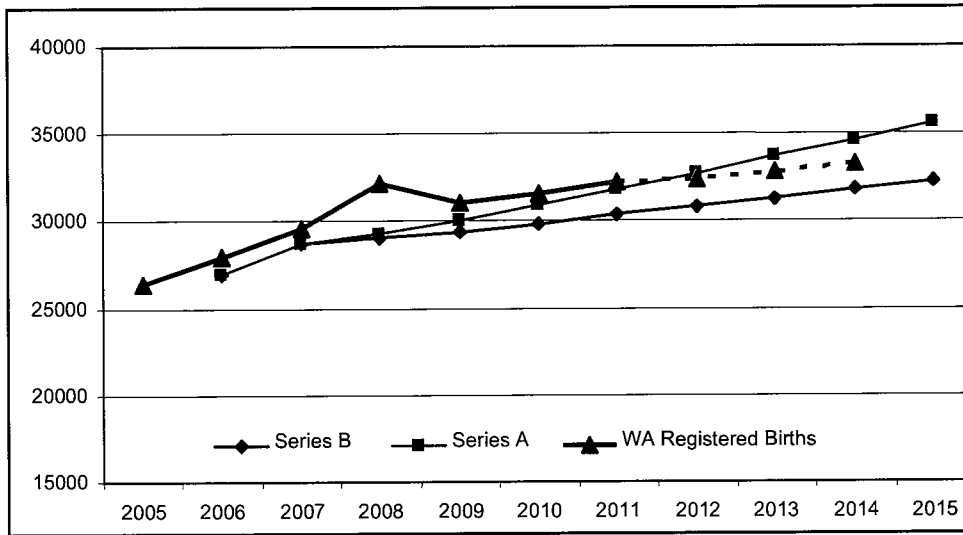
- sustained high birth rates in Western Australia
- return to full student enrolments as a “half cohort<sup>3</sup>” transitions through secondary schooling. The 2015 peak of student growth, Figure 1, reflects the half cohort finishing secondary school the previous year;
- increased numbers of children migrating to Western Australia, particularly the number of refugee students who require specialist teachers to meet the complex educational needs.
- participation rates of four year olds increasing from 2013;
- retention rates of Year 11 and 12 students have also increased as a result of legislation introduced in 2008 raising the school leaving age; and
- introduction of national qualification standards across the childcare sector requiring attendance of early childhood teachers in non school settings.

With respect to sustained high birth rates, Figure 1 shows the rapid growth in the number of births in the State. Registered births in Western Australia grew at a rate of 2.62 per cent per annum, over the period 2005 to 2010<sup>xx</sup>. This growth is faster than the birth rate projected in the Australian Bureau of Statistics population projections Series A and Series B. Whilst it is expected that the number of births within the State will plateau from 2011, the Department recommends that Series A projections provide the best prediction of growth in student population within Western Australia over the short to medium term.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2001 the school entry age in WA changed to include only those children who turned 6 by the 30<sup>th</sup> of June to commence Year 1. Consequently, a reduced number of students enrolled in WA schools that year, now referred to as the ‘half cohort’. The half cohort completes Year 12 in 2014

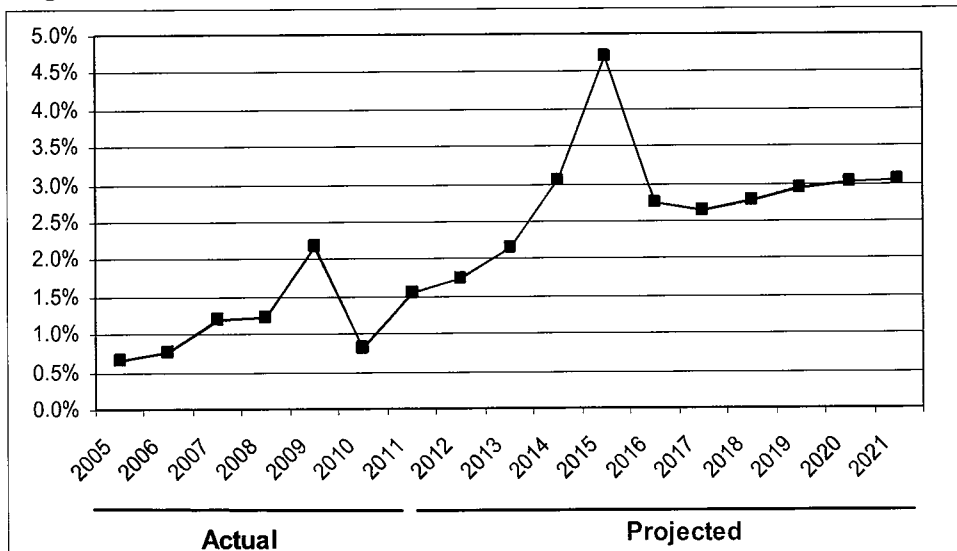
**Figure 1. Projected births Australian Bureau of Statistics Series A, Series B and WA registered births actual/projected**



Source: ABS Cat 3222.0 Series A and Series B, Persons Age 0,WA. Births, Deaths and Marriages (WA) statistics

In April 2011, there were a total of 399,012 students attending Western Australian schools<sup>xxi</sup>. By 2021, it is likely that Western Australia will have a further 130,000 students enrolled, bringing the total to 529,830 students; this is an increase of 32.79 per cent. Figure 2 highlights the projected annual growth in student numbers from 2005 through to 2021.

**Figure 2 Western Australia annual student growth - actual and projected**



Source: Department of Education, unpublished student projections as at April 2011.

### Public and private

In 2011, approximately 66 per cent of Western Australian students attended public schools and 34 per cent attended private schools. Both sectors have experienced growth in total student numbers over the period 2007 to 2011. However, there has been an increasing trend in the proportion of students attending private schools.

**Table 1 Distribution of student population, public and private schools 2007 and 2011**

Distribution of Students 2007	Pre- compulsory	Primary	Secondary	Total
Public Schools %	72%	71%	60%	67%
Private Schools %	28%	29%	40%	33%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

Distribution of Students 2011	Pre- compulsory	Primary	Secondary	Total
Public Schools %	71%	69%	58%	66%
Private Schools %	29%	31%	42%	34%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: DoE unpublished student enrolments, as at April 2011

The most significant shift to the private sector occurs at the completion of primary school as students transition to high school. Prior to 2010, approximately 3,000 students moved from public to private schools at the completion of primary school (Year 7).

However, in 2010, the half-cohort transitioned from primary school into secondary school. In parallel, many Western Australian private sector high schools offered year 7 enrolments for the first time. The combination of the two factors resulted in a greater proportion of students moving to the private sector.

Evidence suggests the traditional movement of 3,000 students will now be replaced by a movement upon completion of Year 6 and a further movement upon completion of Year 7. In total it is expected that close to 4,000 students will transition to the private sector at completion of primary school each year.

There is a further movement of approximately 1,000 students back to the public sector for Year 11 and 12. This second movement of students between the sectors; is a result of the increased school leaving age introduced in 2008.

### **Supply**

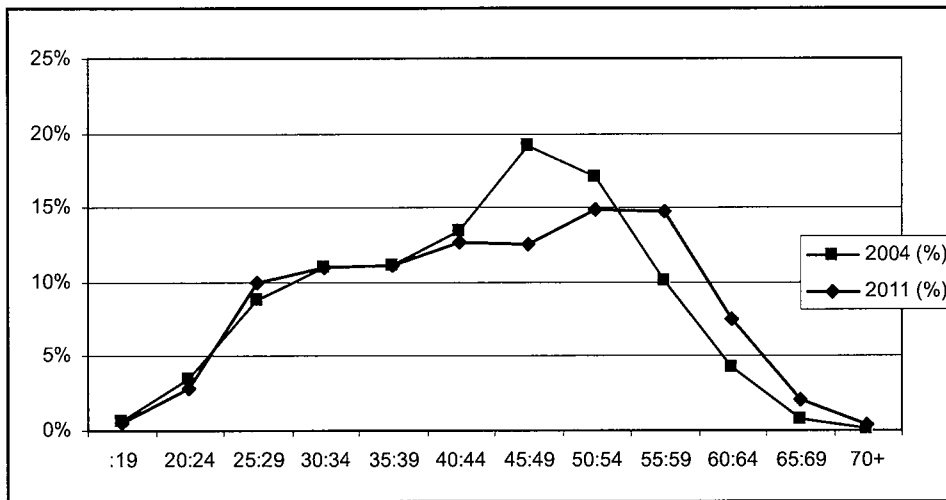
The supply of the education workforce within Western Australia is largely impacted by the performance of the broader economy and tightening of the State's labour market.

For example, the down turn in the economy had a significant effect on the behaviour of the Western Australian teacher workforce. During 2007/08, when the State's economy peaked, resignations from the public sector also peaked at 1,143 then slowed to just 605 in 2010/11. It is anticipated that this reduction was a direct result of the downturn in the global economy. Retirements followed a similar pattern peaking with 440 in 2007/08 and then falling to 358 in 2010/11.

The age of public schools workforce tends to be older than the private school sector within Western Australia. In 2011, 5,500 teachers (24.5 per cent) working in public schools are over 55 years of age with 2,230 teachers (9.8 per cent) currently over the age of 60. Figure 3 shows the ageing of the public teaching workforce since 2004. In contrast, in 2004, only 15 per cent of the public school teaching workforce was aged over 55 and 5 per cent aged over 60 years.



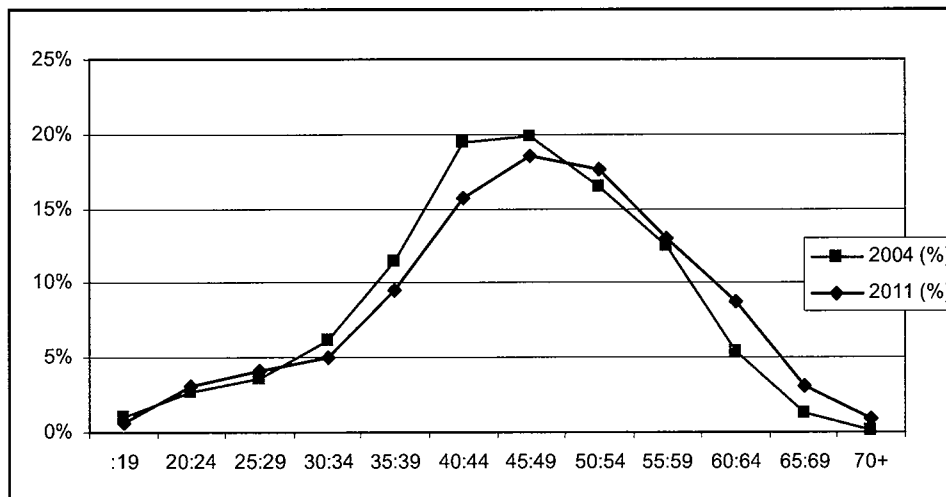
**Figure 3 Distribution of public school teachers by age, 2004 and 2011**



Source. Department of Education unpublished HRMIS

The public school support staff age profile also highlights an ageing workforce. In 2011 there were 4,676 support staff (25 per cent) aged over 55 years and 2,305 support staff (12.7 per cent) aged over 60 years. This is a marked increase since 2004 with 2520 support staff (19.3 per cent) over 55 years and 899 support staff (6.9 per cent) aged over 60 years, refer Figure 4.

**Figure 4 Distribution of public school support staff by age, 2004 and 2011**



The current age profile of the Western Australian teaching workforce indicates a significant proportion of experienced teachers are near retirement. As the economy improves, so too will superannuation benefits; this will give confidence for those eligible to retire and may contribute to an increase in the number of retirements.

In 2011, the actual numbers of teachers available to teach in Western Australia indicates that supply is sufficient. However, Western Australia continues to

experience difficulty in attracting and retaining teachers for certain subject specialities and for specific locations.

Effective supply of the workforce is impacted by:

- Subject specialisation of teachers is not reflective of demand areas– currently across the public school sector, there are hundreds of unemployed Arts and Crafts teachers, but limited numbers of Mathematics or Physical Science teachers, Special Needs and English as a Second Language, Computing and Design and Technology. And a
- Declining willingness to work State-wide - evidence is demonstrating that, of those in the supply pool, few are prepared to be appointed to rural locations. Many teachers indicate they are only prepared to teach in 2 of the 4 metropolitan regions. The availability of teachers to work in geographic areas of need has diminished. This may be attributed to the changing profile of the teaching workforce; the increase in mature age and mid career entrants means many will have family or financial commitments limiting their capacity for relocation. There also appears to be a general unwillingness to relocate.

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