



Department of
Education
and Training

UNLOCK YOUR SCHOOL'S FUTURE

Independent Public Schools
Information for Principals
and School Councils



Licensed for NEALS

FROM THE PREMIER OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA AND THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

Over this last year, the Western Australian Government has progressively honoured its substantial pre-election commitments on education.

It has signed off on the biggest capital works program ever – over \$1billion. It has also negotiated and implemented the salary agreement with teachers; and introduced a much-needed behaviour improvement program.

With this prospectus, the Government honours another significant promise. The promise to empower our schools is given substance here in a plan to introduce a new kind of school – the Independent Public School.

In doing this, we are also fulfilling the promise of the policy of the previous Coalition Government – a policy aimed at establishing autonomous schools within the public sector.

The Department of Education and Training has recently moved on a number of fronts to lessen the amount of bureaucratic control experienced by both schools and teachers. It is time to take a bold step to rejuvenate public schools by placing significant authority and accountability at the local level.

Now, with the Independent Public Schools initiative, those schools which choose to embrace greater independence will not only be freed from a range of bureaucratic burdens, they will also enjoy the freedom to shape their schools according to the needs and capabilities of their communities.

Most importantly, a one-line budget will give financial flexibility while new staffing arrangements will enable principals to develop their own staffing profiles.

Principals and their School Councils (Boards) will receive appropriate induction training; auditing of both finances and standards will be regular and rigorous.

As far as possible, schools will be chosen from a wide range of backgrounds to ensure a mix which reflects the overall variety of schools in the public system. We will, where possible, encourage clusters of schools to sign up so innovative solutions and common resources can be shared. More schools will follow in successive years.

With greater independence, schools can develop the right responses to the reality of their needs and challenges at the local level. We confidently expect that the creativity and determination that will emerge will be the beginning of the single most important transformation of our public schools in generations. It will leave us well-placed to tackle the demands of education policy in the future.

Most importantly, this initiative will allow schools and teachers to focus more precisely than ever on their core business: providing the best possible public school education for this State's children, whatever their abilities and wherever they live.



Hon Colin Barnett MLA
Premier of Western Australia



Hon Elizabeth Constable MLA
Minister for Education



FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

I am pleased to provide details of how schools interested in operating with increased autonomy can lodge an expression of interest in becoming an Independent Public School.

Placing greater decision making authority at the school level is in keeping with the vision I set out in Classroom First for distinctive schools to be shaped by the needs of their students and communities. This new initiative is a decisive step forward in giving schools the flexibility they need to achieve this.

From 2010, school communities will be given the choice of staying within the current arrangements or becoming an Independent Public School. They will still be part of our public school system and operate within relevant legislation and industrial agreements but will not be subject to Department policies, procedures and compliance processes.

What it means to be an Independent Public School is outlined in this prospectus. The powers and responsibilities are those that principals have indicated would enable them to improve their schools' performance.

Given the diversity of schools and school communities throughout WA, a single model will not suit; there is scope for individual schools to apply the flexibilities to meet the needs of their own communities. In the future, flexibility will be extended further by amending legislation or developing new legislation.

There are also many schools that are working together or can see potential benefits in doing so. Groups of schools may want to express an interest in joining as a cluster and exercising the flexibilities across the cluster. Where there is support for such a proposal and a sound educational rationale such expressions of interest are encouraged.

Whether a single school or a cluster of schools expresses an interest, there is an expectation that, before doing so, principals have consulted with and gained the broad support of their staff and community.

The process for becoming an Independent Public School will be based on:

- capacity of the school to assume greater responsibility for its own affairs
- level of local support
- potential benefits to students and the broader school community.

Some school communities may recognise the benefits of becoming an Independent Public School but, for whatever reason, do not believe the time is right to express an interest now. These schools could consider being part of the next intake, with nominations being called during 2010.

Schools will be notified of the outcome of their expressions of interest by the end of Term 3, 2009. This will allow them time to prepare during Term 4, 2009 and be ready to operate for 2010. An induction program will be run for school leaders and school registrars/business managers so they are well prepared for the responsibilities that go with increased autonomy. There will also be induction for members of School Councils (Boards) so they fully understand their roles and are equipped to enact them.

I encourage you to consider this invitation, discuss it with your staff and School Council (Board), and decide whether your school is well placed to benefit from being part of the first intake of Independent Public Schools to begin in 2010.



Sharyn O'Neill
Director General



INTRODUCTION

Western Australian public schools should be as different as the communities they serve.

The programs each school offers and the ethos each school creates should reflect the needs and aspirations of its school community. This diversity is difficult to achieve if schools have to comply with policies and procedures issued by central office. Schools need to have as much control as possible over their resources so they can best serve their students.

We know that the quality of education provided in a school is in the hands of the teachers. The best results are achieved when principals devote time and energy to leading teachers to generate high standards of student achievement. Time spent on complying with centrally set policies and procedures is a distraction from their core leadership role.

In the same way, administrative tasks required of teachers take their focus away from teaching. If, in those schools that are positioned to use it well, principals and staff are given greater authority to go about their educational work free from many central constraints, their creativity and problem solving skills can be directed at enhancing the educational experiences of students.

There is great value in building within a school community a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for making the school successful. If members of the school community feel they have the power and the obligation to create the best possible learning environment for students, they will not only give of their best but will also have the satisfaction of what is achieved through their efforts.

There is no shortage of able, committed educators in our schools. It is through their enthusiasm and willingness to innovate that the challenges facing schools can be met. Independent Public Schools will have the capacity to create local solutions to meet the challenges they encounter.

Providing Independent Public Schools with significantly increased flexibility is a first step towards extending to all schools the level of flexibility they need to deliver the best possible educational experiences to their students.

“A range of schools will be selected in each intake.”



FLEXIBILITIES FOR INDEPENDENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The following flexibilities will be available to all Independent Public Schools for the start of the 2010 school year.

Curriculum

- Flexibility to adopt a range of curricula providing the requirements of the Curriculum Framework are met. A school could, for example, decide to adopt the International Baccalaureate up to Year 10.
- Flexibility to choose when and if to access the Department's Online Teaching and Learning System (OTLS) and ICT-related teaching and learning programs.
- Flexibility in the timing of the six school development days, including the ability to negotiate with staff and the School Council (Board) to 'trade off' days for after-hours professional learning throughout the year.

Student support

- Flexibility to appoint or contract student support staff including, but not limited to, school psychologists, education assistants, speech pathologists and social workers.
- Funding for students with identified special needs provided in the one-line budget (see det.wa.edu.au/schoolsandyou) so there is flexibility to use this funding to best meet student needs. The disability diagnosis, needs and age of the student determine the funding provided. This replaces school funding mechanisms of Schools Plus.
- Capacity to exclude a student for reasons currently permitted under the *School Education Act*. Central support will be available to help a school manage exclusion processes and find alternative placement for excluded students.

Human resources

Staff management

- Flexibility to determine the staffing profile (administrative staff, teaching staff and school support staff) (see det.wa.edu.au/schoolsandyou).
- Flexibility to approve leave decisions (including leave without pay) and responsibility to backfill all associated vacancies, with central support provided where required.
- Flexibility to manage all relief costs for staff leave in the one-line budget (see det.wa.edu.au/schoolsandyou).

Recruitment and selection

- Flexibility to select all staff, with support to recruit staff where no suitable applications are received.
- Exemption from central placement processes, including central transfer process and placement of redeployees. This does not preclude redeployees from applying for advertised positions in Independent Public Schools.
- Following a transition period, a redeployee generated by an Independent Public School's decision to change its staffing profile is the responsibility of that school to manage and fund until a suitable placement in another location is arranged. Central office will support an Independent Public School to place redeployees generated due to a significant decline in enrolments.
- Flexibility for the principal to appoint new fixed term staff for up to 12 months through a local expression of interest process.
- Flexibility to make an 'early offer' of placement to student teachers and school psychologists on their final year practicum.

Payroll

- Payment of staff salaries remains with ETSSC, however the school approves and enters electronically (HRMIS) information on commencement, termination, leave, variation and movement of staff.

Financial management

- Flexibility to manage staff and contingencies through a one-line budget (see det.wa.edu.au/schoolsandyou)
- Flexibility to manage utilities (electricity, water, gas and waste management) and retain savings.
- Flexibility to determine accounting and financial procedures and practices provided they meet compliance and reporting requirements of financial legislative frameworks such as Treasurer's Instructions.
- Flexibility to establish a wider range of reserve accounts (such as Salary, Buildings and Facilities).
- Capacity for the principal to award contracts and dispose of assets with values up to \$150 000; and exercise or decline contract extensions and approve price variations up to \$150 000 for contracts specifically awarded for the school.
- For future Department contracts, potential for the principal to choose to exclude the school from using whole of Department contracts based on a value for money decision. This decision would be made at the time the contract is awarded.

Buildings and facilities

- Flexibility to manage faults (breakdowns and repairs), complying with Government processes and using funds in the one-line budget.
- Flexibility to employ or contract facilities management, maintenance, cleaning and/or gardening staff.
- Capacity to submit requests directly to central office for capital works projects.
- Flexibility to manage property services contracts using funds in the one-line budget (for example, cleaning, window cleaning, mowing, fertiliser, grassed area rejuvenation, hygiene, other rates and charges, maintenance of shared facilities).
- Flexibility to manage routine maintenance using funds in the one-line budget (for example, RCD testing, fire extinguishers, gutter cleaning).



OBLIGATIONS OF AN INDEPENDENT PUBLIC SCHOOL

Independent Public Schools will operate within the parameters detailed below.

Compliance and legislative requirements

- Compliance with all legislation including, but not limited to, *School Education Act*, *Public Sector Management Act*, *Financial Management Act*, *Curriculum Council Act* as well as all industrial instruments.
- Compliance with all agreements between the Australian and WA Governments such as participation in NAPLAN and reporting to parents on student achievement using A–E grades.
- Provision of relevant data to enable the Department to meet Statewide reporting obligations (for example, suspensions, exclusions, attendance, critical incidents and finance).
- Participation in the Department's School Audit program.
- Application of the *Plan for public schools*.

Delivery and Performance Agreement

- Negotiation of a Delivery and Performance Agreement [signed by the principal, Director General and chair of the School Council (Board)] identifying the resources the school will receive, the support it will be provided, the programs it will be contracted to deliver, and improvement targets it will achieve over the life of the agreement (up to five years).

Public accountability

- An independent review in the final year of the Delivery and Performance Agreement, with the report made public, to replace Standards Reviews by Directors Schools. As the focus of the review is on educational performance, the independent review team will be predominantly educators.
- Production of an annual school report signed by the School Council (Board) chair.

Governance

- Requirement of the principal to work with the School Council (to become a School Board) to maximise its functions and community and industry representation.
- Endorsement by the School Council (Board) of the budget, staffing profile, strategic and business plans, signed by the School Council (Board) chair.
- Signature of the chair of the School Council (Board) on the Delivery and Performance Agreement.
- Participation by the School Council (Board) in the selection of the principal when a vacancy arises.
- No impact on the role and function of Parents and Citizens' Associations.

SUPPORT FOR AN INDEPENDENT PUBLIC SCHOOL

Benefits of a large system

An Independent Public School remains part of our larger public school system and is able to access the associated benefits and central support structures including but not limited to:

- graduate teacher support and induction
- professional learning for system programs in which the school chooses to participate
- access to primary and secondary behaviour centres
- support for the management of critical incidents
- access to attendance officers and participation coordinators
- support to establish attendance panels
- support for student exclusions
- Notebooks for Teachers program
- access to the ICT Help Desk
- access to computer software licenses (such as Microsoft products).
- advice and support of the Financial Services and Support Directorate
- employee support services
- services of the Standards and Integrity Directorate
- provision of transportable classrooms in growth areas.

Legal and industrial matters

The Department will represent Independent Public Schools in industrial negotiations and provide support on legal and industrial matters.

Administration support

As a result of increased decision making and governance at the local level, a school will receive ongoing additional funding for administrative support in the areas of human resource and finance.

Leadership support

Strong school leadership is critical to the success of an Independent Public School. Within a one-line budget and flexible staffing model, a school or cluster of schools will have the flexibility to determine their leadership structures and processes.

School leaders may choose to access ongoing leadership development programs, including coaching and mentoring, through the Department's WA Institute of Educational Leadership or other providers.

Transition process

A school or cluster of schools will be allocated additional funding (\$20,000 to \$40,000) in the term prior to commencing as an Independent Public School to help prepare and plan for successful transition.

As an Independent Public School, the school is immediately removed from central staffing processes and may start their own processes to establish their own staff profile.

Where existing school staff are not in agreement with the ethos and direction of Independent Public Schools, they may opt for redeployment within a term of the school starting as an Independent Public School. Where a school wishes to alter its staffing profile while transitioning to an Independent Public School, central office helps place any redeployees who must be identified before the start of the school year.



INTAKE OF SCHOOLS

Principals can only nominate to become an Independent Public School with the support of their current School Council. An independent selection panel will recommend schools to the Director General. A range of schools will be selected in each intake, including primary and secondary, metropolitan and regional, schools from low and high socioeconomic status communities, and clusters of schools.

To express an interest in becoming an Independent Public School, principals in collaboration with their communities are required to submit a written application of no more than three pages addressing the following:

- capacity of the school to assume greater responsibility for its own affairs
- level of local support
- potential benefits to students and the broader school community.

The independent selection panel may source additional information to assist in school selection from:

- school performance data relative to the school context (for example, Schools Online, First Cut, Attendance, Suspensions)
- school financial audit reports and school responses to findings
- Standards Review and Expert Review Group reports and school responses to findings
- Executive Directors and Directors.

There will be an initial intake of schools at the start of the 2010 school year. Subsequent intakes will follow during 2010. Schools not included in the first intake will be provided with feedback and supported to join the initiative in subsequent intakes.

Expressions of interest to become a Public Independent School for the start of the 2010 school year close on Monday 7 September 2009 at 4.00pm and should be addressed (marked Private and Confidential) to:

Ms Sharyn O'Neill
Director General
Department of Education and Training
151 Royal Street
EAST PERTH WA 6004

E: Sharyn.ONeill@det.wa.edu.au

Further Information

W: det.wa.edu.au/schoolsandyou

The website includes this prospectus as well as more details on managing the one-line budget and relief costs for staff leave. Also included is an information sheet for parents and communities, and answers to frequently asked questions for staff (updated regularly).

School Innovation and Reform Unit

For queries or clarification please contact:

T: 9264 5701

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EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Independent Public Schools – commencing 2010

School:

School type: Primary Secondary District High Education Support

School level:

Name of Principal:

T: _____ E: _____

Name of Chair, School Council:

T: _____ E: _____

Is this a cluster application? Yes No

If yes, name of the cluster if applicable:

List other schools in the cluster:

Signed: Principal

Signed: Chair, School Council

Please return this completed form with your written application (maximum three pages).
If a cluster of schools is applying, each school is required to complete this form and include it with the one written application (up to three pages) for the cluster.

Applications close: 7 September 2009 at 4.00pm

Forward applications marked
Private and Confidential to:

Ms Sharyn O'Neill
Director General
Department of Education and Training
151 Royal Street
EAST PERTH WA 6004

E: Sharyn.ONeill@det.wa.edu.au