

# UNLOCK YOUR SCHOOL'S FUTURE

## Key facts on Independent Public Schools

### What does it mean if my local school becomes an Independent Public School?

The Independent Public Schools initiative is a State Government commitment to empower school communities by giving them greater capacity to shape the ethos, priorities and directions of their schools. Independent Public Schools assume greater responsibility for their own affairs and have greater flexibility to respond to their communities. They create more diversity in the public school system and help build strong communities that are more able to respond to the needs of students.

### How many Independent Public Schools are there?

There are 264 schools operating as Independent Public Schools: 34 commenced in 2010, 64 in 2011, 73 in 2012, and 84 in 2013. A further nine new schools opened as Independent Public Schools in 2014. Over half of all public schools have sought to become Independent Public Schools since the initiative began in 2010.

### How will my school change if it becomes an Independent Public School?

Your school will change according to the needs and expectations of your school community. There will be more freedom and flexibility to make decisions about important matters that impact on students' education such as the curriculum, student support, staff recruitment, financial management, governance and accountability.

### Can Independent Public Schools do what they like?

Independent Public Schools, like all public schools, are bound by a framework of legislation, industrial agreements and policies including, but not limited to the:

*School Education Act 1999*

*School Education Regulations 2000*

boards' *Terms of Reference*

Government policies

mandated Departmental policies.

### What happens to those schools which choose not to become Independent Public Schools?

They continue to operate in the normal manner.

### Can my child attend the local school?

Enrolment procedures do not change. Independent Public Schools provide education to students in their local intake areas. Enrolment procedures for Gifted and Talented Programs remain the same.

### What are the fees and charges at an Independent Public School?

Independent Public Schools are bound by the *School Education Act 1999* and *School Education Act Regulations 2000*. The structure for contributions, fees and charges remains the same as all public schools.

### What are the uniform requirements of an Independent Public School?

Uniform requirements are determined by the school council (board) in consultation with the school community.

### What is taught in Independent Public Schools?

Independent Public Schools are bound by the requirements of the *School Curriculum and Authority Act 1997*.

### Can Independent Public Schools select their own staff?

Yes, they can select those staff who best meet the needs of their students. School boards play a significant role in selecting principals when vacancies arise. Like all schools, Independent Public Schools are required to adhere to public sector standards when selecting staff.

### Can Independent Public Schools exclude disruptive students?

As is the case for all public schools, students can only be excluded for reasons permitted under the *School Education Act 1999*.

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## **Will funding to our school change if it becomes an Independent Public School?**

Independent Public Schools are funded on the same basis as all Western Australian public schools. They do, however, operate with one-line budgets which afford greater flexibility because resources can be directed to areas of greatest need, adding educational value.

## **What would it mean for my school council?**

The principal makes a decision as to whether to roll over the current school council, or start a new process and call for nominations for a new school board. Current council members are able to nominate for positions.

Strong community and industry representation is encouraged to ensure the school board makes a significant contribution to the development of the school. Induction is provided for new and existing school board members.

## **How are Independent Public Schools held accountable?**

Independent Public Schools comply with all legislation and industrial agreements and are subject to financial audits. A Delivery and Performance Agreement is signed by the principal, Director General and chair of the school board.

The school is independently reviewed in the final year of the agreement and the report is made public. The school also produces an annual report and business plan for school board consideration and endorsement.

## **What does it mean for the Parents and Citizens' Association?**

The important role and functions of Parents and Citizens' Associations do not change.

## **What evidence is there to support the Independent Public Schools initiative?**

The University of Melbourne carried out an independent evaluation of the initiative, and in its report that was released in 2013, the following key findings were established:

The initiative is positive, with greater autonomy for schools characterised by choice, energy, motivation, innovation and engagement.

The initiative was embraced by principals and has had a significant positive impact within schools and the broader system. Independent Public School principals reported positive cultural changes in their schools, including stronger relationships with their local school community and an enhanced profile with strengthened school and community pride.

The evaluation noted that it was too soon for Independent Public Schools to demonstrate an effect on student outcomes, but the initiative was creating the foundations for improvement.

## **How do schools become Independent Public Schools?**

The next phase of the initiative includes the introduction of a new development program for school communities that want to become Independent Public Schools in the future.

The new development program replaces the previous selection process. Instead of expressing interest through written applications that are either accepted or rejected by a panel, schools will be assisted through a development program to meet the rigorous standards required to become Independent Public Schools. This new approach has been well received by school communities wanting to become Independent Public Schools.

Two hundred and forty-one schools have expressed their interest to proceed to the development program workshops. Implementation of the new development program will start in 2014.