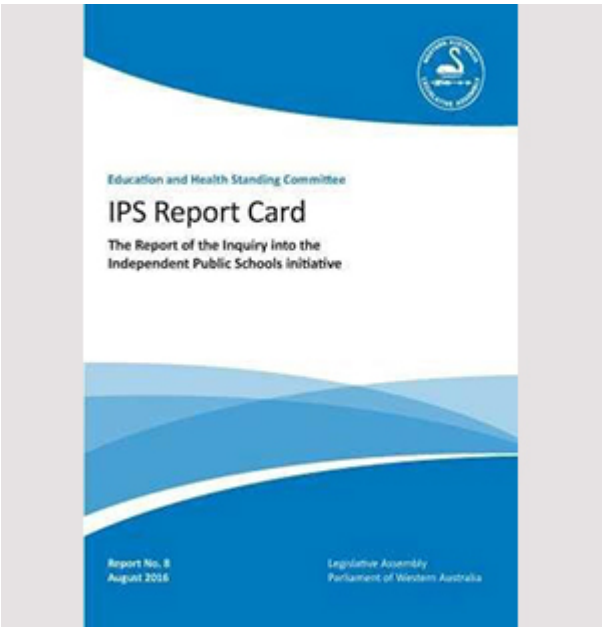
Parliamentary report backs union concerns about IPS initiative



The State School Teachers' Union of WA has welcomed the findings of a Parliamentary Committee review into the Independent Public Schools initiative, introduced by the Barnett Government in 2010.

SSTUWA President Pat Byrne said the union was not surprised the Health and Education Standing Committee found there was no evidence that the IPS model had in any way improved student outcomes.

“Improving student outcomes should be the main focus of any education reform,” Ms Byrne said.

“However, the main outcome of the shift to autonomy for IPS has been to dramatically increase the workload and administrative burden on school leaders and other staff, which the Committee’s report acknowledged.

"The devolution model has significantly reduced central support including crucial professional support for Principals and teaching staff and replaced this with onerous compliance processes which actually get in the way of quality teaching and learning.

"This has occurred in an environment of savage cuts to many school budgets.

“Principals have repeatedly told us that the flexibility to determine how school budgets are used is less important than the amount of funding itself,” she said.

“Financial resources are the most critical factor in ensuring schools can deliver effective education programs through the provision of quality professional learning for teaching staff.”

Ms Byrne said the union was pleased that the Committee recommended the Department of Education change its policy so that both IPS and non-IP Schools had the same responsibilities when it came to accepting permanent employees requiring placement.

Currently, non-IP Schools are forced to hire teachers from the central staffing pool, while IPS are not.

The SSTUWA has been in dispute with the Department over this matter, and called on the State Government to immediately implement the Committee's recommendation.

"IPS have the ability to refuse to accept teachers who are seeking to move to new schools, from the country to the city, for

example, as well as those whose positions have been abolished through "reprofiling" within the school, or those who have been on workers' compensation or long term parental leave who need to be placed," said Ms Byrne.

“This ability for IPS to refuse to accept these teachers has a detrimental effect on the individuals themselves and also on the dwindling number of schools who have no choice and are sometimes directed to take teachers without suitable subject qualifications or experience.

"There is no equity in this particular policy, which undermines the commitment to equitable provision of quality education across the state.”

Ms Byrne said the union also agreed with the Committee's finding that IP Schools had created a two-tier education system in WA which unfairly disadvantaged non-IP Schools.

“The State Government's championing of the IPS model has resulted in a community perception that these schools are elite, when the reality is that all schools are operating in the same public education system and should be treated according to the needs of their students.”

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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