Facing the Facts about what we have achieved



On the second anniversary of the release of the *Facing the Facts* report, let's look at what has been achieved in respect to its recommendations, as well as what still needs to be done.

Recommendation 1

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

The Director General has affirmed his commitment to this principle and reinforced it in "Aspirations for all".

Recommendation 2

Policies should be routinely and regularly subject to independent evaluation.

Dialogue is continuing, primarily through consultation on the Department of Education's (DoE) strategic plan.

Recommendation 3

The WA DoE's priorities for school decision-making and expenditure should be made explicit and clearly communicated to schools.

Consistent with the findings of the agency capability review, the department is expected to more strongly exercise its leadership role to make expectations more explicit on key strategic matters, particularly through the next strategic plan.

Recommendation 4

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

Dialogue is continuing, primarily through consultation on the department's strategic plan. "Aspirations for all" provides insight into future directions.

Recommendation 5

With a view to identifying the key structural changes needed to improve the functioning of the school system in WA, a thorough independent review of the Independent Public School system should be undertaken.

The Director General has acknowledged the finding of the Agency Capability Review that greater clarity is needed around the flexibilities afforded to schools and that the department supports ongoing efforts to better understand how current arrangements may unintentionally contribute to administrative burden and workload and explore opportunities to remediate this.

In relation to staffing schools, there will be three trials for the life of the current Schools General Agreement.

Metro to regional secondments - Attracting experience to our regional schools: Permanent teaching staff at metropolitan schools will have an opportunity to be temporarily deployed to a teaching position in an identified regional school, for a period of three years, with a guaranteed right of return to their substantive position.

Growing our leaders in country schools: Permanent deputy principals, heads of learning area, program coordinators or teachers appointed to a metropolitan school will have the opportunity to be temporarily appointed to a regional principal position for three years, with a guaranteed right of return to their substantive position.

Level 3.3 Classroom Teacher: The trial aims to attract Level 3 Classroom Teachers to those schools in most need and provide additional support and expertise in the priority areas of curriculum, behaviour or disability. This position will include a salary increment, 0.1 FTE time and a guaranteed right of return when completing this role. Teachers will be released as agreed by their school for up to three years.



Recommendation 6

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

Through the General Agreement the department has committed to a specialist pool of relief teachers for The School of Special Educational Needs to improve continuity of service, an additional 64 FTE to expand the allocation of complex behaviour support coordinators across 192 schools and small group tuition to 13,000 students in 350 schools. The Director

General has announced that some work, health and safety support for principals will be placed in regions. He has also committed that “The department shares the SSTUWA’s commitment to improving outcomes for students with disability, Aboriginal students, and those experiencing disadvantage. Equity in education is a core priority, and we are to ensure that resourcing and support align with student need.”

Recommendation 7

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

While no overarching strategy for cross-portfolio services has been established, there have been various commitments such as the Safe Spaces program in the Pilbara, education partnerships with mining and energy companies in the Pilbara, an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation-run Early Learning and Family Centre in Derby, reform of child development services through the cross-agency Child Development Services System Reform Program, Connected Community Schools pilot, and the At Risk Youth Strategy. The SSTUWA continues to lobby for inter-agency collaboration at all levels.

Recommendation 8

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

Then-Education Minister Buti instigated the School Education Act (1999) Review: Access and inclusion for students with disability in 2023. The SSTUWA was consulted and made a submission in 2024. The State of Our Schools survey, the Ombudsman report on *Western Australia’s Reportable Conduct Scheme: A review of systems to protect children and Understanding and Reducing the Workload of Teachers and Leaders in Western Australian Public Schools*reinforced concerns. In July 2025 current Education Minister Winton said the SEA review was “a significant piece of work that requires careful consideration”.

Recommendation 9

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

Debate continues in relation to the value and unintended consequences of NAPLAN.

Recommendation 10

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

Some progress has been made, but the changes were made without proper consultation, there is not a consistent system-wide approach and the burden of determining what change to enact and defending any change has been transferred from the system to each principal. Discussions with the DoE continue.

Recommendation 11

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

A renewed focus on VET for school students is still needed. The SSTUWA included this concern in responding to both the Pathways to Post School Success Review and the Regional Education Strategy consultation.

Recommendation 12

SCSA should be given sufficient resources to create and extend the availability of quality, flexible curriculum resource materials in a form suitable for all schools.

Improved resourcing for SCSA (the School Curriculum and Standards Authority) and optimal use of existing resources have not yet been achieved.

Recommendation 13

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

See Recommendation 12. As per Clause 59 of the 2023 Agreement, the Professional Learning Advisory Group is required to meet in relation to professional learning for curriculum, pedagogy, beginning teachers and school leadership and the first meeting occurred in September.



Recommendation 14

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

See Recommendation 13.

Recommendation 15

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

Significant progress has been made through the General Agreement, which clarifies that a documented plan is for a student who: identifies as requiring substantial or extensive adjustment through the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD); or receives an Individual Disability Allocation; or has persistent absences; or is in the care of the CEO of Department of Communities; or has chronic, long term or significant health care conditions; or has complex and challenging behaviours; or presents a risk of harm to themselves or others. English as an Additional Language/Dialect progress maps will be considered as a documented plan. A documented plan is not required for students: who have their learning needs met by differentiation or requiring supplementary adjustments through NCCD process; or who are on D or E grades, unless there are other supports or educational adjustments required; or whose academic, personal, social and wellbeing needs are met through regular school and classroom programs.

Ongoing work to reduce workload and support change management continues to be overseen by the Workload Ministerial Taskforce .

Recommendation 16

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

Some progress through the General Agreement: The principal, in consultation with teacher/s affected, will provide additional support to ensure workloads are distributed as equitably as possible; and, in determining the allocation of additional support, the principal will consider the notional class size, the proportion of students in the classroom on an individual plan, the number of individual plans and the degree of student need.

Recommendation 17

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

Full funding of 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) has been agreed and confirmed in the Federal budget, March 2025. Timing of full implementation is yet to be resolved.

The bi-lateral agreement second period is yet to be signed off. This is the four per cent for WA. We are at 96 per cent at the end of the year. The complication is that part of this four per cent (1.8 per cent) is tied up on four-year-old education funding (Federal project). The WA Minister recognises that this needs to be returned to schools and the 1.8 per cent found elsewhere. Timeframes around the return of the four per cent to schools is still an issue.

Recommendation 18

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

See Recommendation 17.

Recommendation 19

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

See Recommendation 17.

Recommendation 20

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

While there has been no new Commonwealth or joint capital works funding, the WA government has committed to 11 new schools (five builds, six to be planned), dozens of school upgrades, classroom refurbishments, play equipment, sports facilities and upgrading evaporative air conditioners in 45 schools.

Recommendation 21

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

The SSTUWA continues to advocate for school funding for repair and routine maintenance.

Recommendation 22

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

There has been limited progress to date, however, it should be noted that SCFM is to be adjusted to improve the Enrolment Linked Base in 128 schools with fewer than 100 students. In 2025 this only will provide on average just over $30k per school and even doubling it from 2026 is unlikely to seriously impact outcomes.

The SSTUWA continues to lobby for reform as part of the next strategic plan and notes the Director General's commitment that, "The department shares the SSTUWA's commitment to improving outcomes for students with disability, Aboriginal

students, and those experiencing disadvantage. Equity in education is a core priority, and we are to ensure that resourcing and support align with student need."



Recommendation 23

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

See Recommendation 22.

Recommendation 24

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

No progress has been made on the major reform required. [The General Agreement provides for the review of the School of Isolated and Distance Education, including class sizes, to continue and some consideration for face-to-face teachers - see Recommendation 16.]

Recommendation 25

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

Some progress was achieved through the General Agreement: A targeted initiative (TI) to address classroom support and workload reduction. The TI will provide small group tuition to 13,000 students in the 350 schools. Schools will receive between 0.1FTE and 1.0FTE to appoint additional teacher FTE, commencing in 2025.

The new funding agreement covers this.

This continues to be a focus for the rebooted Workload Ministerial Taskforce Taskforce.

Recommendation 26

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

A trial of free full-time kindy for four-year-olds will commence in 2026 and a dedicated Office of Early Childhood Education

has been established.

Commitments have also been made to the Regional Child Care Workers Program Supporting Children in Early Childhood Education and Care WA, guaranteed eligibility for three days of subsidised early education a week for children who need it and building more child care centres.

Recommendation 27

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

See Recommendation 26.

Recommendation 28

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

While both governments continued to target cost of living there is no coherent strategy to reduce child poverty.

WA families could again claim the WA Student Assistance Payment in 2025 but without means testing or direct funding to schools that would target children most in need.

The WA government has committed to building school canteen capacity, expanding school breakfast programs and providing assistance for school camps and Country Week.

Recommendation 29

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

The agency capability review of the DoE requires the department to improve change management and to clarify and support strategic direction. The Director General has committed to workload reduction. The department has embarked on consultation on the next strategic plan and the Workload Ministerial Taskforce is monitoring workload demands and seeking to reduce workload. Some progress has been made on reporting to parents and through the General Agreement progress has been made on individual plans, professional learning and the creation of Senior Teacher Level 2 with salary increment, for Senior Teachers performing two or more agreed duties. In addition, *Understanding and Reducing the Workload of Teachers and Leaders in Western Australian Public Schools* provided 24 recommendations in relation to workload reduction.



Recommendation 30

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

See Recommendation 29.

Recommendation 31

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

See Recommendation 29. In addition, the agency capability review calls on the Department to develop a deliberate, future focused workforce strategy to address significant attraction and retention issues.

Recommendation 32

In consultation with teachers, the WA DoE should increase the proportion of their total working time available to focus on matters viewed as core to the job of teaching. Time devoted to general administration duties should be reduced to at least the international average for such tasks, as identified by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development).

See Recommendation 29.

Recommendation 33

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

Complex needs and the complex behaviour project are under consideration by the rebooted Workload Ministerial Taskforce. The SSTUWA is advocating for stronger system and inter-agency support through the strategic plan consultation.
See Recommendation 6.

Recommendation 34

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

The SSTUWA continues to lobby for more support for out-of-field teachers.

Recommendation 35

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

See Recommendation 5.

Recommendation 36

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

Recommendation 5 is related. High turnover continues to be a concern.

Recommendation 37

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

SSTUWA representatives have met with DoE heads of Workforce and S&I. It was agreed that the intention sought is to provide and promote opportunities to access mediation to resolve interpersonal conflicts, with a focus on early intervention to preserve positive workplace relationships. It was noted that some schools with the financial means have engaged mediation services directly. However, smaller schools or those with budget constraints do not have this option. DoE advised that mediation services are available through the existing Employee Assistance Program contract and funded centrally. It was agreed that the department would review the content on IKON. DoE also committed to streamlining and simplifying the mediation referral form include these in the plan for digitised forms and consider linking a resource that more fully explains what mediation is and how the mediation process is conducted.

Recommendation 38

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

See Recommendations 29 and 31.



Recommendation 39

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

See Recommendations 29 and 31.

Recommendation 40

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

Under the General Agreement, the department has committed to consult with unions to effectively implement the*Work Health and Safety Act 2020*, including the implementation of the three Codes of Practice associated with psychosocial health and safety. In addition, the agency capability review calls on the department to develop a deliberate, future focused workforce strategy to address significant attraction and retention issues.

Recommendation 41

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

No progress as yet. The SSTUWA continues to advocate for reform in Aboriginal education and has submitted advice in relation to the next strategic plan.



Recommendation 42

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

See Recommendation 41.

Recommendation 43

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

See Recommendation 41.

Recommendation 44

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

See Recommendation 41.

Recommendation 45

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

See Recommendation 41.

Recommendation 46

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

Discussions have been ongoing through a range of forums including the Employee Relations Executive Committee and its sub-committees, the Workload Ministerial Taskforce and strategic plan consultation.

The Director General has noted that “the drivers and goals of the SSTUWA and Department of Education are well aligned” and “Overall, the (*Facing the Facts*) report’s recommendations reflect important priorities that are shared by the SSTUWA and the department”, including workload, attraction and retention – especially in the regions, and the “importance of clearer direction across the system.”

He further confirmed that the report “has played an important role in guiding sector-wide discussion and informing strategic planning activities. It is also one of the many reports being considered by the department in the development of our next strategic plan as we focus on taking action after a period of several reviews. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that the SSTUWA is a close and valued stakeholder of the department. Ongoing consultation through forums including EREC, EREC sub committees, Workload Intensification Taskforce, Professional Learning Advisory Group, System Alliance meetings and a series of regular updates from business areas, directorates and senior officers will ensure our future strategic plan gives fulsome consideration to your priorities and perspectives. I look forward to consultation and collaboration with the SSTUWA, especially throughout the development and implementation of the department’s strategic plan.”





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