

## Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Supplementary Budget Estimates 2013-2014

#### Outcome 2 - Schools and Youth

Department of Education Question No. ED0030\_14

Senator Carr provided in writing.

#### Question

##### Independent schools in Western Australia

In relation to independent schools in Western Australia:

- The Government claims that independent schools in Western Australia are performing better (p9 of schools election policy) than other schools. What empirical analysis of student outcomes exists to support this?
- The Government has also claimed in its election policy that WA is the only jurisdiction where the proportion of students in the State sector has increased in recent years. Has this increase been isolated to 'independent' state schools? What has the rate of increase been across the broader state school system compared to 'independent' state schools? Over how long has this trend been occurring? Has the data relied upon to identify this trend been adjusted for population growth and other factors that influence school enrolments?

#### Answer

##### Performance in WA independent public schools

The Australian Government's policy for schools, *Students First*, sets out the Government's position on school autonomy and independence including a commitment to establish an Independent Public Schools Fund (pages 8–10). The information contained in the document as part of the case study of WA independent public schools (page 9) states that 'A recent evaluation by the University of Melbourne found that the model has set the scene for improvement, has been embraced by schools communities and is leading to a sense of rejuvenation in the government school system'.

##### Increase in government school enrolments in WA

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (*Schools Australia 2012* publication, 2011–12 figures) show WA public school enrolments rose 3.6 per cent, from 236,387 in 2011 to 244,874 in 2012. Ms Sharyn O'Neill, Director-General of the WA Education Department has been quoted as attributing the increase to the IPS initiative and other factors: *The West Australian*, 21 March 2013 [au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-/breaking/16410797/big-surge-in-demand-for-state-schools/](http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-/breaking/16410797/big-surge-in-demand-for-state-schools/).

WA Education Department Annual Reports for 2012–13 (pages 2 and 3) and 2011–12 (page 2) show an increase in enrolments in public schools. In the 2011–12 report, Ms O'Neill states that this was the first increase in public school market share in 30 years.