



## EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

# MEDIA RELEASE

**From:** Ms J.M. Freeman, MLA, Chair  
**To:** ALL MEDIA  
**Date:** 24 September 2020

### REMOTE LEARNING HIGHLIGHTS DIGITAL DIVIDE

Access to digital technology for secondary students should be bolstered in preparation for periods of remote learning, the Education and Health Standing Committee has found.

Schools and the Department of Education loaned laptops to students without access to a device at home during the COVID-19 restrictions, but ways to make it easier for students to buy or access laptops should be explored to provide a longer term solution.

This was a recommendation of the committee's report, *Lessons from Remote Learning: COVID-19 follow-up to the Inquiry into Digital Innovation in Secondary Education*, tabled in the Legislative Assembly today.

The committee was also concerned that the department was only able to distribute 55 out of 5000 SIM cards provided by Telstra for students in need.

Committee Chair Janine Freeman said the COVID-19 response highlighted the digital divide that persists throughout our education system.

*'While there was much goodwill and effort from the teachers, principals and staff, the capacity to provide remote digital technology learning tools to WA students was patchy,' Ms Freeman said.*

The committee raised the need for clear leadership in implementing digital technology in its previous report, and the department has acknowledged that some schools were seeking more direction during COVID-19. Director General Lisa Rodgers said schools needed central support and the department should set clear parameters for schools to operate within.

The committee was pleased to learn that teachers who had been hesitant to embrace technology now saw a reason to upskill and were more willing to engage in professional learning.

Copies of the report are available on the Committee's webpage, [www.parliament.wa.gov.au/ehsc](http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/ehsc) (under the 'Reports' tab).

**For further comment**, please contact Janine Freeman MLA (Committee Chair) on 0400 012 690.

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