



## Education and Health Standing Committee

# **Committee's objection to the Government's response to *IPS Report Card: The Report of the Inquiry into the Independent Public Schools initiative***

**Report No. 12  
November 2016**

Legislative Assembly  
Parliament of Western Australia

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Deputy Chair	Ms R. Saffioti, MLA Member for West Swan
Members	Ms J.M. Freeman, MLA Member for Mirrabooka  Hon. R.F. Johnson, MLA Member for Hillarys  Mr M.J. Cowper, MLA Member for Murray Wellington

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**Published by the Parliament of Western Australia, Perth.**

**November 2016.**

ISBN: 978-1-925116-87-8

(Series: Western Australia. Parliament. Legislative Assembly. Committees.  
Education and Health Standing Committee. Report 12)

328.365

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Report No. 12

Presented by

**Dr G.G. Jacobs, MLA**

Laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly on 17 November 2016



## Chairman’s Foreword

The Committee seeks to redress the allegations of bias, lack of objectivity and erroneous findings and recommendations made by the Government in its response to the Committee’s *IPS Report Card: The Report of the Inquiry into the Independent Public Schools initiative*.

The Committee undertook significant work as part of its Inquiry into the Independent Public Schools (IPS) initiative. I draw the Assembly’s attention to the 32 submissions received and eight hearings conducted during the course of the Inquiry, upon which the report is based. At no time — beginning, middle nor end — was the Committee biased in conducting its Inquiry.

Highlighting the number of negative findings compared to positive findings does not indicate our bias or a lack of objectivity. Rather, it indicates our aim of identifying matters that need attention for the purpose of making the initiative better. Indeed, we support the autonomy concept. We also continue to stress that all education reform needs to be based on the paramount principle of improving student outcomes.

In particular, we respond to what the government called the ‘more misleading and erroneous claims of the report’ as follows:

- Despite the government response’s long-winded account of the papers which supposedly support the link between autonomy and improved student outcomes, we refer again to the significant volume of literature discussing the complexities of the relationship, as noted in the University of Melbourne’s review of the IPS initiative in 2013.<sup>1</sup> As the Director General of the Department of Education said at hearing, “you can find research either way about a direct correlation with greater autonomy and student outcomes.”<sup>2</sup>
- The Committee’s concerns that the IPS initiative exacerbates a two-tiered system by allowing IP Schools to select the more appropriate teachers, leaving less suitable teachers available for positions at non-IP Schools, was a major concern raised by many submitters and witnesses at hearings. To suggest that these concerns originate from a regressive centralised unionised lobby is insulting.

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1 University of Melbourne, *Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative*, WA Department of Education, Melbourne, Victoria, 2013, p8.

2 Ms Sharyn O’Neill, Director General, Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 May 2016, p2.

- It is difficult for the Committee to understand the Government's position that principals in IP Schools are not faced with increased administrative duties. The increased autonomy of an IP School by its very nature increases the workload of principals as administrators, chief executive officers, chief financial officers, and educators. How can principals be more autonomous yet not have more administrative tasks? Further, the Director General of the Department of Education would simply not have time to effectively line manage 445 (now 524) principals, providing them with appropriate levels of mentoring and support.
- The Committee's justified concerns about the rigour of school performance monitoring are demonstrated by the inconsistencies between schools being selected to become IPS, findings of the Department of Education Services' reviews and findings of the Expert Review Group.

The concerns raised in the Committee's report did not materialise out of thin air. They were and are based on the evidence we received during the Inquiry. They highlight ways in which the initiative can be improved so that, most importantly, our kids receive the best education.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G.G. Jacobs', is written over several horizontal lines. The signature is stylized and somewhat abstract.

DR G.G. JACOBS, MLA  
CHAIRMAN

# Contents

1	Government response to <i>IPS Report Card</i>	1
Appendices		3
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1	Committee's functions and powers	3
2	Letter to the Minister for Education	5





# Chapter 1

## Government response to *IPS Report Card*

- 1.1 The Education and Health Standing Committee's (Committee) eighth report "*IPS Report Card: The Report of the Inquiry into the Independent Public Schools initiative*" (Report) was deemed tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 15 August 2016.
- 1.2 In accordance with Standing Order 277(1) of the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly, the Committee directed the Minister representing the Minister for Education to report to the Assembly as to the action, if any, proposed to be taken by the Government with respect to the recommendations of the Committee contained in its Report.
- 1.3 On 10 November 2016 the Government's response to the Committee's Report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly.
- 1.4 The Committee objects to statements made in the Government's response. The Committee resolved to write to the Minister for Education outlining its objections and to table this letter in a report. A copy of this letter is attached at Appendix Two.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G.G. Jacobs', is written over a set of horizontal lines. The signature is stylized and somewhat abstract.

DR G.G. JACOBS, MLA  
CHAIRMAN



# Appendix One

## Committee's functions and powers

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The functions of the Committee are to review and report to the Assembly on:

- a) the outcomes and administration of the departments within the Committee's portfolio responsibilities;
- b) annual reports of government departments laid on the Table of the House;
- c) the adequacy of legislation and regulations within its jurisdiction; and
- d) any matters referred to it by the Assembly including a bill, motion, petition, vote or expenditure, other financial matter, report or paper.

At the commencement of each Parliament and as often thereafter as the Speaker considers necessary, the Speaker will determine and table a schedule showing the portfolio responsibilities for each committee. Annual reports of government departments and authorities tabled in the Assembly will stand referred to the relevant committee for any inquiry the committee may make.

Whenever a committee receives or determines for itself fresh or amended terms of reference, the committee will forward them to each standing and select committee of the Assembly and Joint Committee of the Assembly and Council. The Speaker will announce them to the Assembly at the next opportunity and arrange for them to be placed on the notice boards of the Assembly.



# Appendix Two

## Letter to the Minister for Education

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Address all correspondence to the  
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### **EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE**

16 November 2016

Hon. Peter Collier, MLC  
10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Dumas House  
2 Havelock Street  
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Minister

#### **Response to the Education and Health Standing Committee's *IPS Report Card***

It was with great disappointment that the Education and Health Standing Committee read the *Government response (Response) to IPS Report Card: The Report of the Inquiry into the Independent Public Schools Initiative (Report)*.

The Response asserts that the Report is heavily biased and questions the objectivity of the Report's authors. The Committee finds these statements both offensive and unfounded.

The Report's findings and recommendations were made based on the evidence the Committee received during the inquiry. The Government Response devalues the evidence of submitters and witnesses, upon whose ready participation the oversight role of parliamentary committees depends.

As the Committee has previously noted, it generally supports the concept of independent public schools. However, the initiative is not without issues. The Committee reasserts the findings and recommendations made in its Report for the improvement of the initiative for the benefit of students, staff, parents and communities.

Yours sincerely,

DR G.G. JACOBS, MLA  
CHAIRMAN

*Please note that correspondence addressed to or received from the Committee becomes the property of the Legislative Assembly and cannot be forwarded to any other party without the authorisation of the Committee.*