



**Education and Health Standing Committee**  
**Annual Report 2014—15**

**Report No. 7**  
**November 2015**

Legislative Assembly  
Parliament of Western Australia

## Committee Members

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Chairman	Dr G.G. Jacobs, MLA Member for Eyre
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

## Committee Staff

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Principal Research Officers	Ms Lucy Roberts (from 2 February 2015) Mr Mathew Bates (until 9 February 2015)
Research Officer	Mr Daniel Govus

Legislative Assembly  
Parliament House  
Harvest Terrace  
PERTH WA 6000

Tel: (08) 9222 7494  
Fax: (08) 9222 7804  
Email: [laehsc@parliament.wa.gov.au](mailto:laehsc@parliament.wa.gov.au)  
Website: [www.parliament.wa.gov.au/ehsc](http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/ehsc)

**Published by the Parliament of Western Australia, Perth.  
November 2015.**

ISBN: 978-1-925116-58-8

(Series: Western Australia. Parliament. Legislative Assembly. Committees.  
Education and Health Standing Committee. Report 7)

328.365

# Education and Health Standing Committee

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## Annual Report

**2014–2015**

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Report No. 7

Presented by

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

Laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly on 26 November 2015



## Chairman's Foreword

The year 2014–2015 represented an extremely busy and productive year for the Education and Health Standing Committee. The Committee's main focus during the year was its inquiry into the mental health of fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) workers in Western Australia. This was an issue which had been widely reported in the media as a result of, sadly, a number of young men taking their own lives whilst engaged in FIFO work. As a result of this reporting, the Legislative Assembly passed a motion in August 2014 which referred the matter to the Education and Health Standing Committee for investigation.

The inquiry into the mental health of FIFO workers was one of the largest undertaken by this Committee, which was in keeping with the importance of the subject matter to the Western Australian community. This was reflected by the 133 submissions received by the Committee during the inquiry; a number which represented the broad spectrum of views on the matter. In approaching the inquiry the Committee resolved to initially release a discussion paper which reported on issues consistently highlighted as having an impact on worker mental health. It was hoped this approach would allow for misconceptions to be dispelled and the opportunity for all stakeholders in the resources and community health areas to have input.

The Committee considered it important to experience first-hand the conditions of accommodation facilities provided for those engaged in FIFO employment. The Committee travelled to the Pilbara in order to see projects from Chevron at Barrow Island and Onslow, Rio Tinto at Wickham, and BHP Billiton at Yandi. This gave the Committee a greater understanding of the nuances of FIFO life, and allowed the Committee to engage with FIFO workers 'on site'.

As the inquiry progressed, the Committee became increasingly of the view that, while the regulation of the physical safety of workers has improved dramatically over recent decades, there is still much room for improvement in the sphere of worker mental health. Some steps have already been taken by industry to raise awareness of mental health in the workplace, which are to be commended and encouraged.

The Committee felt that the recommendations made in its final report would go a long way to addressing some the concerns expressed to the Committee by workers, mental health professionals, unions and industry. The recommendation of a Code of Practice covering many of the aspects unique to FIFO practices was considered to be a reasonable approach in more effectively regulating the safety of workers in the mental health sphere.

In addition to this, recommendations made by the Committee around increased worker engagement with local communities, where possible, were considered important in not only providing a more supportive environment for vulnerable workers, but also in providing more benefits to towns and communities located close to where mines are situated.

I am encouraged by the positive manner in which the Committee's final report was received. Many organisations have approached the Committee to offer positive feedback, and I have given several presentations to various groups on the inquiry, at their request.

The Government's response to the report, released in October this year, was broadly supportive of the Committee's recommendations, but stopped short of endorsing the proposed Code of Practice for FIFO. The Committee expressed its concern publicly at a recent decision to extend the lease for the Kurra Village FIFO accommodation facility, which is located on the outskirts of Newman. The Committee felt that this decision ignored the recommendations of the report which encouraged worker engagement with local communities as a means to achieve better mental health outcomes for workers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G.G. Jacobs', with several long, sweeping lines extending from the signature.

DR G.G. JACOBS, MLA  
CHAIRMAN

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# Chapter 1

## Committee Activities

### Introduction

This report covers the work undertaken by the Education and Health Standing Committee of the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament during the financial year 2014–2015. During the period between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2015, the Committee:

- held 25 deliberative meetings;
- took evidence from 43 witnesses at 26 hearings;
- conducted two inquiries and tabled three reports; and
- travelled throughout the Pilbara region of Western Australia as part of its inquiry into FIFO mental health.

**Table 1.1: Summary of activities for the Education and Health Standing Committee, 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015**

Description	Activities
Deliberative meetings	25
Formal evidence hearings	26
Witnesses appearing	41
Reports tabled	3
Report findings tabled	42
Report recommendations tabled	30

### Mental Health impacts of FIFO work arrangements

The Committee's main concern for 2014–2015 was its inquiry into the impact of FIFO work practices on mental health, which resulted in the tabling of a preliminary report *Shining a Light on FIFO Mental Health: A Discussion Paper* in the Legislative Assembly on 27 November 2015, with the final report *The impact of FIFO work practices on mental health* being tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 18 June 2015.

The inquiry commenced after a motion was passed in the Legislative Assembly referring the matter to the Education and Health Standing Committee. The mental health of FIFO workers had been the subject of media reports, in particular in relation to a number of young men taking their own lives in FIFO camp accommodation.

Established by the Committee on 20 August 2014, it was decided that the Committee approach the inquiry by initially releasing a discussion paper highlighting the main concerns raised by submitters. This would provide the opportunity for all relevant stakeholders to provide comment and clarity around such an important and complex

issue. Prior to the publication of the discussion paper, the Committee received 70 submissions and conducted 12 hearings. Following release of the discussion paper, the Committee received a further 63 submissions, and conducted an additional 14 hearings and briefings, several of which were closed. In total, the inquiry received 133 submissions and conducted 26 hearings and briefings.

During the course of the hearings, the Committee received evidence from families of FIFO workers, industry organisations, unions, government departments and large employers. In addition to this, the Committee visited the Pilbara region in February 2015 in order to better acquaint itself with the accommodation facilities and environment FIFO workers experience. During its trip, the Committee visited Chevron's Barrow Island and Wheatstone projects, BHP Billiton's Yandi mine, and Rio Tinto's Julutharndu Maya accommodation facility in Wickham, staying overnight. The Committee thanks these companies for their co-operation as hosts, and for providing important information to the inquiry.

The final report made 42 findings and 30 recommendations. The report highlights the need for legislative change to the current occupational health and safety system which is confusing and complicated. The Committee is aware of planned significant legislative reforms and commends the Government's efforts to simplify and improve the legislative framework.

Of continuing interest to the Committee are recommendations 27 to 30 from the report which sought to encourage engagement between FIFO workers and local host communities, bringing benefits to that community as well as having the potential to improve mental health outcomes for FIFO workers. In particular the Committee recommended that resource companies invest in more accommodation options within local communities for FIFO workers. The Committee reaffirms these recommendations for action by the Government in all relevant activities.

The Committee was therefore concerned by reports of a recent decision by the Premier to extend the lease for BHP Billiton's Kurra camp accommodation facility, located on the outskirts of the town of Newman. The Committee was of the opinion that the Kurra camp represented an opportunity for greater placement of workers within the town site, rather than being isolated in a separate fenced-off camp. The Committee wrote to the Premier to express this view, and a copy of this letter has been included in Appendix 2.

In the Government's response to the Committee's report *The impact of FIFO work practices on mental health*, it supported 14 of the recommendations made, noted 15 recommendations, and partly supported one recommendation.

## **Fiona Stanley Hospital Inquiry**

The Committee commenced an inquiry into the transition and operation of services at Fiona Stanley Hospital (FSH) on 22 April 2015. The Committee resolved to conduct this inquiry in response to media reporting of a number of incidents at FSH. The Committee, through this inquiry, sought to ascertain whether any serious systemic failures existed at the new hospital, and to report on the practical operation of the services contract with Serco.

Six submissions were received and one public hearing was held during the 2014–2015 financial year. The Committee is due to table its report of this inquiry before the end of the 2015 calendar year.

## Public Hearings

Pursuant to Legislative Assembly Standing Order No. 264, the Committee has the power to send for persons, papers and records. During the period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015, the Committee conducted 22 public hearings, taking evidence from 43 witnesses to assist with its investigations.

**Table 1.2: Public hearings of the Education and Health Standing Committee, 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015**

Date	Name	Position	Organisation
22 October 2014	Mr Simon Ridge	Executive Director, Resources Safety	Department of Mines and Petroleum
22 October 2014	Mr Lex McCulloch	Executive Director	Department of Commerce (WorkSafe)
	Mr Ian Munns	Director, Policy and Education	
	Ms Jean Mangharam	Principal Scientific Officer/Inspector (Human Factors and Ergonomics Team)	
3 November 2014	Ms Georgie Harman	Chief Executive Officer	beyondblue
3 November 2014	Mr Steve McCartney	State Secretary	Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union
3 November 2014	Mr Simon Bennison	Chief Executive Officer	Association of Mining Exploration Companies
	Mr Graham Short	National Policy Manager	
3 November 2014	Ms Fiona Kalaf	Chief Executive Officer	Lifeline WA
5 November 2014	Ms Nicole Ashby	Founder and Director	FIFO Families
	Mr Carl Binning	Managing Director	Creating Communities
	Mr Andrew Watt	Senior Associate	
	Mr Nicholas Fitzgerald	Research Director	
5 November 2014	Mr Godfrey Baronie	Chief Executive Officer	Mates in Construction
5 November 2014	Mr Michael Buchan	State Secretary	Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union WA
	Mr Graham Pallot	Assistant State Secretary	
5 November 2014	Ms Nicole Roocke	Deputy Chief Executive	Chamber of Minerals and Energy Western Australia
	Ms Adrienne LaBombard	Manager – Workplace Health and Safety	
	Mr Emmanuel Hondros	Manager – People Strategies	
	Ms Jennifer Rumbles	Policy Adviser – People Strategies and Workplace Health and Safety	
5 November 2014	Mr Stedman Ellis	Chief Operating Officer	Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association
	Mr Andrew Woodhams	A/Director – Safety, Environment and Skills	
12 November 2014	Mr Peter Miller		
	Ms Anita Miller		
25 February 2015	Ms Julie Loveny	Consultant Social Worker	This FIFO Life

Date	Name	Position	Organisation
	Ms Sue Crock	Consultant Social Worker	
25 February 2015	Dr Jennifer Bowers	Chief Operating Officer/Managing Director	Australasian Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health
11 March 2015	Ms Philippa Vojnovic	Co-convenor	FIFO Australian Community of Excellence
	Dr Paul Pulé	Co-convenor	
	Ms Libby Brook	Executive Committee Member	
	Dr Suzanne Bahn	Adjunct Senior Lecturer, Edith Cowan University	
16 March 2015	Mr Owen Whittle	Assistant Secretary	UnionsWA
	Dr Tim Dymond	Strategic Research Officer	
16 March 2015	Ms Ruth Murdoch	Director	Acorn Life Path Pty Ltd
16 March 2015	Mr Tim Langmead	Director External Relations	Fortescue Metals Group
	Mr Robert Watson	Group Manager Health and Safety	
16 March 2015	Mr Mike Boyle	Executive General Manager Zero Harm	Downer EDI
	Ms Donna Viner	Health Advisor Employee Support	
	Ms Natasha Palethorpe	Regional Health Advisor	
25 March 2015	Dr Nathan Gibson	Chief Psychiatrist	Department of Health
	Dr Simon Byrne	Psychiatrist	
20 April 2015	Closed Briefing		
20 April 2015	Closed Briefing		
20 April 2015	Closed Briefing		
22 April 2015	Closed Briefing		
6 May 2015	Ms Kaye Butler	General Manager of Human Resources	Chevron Australia
	Mr Michael Tunnecliffe	Director	BSS Employee Assistance
24 June 2015	Mr Philip Olsen		

## Closed Hearings

In support of the Inquiry into the impact of FIFO work practices on mental health, the Committee held a total of 4 closed briefings with 6 witnesses.



## Chapter 2

The Education and Health Standing Committee is without its own formal budget, and is consequentially funded from the budget of the Legislative Assembly. Approval for major expenditure is required on a case-by-case basis and is entirely at the discretion of the Speaker.

### Committee Financial Statement

The Committee's expenditure for the financial year 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 (in accordance with Standing Order 276) is provided below (table 2.1).

**Table 2.1: Expenditure Items, 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015**

Expenditure Item	\$
Couriers	711
Printing	5,645
Advertising	7,488
Video conferences	266
Staff amenities	1,405
Travel	36,192
<b>Total</b>	<b>51,707</b>

*Notes:*

- *All figures rounded to the nearest \$100.*
- *Salaries of committee staff are not included.*
- *Costs of shared administrative expenses, including lease costs for committee accommodation are not included.*



DR G.G. JACOBS, MLA  
CHAIRMAN





# Appendix One

## Committee's functions and power

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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

## Committee Letter to the Premier

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Address all correspondence to the  
Principal Research Officer

Enquiries to: Ms Alison Sharpe  
Telephone: (08) 9222 7394  
Facsimile: (08) 9222 7804  
Email: laehsc@parliament.wa.gov.au  
Web: www.parliament.wa.gov.au

Ref: A525604

### **EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE**

12 November 2015

Hon Colin Barnett, MLA  
Premier; Minister for State Development; Science  
1 Parliament Place  
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Premier

#### **Extension to BHP Billiton Kurra Camp Lease**

The Education and Health Standing Committee wishes to express its concern with the recent decision to grant a lease extension to BHP Billiton for its Kurra camp, located on the edge of Newman.

The Committee was commissioned by Parliament to conduct an inquiry into the impact of FIFO work arrangements on the mental health of workers. One major factor affecting worker mental health was a sense of disconnection from family and community. The placement of group or individual worker accommodation facilities integrated into a town (not out of town or even on the outskirts of town) is conducive to addressing individual isolation and community disconnect. Please note this is not about mandating residential status for workers but connecting community with FIFO workers where towns are in close proximity to the mining operation.

The Committee particularly directs the Premier to pages 129–139 in its report *The impact of FIFO work practices on mental health* in which it makes four recommendations relating to workers engaging with local communities:

#### **Recommendation 27**

*Where possible, FIFO workers should be encouraged and enabled to engage with the local host community.*

#### **Recommendation 28**

*Mining companies should engage with local host communities to ensure that the placement of accommodation facilities brings benefits to local communities, as well as benefits to the mental health of workers.*

**Recommendation 29**

*That the Department of State Development investigate mechanisms to encourage resource companies to invest in providing workers the opportunity to reside in local communities in order to improve mental health.*

**Recommendation 30**

*The Department of State Development should develop a strategic plan for the decision-making process for the placement of FIFO accommodation camps, which must include consideration of workers' mental health and access to local communities. Such a plan should include a community impact assessment.*

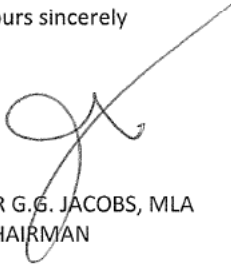
The Committee notes that in its response, the Government supported recommendations 27, 28 and 29. In noting recommendation 30, the Government gave the undertaking that 'DSD will work with relevant stakeholders to ensure that decision making for the placement of FIFO accommodation camps considers amongst other things, workers' mental and access to local communities.'

The Committee is of the view that your recent decision is not consistent with the Government's response to the recommendations of the report.

It is important to remember that the trigger to our inquiry was the publicised suicides in the FIFO workforce, and so anything we can do to reduce the feeling of isolation, while increasing the sense of community, will help to address these tragic losses.

I am happy to discuss the matters raised in this letter with you at any time.

Yours sincerely



DR G.G. JACOBS, MLA  
CHAIRMAN