



Independent Schools in WA and AISWA

The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia is the peak body representing Independent Schools in Western Australia. It has 158 member schools which enroll over 70,000 students; accounting for over 16% of Western Australian school enrolments.

As a sector, Independent Schools are diverse in nature. They provide for students of all abilities and all social and ethnic backgrounds. They provide quality schooling for a wide range of communities, including some of Western Australia's most remote and disadvantaged Indigenous communities, communities in regional towns and diverse communities in Perth.

Many member schools espouse a religious or values-based education, while others promote a particular educational philosophy. They are all registered as schools by the State Government.

Independent Schools vary in size, culture and educational philosophy. While all seek to meet the needs of the students in their care and maximize their achievements, how this is done and the context in which it occurs varies a lot. There are

- twelve large high fee paying K/P/1 – 12
- a large group of schools, representing most students in the sector, are the large low fee paying K/P/1 – 12 Independent Schools
- schools that focus only on primary and early years,
- schools with a strong religious base,
- thirteen remote Aboriginal Schools,
- schools with a particular educational philosophies such as Montessori and Steiner schools, community schools with no links to a particular religion or educational philosophy and
- Curriculum and Re-Engagement (CARE) Schools that cater for students at severe educational risk.

Of the schools, 98 are registered for the senior secondary years (10, 11 and 12) and those are the years where the VET in Schools typically takes place. Of those 98 about 20 have very low numbers of students in those years of schooling and offer very restricted senior secondary offerings.

All Independent Schools receive some government funding from the State and Federal Governments with those at the high Socio Economic Status receiving low levels of funding (just over \$2,000 per student from each of the State and Federal Governments) to those schools that receive significant Government assistance as they are remote Aboriginal schools and often sole providers in the community or are CARE Schools.

The Education and Health Standing Committee terms of reference:

1. How well the program is meeting the needs of schools, student and industry:

VET for Secondary Students is meeting needs of schools in many ways. The main areas it meets the needs for schools is by providing a vocational option for students whilst they remain at school until the end of year 12. Many students are not concerned with achieving an ATAR and following a University pathway. Therefore, they are certainly benefiting by having the option of participating in a VET qualification whilst staying at school. The other benefit to these students is that they stay at school with their peers and can continue in core subjects such as Mathematics and English which will enhance their literacy and numeracy skills and strengthen their employment options in the future.

Another way that VET in schools meets the needs of the schools is by providing an option for students that are otherwise disengaged with school classes. There is the opportunity for students to attend an external training provider once or twice a week. Often these students thrive in a different environment where they are treated more like adult learners. Also the option for workplace learning as either part of a VET program or standalone school program provides a great opportunity for these students to get take time out of the classroom and participate in practical learning.

The VET for Secondary Schools program is a fantastic breeding ground for industry. Not only does it serve the purpose of getting young people interested and experience in a profession it also serves to allow students the opportunity to find out what industries they do not like, before they take the leap into employment. This can only help industry by attracting the most suitable candidates into appropriate jobs.

An interesting discussion between industry and schools is the mass participation of school students in certain VET qualifications. The Certificate II in Business is by far the most popular VET qualification at schools. Industry sees this as saturation of students participating in a qualification at a level that does not provide an employment outcome. However, the counter argument to that is the Certificate II in Business provides some key base skills that transfer across many industries. The units of competency include basic computer word processing skills, using spreadsheets, communicating in the workplace and occupational health and safety – amongst many others.

Another point of contention is secondary school students participating Certificate IV's. In many AISWA schools the Certificate IV is utilised as a pathway into University. This is an attractive option for schools and students who may not achieve an ATAR required for University entrance. However, Industry is concerned with a secondary school student completing a Certificate IV and wanting to enter the workforce without any relevant work experience.

Completing a VET qualification has assisted many students to achieve their WACE, but the WACE requirements for Non-ATAR students have also made it more demanding for schools to access and participate in a VET program.

AISWA has been endeavoring to reach out to industry training councils and relevant industry bodies to provide a support network to schools and their teachers. The main platform for this has been the VET Coordinator Network Meetings which are held once a term. These meetings are organised by the AISWA VET Consultant in collaboration with the VET Consultant from Catholic Education WA.

2. Challenges for regional and remote areas:

The regional and remote areas find numerous challenges with running a VET in schools program. Notably the distance from a training provider is usually the most significant challenge to overcome.

However, schools can still partner with an RTO to deliver at their schools. Then the challenge becomes finding a qualified teacher.

In remote areas in particular, we have heard that schools will often train a teacher up to deliver a VET qualification at their school and then the teacher will leave the regional school to return to the city. Therefore, they have to find more money to train up a new teacher.

Online learning is an obvious option for remote and regional schools, however there are limited options online and they are much more expensive than other delivery options.

AISWA has a small representation of regional and remote schools that participate in a VET program. Many of our remote schools struggle to keep students on past year 10 and those who choose to complete Senior Secondary school will often leave their community and head to a metro school.

3. Registration and ongoing monitoring of training organisations:

The biggest number of VET enrolments is via an auspicing partnership arrangement between a school and an RTO.

These relationships can be quite challenging as it takes time for RTO's to truly understand school standards and requirements and likewise schools not truly understanding the standards that RTO's must maintain. Some schools have been auspicing for many years now and have acquired a lot of knowledge of the VET sector. Also, many schools have employed people who have worked in the VET sector, including AISWA who has a VET Consultant to support schools in areas unfamiliar to them.

The constant change of RTO standards and qualifications being updated proves to be a major interruption to VET in Schools programs.

AISWA has a small representation of RTO schools, with only four. Three of those are CARE schools that cater to disengaged students and an Aboriginal Independent Community School where achieving a WACE is not always the focus. VET qualifications in particular help these schools to engage their cohort.

In the past 2 years, several AISWA schools have been significantly affected by RTO's who have breached compliance and failed to meet RTO standards. This caused a severe disruption to the schools that partnered with these non-compliant providers and put students at risk of not completing their qualification and therefore at risk of not achieving a WACE.

4. Resourcing of the program:

The major challenges with resourcing a VET program are aligned to the auspicings model. This requires teachers to deliver on behalf of an RTO. Therefore, there are significant costs in getting a teacher trained up and then for that teacher to maintain industry currency.

If a school delivers a qualification under an auspicings arrangement they are also required to have the appropriate physical resources to meet industry standards.

Depending on the qualification they are delivering some can be quite demanding with resource requirements (trade areas, hospitality) and others not so much (business, IT, Sport & Rec).

There is limited funding available to schools, particularly in the Independent and Catholic sectors.

The Department of Training and Workforce Development provides funding to AISWA schools for the support of the delivery of Vocational Education and Training in schools (VETiS).

AISWA aims for a student centred approach to distribute the main proportion of funding to support the ever increasing costs of participating in a VET qualification. The feedback from schools in recent times is the cost of students attending a face-to-face course at an external provider has substantially increased. The cost of auspicings amongst the growing list of private providers has also increased. Whilst there is a cap on school students attending a State Training Provider to complete a qualification, there are added resource fees and certain industry areas that are not covered by any profile funding.

As a result, AISWA aims to distribute the majority of funding from this agreement to contribute to student costs.

You can see here the amount that schools spend in comparison to what AISWA is able to provide schools from the DTWD funding pool:

All AISWA Schools VET expenditure =	\$1,370,224
Total AISWA School Grants amount =	\$538,818.00

Breakdown of AISWA School Funding applications key data:

• Total student fees	= \$1,146,010.00
• Total consumable costs	= \$224,214
• Other Student Resources	= \$9117
• Total VET students	= 5616
• Total auspicings students	= 4507
• Total Fee for Services students	= 588
• Total Students on funded courses	= 531

Schools can also access limited positions of fully funded courses at TAFE. These positions are very competitive and in recent years have seen fewer qualifications being offered by TAFE. Therefore, this is sending schools to private RTO's. This results in higher fees.

Also the TAFE fee increase in recent years has really hurt schools.

Many AISWA schools pass on fees to parents whilst some schools cover part of the fees. Higher fee paying schools will usually absorb all or most of the VET fees.

There are many added costs to schools when they consider offering VET courses to their students. If they decide to auspice a qualification and deliver it on their school campus, they will be required to be fully resourced to meet training package requirements as well as have their staff trained up to industry standards.

One of the reasons the areas of Business and Sport and Recreation are most popular is that schools are already well equipped with resources to deliver those qualifications.

Hospitality is an area that more schools would like to deliver as they have a strong interest from their students. However, often the school cannot meet the resource requirements to meet industry standards.

Also certain qualifications require delivery in industry context and therefore require schools to organise excursions. For example Outdoor recreation qualifications demand camping trips, bushwalking, canoeing, mountain biking, abseiling etc. Fortunately, some schools already have a well-established Outdoor Education program and will not have to plan anything more. However, other schools may not plan these excursions and will need to budget accordingly.

The trade type qualifications demand a lot more consumables. Most schools look to outsource these qualifications to be delivered by training providers that already have the machinery and equipment. However, if a school is aligned with a Trade Training Centre and they will need to be constantly ordering consumables for their program.

AISWA will consider the socioeconomic status (SES) of schools before distributing any funding towards consumables. Most of the higher SES schools will not seek funding and are not duly funded for consumables.

AISWA does not collect actual enrolment data from schools, this is only access through the School's Curriculum and Standards Authority.

However we do collect data based on the AISWA VET Funding applications.

Growth in 2016:

2015 AISWA VET Funding Applications	2016 AISWA VET Funding Applications
Students funded = 3854	Students funded = 4360
Schools applied = 63	Schools applied = 66

In 2016, AISWA received funding from the Department of Education Services for the specific purpose of training VET teachers to meet trainer and assessor requirements. This funding was specifically to assist teachers involved in VET delivery to secondary school students, to gain the VET qualifications or 'industry currency in skills and knowledge' to be able to participate in the delivery of VET in Schools Certificate II programs.