



Government of Western Australia
Department of Aboriginal Affairs

ENQUIRIES :

OUR REF: 2016/0226-01

YOUR REF: A55055



Ms Alison Sharpe
Principal Research Officer
Education and Health Standing Committee
Parliament House,
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Dr Jacobs

INQUIRY INTO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S INDEPENDENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

Thank you for your letter dated 3 March 2016 regarding the Education and Health Standing Committee's Inquiry into Independent Public Schools.

Please find attached the Department of Aboriginal Affairs' submission addressing the issues relating to the outcomes for Aboriginal students, as highlighted in your letter.

Should you require any further information, please contact

Yours sincerely

Cliff Weeks
DIRECTOR GENERAL

21 April 2016

Introduction

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) provides the following response to the questions and information requests outlined in the letter dated 3 March 2016 from the Education and Health Standing Committee (the Committee).

As a general comment, the DAA makes the observation that the Department of Education is responsible for the collection and review of education based data for all Western Australian schools, including Independent Public Schools. Furthermore, the DAA understands that the Department of Education develops and delivers programs for all schools and no support is designated as specific to Independent Public Schools.

Education based outcomes for Aboriginal children are an important consideration for whole of government Close the Gap initiatives. All stakeholders associated with Aboriginal students, including the DAA, are committed to improving the education outcomes of Aboriginal students through the provision of appropriate resources and support programs and mechanisms.

1. The impact of Independent Public Schools on the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students, in particular attendance, engagement and performance.

The impact on the attendance, engagement and performance of students was publicly reported in the 2013 Evaluation of the Independent Public Schools Initiative (Evaluation), commissioned by the Western Australian Department of Education and undertaken by the University of Melbourne.

The Evaluation indicates that Independent Public Schools were high performing schools before transition and there has been no substantive increase in student achievement after becoming an Independent Public School. The Evaluation found that:

- There is no difference in attendance, suspension, retention, NAPLAN, enrolment or behaviour measures between schools that have transitioned to become Independent Public Schools.
- Independent Public School Principals have reported that there have been improvements to parent and community engagement since becoming an Independent Public School.
- Cluster analysis of schools in Western Australia indicates that socio-economics is not a factor that explains why some schools are more or less resistant to becoming an Independent Public School.
- The Evaluation noted that changes in student behaviour, enrolment and attendance are likely to emerge from more innovative school wide approaches towards behaviour management and teaching.

The 2011 Productivity Commission Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators Report notes that initiatives that appear to be working include programs

linking school attendance to participation in sports activities and Indigenous cultural studies introduced into schools' curricula, involving Aboriginal people in their development and delivery.

The Department of Education has provided the DAA with analysis of the impact of the Independent Public School initiative on the educational outcomes for Aboriginal students as requested by the Committee inquiry into Independent Public Schools.

It is important to acknowledge that the Department of Education advises it is currently difficult to find empirical evidence to demonstrate success given the length of time that Independent Public Schools have been in existence. Available information currently suggest that there has been limited change in outcomes for all students. Researchers for the Department of Education agree that there is a need for more sophisticated tools and analysis if school systems are to evaluate a wide range of variables and initiatives.

The Department of Education has made some key findings relating to Independent Public Schools pertaining to the education outcomes of Aboriginal students:

- The performance levels between Independent Public Schools and Non-Independent Public Schools are reflective of the substantial difference in the level of socio-educational advantage.
- The data for both Independent Public Schools and Non-Independent Public Schools are significantly impacted by factors other than the status of the school and in general it is these factors that are explaining performance changes, including:
 - The move of Year 7 to secondary in 2015 (and previously in Non-government schools)
 - The implementation of the Australian Curriculum with somewhat higher expectations for primary students.
- Attendance data for Aboriginal students, students in disadvantage schools, students in country schools and English as an Additional Language (EAL) students have declined. This appears mainly attributable to those in schools that have never been an Independent Public School.
- NAPLAN reading results for Aboriginal students, 'disadvantage' and country students are volatile with similar patterns generally evident in both Independent Public Schools and Non-Independent Public Schools.
- NAPLAN numeracy results for Aboriginal students are generally volatile with the patterns being similar for both Independent Public Schools and Non-Independent Public Schools.
- Year 7 Non-Independent Public School percentages have improved and are at or above the national minimum standard for Aboriginal students but there is no common trend in Independent Public Schools.
- 2010 to 2015 NAPLAN reading assessments for Aboriginal students in Independent Public Schools has seen only slight improvement in Year 3 and Year 7 but in Year 5 there has been an 11% improvement in reading results and in Year 9 there has been a 13.4% improvement in reading results.
- 2010 to 2015 NAPLAN numeracy assessments for Aboriginal students in Independent Public Schools has seen an improvement in Year 5 of 9.8% and in Year 9 of 16%.

- From 2010 to 2015 the Attainment Rate (the number of students leaving school with an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank that will qualify them for university, training qualification at Certificate II or higher) for Aboriginal students in Independent Public Schools greatly improved from 34.3% in 2010 to 79.4% in 2015 (for all WA Public Schools the Attainment Rate was 78%).
- The Year 12 outcomes data for Aboriginal, 'disadvantaged', country and EAL students can be volatile due to small numbers but generally displays very similar patterns for Independent Public Schools and Non-Independent Public Schools which match those evident for all students.

Attendance data for Aboriginal students in Independent Public Schools provided by the Department of Education indicates that from 2008 to 2015 the attendance rate has varied only marginally from 79.5% in 2008 to 79.3% in 2015. During this period Aboriginal student numbers in Independent Public Schools have increased from 7944 to 12,620.

2. The participation of schools in programs to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal students.

The accountability for education outcomes for Aboriginal students in all Western Australian schools is the responsibility of the Department of Education. A Delivery and Performance Agreement exists between the Department of Education and each Independent Public School. Under this Agreement, Independent Public Schools remain part of the public school system of Western Australia and as such are expected to meet the obligations of all public schools. The Agreement sets out the performance and accountability expectations of the school; and the resources and support supplied by the Department of Education.

The Agreement requires that all parties to the Agreement commit to being socially inclusive and address disadvantage, including for students who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, have a disability, who come from an English as an Additional Language background or who experience social disadvantage.

There are specific strategies and programs that target improved education outcomes for Aboriginal students. All schools in Western Australia can access these programs, including;

- Literacy and numeracy support

Consultants and resources that support schools to develop and implement whole-school improvement planning. The Improving Literacy and Numeracy Partnership is a professional learning and support program that is supporting 75 primary schools and 4 secondary schools to implement sustainable, evidence based strategies and monitor literacy and numeracy performance.

All schools have access to the State-wide Speech and Language Service and the Aboriginal Early Childhood Language Support Program is a Commonwealth funded program addressing school readiness of Aboriginal students in Pre-Primary for Year 1.

- Complex Learning and Wellbeing

Coordinates and supports schools to implement the following programs: Youth Mental Health First Aid, Teen Mental Health First Aid, Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies and Aussie Optimism. The program provides advice and support to schools about bullying, child protection and protective behaviours.

- Behaviour and Attendance

Monitors daily all state-wide suspensions and reported critical incidents and forwards child protection matters to the Child Protection Team.

Provides specialised consultation in relation to complex situations involving student behaviour, including attendance and mental health.

- PALS Program (42% of Independent Public Schools have applied to participate in the 2016 Program)

PALS, an initiative of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, encourages young Western Australian school students to develop projects that promote reconciliation in their local community.

PALS commenced in 2004 and is based on the core attributes of:

Partnership between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people;

Acceptance of difference as unique and to be respected;

Learning more about ourselves and each other, and,

Sharing a common journey along the path of healing and reconciliation towards a more harmonious and optimistic future.

In 2015, 367 schools from across the State coordinated 422 PALS projects that aimed to increase students understanding of our unique Aboriginal culture.

- Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework

The Framework is leading the way for public schools to become culturally responsive to their Aboriginal students and supports work to improve outcomes for Aboriginal students.

The framework was developed following extensive consultation in 2015 with school staff and key stakeholders. It sets expected standards for all staff when working with Aboriginal students, their families and communities.

The framework is aligned with the Australian Professional Standard for Principals and Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

The framework supports staff to reflect on their behaviours, attitudes and practices with a view to progressing from cultural awareness to cultural responsiveness so we can maximize learning outcomes for Aboriginal students. This includes staff in Central and Regional offices.

- Clontarf Foundation Academies Program (12 Clontarf Academies, including 2 for girls)

The Clontarf Foundation provides a range of in-school and extra-curricular activities to assist Aboriginal students to have a successful school experience and transition to post-school destinations. The Foundation exists to improve the education, discipline, life skills, self-esteem and employment prospects of young Aboriginal men and by doing so equips them to participate meaningfully in society.

Since opening its first Academy for 25 boys in 2000 the Foundation has grown to cater for about 4,200 boys in 68 schools across Western Australia, Northern Territory, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

- Follow the Dream, Partnerships for Success Program

Follow the Dream: Partnerships for Success program targets Aboriginal students with high aspirations as they commence their secondary education. Through individualised case management in the areas of academic acceleration, longitudinal subject selection, career and transition support students are encouraged to complete Year 12 and achieve results that enable entrance into tertiary studies.

The program operates in 27 public schools throughout the State but also supports high achieving students in neighbouring schools through an outreach model. Overall the program services approximately 1000 students through most schools or outreach programs.

Each site has a Program Coordinator with the funding and system level coordination and support provided by the Aboriginal Education Directorate. The program is managed locally at the school where it operates under the guidance of a Steering Committee who meet four times a year.

- Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers

Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers are based in schools and play an important part in education for staff, students and the Aboriginal community. An understanding of local culture and language and strong community ties contribute to the improvement of education outcomes for Aboriginal students.

- KindiLink

KindiLink is a play-and-learn initiative for Aboriginal three year old children who attend with a parent/carer at 37 selected schools. Kindilink aims to boost children's learning in the year before they start Kindergarten and build supportive links between home and the school. It is running as a pilot over the next three years and will be independently evaluated to inform future directions.

- Remote School Attendance Strategy (Commonwealth funded)

The Remote School Attendance Strategy is a Commonwealth initiative aimed at improving the attendance rates of Aboriginal students. School attendance officers working with schools, families, parents, and community organisations to ensure all children go to school every day.

The Remote School Attendance strategy is designed to improve school attendance levels in specific remote communities through the employment of local engagement teams.

- Aboriginal Youth Ranger Program

The Aboriginal Youth Ranger Program aims to improve the retention of Aboriginal students to Year 12 and assist in their transition to further education, training and work. The program provides flexible school-based programs in Kimberley schools, which blend school curriculum with Aboriginal natural resource management, heritage related activities and cultural studies. The program is funded by the Commonwealth's Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

- Aboriginal School Based Training Program

The Aboriginal school-based training (ASBT) program is a specific vocational education and training in schools program and provides opportunities for Aboriginal students to start training while at school. Students in years 10, 11 and 12 can gain a qualification, employment or go on to further education or training.

There are two pathways available in the ASBT program – an institutional based training pathway and an employment based training pathway.

School based engagement programs provide an important variety of avenues to improve participation, attendance, engagement and transition.

- Local School-based Aboriginal Engagement Programs, for example SHINE (Students Hairdressing Integrating Education), Role Models and Leaders Australia including; Kimberley Girl and Pilbara Girl, Deadly Sista Girlz and Girls From Oz Performing Arts Program.

SHINE (Students Hairdressing Integrating Education) supports young Aboriginal women at risk of disengaging from education. Originally established in 2010 at John Willcock College in Geraldton, Western Australia and now in its fifth year, over 200 students have completed the program under the guidance of its founder Mandy Jolley and her team.

The primary outcomes of the SHINE program have been improved school attendance rates, students re-engaged in the learning process and enhanced post-school opportunities.

Role Models and Leaders Australia includes girls academies that aim to bring about change to the lives of at-risk girls with programs including;

- Girls from Oz provides activities to children and young people in remote Australia that expand life experiences, create connections, encourage

- growth in confidence and increase opportunities for those who have limited access to high quality performing arts education.
- Kimberley Girl and Pilbara Girls is a youth engagement, personal development and leadership program for young Aboriginal women. The team joins local mentors to deliver workshops addressing ongoing generational issues to any Indigenous girl between 16 and 25 who wishes to take part.
 - The Deadly Sista Girlz Program is delivered by strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander role models and mentors who offer a stable environment in which they can discuss current and personal issues they may be facing. Each girl has the opportunity to be personally mentored throughout the program and also make positive social interactions with their fellow 'sistagirls' in a fun and caring environment.
- Netball WA's Shooting Stars and Shooting Goals Program

Shooting Stars uses netball as a vehicle to encourage greater engagement and attendance at school of young Aboriginal girls living in WA's remote communities and regional towns. The program links health and physical education learning outcomes, empowering girls to make informed health and wellbeing decisions. The program operates in Carnarvon, Meekatharra, Wiluna, Derby and Halls Creek.

Conclusion

The Western Australian Government continues to work through the Aboriginal Affairs Cabinet Sub-Committee and the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee (AACC) to drive better coordination and collaboration in Aboriginal Affairs, including education.

The DAA supports measures and initiatives that address the key developmental stages in Aboriginal children to achieve success at school and transition to success in life.