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Dear Ms Shaw

**ECONOMICS AND INDUSTRY STANDING COMMITTEE: INQUIRY INTO WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIA**

Please find following the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) response to the Economics and Industry Standing Committee ("Standing Committee") inquiry into Western Australia's economic relationship with India (the "Inquiry").

The attached response provides information with respect to the role the Authority may play in contributing to Western Australia's economic and diplomatic relationship with the Republic of India, specifically through its well-established international education program. This program provides opportunities for overseas students to complete primary and secondary school curriculum in their home country while studying the Western Australian curriculum.

With Australia being a study destination for a significant number of Indian students each year, there exists an opportunity to use the Authority's international education program to raise the profile of the Western Australia education system as a pathway to its universities.

The Authority's response to the Inquiry is focused on those Terms of Reference of relevance to its activities. Specifically, the Authority has focused its response on Terms of Reference 3 – existing barriers or impediments to trade and 4 – opportunities to strengthen the trading relationship.

On behalf of the Authority I welcome the opportunity to discuss our submission further.

Yours sincerely

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**CHAIR, SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND STANDARDS AUTHORITY**

4 November 2019

cc Ms Suzanne Veletta Principal Research Officer, Economics and Industry Standing Committee

## **School Curriculum and Standards Authority Submission – Inquiry into Western Australia’s Economic Relationship with India**

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## 1. Executive summary of responses

| Response No.   | Response   |
|--|--|
| Inquiry focus 3 – existing barriers or impediments to trade                                      |  |
| 5.1  | Having a clear understanding of India's local, state and national regulatory frameworks with respect to foreign curriculum delivery, and knowledge of cultural norms and official protocols for engaging with education related institutions in-country. |
| 5.2  | Price sensitivity of the Indian market may mean the Authority has to consider its commercial approach to the Indian market and corresponding risks.  |
| 5.3  | Declining numbers of Indian onshore international students in Western Australia.   |
| 5.4  | English academic language skills need to be addressed to adequately prepare students from India for further study in Western Australia.  |
| Inquiry focus 4 – Opportunities to strengthen the trading relationship (international education) |  |
| 6.1  | Identify suitable partners schools in India to deliver Western Australian curriculum programs.   |
| 6.2  | Utilise existing, and develop further, sister-state relationships in India of strategic value to the State. The Authority would be particularly interested in those Indian states that wish to deliver foreign school-based curriculum.                  |
| 6.3  | Working with members of the Indian business community in Perth to identify and license schools in India to deliver Western Australian curriculum. Such an arrangement would have public and private benefits.  |
| 6.4  | Utilise employment opportunities to attract more Indian students to Western Australia to study.  |
| 6.5  | Provide a holistic public and private education offering, which includes curriculum export, with complementary branding.   |

## 2. About the Authority

The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) is the Western Australian Government's statutory agency responsible for setting standards of student achievement and for assessment and certification (in Year 12) according to these standards. The Authority is also responsible for setting year-level syllabuses across learning areas from Pre-primary to Year 10 and issuing the Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines through the *Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline (the Outline)*. Additionally, the Authority is the Test Administration Authority for National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing in Western Australia.

The Authority's Board reports directly to the Minister for Education and Training and consists of seven members. The Authority's Board is supported by two statutory committees – the Curriculum and Assessment Committee and the Standards Committee – and approximately 143 public sector employees.

## 3. The Authority's international education program

The Authority's international education program involves the licensing of its curriculum programs to overseas schools:

- *Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline (the Outline)* – Kindergarten to Year 10
- Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) – Year 11 and Year 12
- Australian Matriculation program (AUSMAT) – Year 12 only.

Both the WACE and AUSMAT may lead to the calculation of an Australian Tertiary Admissions Ranking (ATAR) and achievement of Western Australian Government issued senior secondary certification. The *Outline* includes an early childhood education program specially designed for use in overseas markets, recognising challenges to education in this space.

The Authority has operated its international education program for over 32 years, the longest of any Australian state or territory. Currently the Authority licenses curriculum to overseas schools located in China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Bangladesh and Indonesia. Eleven overseas schools were approved by the Authority's Board prior to 2019 to deliver Western Australian curriculum programs. An additional seven schools were approved in 2019 under a phased expansion of the Authority's international education program. Further schools, under this expansion, are in the final stages for approval. This phased expansion includes a focus on market diversification with India identified as a key destination for the Authority's international education activities.

Key focuses of the Authority's international education program is to develop methodologies and resources for use by overseas schools that will also benefit schools in Western Australia. Further information and a brochure summarising the Authority's international education program may be found at <https://international-schools.scsa.wa.edu.au>.



#### 4. Links to the Western Australian Government's International Education Strategy

The Authority's international education program contributes to the Western Australian Government's broader International Education Strategy as described in the *Where bright futures begin*, International Education in Perth, Western Australia 2018–2025. The Western Australian Government's International Education Strategy is led by the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation (JTSI) and is focused on increasing the number of international students studying in Western Australia. The Authority's international education program contributes to this strategy through a series of mechanisms aimed at encouraging WACE and AUSMAT graduates to select Western Australia for higher education studies.

#### 5. Inquiry focus 3 – Existing barriers or impediments to trade

##### 5.1 Regulatory

Reflecting national sentiment, India's Central Government has considered education as a top priority since 1968 and made significant progress in raising standards of literacy, the quality of education, and growth in student engagement in secondary education. The Indian education system caters to over 260 million students per year and significant changes are evident including:

- a steady decrease in state school enrolments compared to private school enrolments
- the increasing wealth of Indian families and expectations with respect to educational outcomes
- increased youth spending on aspirational education
- increasing numbers of Indian student undertaking studies overseas.

As mentioned above, the Authority has identified India as a key market for the expansion of its international education program. However, to support this strategy, the Authority has found it challenging to establish the following key understandings to determine a suitable way forward:

- the intersection between Indian governance structures and the roles of local, state and Central Government education authorities with respect to the delivery of foreign curriculum in India
- Indian education board policy and processes for approval of foreign curriculum, and whether there is a regulatory appetite for foreign curriculum delivered in India
- best practice approaches for the identification of suitable schools to deliver Western Australian curriculum programs
- teacher registration and standards
- cultural norms and diplomatic protocols that should be observed in conducting business with India.

## 5.2 Price sensitivity

The Authority understands from Commonwealth Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade advice that India's education system is struggling to cope with domestic demand for education. For example, demonstrating the scale of India's education system, the Uttar Pradesh Board of High School and Intermediate Education claims to be the largest examining body in the world with 22,000 affiliated schools.

In 2018, a total of 6.6 million candidates sat for the Board's examinations at more than 8,500 examination centres throughout Uttar Pradesh.<sup>i</sup> Statistics such as those from Uttar Pradesh are propagated by a growing, and increasingly wealthier, middle-class for whom quality education is a necessity and also reflective of social status.

Despite the demand for quality education, India appears to be a price sensitive market which is largely high volume and low price points in comparison to other Asian countries such as China. As a Western Australian Government agency, the Authority must ensure that it covers the financial costs of its commercial activities whilst delivering an economic benefit to the State. The price sensitivity seen in the Indian market will require the Authority to thoroughly evaluate its strategy for expansion in this country. For example, in countries like China, minimum student numbers for the WACE program to commence at a school are 40 to 45 students in Year 11. In India, minimum student numbers may have to be higher to offset lower price points, which may place an additional burden on Indian schools delivering the WACE to enrol minimum student numbers to the detriment of the quality of teaching. Furthermore, as student numbers increase, the number of teachers and support staff that a school must employ will increase, which may adversely affect school preparatory processes for the delivery of the WACE.

## 5.3 Onshore international students

There is a critical need to raise the awareness of the State of Western Australia to prospective international students from India to increase onshore enrolments from this market. Recent figures show that Western Australia has just 7.5% of Australia's international student enrolments from India.<sup>ii</sup> Additionally onshore student commencement growth from India from 2016 to 2017 in Australia was 9.1%, in Western Australian this growth was -14.7% over the same period.

Western Australia's market share of student commencements from India dropped from 11.9% in 2016 to 9.3% in 2017.<sup>iii</sup> There are number of reasons for the decline in international student numbers from India in Western Australia, not least of which include issues with streamlined visa processing (SVP). SVP enables the packaging of qualifications from different types of education institutions to provide pathways for international students to university. Two Western Australian universities have informed the Authority that they are reviewing SVP arrangements due to international student visa compliance issues.

Research indicates that prospective students who know about Perth as a study destination, view the prospect of further study here positively, based on factors including teaching quality, lifestyle, graduate employment and the cost of living. However, a 'significant awareness deficit' exists with regard to prospective students



with only 9.5% of potential Indian university students reporting that they were familiar with or knew Perth very well.<sup>iv</sup>

The delivery of Western Australian curriculum overseas provides an opportunity to address the above by assisting Western Australian universities identify students that have prepared for higher education studies through an appropriate curriculum. Furthermore, the Western Australian curriculum provides a further branding point and target market for onshore education in the State. However, to realise onshore enrolments from the overseas schools' market, a well-designed coordinated effort between public and private institutions is necessary. At present, it is not clear how such an effort will be established, managed and contextualised to ensure a strong impact in the Indian market. The Authority has endeavoured to describe a possible model for a coordinated effort in section 6.5 below.

#### 5.4 Academic English language skills

Recent media drew attention to concerns over the academic English language skills of Indian students studying in Western Australia amongst other places. The Western Australian curriculum is written in Standard Australian English and the level of English skill required for senior secondary certification is at a higher level than common interpersonal communication. The Authority would need to ensure it has adequate support frameworks in place for each school in India delivering its curriculum programs. These frameworks would be established to support teachers in providing students with a number of opportunities to develop the cognitive academic language proficiency necessary for Western Australian curriculum study. The failure to do so may impact student achievement and their ATAR with respect to the WACE and adversely impact the transition of overseas Indian students into Western Australian university study.

### 6. Inquiry focus 4 – Opportunities to strengthen the trading relationship – international education

Private schools in India, including low-fee or elite schools, account for 31% of the total number of Kindergarten to Year 12 schools in this country. The increased demand for quality senior secondary education programs delivered in the English medium reflects growing wealth and the desire for successful education outcomes. Furthermore, India's Central Government is focused on the expansion of education to support national development and industrial quality.<sup>v</sup> This creates a significant opportunity for Western Australian curriculum programs in India through suitable partnerships and sustainable models of delivery and support. The Authority has identified below potential opportunities with respect to deployment of its international education program in India.

#### 6.1 India as a target market for the Authority's international education program

As mentioned above, the Authority considers India a key market for the expansion of its international education program. Western Australian curriculum programs from Kindergarten to Year 12 are recognised as world-class and have demonstrated that they meet the needs of students in overseas schools for the past 32 years.



The Authority considers the Western Australian curriculum programs to be suitable for primary and secondary schools in India due to the following features:

- each curriculum program has been designed to reflect the various phases of schooling and are student-centred, culturally responsive and have a focus on building life and learning skills
- each curriculum program focuses on the learning needs and styles of specific year levels and are interconnected with other curriculum programs offered by the Authority, such that each curriculum program may be delivered by a school independently or as a suite of sequential curriculum programs
- each curriculum program provides overseas schools with access to extensive resources to support lesson planning, teaching, assessment, school leadership and reporting, accompanied by regular professional learning opportunities and ongoing support provided by the Authority online and through regular scheduled in-country visits.

The design of the Western Australian curriculum is the product of extensive Western Australian Government investment over a number of decades. This investment includes ongoing reviews of best practice nationally and internationally and consideration of diverse student learning needs.

The Authority's experience in international education would suggest that the delivery of Western Australia curriculum in India may face some challenges. These challenges may relate to pedagogy, possible variances in English language skills of students from region to region and adjustment to the Authority's syllabuses. However, none of these challenges would be considered insurmountable due to the various support structures and resources that the Authority provides.

The Authority also considers that the delivery of Western Australian curriculum in India would have a number of complementary benefits. These benefits include raising greater awareness of the State of Western Australia as a study and tourism destination and link service offering for various other institutions as identified in section 6.9 below.

## 6.2 Sister-State relationship between the Government of Western Australia and the State Government of Andhra Pradesh

The Authority proposes that the utilisation of existing, and development of further strategic, sister-state relationships would provide a valuable platform for the delivery of Western Australian curriculum programs and other Western Australian products and services in India. For example, Western Australia has a sister-state relationship with the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. This bilateral relationship presents a starting point for dialogue on the delivery of Western Australian curriculum programs and a pipeline for Indian students into further study in Western Australia. This opinion is supported by India's draft National Education Policy 2019 (NEP) which aims to create greater opportunities for students to access consistent high levels in the quality of curriculum and schooling. The NEP states:



Since children learn languages most quickly between 2–8 years, and multilingualism has great cognitive benefits for students, children will be immersed in three languages early on, from the Foundational Stage<sup>vi</sup>

In the case of Andhra Pradesh, it may be prudent to send further targeted trade missions to this Indian state to conduct meetings with appropriate education officials and sector leaders. These meetings could be centred around specific opportunities for Western Australia's international education offerings including Western Australian curriculum programs. Relationships between Western Australia and other Indian states could also contain this type of focus.

### 6.3 The role of the Indian diaspora business community

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia (CCIWA) could play an important role in supporting the delivery of the Western Australian curriculum in Indian schools that leads to further study and commercial opportunities in the State. Specifically, CCIWA could play a pivotal role in advising and encouraging businesses such as those belonging to members of Western Australia's Indian diaspora to identify and work with Indian education institutions and the Authority in the delivery of Western Australian curriculum. The Authority has recently approved schools in China working with members of Perth's Chinese business community with links to China. Key benefits of approving schools under this model include that these businesses benefit financially through their relationship with approved overseas schools, assist the Authority with overseas communication and addressing cultural norms and support the Western Australian international education strategy by working towards bringing overseas WACE graduates to Perth. The Authority proposes that businesses belonging to members of the Indian diaspora may achieve the same.

To encourage these Perth-based Indian businesses to generate onshore university enrolments from Indian schools delivering Western Australian curriculum, several measures could be undertaken. These measures include that these businesses could be encouraged to form education agency arrangements with Western Australian universities, if they are not registered and the universities agree, to receive financial benefits from onshore enrolments. Furthermore, these businesses could establish migration related services for overseas WACE graduates from India to undertake higher education studies in this State. While it is unlikely that every WACE graduate from India will undertake university studies in Western Australia, this strategy should see a number of these students pursuing further studies in the State. As with the Perth-based Chinese businesses, the Indian businesses could also receive financial benefits from India-based partner schools for student recruitment and other services to the school.

### 6.4 Incentivising onshore student enrolments through employment to undertake Western Australian university studies

To incentivise overseas Indian WACE graduates to come to Australia, the above mentioned businesses, and others, should be encouraged to employ international students where practicable. This employment would be provided to Indian students while studying in Western Australia and includes paid and unpaid internships that may lead to post-graduate employment or further study.



The Authority understands that international student visa's permit work for up to 40 hours every two weeks when studying and unrestricted hours during course breaks/holidays.<sup>vii</sup> Furthermore, the reinstatement of Western Australia's regional migration status will assist international student transition from university studies to work.

By recruiting overseas WACE graduates, Western Australian businesses may be assured of the quality of the contribution of these students to their businesses. The WACE is a high quality internationally recognised certification and the Authority's moderation processes ensure comparability in standards student achievement overseas and locally. To achieve a WACE, students must meet a number of requirements including meeting minimum standards of literacy and numeracy. This standard is based on Level 3 of the *Australian Core Skills Framework*,<sup>viii</sup> which is regarded as the level essential for individuals to meet the demands of everyday life and work in a knowledge based economy. A further requirement to achieve a WACE is that students must complete at least four semester long units in the Authority's English courses (with two of these units completed in Year 12 from a particular course). The combination of the literacy and numeracy standard with the English course completion requirement should provide some assurance to employers that overseas WACE graduates from India have the requisite language and literacy skills for employment in Western Australian.

#### 6.5 Tailored branding strategy and wholistic product offering

It is the Authority's experience that a tailored branding strategy that includes a defined product offering, including comprehensive and relevant wrap around services that raise awareness of Western Australia and leads to positive perceptions of the State as a market leader in education. The Authority's international education program is focused on curriculum, assessment and certification of student certification as this relates to its syllabuses. There are a number of products and services that complement the Authority's international education offerings that the Authority has limited resources to address or these are not within its remit to deliver. These products and services include, but are not limited to, the following:

- teacher training and certification including micro-credentialing
- school leader training and professional support
- study tours to Western Australia (students, teachers and school leaders)
- student exchange
- teacher exchange
- marketing of higher education options
- university bridging options
- university incubators to promote international student ideation that can be commercialised and to facilitate paid and unpaid internships, and further employment opportunities in Western Australia
- vocational education and training delivery
- sister-school arrangements (between Indian and Western Australia-based schools)
- education agent training
- onshore primary and secondary school enrolments



- tourism links (in 2018 India was the eighth largest inbound market for visitor arrivals and 13th largest market for total visitor spend)<sup>ix</sup>
- cultural exchange.

The above products and services may be delivered by private and public institutions, independently or cooperatively as part of a coordinated implementation in India, which includes Western Australian curriculum delivery. To ensure awareness of a coordinated product and service education offering, a tailored branding strategy for the Indian market should be considered. Such a brand strategy may require coordination through the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation (JTSI) and complement existing strategies. JTSI's involvement may ensure adequate resourcing is in place to guide a coordinated offering. A coordinated effort would realise a number of economic benefits for various public and private Western Australian education related institutions. Such an approach could also send a positive message to schools and students in India that Western Australia is an education destination of choice.

## 7. Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> *66 million write UP school board exams, billed as world's largest*, The Telegraph Online Edition, <https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/6-6-million-write-up-school-board-exams-billed-as-world-s-largest/cid/1334909>

<sup>ii</sup> Western Australia's Engagement Strategy 2019–2030 – Our Future with Asia [https://www.jtsi.wa.gov.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/asian-engagement-strategy-2019-2030.pdf?sfvrsn=a4c2701c\\_4](https://www.jtsi.wa.gov.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/asian-engagement-strategy-2019-2030.pdf?sfvrsn=a4c2701c_4)

<sup>iii</sup> *Understanding the International Student Experience–report 2018*, StudyPerth, commencement data sourced from Austrade.

<sup>iv</sup> *Understanding the International Student Experience–report 2018*, StudyPerth, commencement data sourced from Austrade.

<sup>v</sup> *Education in India*, Stefen Trines, 13 September 2018, World Education News and Reviews. <https://wenr.wes.org/2018/09/education-in-india>.

<sup>vi</sup> Draft National Education Policy 2019 [https://epsiindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Draft\\_NEP\\_2019\\_EN\\_Revised.pdf](https://epsiindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Draft_NEP_2019_EN_Revised.pdf).

<sup>vii</sup> *Future Unlimited: Work while you study*. <https://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/english/live-in-australia/working>.

<sup>viii</sup> *Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) Level 3*, May 2019, Australian Government Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business.

<sup>ix</sup> *Tourism Australia, India at*: <http://www.tourism.australia.com/en/markets-and-stats/market-regions/south-and-south-east-asia/india.html>.