



Education and Health Standing Committee

Annual Report 2016-17

Report No. 2
September 2017

Legislative Assembly
Parliament of Western Australia

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Presented by

Ms J.M. Freeman, MLA

Laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly on 14 September 2017

Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to table the first annual report of the Education and Health Standing Committee in the 40th Parliament. This report covers the committee's activities in the final months of the previous parliament (from July to November 2016) and the current committee's activities from its formation on 23 May 2017 until 30 June 2017.

Despite operating for less than two months, the committee has already tabled one short report – an exploration of the issues around the legal use of e-cigarettes in this state – and has an inquiry underway. The committee is investigating the extent to which the Vocational Education and Training in Schools program is meeting the needs of schools, students and industry. Given the ever-increasing demand for VET courses by students in years 11 and 12, it is timely to look at the way the program is being delivered.

As I was also a member of the previous Education and Health Standing Committee, I will take the opportunity to say a few words about three important reports tabled in the last half of last year. But first, I would like to thank the previous chair of the committee, Dr Graham Jacobs, who did not return to the Parliament in this term. As chair, Dr Jacobs was committed to achieving outcomes designed to benefit the taxpayers of this State, and to questioning waste and mismanagement. His compassion shone through in his consideration of witnesses, particularly community members, and his desire to deliver useful documents that set out achievable change for the better is to be commended.

The current focus of the committee builds on the work of the previous committee's inquiry into the independent schools initiative. The focus of the report, *IPS Report Card*, was on outcomes for students and ensuring that management of staff was to the benefit of the whole public education sector, including concerns regarding employment practices and restrictions. Unfortunately, the recommendations were given little consideration by the previous government.

The Committee returned to the issues plaguing the opening of the Fiona Stanley Hospital with a brief report responding to an auditor general's report on the management of the hospital's centralised computing services contract. Despite the committee (and the auditor general) identifying multiple project management shortcomings in previous reports, it appears lessons on contract management had not been learnt, resulting in taxpayer funds being wasted yet again.

The *Learnings from the Message Stick* report into Aboriginal youth suicide was delivered towards the end of the 39th Parliament and risked being "yet another report" on this issue. The current government's commitment to respond is to be congratulated and ensures that efforts of all those who gave evidence - both in writing

and verbally - as well as the work done by the Committee and the staff, will not be in vain.

I look forward to continuing to work productively with my fellow committee members in this parliament. On their behalf I would also like to acknowledge the work of committee staff, both past and present.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James Freeman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

MS J.M. FREEMAN, MLA
CHAIR

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Chapter 1

Committee's activities

A report on the activities of the Education and Health Standing Committee for the financial year 2016-2017.

Introduction

The 2016-2017 reporting period encompasses two parliamentary sessions. The 39th Parliament was prorogued and the Legislative Assembly dissolved by the Governor on 30 January 2017. This dissolution terminated the parliament and its committees. The Education and Health Standing Committee of the 40th Parliament was established on 23 May 2017.

A summary of the activities of the committee during the course of this reporting period – 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 – is in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Summary of committee activities, 1 July 2016–30 June 2017

Activity	Number
39th Parliament	
Reports tabled	5
Deliberative meetings	12
Hearings	6
Briefings	1
Witnesses appearing	16
40th Parliament	
Reports tabled	1
Deliberative meetings	4
Hearings	0
Briefings	0
Witnesses appearing	0

Portfolios

The three portfolio areas of the committee as determined by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly are:

- Education and Training
- Health
- Mental Health

Public hearings

Pursuant to Standing Order 264, the committee has power to send for persons, papers and records. During the period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017, the committee conducted six hearings and took evidence from sixteen witnesses. Hearings were primarily related to the inquiry into Aboriginal youth suicides.

Table 1.2 – Witnesses who provided evidence at hearings of the committee, 1 July 2016–30 June 2017

Date	Name	Position	Organisation
39th Parliament			
12 September 2016	Ms M Nelson-Cox	Chairperson	Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia
	Mr S Wyn-Jones	Senior Policy Officer	
	Miss H J Thompson	Youth Policy Officer	
12 September 2016	Mr R Wortham	Chief Executive Officer	Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia
	Mr J Cunniffe	Senior Policy Officer	
12 September 2016	Dr T G Westerman	Aboriginal Clinical Psychologist and Managing Director	Indigenous Psychological Services
12 September 2016	Prof S Silburn	Clinical Psychologist and Researcher	Menzies School of Health Research
12 September 2016	Prof J Carapetis	Director	Telethon Kids Institute
	Mr G Pearson	Head of Aboriginal Health Research	
	Prof D Lawrence	Researcher	
12 September 2016	Mr C Weeks	Director General	Department of Aboriginal Affairs
	Ms L Gunn	A/Executive Director, Accountable Government	
12 September 2016	Mr R Addis	Director General	Department of Regional Development
	Mr G Searle	State Reform Leader	Regional Services Reform Unit, Department of Regional Development
21 October 2016	Dr D Russell-Weisz	Director General	Department of Health
	Prof Tarun Weeramanthri	Assistant Director General, Public Health	

Briefings

The committee received one briefing during the reporting period. Details are contained in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3 – Witnesses who briefed the committee, 1 July 2016–30 June 2017

Date	Name	Position	Organisation
39 th Parliament			
21 October 2016	Mr G Clarke	Deputy Auditor General	Office of the Auditor General
	Ms C McMinigal	Acting Assistant Auditor General, Performance Audit	

Conferences

The committee did not attend any conferences or forums during the reporting period.

Investigative travel

The committee did not undertake any investigative travel during the reporting period.

Reports tabled

The committee of the 39th Parliament tabled five reports between July and December 2016, including the annual report.

[IPS Report Card: The Report of the Inquiry into the Independent Public Schools initiative](#) was tabled on 15 August 2016. The inquiry found that the initiative does not use student outcomes as a measure of the success of IPS, and that it was unclear whether the initiative would in fact be able to improve student outcomes. The IPS initiative was creating a two-tiered system and the review system in place to monitor the performance of IP schools and their principals lacked rigour, the inquiry found. In November the committee tabled an objection to the government response to the report, which had questioned the report's objectivity.

On 22 September 2016, the committee tabled [<System Error> Auditor General's report on Health Department's Procurement and Management of its Centralised Computing Services Contract](#) as an addendum to an earlier report on the commissioning challenges posed by Fiona Stanley Hospital.¹ The Auditor General's report highlighted the mismanagement of the contract and breaches of agency review obligations. The committee was concerned at the Department of Health's cavalier attitude to contract

¹ *More than Bricks and Mortar: the report of the inquiry into the organisational response within the Department of Health to the challenges associated with commissioning the Fiona Stanley Hospital*, tabled on 10 April 2014.

management and record-keeping, particularly as similar deficiencies in procurement, governance and management of ICT had been identified by the Auditor General in previous reports.

And on 17 November 2016, the committee tabled [*Learnings from the message stick: The report of the Inquiry into Aboriginal youth suicide in remote areas*](#). It found that the Government's failure to respond to recommendations made by a plethora of reports into Aboriginal wellbeing in the past 15 years had contributed to the suicide crisis. Culturally-based programs, which had the greatest impact, were not well-funded. It recommended that the government shift its focus from government-run programs to Aboriginal-owned and run programs, and that an integrated whole-of-government approach to Aboriginal youth suicide be adopted.

On 28 June 2017, the committee of the 40th Parliament tabled a short report on the regulation of electronic cigarettes. The report, [*Clearing the air on e-cigarettes: factors regarding regulation that require consideration*](#), was intended to highlight the uncertainty in the community over the use of e-cigarettes and the confusing nature of legislation governing the use of nicotine versus non-nicotine e-cigarettes. The report's single recommendation was that the Minister for Health inform the committee of any considerations that have been given to the regulation of e-cigarettes.

Work in progress

The committee commenced an inquiry into the delivery of the Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS) program on 28 June 2017. Recent changes require VET students to achieve a minimum Certificate II qualification in order to graduate with their WA Certificate of Education. The inquiry will assess how well the program is coping with the new graduation requirements and the increase in the number of secondary students undertaking VET courses.

Chapter 2

Financial statement

Expenditure of the committee during the financial year.

Committee expenditure

The committee does not have its own formal budget and is funded out of the budget of the Legislative Assembly. Approval for major expenditure is required on a case-by-case basis and is subject to the approval of the Speaker.

The committee is required in accordance with Standing Order 276 to detail expenditure for the financial year 1 July 2016 – 30 June 2017. The Legislative Assembly dissolved on 30 January 2017 prior to the state election; therefore, two committees operated during the 2016-2017 financial year. The figures tendered below cover the full reporting period and therefore also include expenditure by the committee of the 39th Parliament.

Table 2.1 – Expenditure items of the committee, 1 July 2016–30 June 2017

Expenditure item	Total (\$)
Travel	\$639
Printing	\$4635
Couriers	\$271
Amenities	\$1089
TOTAL	\$6633

Notes:

- Figures rounded to nearest dollar.
- Excluded:
 - Salaries of committee staff;
 - Costs of shared administrative expenses, including lease costs for committee accommodation.



MS J.M. FREEMAN, MLA
CHAIR

Appendix One

Committee's functions and powers

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.