

WACSSO Inc.  
**POSITION PAPER  
RESPONSE SUMMARY**  
STATE ELECTION 2017

*Supporting parents  
Supporting public schools*



The Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc.  
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**[WACSSO.WA.EDU.AU](http://WACSSO.WA.EDU.AU)**

# Introduction

Some March 11, Western Australia will go to the polls to determine which party will lead the State for the next four years. Over the official campaign period we will see many promises made, namely in relation to jobs and growth, transport and community safety. Undeniably, education commitments are also rising to the fore as a key determining factor in the upcoming vote.

The Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc. (WACSSO) believes that education is the most important issue of this election. Sound investment in education has the power to shape our State's future.

WA has an excellent public education system that should be celebrated. However, together with its affiliates, WACSSO has identified a number of funding, resourcing and procedural shortfalls, that we believe if addressed, would improve the quality and outcomes in education for our State's children.

WACSSO produced a State Election Position Paper in November 2016, setting its position on several key

issues pertinent to education in WA. This position paper has informed the nature of advocacy carried out by WACSSO on behalf of its affiliates, more than 660 P&C Associations state-wide, to political candidates, members and parties, in the lead up to the election.

Each major political party has now released its key policies and vision for the future of education in our State. WACSSO also requested specific response from the WA Liberal Party, WA Labor Party, The Greens WA and The Nationals WA on each of the 19 issues addressed in its Position Paper. This document is a summary of each party's education-related announcements, commitments and policies.

Please note that WACSSO did not receive specific feedback on some key issues from all parties and any unaddressed concerns will be noted in the document. You may find each party's full response online at: [www.wacssso.wa.edu.au/issues](http://www.wacssso.wa.edu.au/issues).

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"Between 2008-09 and 2015-16 inclusive, the Liberal-National Government has spent around \$800 million on school maintenance. "Total maintenance identified in the SCA reports has decreased from \$166 million in 2007 to \$146 million in 2010 and to \$135.7 million in 2013.

"All major additions and upgrades at existing schools are carefully planned, with schedules for additional accommodation planned to meet expanding enrolments. This additional accommodation is scoped to ensure adequate specialist spaces are provided, as well as additional general learning areas."



"WA Labor recognises that poor planning by the current government has meant in many suburbs the use of transportable classrooms is now not a temporary measure, but a medium to long term measure to deal with enrolment pressures.

"A McGowan Labor Government will be investing in school infrastructure and will ensure better connected planning for new schools."



"Through the sale of Western Power, The Nationals WA support the introduction of the \$3billion Next Generation Account. The government has allocated \$1 billion to investing into school and TAFE infrastructure, focussing on upgrading or replacing old facilities. This fund will enable school maintenance and upgrades to be undertaken in a timely manner without affecting the State budget. The Nationals WA commit to delivering this funding to education infrastructure. This will address the \$135 million backlog identified in your correspondence."



NA

## 1. School Funding, Resourcing and Support

### 1.1. School maintenance

WACSSO calls for:

- the development of an effective maintenance plan that will address the current backlog within an acceptable timeframe;
- the State Government to fund the maintenance backlog in order to ensure that all government school students and staff have access to comfortable, sanitary and safe learning environments that are adequate in all aspects; this includes quality (including size) of buildings, grounds, facilities and equipment; and
- ongoing maintenance programs to be developed and implemented which will address the pressure of aging facilities and population growth facing government





"The student-centred funding model supports greater local control and decision-making by principals and their school communities in determining how funds are spent. All schools now operate with a one-line budget, which provides greater flexibility to develop educational programs and staffing profiles that best suit the needs of school communities. This includes decisions related to the type and number of staff they employ and the programs they run."



"Under the Liberal Government \$203million has been cut from the education budget and over 1400 staff have been cut, including 550 teachers."



"If elected at the 2017 State election, The Nationals WA commit to implementing a school leadership program, to ensure senior staff in regional schools have the right tools to manage their school's affairs."

"We also commit to establishing a professional ICT support program for regional teachers, to enable them to deliver education with the latest technology."



NA

"Between 2008-09 and 2015-16 inclusive, the Liberal-National Government has spent around \$800 million on school maintenance. Total maintenance identified in the SCA reports has decreased from \$166 million in 2007 to \$146 million in 2010 and to \$135.7 million in 2013."

"All major additions and upgrades at existing schools are carefully planned, with schedules for additional accommodation planned to meet expanding enrolments. This additional accommodation is scoped to ensure adequate specialist spaces are provided, as well as additional general learning areas."



NA

"The Nationals WA fully support the introduction of the student-centred funding model, which targets the areas of most need. The Nationals WA were vocal in ensuring the 'small schools allocation', introduced at the same time as the student centred funding model, meets the needs of small regional schools and is sufficient to meeting their basic operating costs."



"The Greens are the only political party whose support of the Gonski reforms has been unwavering. We want to ensure that every school should have the level of funding and resources needed to offer a broad range of subjects that caters for all students no matter where they live or the income of their parents."

## 1.2. Support for all school staff

- optimal staffing levels;
- appropriate and effective professional development for teachers and other staff as well as, in certain cases, other members of the school community; and
- systemic, departmental support for schools and school leaders to ensure efficient school management.

## 1.3. Student centred funding model

- State Government to fund education to a level that mitigates the need for parental fees, charges and contributions;
- additional funds to be invested in order to cover core learning activities and outstanding maintenance, so that P&C funding can be utilised effectively in other areas;
- a governance strategy to be implemented around how principals allocate funding provided on a needs-basis, i.e. for particular students, such as those with a disability or English as an Additional Language or Dialect;
- transparent and detailed information to be provided to parents so they can be informed how targeted funding for students is being directed to their needs;
- a review into how the Student-centred funding model is accounting for economies of scale, as small and mid-sized schools must be able to offer their students an equitable level of education; and
- an increase in the level of funding provided to schools for the purchase of stationery and material to address the shortfall currently picked up by teachers, especially in addressing the needs of students from low

## 2. School populations

WACSSO calls for:

- greater transparency in the planning and communication of school population projections;
- new schools to have funds committed to ensure optimal levels of school resourcing at inception and in line with projected growth;
- the State Government to fund the development of specialty spaces so that students have access to a diverse and optimal education.



"Projected enrolments at all public schools are continually monitored and strategies developed to alleviate enrolment pressure, including approved building works at a number of inner-city and western suburbs primary schools. While the Department does not publish enrolment projections, they are available to individual school communities on request.

"All new schools, both primary and secondary, are provided with specialist classrooms/spaces as part of their planning brief. However, the principal has discretion as to how these spaces are used."



"WA Labor recognises that poor planning by the current government has meant in many suburbs the use of transportable classrooms is now not a temporary measure, but a medium to long term measure to deal with enrolment pressures. A McGowan Labor Government will be investing in school infrastructure and will ensure better connected planning for new schools.



"The Nationals WA support transparency in planning and communication of school population projections and commit to working with regional communities to projections are properly communicated.

"We also commit to ensuring new regional schools have optimal levels of resourcing to ensure regional students have access to the same opportunities as their metropolitan counterparts."



"The Greens are strongly in favour of supporting transparency in all aspects of decision making including decisions around planning and communication of school population projections along with administrative support.

"It is imperative that this planning information is then made effective through adequate funding levels. Schools must be able to rely on planning and funding in order to be able to be most effective at meeting the needs of students."



"School psychologists play a key role in supporting school communities in the areas of learning, behaviour, wellbeing and critical incident and emergency management, with over 300 FTE across schools.

"The greater autonomy now afforded to public schools means that they can choose to augment their services in particular areas in response to the needs of their student population."



"More students than ever are presenting to school with complex mental health and behaviour issues and if in government we will work closely with the WACSSO and other stakeholders to ensure that schools do get the support they need to be successful."



"The School Chaplaincy program operating in WA recently expanded to cover 501 public schools across the state.

"Chaplains act as counsellors to students, assisting with problems such as loneliness, relationship or self-esteem issues.

"The Nationals WA recognise proper mental health is a major part of receiving a good education."



"School psychologists are chronically under-funded and the effects are being felt particularly in the context of the increasing incidence of mental health issues amongst our young people. We are concerned that the introduction of school chaplains into schools may detract from the need for professional, secular assistance. Chaplains should be considered an extra rather than a substitute for the school chaplain program."

## 3. Wellbeing and support

### 3.1. Mental health and allied health services

WACSSO calls for

- State Government to increase funding for mental and allied health services, ensuring that all school communities have access to an array of support systems;
- better promotion of, and access to, allied and mental health services for students in government schools; and
- greater collaboration between schools; community and service providers to improve service delivery.



“The disability allocation is provided to schools through the SCFM to make reasonable adjustments for students with disability and additional needs, giving more control to principals and school communities to determine how money is spent to deliver the best education to students.

“There is no minimum qualification requirement for Education Assistants (Special Needs). However, all classifications of education assistants are required to undertake any training specific to their role.

“Teachers have reported that with less Education Assistant (EA) support in the classroom they now have to spend more time with those students who need extra help to stay focused and feedback from WACSSO has also reinforced the concerns of parents that many schools do not have enough EAs to provide the support needed for younger children and those with high needs. A McGowan Labor Government will provide funding so that schools can employ more Education Assistants to ensure more one on one support.”



“Initiatives such as [Abilities Based Learning Education WA (ABLEWA)] give students the ability to access specifically tailored learning experiences to further develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. Programs like this allow students new opportunities and The Nationals WA will continue to support their development and rollout.”



“At the federal level the Greens have been working to address the funding gap for students with a disability. Less than half of students with a disability in Australian schools are being funded for their support needs and many others are receiving inadequate funding. The Greens support funding mechanisms which follow the child not the school.

“The Greens opposed cuts to funding for education assistants in WA in recognition of the vital role education assistants play in schools not just for children at risk but for the wellbeing of all students.”



“The WACSSO position on gifted and talented education is consistent with the Department’s policy and practice. The Department’s Gifted and Talented policy recognises the special learning needs of exceptionally able students. Identification, provision and monitoring of gifted students is the responsibility of all teachers and principals.”

“I agree that schools should cater for all students; including Gifted and Talented students. If WA Labor is elected we will work with WACSSO and other stakeholders to ensure that their needs are met.”



“The Nationals WA will continue to work towards access to GATE programs for regional students.”



“The Greens are in favour of increasing access to specialist programs for students right across the education attainment spectrum to enable all students to reach their potential.”



### 3.2. Support for students with disability

WACSSO calls for

- State Government to make an increased funding commitment to ensure that students with disability and special educational needs are adequately supported through a wide range of programs and services in schools across the state;
- increased transparency in the allocation of need-based funding;
- appropriately trained and adequately resourced educational assistants be provided, ensuring that students with disabilities receive an excellent education enabling them to achieve to the best of their individual potential;
- a change to the Job Description Form for Education Interpreter that lists NAATI accreditation as an essential criteria; and
- a commitment to upskilling EAs and EIs to enable improved educational outcomes.

### 3.3. Gifted and talented education

WACSSO supports a targeted focus of identifying and catering for students with exceptional ability and ensuring that their learning needs are met.

The government school sector must ensure that:

- extracurricular programs for students with exceptional ability are readily accessible;
- specialist provisions and extension are integrated into daily class time;
- where extracurricular programs are offered, this must not be the sole extent of support for students with exceptional ability; and
- schools are properly equipped, and teachers are supported and resourced to develop all students across the full educational spectrum.



"The Department's new Student Behaviour policy emphasises a more active role for teachers in educating students to develop safe, inclusive and respectful behaviours. The new model of service implemented in 2016 has improved the implementation of wrap-around services for students exhibiting challenging behaviour support needs, so that underlying issues such as mental and physical health that are affecting student attendance and behaviour can be addressed."



"We were disappointed in 2015 with the closure by the Liberal National Government of the Behaviour Centres, established by the previous Labor Government, and the rushed implementation of the Government's 'engagement' centres replacement. With reference to WACSSO's concerns about school safety, there is a clear need for all resources and programs used in schools, including those associated with school safety, to be rigorously evidenced based."



"The Nationals WA believes every student has the right to attend school in a safe and enjoyable environment. While acknowledging infrequent instances of extreme behaviour, we believe the present legislative framework and regulations, coupled with the professionalism of teaching and support staff provide a safe environment for students."



"We recognise that feeling physically and emotionally safe is a fundamental need that must be met before children are able to learn. "Everyone has the right to an education free from bullying and intimidation and everything possible needs to be done to ensure all young people feel safe at school. We are in support of initiatives such as Safe Schools being implemented in more schools."



"The provision of 'walk lights' at crossings without traffic wardens is not under current consideration. "The Department works closely with Local Government Authorities to ensure these projects provide safe parking and drop-off and pick-up areas at schools across the State. Parent parking is required to be either on the school site or contiguous with the school site, thus maximising students' safety."



"If elected we will, with stakeholders like WACSSO, examine the existing criteria for school crossings; the way of consulting with school communities; the timeliness of decisions and the assessment process."



"The Nationals commit to ensuring road safety is a priority for a re-elected Liberal-National government."



"Families should feel confident that the roads are safe for their children. Again, we are in favour of initiatives that seek to reduce the road risks to young people."

## 4. Safety

### 4.1. School safety

WACSSO calls for

- the government to develop collaborative, and where appropriate inter-agency, strategies aimed at preventing and managing the safety of students and staff in government schools; and
- the development of guidelines for vetting programs, resources and presenters so that students are being informed by expert, evidence based knowledge.

### 4.2 Road safety

The safety of Western Australian school students is paramount.

WACSSO calls for:

- any school requesting a crossing guard to be provided with one immediately for an initial 6 month period while further assessments are carried out;
- a more accurate determination of risk via amendments to the current formula to determine the need for a Type A crossing, to also take into account other risk factors i.e. road conditions, speed limits, types of vehicles using the road, pedestrian age and number of unsupervised crossings;
- the State Government to investigate the provision of 'walk lights' at all schools without school crossing guards; and
- the development of a coordinated pick-up and drop-off scheme between Local Government and the Department of Education to ensure all schools have a safe environment for the pick-up and drop-off of students.







"It is misleading to suggest that the IPS initiative has exacerbated existing inequalities in the public education system, both perceived and actual, reinforcing a "two-tiered system".

"As the IPS initiative is an opt-in model, some schools will take up the advantages afforded by greater autonomy, and others will not. Schools that are not IPS will continue to be extremely well-resourced and supported by the Department of Education."



"WA Labor supports Independent Public Schools (IPS). I am aware of concerns about inequity in the public school system now between the majority of schools that are IPS and the minority that are not. If elected, we will work with all stakeholders, including WACSSO, on ways to address the inequities."



"The Nationals WA will continue to support the rollout of the Independent Public School model in Western Australia."



"Our schools face systemic inequalities and cuts to funding. The Greens are concerned that the introduction of independent public schools is resulting in a two-tier system that is serving to further exaggerate inequality.

"We note that a 2016 parliamentary inquiry into the IPS system did not find that student educational outcomes were being improved

"Officers from the Department's School Improvement and Support Unit, Policy branch and education regional offices are available to provide advice to council/board members.

"In Term 4, 2016, a new development program for school boards commenced and will continue to be offered to boards through a combination of online learning and face-to-face training to maximise access to school community members.

"During 2017, the Department will be modifying these resources and the access to training to suit the context and needs of school councils."



"I am aware of some concerns about discrepancies in training for parents on governance bodies and, if elected we will work with stakeholders to address this."



NA



"The Greens believe that all school governance bodies should have equal access to support irrespective of whether or not they are independent schools. We recognise that funding constraints require that resources be prioritised, however we believe that the amount of support schools receive should be based on student need rather than whether they are an independent school or not."

## 5. Independent Public Schools

WACSSO calls for the promotion of the government school system as a whole, to include:

- supporting teachers and helping them to achieve quality teaching, whether IPS or not;
- a formal and immediate change in the discourse surrounding IPS and government schools, the current dichotomy, IPS (good) versus non-IPS (bad), is further entrenching the perception of a two-tiered system; and
- State Government addressing the mechanisms that are creating the perceived and actual two-tiered system.

Any major educational reform should be made on the basis of improved student outcomes. With no evidence to suggest that this is the case, WACSSO calls for evidence into improved student outcomes before any further roll out of the initiative.

### 5.1. School council/board training

WACSSO calls for the State Government to:

- address the disparity between supports offered to IPS and non-IPS schools, including providing equitable training and resources for school boards and school councils; and to
- mandate the requirement for consistent and ongoing comprehensive training and resource material to school councils and boards, alike. There must be equal opportunity provided to school council and board members to access comprehensive training and resource material in order to develop strong management teams across the government





"Schools receive one-line budgets to fund the education, learning and development of enrolled children. Community development often arises as a positive by-product of the work of schools, but is not their core business."



NA



"Community engagement for Aboriginal students is particularly important as great importance is placed on the value of family and community. This is why The Nationals intend to develop strategies to further engage Aboriginal communities in education through a regional 'Centre for Excellence' in Aboriginal Education."



"The Greens strongly support initiatives that promote parent and community engagement. We recognise that students perform best when there is a strong partnership between their home and school lives and when they feel connected to their communities. Again, all schools should be able to access assistance to help them to promote these partnerships."



"Schools are at the heart of communities and have a critical role to play in supporting positive partnerships between teachers, parents and students. They continually explore opportunities to maximise the benefits of those partnerships in their specific contexts, including working with parents who have been elected to school boards or are active participants on Parents and Citizens' Associations. "WACSSO's request for development of a parental engagement policy is noted."



"Similarly I am keen for a McGowan Labor Government to work very closely with WACSSO on a strategy to support and improve parental engagement."



"Education does not end in the classroom and The Nationals WA encourage schools and parents to communicate to achieve the best outcomes for their students."

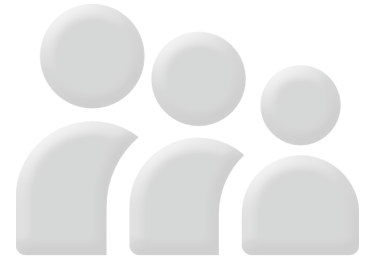


"The Greens strongly support initiatives that promote parent and community engagement. We recognise that students perform best when there is a strong partnership between their home and school lives and when they feel connected to their communities."

## 6. Community Engagement

WACSSO calls for:

- Inter-agency, and where appropriate cross sectoral, cooperation to deliver, implement and foster improved community engagement; and
- funding to be provided to schools to help them develop and resource community development programs, services and support for families from all cultural backgrounds.



### 6.1. Parental Engagement

WACSSO calls for:

- State government to have a targeted initiative of promoting and supporting parental engagement;
- the development of a parental engagement policy, including clearly defined terms of reference; and
- teacher training courses to include compulsory parental engagement training.



"Schools have the flexibility to make local decisions regarding the provision of VET qualifications and work placement opportunities for their students. These decisions are based on student interests, aspirations, local employment options, access to suitable training and workplace opportunities and school staff expertise."



"WACSSO's proposal for a system of work placements in government agencies for students in government schools undertaking VET studies is a positive initiative and if elected we would be keen to collaborate with WACSSO to examine ways of exploring how we could make this work."



NA



NA



Voluntary contributions and charges are determined by school principals and endorsed by the school council/board, ensuring they are local school decisions.

"Due to the nature and purpose of voluntary contributions and charges for secondary school students, the Department does not consider that a 'no cost' cost option requires assessment."



"\$203 million in cuts put more pressure on schools and parents to 'bridge the gap' in the costs of school programs, equipment and resources. It is for this reason Education will be one of the key areas of commitment in the lead up to the election and my Shadow Minister, Sue Ellery and I will have more to say in the lead up to the election."



"The Nationals WA recognises the significant donations and contributions of P&Cs to schools, particularly regional schools. As previously mentioned, The Nationals will announce an initiative to support regional P&Cs during the election campaign.

"We support the continuation of voluntary school fees in State government schools."



"Chronic underfunding is putting pressure on parents to help fill the funding gap. We know that school fees, contributions and charges disproportionately affect those most in need and serves to exacerbate disadvantage. We believe that the government should be providing adequate funding to schools rather than relying on parents to do so."

## 6.2. Improved strategies for VET work placements

- WACSSO calls for a commitment from government to provide work placements in government agencies for senior school students undertaking VET studies in government schools, by developing a partnership program with the Department of Education



## 7. School fees, contributions and charges

WACSSO calls for:

- government to fund education to a level that mitigates the need for parental fees, charges and contributions;
- the viability of increased 'no cost' cost options for secondary school students to be assessed; and
- an increase in funding for all government schools so that core education materials are effectively resourced and so that schools are not relying on parent contributions to maintain optimal levels of resourcing.



"All ICT initiatives and the associated technical support strategies employed by the Department ensure that Western Australian public schools can be individual, distinctive and responsive to their local communities while still benefiting from being part of a system."



"The Auditor General's report this year, found that the rollout of the new ICT system had been slow, poorly organised and that many schools reported slow and unreliable internet."



"The Nationals WA recognise the importance of ICT resources and training in schools. This is why we commit to providing ICT infrastructure and training to regional schools over if re-elected."



"The ability to use new technologies is vital to reducing inequality now and into the future."



"The Department has been working since May 2015 with the 77 public schools that have volunteered (based on their readiness, technical capacity and willingness) to transition to NAPLAN online in 2017. The schools have been involved in a number of online assessment opportunities, including the platform trial and readiness test in August 2016."



"The changes to the Australian Curriculum to include Technology and the moves to NAPLAN online will mean schools online technology will have to keep up with these changes."



NA



NA

## 8. Information Communication Technology

WACSSO calls for:

- the development and communication of a strategy that details the Department of Education's commitment to constantly upgrading and updating ICT in schools so as not to fall behind; and
- the replacement of hardware and devices and upgrade of bandwidth and network infrastructure regularly to ensure that schools are keeping pace with the technological requirements of students.

### 8.1. Online NAPLAN

WACSSO calls for:

- State Government to ensure that all schools have adequate hardware and network infrastructure prior to the rollout of state-wide Online NAPLAN so that no student is at a disadvantage due to the testing medium; and
- expansions of digital programs in schools to improve digital literacy and ensure students are comfortable and capable of sitting digital testing.





"During 2016, the Department negotiated a new telecommunications services contract with Telstra. This arrangement has enabled the Department to address bandwidth issues generally across all schools, and to make particular improvements in locations where capacity has previously been a concern."



NA



"To enable schools to capitalise on technology, adequate regional connectivity needs to be provided. This is why The Nationals WA have delivered improved regional telecommunications with an \$85 million investment through the Regional Mobile Communications Project and Regional Telecommunications Project."



"The Greens are calling for all schools to have access to the best available bandwidth capabilities and access to equipment to be able to keep pace with the latest technological advancements."



"Recognising that some families may be unable or unwilling to participate in personally owned/BYOD programs in schools, it is the responsibility of school leaders in Western Australian public schools to ensure that all students are provided with sufficient access to technology to meet educational needs."



"I agree that no student should be forced to participate in Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) or Personally Owned Device (POD) schemes and that no student should be disadvantaged if they do not have their own device."



NA



"We are concerned about the incidence of bring your own device schemes in public schools, as once again this practice disproportionately affects disadvantaged students."

## 8.2. Improved Internet bandwidth and speeds

WACSSO calls for:

- an upgrade of bandwidth capabilities for all schools;
- a commitment to ensuring imminent, high-speed internet access for all students, including adequate provision for students in rural and remote areas of Western Australia;
- the 'My School' website to include data stating the speed, quality and availability of each school's internet access so that the delivery of the Australian Curriculum at an individual school level can be assessed against their ability

## 8.3. Bring your own device

WACSSO calls for:

- State Government to guarantee that no student will be forced to participate in a BYOD / POD scheme at school whether they are financially unable to, if they conscientiously object, or for any other reason.
- no student to be disadvantaged if they do not have their own personal device;
- an investigation into BYOD schemes to assess the problems and to remedy the issues, i.e. what is in place for families who can't afford to participate or who can only afford old technology and the resulting digital gap; and
- for State Government to ensure sufficient funding is available for schools to be able to deliver optimal technology based lessons, including supply of devices, hardware, software and net-



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