



Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council (RREAC)

Report: Professional development and training for government school boards and councils

21 December 2016

Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
1. Introduction.....	3
2. What issues have been raised?	3
3. Councils and boards.....	4
2.1 School councils.....	4
2.2 School boards.....	5
2.3 Boards - a heightened role or additional functions?.....	7
4. What professional development and training is available?	8
4.1 What is currently available?	8
4.2 What was available?	9
4.3 Recent developments	10
5. P&C associations	10
6. Conclusions.....	11
7. Recommendations.....	13

Executive Summary

The ongoing provision of quality education and training to rural and remote Western Australia is dependent on the Minister for Education receiving sound strategic advice. The Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council (**RREAC**) fulfils an important role in providing advice to the Minister from a cross-sectoral perspective and encompasses the provision of education through both the government and non-government sectors.

During RREAC's discussions in the Mid West region in August 2016 a number of concerns were raised by stakeholders regarding aspects of professional development and training for government school boards and councils. This report examines those matters and the initiatives that have been recently launched. RREAC will watch with interest as the Department of Education's *School Boards Development Program* is delivered to see whether it addresses the matters raised with regard to school boards.

Under the Act, the formal governance requirements of school councils and boards are the same. Under the Independent Public Schools initiative, boards (which replace councils) are signatory to a Delivery and Performance Agreement. The agreement emphasises the heightened role that boards have with regard to strategic oversight including helping to shape future directions, endorsing plans and budgets, and monitoring the performance of their schools.

However, councils still perform functions role with regard to governance and strategic input particularly under the Student Centred Funding model which applies across the government sector, regardless of Independent Public Schools status. Additionally if a government school transitions to Independent Public Schools status the building blocks for the formation of an effective board are likely to be drawn from the council (which is replaced by the board).

Prior to the Independent Public Schools initiative training was offered to councils by the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations under a service agreement with the Department of Education. Training for school councils is no longer available and the focus of the Department of Education has shifted to providing training for boards, funded by a Commonwealth initiative. While RREAC acknowledges the steps that have been taken with regard to the proposed *School Boards Development Program*, that program is focused solely on government school boards, with an absence of training for government school councils.

In RREAC's view this focus on training and professional development initiatives for boards, not councils, is unfortunate as the difference in opportunity has potential to lead to the perception of a two-tiered approach with regard to the importance of boards (Independent Public Schools) as opposed to councils (non-Independent Public Schools).

RREAC draws this matter to the attention of the Minister, and makes a number of recommendations for liaison with the Department of Education.

1. Introduction

Government schools in Western Australia have either a school council or a school board. Government schools that have become Independent Public Schools (**IPS**) have a school board; non-independent government schools have a school council. Boards and councils are regulated by the *School Education Act 1999 (Act)*, *School Education Regulations 2000 (Regulations)* and the individual body's Terms of Reference. If the board or council is incorporated it must also comply with other legislative requirements.

During RREAC's discussions in the Mid West region¹ a number of concerns were raised regarding professional development and training for government school boards and councils.² Just prior to those discussions the Department of Education (**DoE**) announced the *School Boards Development Program* which is focused on school boards, not school councils. The program was launched in September 2016.

2. What issues have been raised?

A number of recurring themes arose in discussions in relation to professional development and training for government school boards and councils. While some of these issues were raised with RREAC prior to the launch of the *School Boards Development Program*, they are still relevant to any assessment of that program's outcomes.

1. Diversity of experience, training and support needs

The IPS initiative requires a large number of principals, staff and volunteer board members to build their knowledge of governance, reform their boards, develop business plans, evaluate school performance and report to the community, all in addition to the tasks they were performing as school councils. As expressed by ICPA WA to a parliamentary committee:

*"... often rural and remote communities are highly skilled at community involvement and self-management.... It is widely recognised that some of the most successful P&C organisations are from rural schools. However, some school communities currently do not have the resources to even consider becoming Independent, due to inexperienced staff, lack of information presented to staff and the community and/or the lack of appropriate skill set of board members."*³

2. Building and maintaining capacity

The limited places indicated as available for board training was a concern to people with whom RREAC met; turnover of membership, whether through resignation or the completion of a three year term, would mean that a board can lose the capacity of those

¹ Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council, *Regional Report: Meetings in the Mid West Region - 29-31 August 2016*, Report to the Minister for Education, (December 2016).

² People with whom RREAC met were drawn from across the government (IPS and non-IPS schools) and non-government education sectors.

³ Parliament of Western Australia, Submission to the Legislative Assembly Education and Health Standing Committee *Inquiry into the Independent Public Schools initiative*, Submission No 26 by the Isolated Children's Parents' Association. Public. Available from <http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au>. Accessed 27/11/2017. ICPA WA (the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of WA) is the state arm of a national, voluntary, parent body representing families who live in rural and remote Australia. Mrs Liz Sudlow, State President, ICPA WA is a member of RREAC.

who have participated in training. As further noted by ICPA WA to a parliamentary inquiry into the Independent Public Schools (**IPS**) initiative:

“... [we recommend that] *Establish targeted approaches to developing leaders from rural and remote communities, both Principals and potential board members. Often schools in these areas have a revolving door of Acting Principals and are unlikely to even consider becoming an Independent Public School. The success of the program relies on effective leadership, both Principal and board members and it makes sense that where possible these people should be drawn from the local area, who are happy to live in the regions and understand the lifestyle.*”⁴

3. Eligibility for training

Training should be made available and undertaken prior to joining a board, or as soon as possible thereafter.

4. Accessibility of training

Council and board members are volunteers and often have full-time employment; however training is often only available during business hours. Many members cannot attend due to work commitments.

5. Location of training

Training is predominantly offered in the metropolitan area, which can cause practical and financial difficulties for access by regional and remotely-located members. As is often the case for other training, schools outside the metropolitan area must usually coordinate a large enough group, often from multiple schools, in order to make it economically feasible for the training provider to attend and provide the training.

6. Mode of delivery of training

Training is not often, and can be solely, face-to-face. Often rural and remote schools cannot, collectively, get enough numbers for a program to run. Access to online resources can also enhance and reinforce the face-to-face component.

7. Training is not available for councils, only boards.

3. Councils and boards

2.1 School councils

Under the Act, all WA public schools are required to have a council unless exempted by the Minister. The Act defines a council as follows: “*Council, in relation to a government school, means the Council established under section 125 for the school.*”⁵

The council is defined in the Act and Regulations by its membership (s.127) and functions (s.128). The Act requires council members to include parents (or, if the majority of the students are over 18 years old, students of the school), the general community, staff of the school, students (for secondary schools where most students are less than 18 years old) and the principal (s.127).

The functions of a school council are outlined in s128 of the Act and include to take part in:

- establishing and reviewing from time to time, the school's objectives, priorities and general policy directions;

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ Section 125 states “*Each government school is to have a council*”.

- planning financial arrangements necessary to fund those objectives, priorities and directions;
- evaluating the school's performance in achieving those objectives, priorities and directions; and
- formulating codes of conduct for students at the school;
- the selection of, but not the appointment of, the school principal or any other member of the teaching staff if prior approval is given by the Regional Executive Director.

In addition the council is to promote the school in the community; and to determine, in consultation with students, their parents and staff of the school, a dress code for students when they are attending or representing the school. Councils may also have additional functions.⁶

A council can not intervene in the control of management of a school, in the educational instructions of students, exercise authority over teaching staff or other persons employed at the school, intervene in the management or operation of the school fund.⁷

Councils do have a strategic role and take part in school governance; sections 63 of the Act provides that "*The functions of the principal of a government school are ... (e) to establish a plan for the school in consultation with the Council and the school's teaching staff setting out its objectives and how the objectives and priorities will be achieved; and ... (f) in consultation with the Council and the school's teaching staff to monitor and report on the school's performance in relation to the plan referred to in paragraph (e).*"⁸ [our emphasis]

2.2 School boards

All government schools, whether an IPS or not, are subject to the same legislation and regulations. The term 'board' is not used in the Act or Regulations. Indeed the Act and Regulations continue to refer to councils and make no reference to boards; a board is not legislatively different from a council.

The DoE formally introduced the term 'board' on the implementation of the IPS initiative.⁹ A board retains all of the functions of a council. However, in addition to fulfilling their legislated roles, IPS principals and board chairs co-sign a Delivery and Performance

⁶ Other functions include to carry out the functions given by ss 70 (religious activities), 99(4) (approval of charge or contribution for student use of materials, services and facilities), 100(3) (approval of extra cost optional component of education program), 108(2) (approval of items supplied by a student for student's personal use) and 216(5) (approval of principal entering into an agreement of arrangement for advertising or sponsorship of the school); and such other functions prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of section 128.

⁷ Section 132 of the Act.

⁸ A council's governance role is noted on the Department of Education website: <http://det.wa.edu.au/schoolcouncils/detcms/navigation/unincorporated-councils-and-boards>

⁹ As noted in Gilchrist, DJ and Knight P (2015), *Research into Developing Highly Effective School Boards for Independent Public Schools*. A Report for the Department of Education, Perth, Western Australia. p.5. Available from www.education.wa.edu.au. This DoE-commissioned report was released in June 2016. The study assessed the operations of 20 school boards across WA, including from metropolitan and regional schools, and primary and secondary schools.

Agreement (DPA)¹⁰ with the Director General, DoE and *“this agreement creates somewhat higher expectations regarding the quality of governance of Independent Public Schools.”*¹¹

The Sample Delivery and Performance Agreement (DPA) states that the Principal will ensure that the board participates in:¹²

- i. the endorsement of the DPA;
- ii. development and endorsement of the school’s annual report;
- iii. the development, endorsement and review of the school budget and Business Plan;
- iv. processes to review school performance;
- v. processes to determine satisfaction levels of parents, staff and students, with results reported in the school’s annual report;
- vi. the DES independent review of the school in the final year of the DPA (with the report made public);

... and

the Board receives:

- i. relevant monthly financial reports;
- ii. the results of any school audits and reviews;
- iii. advice on school performance and student improvement targets, as detailed in the school’s Business Plan; and
- iv. a copy of the Department of Education Services Independent review report.

As noted by the DoE:

“While members of a school council may be re-elected to a new board, establishing a board of an [IPS] is an opportunity to attract a broader cross-section of people with a range of experiences and expertise. Strong community and business representation ensures the board can make an even more significant contribution to the development of the school.

*The board establishes a vision for the school that reflects the aspirations and needs of the community. The board can have an important influence on the direction of the school, with members bringing ideas and lending their expertise to strategic planning and community partnerships. Professional skills in areas such as management, finance, procurement, marketing and cultural knowledge support the principal and strengthen the school’s capacity to meet the needs of its students.”*¹³

¹⁰ The Delivery and Performance Agreement states that the term “board” means “Council as referred to in the Act”.

¹¹ Op cit footnote 9, p.4.

¹² Western Australian Government, Department of Education, *Sample Independent Public Schools Delivery and Performance Agreement*, clause 19. Available from: <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/> Accessed 12/9/2016.

¹³ Western Australian Government, Department of Education, *Boards of Independent Public Schools* - <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/web/our-schools/independent-public-schools/boards-of-independent-public-schools>. Accessed 27/11/2016.

2.3 Boards - a heightened role or additional functions?

As previously noted all government schools, including IPS, are subject to the same legislation and regulations - a board is not legislatively different from a council.

Information packages available on the DoE website are written for council and boards jointly – there is no difference in functions drawn between the two as legislatively they are the same.¹⁴ However RREAC notes the different focus for boards as a result of becoming signatory to a DPA when the school achieves IPS status. The school board must endorse the DPA, the one-line budget, the business plan and the annual report. Boards must monitor school performance via quarterly reporting provided by the principal. Unlike councils, board members must also participate in the independent review of the school by the Department of Education Services.¹⁵

The difference is not in legislative function, rather it is that the DPA provides a focused platform, created by the IPS initiative, in relation to which those functions are to be exercised. That platform includes heightened strategic and governance tasks. As noted in a DoE-commissioned report into developing highly effective school boards for IPS (**IPS Boards Report**):

“Clause 19 DPA of the agreement specifies the responsibilities of the [DoE] and the principal in regard to the functions of the board. These reflect the legislated functions but, in specifying the tasks of the board, appear to place a little more emphasis on its role in regard to the school business plan and budget, reviewing school performance, the annual report, assessing parent, staff and student satisfaction and the Department of Education Services’ independent review.”¹⁶

And further ...

... At this point, it is worth noting that the terminology used in the [DPA] and Act differ slightly. The Act requires the board to “to take part in” planning and performance monitoring and to “approve” such things as charges and contributions; whereas the [DPA] uses different phrases including “the board participates in the development, endorsement and review of the school business plan and budget”. While the [DPA] is clear about the board chair’s role in endorsing the agreement itself, the phrase “participate in endorsement” is not clearly defined. The boards we examined interpret this as a requirement to put these documents to the board for a vote of endorsement. A key difference between the Act and the agreement is that the agreement puts the onus on the principal to ensure that the board fulfils its functions. It is also more prescriptive regarding the requirement of the principal to provide the board with monthly financial reports, the results of school audits and reviews, and advice on school and student performance targets.”¹⁷

However RREAC notes that both councils and boards have the same functions, albeit in practice it may have become more pronounced for boards under the IPS initiative. As noted

¹⁴ Western Australian Government, Department of Education, *School Councils and Boards, Unincorporated and Incorporated information packages*, <http://det.wa.edu.au/schoolcouncils/detcms/education/school-councils/trim-documents/unincorporated-information-package.en>. Accessed 27/11/2016.

¹⁵ Parliament of Western Australia, Submission to the Legislative Assembly Education and Health Standing Committee inquiry into *the Independent Public Schools initiative*, Submission No 30 by the Department of Education, p 7. Public. Available from <http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au>. Accessed 27/11/2017.

¹⁶ Op cit footnote 9, p.15.

¹⁷ Ibid.

by the IPS Boards Report when recommending training for boards “As the formal governance requirements of all school boards are the same, the findings from this research are applicable to all public schools.”¹⁸

Further as noted by IPCA WA -

“.. with the introduction of the Student Centred Funding Model (SCFM), all schools have effectively moved to a system that is more autonomous, from a budgeting point of view and hence similar to [IPS] operation. Inexperienced and high turnover of Principal in many rural and remote non-Independent Public Schools is resulting in lack of long-term school planning. Schools are being expected to operate in a similar way to Independent Public Schools, but without much of the training, system management or quality of staff.

...

With 70% of government school students now attending an [IPS], ICPA WA is concerned that the remaining 30% are not being given the same opportunities. More resources need to be provided in a targeted way to non-IPS rural and remote schools to support the school council and to review the school plan, as is done in the [IPS].”¹⁹

In September 2016 DoE noted that by the beginning of 2017, more than 60% of public schools in Western Australia will be Independent Public Schools.²⁰ Recent figures provided to RREAC by DoE indicate that as at 9 December 2016 of the 780 public schools, 67.2% (524) were IPS and 32.8% (256) were non-IPS. RREAC notes that this means that almost 33% will not be IPS.

4. What professional development and training is available?

This section examines professional development and training available for government school councils and boards.²¹

4.1 What is currently available?

RREAC notes that in June 2016 the new School Boards Development Program, was announced by the Minister for Education for roll out by the DoE to IPS during the second half of 2016.²² The program, *On Board for Education*, has been designed to strengthen the roles of boards and build a sustainable on-line resource accessible, on a needs basis, to all school communities for their ongoing development into the future.²³

The program, developed by DoE, was informed by the IPS Boards Report.²⁴ That report aimed to better understand where improvements could be made to the functioning, influence

¹⁸ Ibid, p 4.

¹⁹ Op cit footnote 3, p1.

²⁰ Western Australian Government, Department of Education, *Independent Public Schools - School Board Development Program*, September 2016, <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/>. Accessed 27/11/2016.

²¹ This report does not explore the program offered by the Catholic Education WA, nor any offered by AISWA. RREAC notes that an on-line course is being developed by PFF WA (Parents and Friends Federation of Western Australia which supports Catholic school families).

²² Information under this heading, unless otherwise indicated, was obtained from Western Australian Government, Department of Education, *Independent Public Schools - School Board Development Program*, September 2016, <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/>. Accessed 27/11/2016.

²³ Western Australian Government, Department of Education, *School Board Development Program* <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/web/our-schools/school-board-development-program>

²⁴ Refer to footnote 9.

and effectiveness of Boards in meeting the demands of their role within the scope of existing statutory and policy settings.

DoE advised RREAC that all boards (three board members from each school – the principal, a staff representative and the board chair) will have the opportunity to participate in the program which is being offered state-wide in both metropolitan and regional locations from Term 4, 2016, 2016 until the end of Term 2, 2017, with the online materials providing an ongoing sustainable resource. The program includes a two day face to face component, supported by online resources. Access to the online modules is facilitated through the principal of each IPS.

The project is a collaborative program under the *Project Agreement to Build Stronger School Leadership and Governance in Independent Public Schools*, and is funded by the Australian Government as part of the Australian Government's IPS initiative.

Regional participants can access the program at their nearest regional centre. Travel and accommodation is funded. In Term 3 2016, principals of all IPS were invited to register for the program. As at 23 September 2016, there had been expressions of interest from 165 schools.²⁵

In addition to the provision of the new development program and online resources, DoE advised RREAC that IPS have access to board training as part of their transition program. Many schools also seek to access to additional training from the School Improvement and Support Unit within the DoE, on a user-pays basis, and since 2010 this has involved training over 3990 board members.²⁶

RREAC notes that the development program only provides training for school boards.

4.2 What was available? ²⁷

The Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc. (**WACSSO**)²⁸ provides training, including governance training, for member associations.²⁹ WACSSO advised

²⁵ Mr Stephen Baxter, Executive Director, Statewide Planning and Delivery, Department of Education to RREAC in October 2016. Mr Baxter is a Member of RREAC.

²⁶ *ibid*

²⁷ Information under this heading, unless otherwise indicated, was provided by Ms Kylie Catto, President, WACSSO, to RREAC September and October 2016. Ms Catto is a Member of RREAC.

²⁸ WACSSO is the peak body representing parent organisations of public school children in Western Australia. WACSSO provides services and representation at State and National level to 649 Parents and Citizens Associations (P&Cs), four school boards and three school councils in Western Australia. WACSSO is largely a volunteer organisation made up of a President and State Councillors (representatives) from geographically-based electorates and as such, the organisation has a wide representative reach across the State.

²⁹ Ms Kylie Catto, President, WACSSO, advice to RREAC September and October 2016. WACSSO further advised that it has a full time Training and Development Officer (TDO) who delivers training face to face and online training (the Online Learning Community) and also develops physical training resources (hard copy and online). When a P&C affiliates with WACSSO they are entitled to access training at no additional cost. The TDO travels to all WACSSO electorates at least once per year (with the exception for Kimberley which is only once per year due to the high cost involved and low number of affiliates. Training is initiated by a P&C, they will host the training and other schools in the area are invited to attend. WACSSO advises that this works well in terms of both maximising the benefit of the TDO's time and also networking for the affiliates. With 650 affiliated school organisations WACSSO states that it is unable to deliver training to each P&C individually.

RREAC that in previous years WACSSO had a service agreement with DoE to deliver training to councils however that ceased at the end of 2010 when the service agreement for WACSSO no longer included the provision of training for school councils. WACSSO continues to provide limited advice to member P&C representatives who sit on councils and boards, and to boards and councils who are members of WACSSO but not to any other councils, boards or their members.

RREAC has been advised by WACSSO that the lack of access by councils to training -

“... is an issue that has been highlighted in previous External Review Group processes and is heightened when it comes to rural and remote schools who may not have neighbouring or other schools to collaborate with, particularly from a community member perspective. In WACSSO's view this is significant as parents and other members of the community must form the majority of the council.”³⁰

4.3 Recent developments

RREAC notes that the proclamation and commencement of the *School Boarding Facilities Legislation Amendment and Repeal Bill 2016* will also provide for local input networking and communications committees (LINC committees) for student residential colleges. Those LINC committees will add to the suite of school advisory groups that might need professional development and training.

RREAC was advised in December 2016 that consideration is being given by DoE to the provision of training for all councils and other advisory groups with support roles for schools, although this has not yet been budgeted.³¹ With upfront development costs largely incurred to launch the *On Board for Education* program for IPS school boards, RREAC was advised by DoE that the program might be able to be easily adapted for other school advisory groups, including school councils. RREAC will watch developments with interest.

5. P&C associations

During its Mid West discussions, RREAC also met with representatives of Parents and Citizens' Associations (P&C) and Parents' and Friends' Federation (PFF). The availability of professional development and training for P&C's was raised along with some concerns that the increased profile for school boards under the IPS initiative should not detract from the valued role of a P&C.

Parents and other persons who are interested in the welfare of a government school or a group of government schools may, in accordance with the Act form a P&C for that school or that group of schools. The P&C must become an incorporated association under the *Associations Incorporation Act 1987*.³² A P&C has objects which are -

- ...to promote the interests of the school or group of schools for which it is formed through —
- (a) cooperation between parents, teachers, students and members of the general community; and

³⁰ Op cit footnote 27.

³¹ Mr Stephen Baxter, Executive Director, Statewide Planning and Delivery, Department of Education to RREAC in December 2016.

³² Section 142 Act.

- (b) assisting in the provision of resources, facilities and amenities for the school or schools; and
 - (c) the fostering of community interest in educational matters.
- (2) An association cannot —
- (a) intervene in the control or management of a school; or
 - (b) intervene in the educational instruction of students; or
 - (c) exercise authority over teaching staff or other persons employed at the school.

WACSSO has reinforced to RREAC that P&Cs perform a valued role for a school, particularly in rural and remote areas, and the role of councils or boards should not detract from that value. This matter was also noted by WACSSO in another forum:

“In 2013 the Director General issued a directive to school principals outlining the legislated role and the value of P&Cs to schools. This was available on the Department’s website until recently. The Director General published a column in WACSSO’s P&C Voice magazine in Term 3, 2014, stating that “the important role and functions of parents and citizens’ associations in schools remains unchanged”³³ Unfortunately WACSSO continues to receive reports from schools where principals have indicated that the P&C is surplus to requirements.”³⁴

In RREAC’s view schools and the wider community must be made aware of the differing and equally valuable roles of the board (or council) and the P&C. The DoE website highlights the opportunity for parents to participate at school and in that context refers to the P&C association.³⁵ RREAC is of the view that there is merit in the 2013 directive of the Director General being made publicly available again and linked to that area.

6. Conclusions

1. There are concerns within the education sector and its wider community regarding the availability of professional development and training opportunities for councils and boards of government schools. This concern is expressed in relation to IPS and non-IPS schools.

School boards

2. RREAC observes that the strong focus on IPS means that the DoE has enhanced support for school boards, and those schools which are transitioning to IPS.
3. Subsequent to RREAC’s visit to the Mid West region in August 2016 the DoE issued details of the *School Boards Development Program*. This program, launched in June 2016, is funded by the Commonwealth government.
4. DoE currently offers a limited number of places per school for board members to participate in the program. It offers opportunities for board member training when a school transitions to become an IPS, and offers ongoing training for board members on an as needs basis.

³³ Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc. 2014. Message from Director General of Education. p2. Available from <http://www.wacssso.wa.edu.au>.

³⁴ Parliament of Western Australia, Submission to the Legislative Assembly Education and Health Standing Committee inquiry into *the Independent Public Schools initiative*, Submission No 20 by WACSSO. Public. Available from <http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au>. Accessed 27/11/2017. Ms Kylie Catto, President, WACSSO is a member of RREAC.

³⁵ <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/web/at-school/supporting-childrens-learning/participating-at-school>

5. RREAC will watch with interest as the *School Boards Development Program* is delivered, and the outcome of an evaluation into its effectiveness, as to whether the program addresses the matters raised in this report with regard to school boards.
6. While RREAC acknowledges the steps that have been taken with regard to the proposed *School Boards Development Program*, that program is focused solely on government school boards, with an absence of training for government school councils.

School councils

7. Under the Act, the formal governance requirements of school councils and boards are the same. Under the IPS, boards are signatory to a DPA. The DPA emphasises the heightened role that boards have with regard to strategic oversight including helping to shape future directions, endorsing plans and budgets, and monitoring the performance of their schools.
8. Councils still continue to perform functions with regard to governance and strategic input particularly under the Student Centred Funding model which applies across the government sector, regardless of IPS status. Additionally if a government school transitions to IPS status the building blocks for the formation of an effective board are likely to be drawn from the council (which is replaced by the board).
9. As at 9 December 2016 of the 780 public schools, 67.2% (524) were IPS and 32.8% (256) were non-IPS. RREAC notes that this means that almost 33% will not be IPS and should have a council (subject to any exemptions).
10. Councils play a very important role in non-IPS schools and can require governance training. Councils are still required to build skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles more effectively.
11. Prior to the IPS initiative, training for school councils was provided by WACSSO and funded by DoE, however the DoE no longer funds any professional development and training support for councils.
12. In RREAC's view this focus on training and professional development initiatives for boards, not councils, is unfortunate as the difference in opportunity has potential to lead to the perception of a two-tiered approach with regard to the importance of boards (IPS) as opposed to councils (non-IPS).
13. RREAC notes that consideration is being given by DoE to the provision of training for all councils and other advisory groups with support roles for schools possibly through the adaption of the *On Board for Education* program for IPS school boards. RREAC will watch developments with interest.
14. RREAC emphasises the need for equal access to professional development and training whether for a school board or a school council.

P&C associations

15. P&C associations perform a valued role for a school, particularly in rural and remote areas. The role of councils or boards should not detract from that value. RREAC notes the Director General's 2013 statement in that the important role and functions of P&C associations in schools remain unchanged.
16. In RREAC's view, schools and the wider community must be made aware of the differing and equally valuable roles of the board (or council) and the P&C association.
17. RREAC is of the view that there is merit in the DoE website reflecting the role of P&C associations, and their continuing role under the IPS initiative.

7. Recommendations

1. That the Minister note this report.
2. That the Minister raise the current absence of training for school councils with the Department of Education and inquire as to what, if any, steps are being taken to provide training to councils and the timing of such, and further that consideration be given to the possibility of adapting the program the *On Board for Education* program (which has been developed for IPS school boards) for provision to school councils.
3. That the Minister raise the matters regarding the role of P&C associations and their continuing roles under the IPS initiative, as noted in this report, with the Department of Education.

