

# INDEPENDENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

## INFORMATION FOR PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

### Chief Executive's Message

The introduction of Independent Public Schools represents an evolution in the way public schooling operates in the Northern Territory. It builds on the existing level of autonomy that has been available to our schools since devolution was first introduced in the 1990s.

The opportunity to become an Independent Public School will be open to government schools that can demonstrate readiness to work with increased autonomy, and has the support of their community to do so.

As part of the government education system, Independent Public Schools will have to operate within legislative and industrial relations frameworks, however they will be empowered to operate with increased authority and will be able to make decisions that benefit the students in the classrooms at their school.

A robust selection process will ensure that schools are ready to assume this challenge and that they will be supported to prepare for, and work in, this new way.

This is the start of an exciting journey and we will be learning along the way. We will all have different starting points and there will be no 'one size fits all' model. As long as we acknowledge this and continue to focus our efforts on the Independent Public Schools model being an opportunity to improve education for students, I believe that together we can positively impact education in the Northern Territory for years to come.



Ken Davies

## **Independent Public Schools: Our School, Our Future**

As part of the strategy to increase school autonomy, Northern Territory schools are being provided the opportunity to become an Independent Public School.

Choosing to apply to become an Independent Public School will be a joint decision between the principal and school community, through its school council. It will need support from teaching and non-teaching staff and parents.

Northern Territory schools already enjoy a degree of autonomy that is comparable, and in some cases, more extensive than in some other jurisdictions. From 2015, selected Independent Public Schools will have the opportunity to build on the increased autonomy provided through the Global School Budgets (GSB). IPS will give even greater freedom and flexibility to make local decisions about the way in which their school operates. They will have a greater say in the recruitment and selection of staff and will operate in an accountability framework that includes closer links to the Chief Executive.

Independent Public Schools will continue to be able to access the services and support provided to all government schools, and will be required to continue to operate within the same legislative, industrial relations and major policy frameworks. Independent Public Schools will be encouraged to collaborate closely together on matters of mutual benefit and will operate with enhanced governance arrangements that promote stronger performance focus and greater public accountability for outcomes.

### **Scope of Independent Public Schools in the NT**

#### ***Teaching and Learning***

Independent Public Schools will be required to adhere to the same legislative and curriculum standards as all schools in the NT and work under the direction of the NT Board of Studies. However, there will be flexibility in the way that they offer their learning program and they will have the opportunity to offer approved alternative curriculum frameworks.

#### ***Workforce***

With the introduction of Global School Budgets, school staffing will no longer be allocated through a centrally managed staffing formula. Schools will be provided a one-line staffing budget and principals will be able to determine the staffing mix that best suits their student's needs.

In addition, Independent Public Schools will:

- have the option to directly advertise and manage recruitment;
- be able to select and appoint staff; and

- have greater authority under human resource delegations that reflect their position in the organisational reporting structure.

All government schools are required to operate within the requirements of the enterprise bargaining agreements, including those relating to redeployment of displaced staff.

Consideration will be given to the additional flexibilities that can be offered to Independent Public Schools in the departmental processes relating to staff placement and transfer. Further work will be undertaken to specify the circumstances and parameters in which these placements will be negotiated.

### ***Financial Management***

The introduction of Global School Budgets will be the primary vehicle to increase autonomy for all schools, and Independent Public Schools will be required to meet the same audit and compliance.

Independent Public Schools will receive a one-off grant of up to \$50,000 to help them to prepare for greater autonomy.

The option for Independent Public Schools to self-manage minor new works and capital works up to a threshold value will also be explored.

### ***Local Governance***

The governance structures at Independent Public Schools will vary from those in other schools. They will be governed by a school board which will include external representation (i.e. local business/industry or specialist professional expertise).

Changes to the Northern Territory's *Education Act* will be needed to fully implement this change. However, Independent Public Schools can begin to build networks and consider invited members who may be involved over the longer term.

The Independent Public School Board will:

- work with the principal to set strategic direction for the school and oversee implementation of the associated business plan;
- endorse the Delivery and Performance Agreement;
- endorse and regularly review the school's one-line budget;
- review school performance through regularly consideration of reports and data on student achievement and school business operations;
- lead processes to determine satisfaction levels of parents, staff and students with results reported in the school's annual report;
- formally endorse the school's annual report;
- participate in the selection process for the principal when a vacancy arises;

- participate in the independent school review and assist to identify ways to address issues raised.

Independent Public School principals will have closer reporting links to the Chief Executive, but may still access professional support from regional offices. Regional officers will maintain a role in compliance and issue resolution.

Independent Public School principals will have opportunities to engage directly with the Chief Executive to raise and discuss matters of significance, and to identify ways to improve autonomy.

### ***Accountability***

Independent Public Schools are required to demonstrate a strong focus on school improvement and accountability. They are required to align their activities to the strategic direction of the NT Government and the Department of Education.

A differentiated accountability structure will be developed that reflects the Independent Public School's organisational reporting lines, and provides enhanced information to the school community about a school's performance. This will be incorporated into the department's Accountability and Performance Improvement Framework.

Features will include:

- a Delivery and Performance Agreement that identifies accountability and expectations of the school and the system support that will be provided by the department. The principal's performance agreement will be based on this. Both will be agreed between the principal, the chairperson of the school board and the Chief Executive;
- a business plan, developed by the board and signed by the school board chairperson, will set direction for the school and identify the key deliverables and indicators that will be used to measure performance. This will be publicly available to the school community;
- a strengthened monitoring and reporting framework which includes quarterly reporting to the board on a range of business and educational measures and continuation of the current arrangement that requires online publication of annual reports;
- participation in an external school review, the findings of which will be made publicly available and addressed through business plans.

## **Continued System Support**

Independent Public Schools remain part of the public education system. They will continue to access:

- regional services and school networking opportunities;
- central school support and corporate services, including curriculum, student support, pathways and engagement;
- Positive Learning Centres;
- support to improve student attendance;
- legal and media advice;
- management of critical incidents;
- existing liability insurance and workers compensation cover;
- employee assistance services;
- payroll support for public servants;
- school recruitment and human resource services;
- financial and procurement advice;
- industrial relations advice and support;
- ongoing leadership preparation programs provided to all schools;
- ICT services including systems and support.

## **Additional Support for Independent Public Schools**

Independent Public Schools will have access to a range of additional support to assist them to establish and operate effectively which will include:

- a preparation program to assist schools to identify readiness to operate as an Independent Public School and support them through the selection process;
- a one-off transition grant to assist prepare for the introduction of the new arrangements;
- a transition program to assist schools in operating independently covering legislative and industrial frameworks, policy and processes, business and workforce planning, and business acumen (risk management);
- support to manage placement arrangements for existing staff who are not supportive of the Independent Public Schools arrangement;

- continued central support to manage redeployment processes for staff due to factors beyond the control of the principal – such as significant declines in student enrolment;
- active support from corporate and school support service staff, as well as regions, to assist Independent Public Schools principals to operate flexibly within the parameters of existing legislative and industrial relations frameworks and policy requirements.

## Obligations

As part of the public school system, Independent Public Schools will be bound by the same legislation, policy and industrial agreements and curriculum standards as other government schools. Any alterations to the way schools conduct their business will need to be undertaken with consideration of the:

- *Education Act (NT)*
- *Public Sector Employment and Management Act*
- *Financial Management Act*
- *Australian Education Act 2013*
- *Education and Care Services Act 2013*
- *NT Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011*
- *Care and Protection of Children Act, Information Act (NT)*
- *Teacher Registration (NT) Act*
- relevant State and Australian Government anti-discrimination legislation including the *Disability Discrimination Act Education Standards 2005*
- Australian Curriculum
- Northern Territory Curriculum Framework
- NT Board of Studies
- Teachers and Educators Enterprise Agreement
- NTPS General Enterprise Agreement
- relevant whole of NT and Australian Government policies that affect all public schools
- mandated Departmental policies – including those that relate to provision of data to enable the NT to meet reporting obligations and public accountability processes.

## Schools Choose

Any Northern Territory school can apply to become an Independent Public School in 2015.

Schools interested in becoming an Independent Public School will participate in a preparation program. This will determine their level of readiness and prepare them to demonstrate to a selection panel that they have:

- capacity to work more autonomously and assume greater responsibility for their own affairs;
- local support, including of their staff and school council, for becoming an Independent Public School;
- considered the potential benefits to students and the broader school community.

Schools interested in becoming part of the first round of Independent Public Schools in the NT are invited to submit the attached expression of interest by date

Individual briefings are available to school councils interested in learning more, contact [schoolautonomy.decs@nt.gov.au](mailto:schoolautonomy.decs@nt.gov.au) to arrange a briefing.

## **Preparation Program**

This workshop will provide tailored professional support that involves each school undertaking a process to consider how becoming an Independent Public School will benefit their individual circumstances and context. The principal and one other staff member will have the opportunity to participate in this action learning program with the opportunity for the school council chairperson to be involved in some elements.

The program will be run in July and will culminate in a presentation to the selection panel in August.

## **Transition Training**

Schools selected to be Independent Public Schools will be provided with the operational information to assist them with the transition and will include information on legislation and processes needed to operate successfully in a more autonomous environment. This training will be offered throughout Semester 2 2014 and will be ongoing as specific training and development needs are identified.



## INDEPENDENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Complete this form to indicate interest in attending the Preparation Program for Independent Public Schools in 2015.

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Name of school:             |  |
| Principal:                  |  |
| Principal's Signature:      |  |
| Contact email:              |  |
| Contact Telephone:          |  |
| School Council Chairperson: |  |
| Chairperson Signature:      |  |

Please return the form to: [schoolautonomy.decs@nt.gov.au](mailto:schoolautonomy.decs@nt.gov.au).

#### **For queries or clarification:**

The School Autonomy Project Team:

e: [schoolautonomy.decs@nt.gov.au](mailto:schoolautonomy.decs@nt.gov.au)

t: (08) 8999 5878

w: [Our School, Our Future](#)