

[CCI calls for rethink of how our schools are run, and children taught](#)

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Statement by CCI Chief Executive James Pearson

With Western Australia preparing to enter a new era of economic growth and prosperity, which will require a greater number of skilled workers, the State's peak organisation representing local business has today released a landmark research paper examining ways to improve the school system, and the way our children are taught.

The Western Australian business community, which depends on a well trained and educated workforce, knows that changes are needed to the way our schools are run.

CCI's discussion paper *Building a Better Tomorrow: Education Reform in WA* examines the teaching profession, early childhood education, the primary and secondary school system, school curriculum, and structural reform in the sector.

The paper suggests a number of changes to the education system designed to ensure all students leave the education system properly taught, and with the skills they need to get good jobs.

While successive State Governments have tried to improve the education system, there remains more work to be done.

The shift of large numbers of students from public to private schools over recent years suggests that parents believe their children will be better off in the private school system. This is a perception that must be addressed.

One of the biggest challenges faced by the current system is that teaching as a profession isn't as highly regarded as it should be. International research consistently identifies teachers as being one of the most significant factors in a student's education.

CCI believes a range of strategies are needed to make teaching a more rewarding and desirable career.

These should include improving the training and pay of teachers. CCI believes the current inflexible pay levels and structure need to be changed to allow teachers to be rewarded for good performance. This may include opportunities for the best performing teachers to be paid more for increased class sizes or for working with more challenging students.

In addition, trainee teachers should receive greater practical experience before graduation, and offered greater support when they enter the classroom.

The paper makes a number of other recommendations, including –

- School autonomy – providing schools and the local community with a greater say over how their school is run. This will enhance Western Australia’s educational outcomes and allow schools to meet the requirements of their local community;
- Class sizes - The long standing policy of reducing the student to teacher ratio through smaller class sizes needs to be reconsidered. There is international evidence showing that smaller class sizes has no positive impact on a child’s education;
- Literacy and Numeracy – there needs to be a greater focus on literacy and numeracy in the early years of education as these are the skills that form the basis for future learning;
- Early Childhood – every child should sit standardised assessments prior to entering early childcare facilities to help identify which students need additional support. Similar testing should occur throughout a child’s academic career to ensure no child is disadvantaged;
- National Benchmarking – To ensure children who are struggling to meet basic educational standards are identified early, an internationally consistent benchmarking system should be adopted as the basis for assessing academic achievement across the nation; and
- School infrastructure – there needs to be an assessment as to whether some schools remain relevant to the local community. Such a review would allow resources, such as teachers and facilities, to be directed to where they are needed most.

Western Australia’s education system is an important investment in the State’s future economic prosperity. It is critical that students are provided with a strong foundation for the development of lifelong learning and skills. This will ensure the students of today will be well placed to tackle the issues and challenges of tomorrow.

Reforms in the education system will underpin continued growth in the productivity of the State’s workforce, a key to long term prosperity, and also ensure better economic and social outcomes for all Western Australians.

Building a better education system is needed to ensure the State has a well educated and trained workforce to meet the needs of a growing economy.

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http://www.cciwa.com/Education__Training_policy.aspx