



# Independent Schools

What independence really means

## What it means to be an Independent School in Western Australia

Independent Schools have been so named in Australia and recognised under this name for many years. The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA) was formed well over 50 years ago to represent the interests of Independent Schools in Western Australia. AISWA is a member of ISCA, the Independent Schools Council of Australia which represents the interests of all Independent Schools in Australia.

In recent years the Government of Western Australia has introduced schools within the Government sector which are referred to as “independent public schools”. The use of the word “independent” has created confusion and a blurring between genuinely Independent Schools and those now referred to as “independent” in the public sector.

The reality is that independent public schools have limited autonomy. Such public schools do not have power to fully self-determine their operations. They are obliged to meet teacher awards (the Department of Education State Agreement) and work place entitlements, and are subject to a range of department policies and accountability requirements. These public schools have no separate legal status.



**On the other hand the following list illustrates some of the distinctive features of genuinely Independent Schools:**

- Each Independent School has legal status in its own right. Each School is separately constituted under its own Constitution.
- Independent Schools are owned and operated by a separately constituted association or organisation and as such, determine the strategic directions of the school whilst meeting all legislative requirements. Some Independent Schools are part of a small system within the sector and these have an Independent governing body that makes determinations for the schools in that small system.
- Independent Schools are separately registered by the Minister of Education and must have a constitution that outlines the structure roles and responsibilities of the governing body.
- The governing body of an Independent School is responsible for the strategic planning for the school, the selection and support of the principal and the financial viability of the school.
- In an Independent School it is the school's governing body that is ultimately responsible for the welfare of students and the school and ensuring the school meets the standards required by the Education Act.
- Independent Schools develop their own behavioural management and discipline policies that suit the needs and culture of their school and the community they serve.
- Many Independent Schools have their own Enterprise Agreements (EAs) and others work under the conditions of the State Independent School Teachers' Award (1976) or the Federal Educational Services (Teachers) Award (2010).
- Independent Schools develop their own culture, ethos and values system that is reflective of each Independent School's belief structure.



**For a list of all Independent Schools in WA  
please see the AISWA website [www.ais.wa.edu.au](http://www.ais.wa.edu.au)**

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