

Reference Group

A Reference Group was established to inform the development and implementation of the consultation.

The Reference Group comprised the following members:

Mr Colin Pettit, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA (Chair)

Professor Barry Down, School of Education, Murdoch University

Mrs Annie Fogarty AM, Ambassador for Children and Young People and Founder, The Fogarty Foundation

Mr Ron Gorman, Deputy Director, Association of Independent Schools Western Australia

Mr Lindsay Hale, A/Deputy Director General Schools, Department of Education

Ms Hancock, Life Course Centre Research Fellow, Telethon Kids Institute

Ms Fiona Harlond, Principal Education Officer, Child Protection and Family Support, Department of Communities

Ms Eileen Kuruckchi, President, School Psychologists Association of WA

Associate Professor Dr Libby Lee-Hammond, Early Childhood Education, Murdoch University

Dr Tim McDonald, Director, Catholic Education Office

Ms Paulina Motlop, Director Aboriginal Education Teaching and Learning, Department of Education

Ms Nikki Niha, Teacher, Corridors College

Ms Joanne Taggart, Director Education Regulation, Department of Education

Associate Professor Edward Wilkes, National Drug Research Institute

The Reference Group met four times and provided advice outside of the meetings.

Advisory Committees

The two 2016 Advisory Committees supported the consultation by providing advice at various stages of the project including providing feedback on the content and structure of the survey and group discussion questions.

The 2016 Advisory Committees were:

Swan View Senior High School – Metropolitan Advisory Committee

North Albany Senior High School – Regional Advisory Committee

Advice on the Year 3 to Year 6 survey and the group discussion questions was also sought from:

Year 4 and Year 5 students Scotch College Junior School

Year 3 and Year 6 students Carine Primary School

Methodology

The purpose of this consultation was to seek the views of Year 3 to Year 12 students enrolled in government, Catholic and independent schools across WA on the positive and negative factors that influence their engagement in education.

A mixed methods approach was adopted for the consultation, comprising two components: an individual electronic student survey delivered through the SurveyGizmo platform (quantitative research tool), and group discussions with students facilitated by the Commissioner's staff (qualitative research tool). This approach enabled the views of a large number of children and young people to be heard through the survey, with more in-depth discussions occurring through the group discussions.

In addition to these components, parents/guardians of students who agreed to take part in the consultation were also given the opportunity to provide their views via a survey that comprised quantitative and qualitative elements (multiple choice questions and open narrative responses).

A two-stage stratified sampling design was used for the surveys:

- The stratified random sample was drawn from all WA schools using the WA School List 2016 (Semester 1).⁴⁰
- Education support centres were included.
- Schools with an enrolment of less than 20 students were included and matched with a supplementary school.
- Single sex schools were matched with a supplementary opposite sex school.
- Stratification was by geographic location (metropolitan and regional) and educational sector (government/Catholic/independent).
- Schools selected through stratified random sampling constituted the main sample.

In addition, a distinct number of regional schools were also drawn (not randomly) in order to increase the participation of regional students and students who are Aboriginal. These schools constituted the additional sample (and were not part of the main sample). The purpose of the additional sample was to oversample for these two particular groups of students in order to allow for more accurate comparisons between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and between regional and metropolitan students.

In total, 1,812 students across 98 schools participated in the survey and 1,174 students participated in the group discussion between July and November 2016.⁴¹

Participation by students in the consultation was anonymous and voluntary. Active student and parent/guardian consent was required for participation in the consultation (opt-in approach).

Students could choose to participate in the survey, the group discussion or both the survey and the group discussion. Participation in the consultation was limited to no more than 40 students per school for the survey and no more than 15 students per school for the group discussion.⁴²

Parents/guardians who provided consent for their child's participation in the consultation could choose to participate in the parent survey. A link to the survey was provided to them following their child/children's participation in the student consultation.

In total, 421 parents participated between August and November 2016.

All student surveys as well as the group discussion questions were trialled with selected student groups. The parent survey was also trialled with a select group of parents.

Similarly, key findings from the consultation were presented and discussed with a number of students from participating schools at post-consultation workshops held in February 2017.

Further detail about the sampling method, strategy and sample characteristics are included in Appendix 1 – Technical notes.

Data analysis

The student and parent survey data were analysed using SurveyGizmo analysis tools, including cross Tabulation. The Telethon Kids Institute was engaged to provide statistical advice and to conduct independent checks of the survey data and the results provided in this report. These checks included accuracy of the reported figures, confidence intervals of proportions, and assessing if group differences in survey responses were statistically significant (for example, if the proportion of students who like school 'a lot' was statistically different for regional and metropolitan students). The chi-square test of independence was used to assess these group differences. The data checks were carried out using SAS 9.4 and the surveyfreq procedure. The detail of the statistical checks are not included in the report but are available upon request.

The group discussion data was analysed using NVivo content analysis tools.

The sample

Despite the use of a stratified sampling design from the frame of all WA schools, the participating students are not representative of the WA student population as a whole.

The reasons for this are:

- 1. Active consent requirement for students and parents/guardians (opt-in approach rather than opt-out):** the opt-in consent approach requires potential participants and their parents/guardians to return a signed consent form through which they indicate their consent. The opt-out approach on the other hand is a method where information will be provided to the potential participants and their parents/guardians regarding the activity and their involvement in which their participation is presumed unless they and/or their parents/guardians take action to decline participation. Research has shown that studies carried out under parental opt-in consent conditions can result in low participation rates and return samples that under-represent students “who are more involved in and more at risk of involvement in problem behaviours” and “young people at higher risk who are most able to inform and benefit from the research”.⁴³

The active consent requirement meant that the anticipated response rate from students was revised from 80 per cent to 10 per cent. The actual student response rate in the study was eight per cent.
- 2. Lower than expected response rate from schools:** Schools are extremely busy environments that often face competing research projects amidst a raft of other priorities. It was often difficult for the schools to agree to participation in the Commissioner’s School and Learning Consultation due to other commitments.

The anticipated response rate from schools was 80 per cent. The actual school response rate was 63 per cent.
- 3. Information provided to potential participants and parents/guardians was too comprehensive:** Feedback from participating schools revealed that the information provided to potential participants and their parents/guardians was for some too comprehensive or lengthy. This may have impacted on the response rate from students and their parents/guardians in that the information was not read and the invitation rejected.

These factors resulted in a sample of students that can be described as having a higher level of engagement with their schooling than the broader student population as a whole.

The prevalence of disengaged behaviours for the population of Western Australian students is therefore likely to be higher than those reported in this consultation report.⁴⁴

Ethics

The consultation underwent external ethics review by two research experts as required by the Commissioner’s Ethical Research and Consultation with Children and Young People Policy.

In addition, the consultation received ethics approval from the Department of Education and Catholic Education Office. Principals provided consent for their students in their schools to be approached to participate.

The children and young people who participated in the consultation and their parents/guardians were required to provide written informed consent. The Commissioner’s Participation Policy and Participation Consent Policy guided the processes for seeking consent and for undertaking the consultation.