Independent Public Schools

Driving local decision-making and innovation

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Premier's Foreword

The *Independent Public Schools* initiative delivers on the LNP Government's election commitment to give Queensland principals, teachers, parents and local communities greater control and ownership of their schools as well as greater input into decisions that affect them.

The LNP Government knows that there is a great diversity of communities throughout Queensland. We want schools to have greater freedom to work with parents, businesses and industry to make decisions that best meet the needs of their local community to improve outcomes for students.

The *Independent Public Schools* initiative will cut red tape, remove layers of management and give local communities a greater say in decision-making.

This Government is committed to lifting education standards for all students. Our focus is on providing a strong education system and giving our children the best possible start.

Our state schools play a vital role in delivering education for families across Queensland, wherever they reside and whatever their circumstances. *Independent Public Schools* will make our state school system even better.

I look forward to working with you to deliver stronger outcomes for our most precious resource – our young people.

The Hon. Campbell Newman MP
Premier of Queensland

Minister's Foreword

Education is the foundation of our future and I am focused on improving outcomes for all Queensland school students — we owe it to them to provide the best possible stepping stones to help them realise their full potential.

Queensland has an impressive state school system. It is one of our greatest strengths. It's a system that can be further improved by giving principals, staff and local communities greater ownership of their schools and greater autonomy in decision-making.

By removing red tape, *Independent Public Schools* will have the freedom to determine their staffing profile as well as the departmental policies and procedures that best suit their individual environments. Principals will have direct communication with the Director-General as well as new opportunities for innovation and improved performance.

This Government is committed to getting the basics right and getting Queensland back on track. The best way to do this is to enable the people closest to their communities to make decisions affecting them.

This prospectus outlines the opportunities provided to *Independent Public Schools*. I welcome the interest of those school leaders, teachers and school communities who are considering an application to participate in this important initiative.

The Hon. John-Paul Langbroek MP
Minister for Education, Training and Employment

Photography: Michael Marsden

Maximising possibilities

The *Independent Public Schools* initiative recognises the best decision-making, for the most part, occurs at a local level through direct response to local community needs and aspirations.

It is designed to reduce red tape, giving schools more opportunities to achieve the best possible outcomes for their students and local communities.

Since 2013, 80 schools have commenced as *Independent Public Schools*.

In 2015, additional schools will have the opportunity to become *Independent Public Schools* and embrace additional autonomy to enable:

- increased innovation
- stronger partnerships with industry and the community
- further tailoring of local school programs.

Queensland is a diverse state with diverse school communities to match. *Independent Public Schools* have the freedom to be responsive and open to the broader range of possibilities their communities can offer.

All *Independent Public Schools* remain part of the strong state school system. They need to operate within the system enacting the same core values, beliefs and priorities.

Photography: Lime

Enhanced local governance

All *Independent Public Schools* are required to establish a school council.

School councils enable greater involvement of the school community and other stakeholders, such as industry, in setting the strategic direction for the school.

School councils approve and monitor the school's strategic direction, further strengthening collaborative local decision-making.

The role of the school council

The school council:

- approves strategic plans, including performance targets and strategies that set the future direction of the school
- approves other strategic documents such as those relating to school revenue and expenditure
- monitors the school's strategic direction and endorses the school's performance against planned targets
- advises the school's principal about strategic matters
- is represented on the selection panel for the principal.

Advancing innovation

Independent Public Schools can embrace enhanced innovation to further maximise student learning outcomes by harnessing local expertise and thereby responding directly to local community needs.

Opportunities for innovation

Greater autonomy enables *Independent Public Schools* to find exciting new ways to do business. This enhanced innovation drives improved outcomes for Queensland's students. On offer is:

- a direct line of communication with the Director-General and other senior executives who help prioritise innovation by paving a smooth path through departmental processes
- the freedom to directly recruit staff and to build a team that is fit-for-purpose to drive innovation
- more autonomy to manage and use infrastructure, financial resources and human resources
- opportunities to work in new ways with local businesses, industry and other community organisations
- an option to pursue creative models of sponsorship, industry partnerships and infrastructure partnerships
- increased flexibility to shape curriculum offerings that suit the needs of their students e.g. International Baccalaureate programs, extracurricular programs, gateway programs and centres of excellence
- freedom to shape and deliver innovative educational practices that maximise outcomes for students.

Independent Public Schools use their additional autonomy to enable them to better respond to the unique potential of their students and community.

Locally tailored workforce

Independent Public Schools have additional autonomy for greater flexibility in staffing options through:

- direct recruitment of classified and non-classified teaching staff at any time
- direct allocation of staffing resources expressed in notional full-time equivalent staff
- local management of their staffing profile

Principals at *Independent Public Schools*:

- can choose between directly recruiting teachers (where vacancies exist) or the filling of vacancies through existing department applicant pools or the transfer system
- can access the relocation process for classified teaching staff.

Increased financial flexibility

Independent Public Schools can flexibly direct their budget to best meet their students' individual needs.

Schools manage to a one-line grant budget which allows them the maximum flexibility to manage their budget based on their identified needs.

Building for the future

Independent Public Schools can formulate infrastructure plans and industry links to shape a physical environment that best matches the strategic vision for their school. Schools:

- can make local decisions about joint facility agreements and partnerships
- can contract and manage their own maintenance using QBuild or contractors
- develop a Strategic Infrastructure (Assets) Plan in direct consultation with Central Office
- submit requests for capital works projects directly to Central Office.

An *Independent Public School* that is subject to a Department Public Private Partnership (PPP) is obligated to comply with the PPP contract conditions. For example, a PPP School is not required to formulate a maintenance or Infrastructure (Asset) Plan and these are incorporated into the PPP arrangements. The PPP contract would also continue to be managed centrally by the department.

Photography: Lime

Public accountability, transparency and performance

As part of Queensland's strong state education system, *Independent Public Schools* comply with state and national legislation, industrial instruments, directives, delegations, whole-of-government policies and national agreements.

While *Independent Public Schools* are not required to follow a number of operational procedures, they are required to:

- determine and manage their planning and review processes for the school
- participate in system audits
- provide systemic data and use corporate systems, for example OneSchool and MyHR
- purchase IT products that are compatible with the department's managed operating environment.

Independent Public School principals enter into a performance agreement with the Director-General.

The school council monitors and endorses school performance against planned targets.

Supporting our *Independent Public Schools*

Independent Public Schools receive a one-off $50,000 grant to assist with their transition. This funding enables the schools to seek expertise and advice about the establishment and effective functioning of their school council. In addition, schools are eligible to receive a further $50,000 in funding each year.

Independent Public Schools continue to benefit from the strengths of the Queensland state education system through access to:

- existing liability insurance
- legal and media advice
- financial and procurement advice
- industrial relations advice and support
- *Curriculum into the Classroom*
- OneSchool
- MyHR
- Workcover support
- central and regional office support.

How to become an *Independent Public School*

All Queensland state schools, irrespective of size, geographical location or school type, can apply to become an *Independent Public School* in 2015.

Schools should submit their application via the Expression of Interest (EOI) Form which will be made available on OnePortal during the submission period. Schools will be advised of the opening and closing dates for submissions.

All EOI applications must be accompanied by:

- documentation of consultation undertaken with school communities
- a short written application of no more than three A4 pages.

The consultation process

Prior to submitting an EOI, it is essential that principals undertake broad consultation with their school communities.

Principals may use existing consultative groups to ensure the whole school community has the opportunity to provide input and to gain an understanding of all stakeholder views.

Consultation will gauge community interest in becoming an *Independent Public School*.

Schools can begin their consultation at any time and involve stakeholders such as:

- staff
- parents, including the Parents & Citizens' Association and school council (if established)
- the wider community, for example local business, industry, and community groups.

When submitting an EOI, schools will need to provide documentation outlining the consultation that has occurred across these groups.

Documentation must include a summary of views expressed by the groups.

Written applications

Schools will also need to prepare a written application, of ***no more than three A4 pages***, to support their EOI. Schools are required to use the template available on OnePortal to complete their written application by the due date.

The written application must demonstrate:

- the consultation that has occurred across groups, including a summary of their views
- the school's capacity to assume greater responsibility for their affairs
- the potential benefits for students and the broader school community
- the innovative educational programs or practices that the school will implement to improve student performance.

Selection process

A Department of Education, Training and Employment internal panel, which includes a number of existing *Independent Public School* principals, will consider all applications.

To assist in the selection of schools, the panel may source additional information including:

- school performance data
- school financial audit reports.

Future opportunities

Further opportunities to express interest to become an *Independent Public School* will be provided each year until 2016.

From 2017, the *Independent Public Schools* program will be expanded through *Great teachers = Great results*.

Expression of Interest (EOI) written application

Using the template on One Portal, in no more than **three A4 pages** demonstrate:

- The consultation that has occurred across stakeholder groups, including a summary of their views
- The school's capacity to assume greater responsibility for their affairs
- The potential benefits for students and the broader school community
- The innovative educational programs or practices that the school will implement to improve student performance.

Application checklist

- ☐ school staff, parents and local community consultation completed
- ☐ maximum three A4 pages written application completed on the template provided
- ☐ commitment to establish the school council
- ☐ school council already established
- ☐ name and signature of substantive principal submitted (if applicable)

Submission checklist

- ☐ EOI form completed on One Portal
- ☐ Completed written application uploaded to the e-form
- ☐ Application submitted by closing date
- ☐ Confirmation of submission received and kept on file

All applications must be submitted using the online form available on One Portal. Schools are to attach the written application to this form.