

## **PORTFOLIO REPORTS - STATE COUNCIL**

### **SPECIFIC EDUCATION REPORT**

#### **Jasmyn Allen – Portfolio Leader, March 2025**

On 4 December 2023 the Minister for Education, Hon. Dr Tony Buti announced a review of the ‘*School Education Act 1999*’ to identify and review opportunities to strengthen access and inclusion for students with a disability. The WA based Education Act was written over 25 years ago and was identified as not fully meeting today's understanding and community expectations for students with a disability. The purpose of the review is to identify any barriers to access and inclusion within the Act and how it is applied to education in WA schools and make recommendations for change.

The review is now complete, the expert panel chaired by Professor Andrew Whitehouse provided the Minister for Education with a final report in December 2024. The consultation phase ran from 20 August to 4 October 2024 and involved:

- Over 30 consultations and information sessions with over 280 people
- Over 200 formal submissions
- Public face-to-face sessions in Perth and regional WA.

The review showed the following points relevant for our rural and remote students as barriers to access for education:

- Right to enrol
- Definition of a disability and clarity about what is included in this definition (e.g. Is ADHD included as a disability or not?)
- Students rights to teaching and learning adjustments
- The role and function of disability advisory panels and advocacy
- Restrictive practices
- Better alignment to the convention on the rights of a person with a disability.

The review also looked at how the Act relates to other state, national and international policies and how other states across Australia have learnt and implemented to improve access and inclusion for students with disabilities and health conditions. The review is the first step in the legislative change process and will result in recommendations being made to the Minister, which will then need a cabinet approval process before amendments to the Act can be introduced.

ICPA (WA) were consistent in their message throughout the consultation period that the needs of rural and remote students with a disability and or complex health care needs must be taken into account, especially considering limited access to health care and the variety of different ways our children access education (School of the Air, School of Distance Education, bus travel and boarding house residential care).