

## **Response to the Pathways to Post School Success – Review of WA Senior Secondary Pathways**

### **Six Key Imperatives**

The six key imperatives are supported by the PFWA, but it is extremely important to understand that the stated imperatives are very broad and idealistic in nature. Whilst they serve as direction and purpose for quality senior school delivery in WA, it must be emphasised that purpose can only be translated into action where there is sufficient capacity within the system, a genuine willingness within the system for change and realistic timelines for planning and implementation. The PFWA is concerned that there is currently limited capacity for considerable change due to several factors:

- Staff shortages (quantity and quality). The system is losing specialist teachers in most learning areas. These leaders and teachers are essential to facilitating change.
- Lack of funding to schools and inequities that exist e.g. District High Schools, country schools, low ICSEA schools (VET, limited course availability, lack of suitably qualified teachers, teacher transiency).
- Workloads are already excessive for leaders and teachers.
- Changes to curriculum require considerable communication and professional development. There is very limited time available in schools utilising school development days and/or general staff meetings. Providing relief funding to schools for training is only useful if relief teachers are available to schools, which is not the case for many secondary schools.

There is also a lack of will in schools for more change. This has been influenced by excessive workloads and growing expectations of schools by government, community, parents and the DoE and SCSA. The successful implementation of any significant new initiative is dependent upon leaders and teachers in schools having the genuine will to lead changes. Without addressing the already excessive workloads and expectations on schools and the staff, there is unlikely to be sufficient will and potentially resistance.

The PFWA notes that there appears to be urgency in the language throughout the consultation paper. Terms like “require immediate attention” while suggesting a three-year timeline for change are concerning. The timelines are unrealistic and demonstrate a lack of understanding of the practicalities required for changes in curriculum delivery e.g. parent consultation, counselling processes, workforce planning and profile, timetabling, professional development of staff, SCSA compliances.

Whilst the PFWA agrees with the intent of the key imperatives there is a strong position that any changes need to be appropriately planned, funded and gradual while giving great consideration to the lack of capacity within in the system at present, the general willingness of teachers and leaders to implement major change and the need for realistic timelines.

### **Purposes of Senior Secondary Education**

The “Purposes of Secondary Education” raised a number of comments and insights within the PFWA membership:

- Figure 3 captures the current situation. However, schools have to provide for their students as best they can with the resources available. Lack of funds, lack of suitably qualified teachers, geographical isolation, socioeconomic issues, etc all impact upon a school's capacity to cater for "student interests and aspirations".
- A stated purpose won't necessarily result in change. Change is dependent upon planning, resourcing, funding etc.
- The premise of student interests and aspirations appears to be at odds with an underlying tone throughout the paper for increased numbers of students receiving an ATAR score. This paper appears to promote ways of increasing students with an ATAR score without addressing the elephant in the room – why are universities still driving school curriculum delivery?
- There are questions concerning Recommendations 1&2. Why is one purpose not clearer and sufficient?

#### **Modes of Assessment**

The highest values of assessment are to inform students about their learning and to inform teachers about the levels of knowledge and understanding their students have achieved. For this purpose assessment forms an integral part of the teaching and learning process and many different assessment tools may be applied. In senior schooling assessment must also compare student progress against standards and other students across the state. The higher the stakes (WACE depth of study), the higher the emphasis on assessment methods that provide comparability. This significantly narrows the viable options for assessment. Without altering the depth of study element of the WACE, it is unlikely that application of varied assessment methods would be achieved.

The concept of consolidating courses where there is currently a General and ATAR version might seem straight forward and as a way of reducing the number of courses. However, this would result in higher workloads for teachers in differentiating course content and complexity for broad ability levels. It would also favour larger schools that would likely timetable streamed classes (ATAR version and Non ATAR version). Smaller schools would only be able to offer single class sets.

It is also worth noting that in Victoria where this has been tried, increasing numbers of students are opting out of the examination (ATAR) element, sometimes with school encouragement.

#### **Shift to Learner Profiles**

More detail is needed than is available through the Review paper. The PFWA is very concerned if the intent is to transition to a version of *student outcome statement* or where schools collect credentials achieved by students outside of school. Both of which have already been attempted in WA but ultimately failed due to the unrealistic workloads, excessive demands on teachers in delivering course content, differentiating for a wide range of student abilities and in implementing effective assessments.

Recommendation	Comments
<p>Rec 1: Western Australian Government to commit to developing a statement setting out the multiple inter-related purposes of senior secondary education, which centres on the concept of 'students' interests and aspirations'.</p>	<p>PFWA to be included in consultation. The purpose needs to include "reaching their potential". Support in principle.</p>
<p>Rec 2: School system, sectors, and SCSA to conduct an inclusive process to develop and refine a statement on the purposes of senior secondary education, drawing on consultation with students, schools, families, other education sector stakeholders, and industry.</p>	<p>PFWA to be included in consultation.  Support in principle</p>
<p>Rec 3: SCSA to incorporate the new statement of purposes as agreed above to guide its activities through its Strategic Plan. When the School Curriculum and Standards Authority Act 1997 is next reviewed, the Western Australian Government should ensure that it incorporates this statement of purposes into the legislation, along with any other changes required to allow SCSA to deliver on the recommendations contained in this report.</p>	<p>Matter for SCSA and Government</p>
<p>Rec 4: As part of its senior secondary syllabus review process, SCSA to commit to a course-by-course review of Year 11 and 12 courses and programs, to ensure that course rationale, aims, and design are consistent with the new statement of purposes of senior secondary education. SCSA to advise on: reasonable timeframes for this process to take place; priority courses for review; alignment with other activity; and how to engage with students in the review process.</p>	<p>The PFWA supports the current SCA review processes for courses /syllabus.  Reasonable timeframes as determined by SCSA schools and PFWA!  Expert teachers contribute to each course review. Appropriate Release time and funding provided to schools and representatives include teachers experienced in regional and remote areas, ATSI, low SES and disability.  Student voice is incorporated within this process (Recommendation 5)</p>
<p>Rec 5: Western Australian Government, through SCSA in partnership with the three school sectors, to review the role that young people play in education system design, including periodically consulting students on senior secondary course rationales, aims, and design.</p>	<p>Support in principle.</p>
<p>Rec 6: Western Australian Government to commit to periodically evaluating the effectiveness of these recommendations on an agreed schedule. We suggest: 18 months following the Western Australian Government's</p>	<p>Adequate funding essential to conduct effective evaluation and review. Stakeholder involvement.</p>



<p>response focussing on fidelity of implementation, and again three years later with a focus on achievement of new purpose and outcomes for students.</p>	<p>Timeline is too short. Will take time to plan, implement and embed in schools. Ongoing change is difficult to sustain due to workload, personnel changes, communication challenges, etc.</p>
<p>Rec 7: Education sector organisations to work together to strengthen data collection and integration, particularly to enable understanding of school and post-school outcomes for all priority cohorts.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>
<p>Rec 8: The Western Australian Government, on behalf of the three school sectors and SCSA, to assess resourcing implications of all recommendations in this report, in order for this package of recommendations to be fully funded.</p>	<p>Strongly supported by PFWA. PFWA to be involved in the process to determine resource allocation. There is significant workload (planning, professional development, course development and assessment, etc) attached. Adequate funding is essential for any level of success.</p>
<p>Rec 9: Department of Education and DTWD to work with the school system and sectors to strengthen delivery of career education and pathway planning, consistent with the principles outlined above in conjunction with appropriate course selection processes, where applicable, particularly for students in regional, remote, and lower socio-economic areas.</p>	<p>Consultation and collaboration is critical especially for schools/regions in regional, remote and lower socio-economic areas.</p>
<p>Rec 10: Department of Education and DTWD to hold first principles discussions with key stakeholders, which includes SCSA, schools, the system and sectors, training providers and employers, on the purposes of VET in schools, including for the purposes of student retention and engagement, with a view to establishing a shared understanding. This should be seen as a pre-condition to addressing issues relating to delivery of VET in schools or assessing the suitability of particular offerings. This process should draw on SCSA's work undertaken as part of its WACE refreshment process.</p>	<p>PFWA to have a 'seat' at the table during discussions.</p> <p>Principals must be adequately consulted, particularly those within regional and remote areas and a higher proportion of 'vocational' students.</p> <p>Genuine commitment is needed.</p>
<p>Rec 11: Western Australia to shift to an approach in which, for any particular course or program, learning goals, rather than course category, should define course design and assessment requirements. This should draw on SCSA's recent and ongoing syllabus review and development work.</p>	<p>The range of student abilities in senior secondary schools are wide ranging as demonstrated through Year 9 NAPLAN predictions. Catering for highly differentiated learning goals is exceptionally challenging for teachers and involves considerable planning and workloads. Larger schools will consider streaming classes where there are multiple sets.</p> <p>Adequate funding to release staff to engage in any planning, professional development is essential.</p>



	<p>Considerable and quality professional development for teachers, HOLA's and Administration staff to support transition to this model.</p>
<p>Rec 12: Western Australian senior secondary course and program assessment should draw from a wide range of contemporary assessment tools. SCSA should determine the utility and reliability of different methods of assessment where necessary to ensure that current standards are maintained, drawing on its recent and ongoing syllabus review and development work.</p>	<p>SCSA currently determines the utility and reliability of different methods of assessment where necessary to ensure that current standards are maintained.</p> <p>PFWA maintains that while there are many assessment methods not all are suitable for rigorous comparability. PFWA would be opposed to assessment changes that then required additional layers of comparability and then increased workloads for schools and created disruption to normal routines</p>
<p>Rec 13: As part of the course-by-course review in Recommendation 4 above, SCSA to consolidate existing offerings where it makes sense to do so based on learning goals, drawing on its current WACE refreshment process.</p>	<p>PFWA believes this is a simplistic solution that will have unintended consequences. The workload implications associated with differentiating learning for wide ranging ability levels that exist in senior school would result in schools offering ATAR and non -ATAR versions of the same course. There are still principals who remember the problems associated with student outcome statements.</p> <p>Any changes to courses or syllabus takes considerable time to implement (timetable, workforce planning, communications, counselling processes, professional development).</p>
<p>Rec 14: Once courses have been reviewed, SCSA to cease using the terminology of 'ATAR' and 'General' courses, to reflect the move away from the hard distinction between the two course categories. This should draw on the SCSA's work undertaken as part of its current WACE refreshment process.</p>	<p>PFWA's position is that while university entrance and selection is based upon school assessment and rankings there will always be reference to ATAR and non-ATAR pathways. Ceasing the use of the terminology is unlikely to change the practice in schools.</p>
<p>Rec 15: Ensure that median ATAR is not used as a measure of school performance, including removing it from the school dashboard used in Department of Education schools.</p>	<p>PFWA supports this but there is concern with regard to alternative metrics that were used to compare schools.</p>
<p>Rec 16: As a temporary measure and drawing on the work undertaken through the WACE refreshment process, SCSA to explore whether D grades in ATAR courses could be credited toward WACE achievement, to counteract students avoiding ATAR subjects on the basis that D grades do not meet WACE achievement requirements.</p>	<p>PFWA supports the encouraging of students to select courses that interest them and challenge them. However, there are many factors other than course design and WACE manipulations that affect the choices made by students and parents.</p>



	<p>PFWA also supports a simplification of the WACE!</p> <p>PFWA is highly cautious about short-term fixes. What does this say about our curriculum and our system when understanding 40% of content is good enough.</p>
<p>Rec 17: SCSA to review the WACE achievement requirements, with a view to reducing complexity and increasing the ability for students to tailor their course and program options, and allow for more of their course and program achievements to be counted toward the WACE (for example, removing barriers to mixing and matching course and program types, removing requirements to study from both 'List A and 'List B' courses to fulfil breadth requirements).</p>	<p>The PFWA supports a review of WACE requirements. The current WACE is complex and is workload demanding for schools in monitoring.</p> <p>Increased flexibility is supported as long as it reduces also complexity of the WACE.</p> <p>Removing List A &amp; B requirements has implications for English and TAFE entry.</p> <p>Sensible timelines for training, PL and information sessions for school staff, students and families required for any changes in this space.</p>
<p>Rec 18: SCSA to increase the number of courses that have a numerical score as well as letter grade reported.</p>	<p>PFWA contests this recommendation. This is where the credibility of the ideals associated with this Review are brought into question. This is all about providing more students with an ATAR and hence inferring it is more important than other courses/pathways. This is where university entrance is determining the course offerings and assessments used in schools.</p> <p>Currently all ATAR, General and Foundation courses receive a numerical score and a grade. This only leaves endorsed courses which there is no reason to change their structure to include a numerical score.</p> <p>ATAR pathway that includes every course. Contradictory to the reports view that they want to move away from that philosophy.</p>
<p>Rec 19: SCSA and TISC to work to expand the types of courses and programs that can contribute to an ATAR, with a view to expanding what students are able to have recognised through an ATAR.</p>	<p>PFWA hope that SCSA and TISC already work collaboratively. TISC works for the universities so therefore it is ultimately about gaining support from all universities.</p> <p>As for the response to Recommendation 18 it raises scepticism about the intent of the Review.</p>



<p>Rec 20: SCSA to commit to working with DTWD and TISC to enable as many VET qualifications as possible to contribute to the combined score from which an ATAR is calculated; and to implement this change as quickly as possible, drawing on SCSA’s current WACE refreshment process.</p>	<p>PFWA would need to be assured about the comparability between a Vet Qualification and other courses that contribute to an ATAR.</p> <p>PFWA would not support changes that create further inequities in the capacity of schools to provide VET offerings or where workloads to schools are increased.</p> <p>The objective should not be “to implement this change as quickly as possible”. There needs to be considerable time in consultation, planning and implementation. PFWA and Principals should be consulted!</p>
<p>Rec 21: Universities to strengthen collection and analysis of data on students that accessed universities through enabling programs, to contribute to the evidence base on the effectiveness of these programs and how universities can support students that elect to use these pathways.</p>	<p>PFWA supports this in principle.</p> <p>Enabling courses were introduced by universities and have found their way onto school grids. This has been one of the factors contributing to a drop in the number of students electing to do a full selection of ATAR subjects. Increasing numbers of students are taking enabling courses as a smarter path to university.</p>
<p>Rec 22: SCSA to play a role in establishing and moderating achievement standards in university-developed enabling programs, as a way of ensuring transparency, parity and quality and increasing consistency among these offerings. This should draw from SCSA’s current WACE refreshment process.</p>	<p>PFWA questions why this is something for SCSA to do. These are alternative university entrance programs!</p>
<p>Rec 23: SCSA to develop a transparent set of criteria against which emerging credentialling approaches will be assessed.</p>	<p>PFWA supports in principle.</p>
<p>Rec 24: SCSA to explore expanding the information included in the WASSA, in order to reflect a more holistic picture of student achievement, drawing on the current WACE refreshment process. This could include listing the achievement of alternative programs subject to further exploration of the reliability and validity of assessments</p>	<p>PFWA supports in principle.</p> <p>PFWA however would not support increased workloads associated with collecting and validating achievements in alternative programs.</p> <p>Potential professional learning and communication with parent/student implications!</p>
<p>Rec 25: SCSA to make WASSAs available to students who leave school prior to the completion of Year 12, in order for all students to leave school with a record of achievement.</p>	<p>PFWA supports in Principle</p> <p>Students undertaking 2-year VET Qualifications must be signed off on an appropriate number of UOC’s in Year 11. This would require the assessment schedules to be agreed on with external providers to ensure over-clustering of</p>



	<p>UOC's does not occur and students depart with some formal attainments.</p> <p>A structured process be developed and implemented to support school administrators to finalise results for early school leavers in RTP to ensure student results are recorded. Training required for applicable staff</p>
<p>Rec 26: SCSA to investigate moving to learner profiles over the longer term, in order to reflect a more holistic picture of student achievement, drawing on SCSA's current WACE refreshment process.</p>	<p>PFWA is concerned about the detail behind and extent of approach to Learner Profiles. Lessons learned from Student Outcome Statements is that catering for wide ranging abilities and assessing across broad scales is extremely challenging for teachers and comes with a very high workload. The capacity of the system to cope with significant change and any increase in workload is not there at present.</p> <p>PFWA and Principals should be extensively consulted with regard to any implementation and likely workload burden.</p>
<p>Rec 27: SCSA to explore how complex competencies could be delivered, assessed, and certified through course content, and reflected on the WASSA (in the short term) or Learner Profiles (in the longer term), drawing on SCSA's current WACE refreshment process.</p>	<p>PFWA would expect significant consultation. Changing the WASSA or moving to a Learner Profile has significant implications for school administration and workload.</p>
<p>Rec 28: School system and sectors to review reasonable adjustments in the context of senior secondary pathways, to identify opportunities to strengthen inclusive practices.</p>	<p>PFWA supports in principle. Staff training, professional learning, school resource allocation would be needed and adequately resourced.</p>
<p>Rec 29: SCSA to undertake a review of special consideration arrangements, especially in context of new modes of assessment, with a view to expanding schools' capacity to validate arrangements that are supportive of learners with disability, chronic conditions, or additional learning needs. For clarity, this should include what opportunities there are for schools to make decisions around special considerations (for example, with regard to timing; rest breaks etc). This should build on SCSA's Equitable Access to Assessment Policy and Guidelines noting that SCSA has recently undertaken reviews of special considerations for students which have informed this Policy and Guidelines.</p>	<p>Support but has this work not already been done? SCSA has an Equitable Access to Assessment Policy already. already. Adequate training, professional learning needs to be sufficient.</p>



<p>Rec 30: School system and sectors to work with schools to enhance opportunities of access for Foundation and Preliminary courses. In many cases, this will be a question of resourcing.</p>	<p>PFWA support in principle.</p> <p>This would need a significant increase in school funding. The reason many schools do not offer these courses is due to small numbers of eligible students and inability to properly fund.</p> <p>Many regional schools do not have the student numbers to offer both Foundation and General courses, let alone preliminary. 'Gap' funding could be allocated to schools to adequately staff foundation or preliminary courses where they have eligible students.</p>
<p>Rec 31: SCSA to explore the possibility of developing a new offering for students with disability, similar to the New South Wales Life Skills course</p>	<p>PFWA supports in principle.</p> <p>The system would require specialist teacher training and sufficient numbers of trained teachers would need to be available for all schools to access.</p> <p>More support is required for regional and remote schools who have students with disability, but do not have access to sufficient support. Provision of regional-based Learning Support Coordinators to better support schools?</p>
<p>Rec 32: SCSA to develop an additional level within the WACE to accommodate students with a recognised disability, following a period of consultation with students with disability, their families, schools, and other stakeholders. This should draw on SCSA's work undertaken as part of its current WACE refreshment process, and which reflects similar offerings in other jurisdictions.</p>	<p>PFWA would expect considerable consultation.</p> <p>Simply not enough detail and the devil will be in the detail!</p>
<p>Rec 33: The literacy and numeracy standard remain as a requirement to achieve the WACE.</p>	<p>PFWA supports in principal</p> <p>PFWA does recommend a review of how the OLNA is tested in schools. Currently it is very disruptive to normal class routines (online access) and causes significant anxiety for some students.</p>
<p>Rec 34: SCSA to expand methods of demonstrating the literacy and numeracy standard with a view to addressing the disproportionate impact on diverse cohorts</p>	<p>If there are other methods for demonstrating literacy and numeracy why are we doing OLNA OLNA which has a significant impact on the schools operations (coordination time, timetable disruptions etc).</p>



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	<p>PFWA does not support other layers of workload and disruption to school operations and routines.</p>
<p>Rec 35: Consistent with Recommendation 29, SCSA, working with schools, to expand the current conditions for special consideration for OLNA achievement.</p>	<p>PFWA supports the concept, but would need more detail with regard to how this could be done and meet literacy and numeracy standards.</p> <p>PFWA does not support methods that require additional resources or increase school disruption or workload.</p>