Major reforms to raise bar on literacy and numeracy

- Changes amount to biggest commitment ever made to WA senior secondary students
- Students supported to meet minimum standards by the time they graduate high school

All Western Australian students would be supported to meet minimum literacy and numeracy standards by the time they graduate under major reforms to the State’s senior secondary education system announced today.

Premier Colin Barnett said Western Australia would introduce a minimum literacy and numeracy assessment in year 10 from 2014. Students requiring extra support would then be given targeted educational programs throughout the rest of their schooling and ongoing reassessment to meet graduation eligibility.

“The community has a right to expect that students will leave school with a minimum level of literacy and numeracy that meets the demands of everyday life,” Mr Barnett said.

“The State Government has listened to tertiary educators, training providers and employers, who have told us that more can be done to ensure school-leavers are better equipped to pursue further education or enter the workforce. These reforms will do that.

“We will provide parents with the confidence that when their children leave school they would have met minimum literacy and numeracy standards.

“Western Australia is leading the nation by introducing this minimum literacy and numeracy standard requirement for secondary graduation.

“Along with the Independent Public Schools initiative and the transition of year 7s to high school, this significant reform to secondary education is yet another example of the Liberal National Government's investment in our children’s future.”

Education Minister Peter Collier said the changes would also see students required to achieve an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) or a minimum Certificate II in training programs to graduate.

“The Liberal National Government will ensure there are opportunities for students in all schools to complete a Certificate II or higher in training programs,” Mr Collier said.

“There is a huge demand for people with trade skills in this State and it is imperative that our young people leave school with the skills that set them on the right path.”
The Minister said under the reforms, Stage 1, 2 and 3 courses would be removed and replaced with new, simplified year 11 and year 12 General and ATAR courses. He said this would encourage students to meet their maximum potential.

“Changes to WA’s education system announced under the previous government have allowed too many students to take the easier option, and literacy and numeracy standards are suffering as a result,” he said.

“In the lead-up to the implementation of these reforms, Stage 2 examinations will be optional in 2014 and 2015. These reforms are designed to engage students in rigorous educational programs to prepare them better for life after school.”

Mr Collier said the changes would incorporate the senior secondary national curriculum in the WACE.

“The reforms will be introduced in 2015 for year 11 and 2016 for year 12 students to coincide with the implementation of the Australian curriculum in Western Australia and therefore minimise the impact on schools, teachers and students,” he said.

Fact File

- The School Curriculum and Standards Authority to develop online literacy and numeracy assessments this year, ready for 2014
- Since 2008, the Liberal National Government has made unprecedented $1.4 billion-plus investment in school infrastructure with 26 schools built
- Liberal National Government’s Independent Public Schools (IPS) initiative is the biggest education reform in decades and leads Australia in giving more decision-making power, autonomy and flexibility to parents and school communities
- Currently 255 IPS schools across WA representing one third of all public schools and half of all students and teachers in the public school system

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