What is different in this new approach?
While the rigour of selection to become an Independent Public School is maintained, there are two key differences in this new approach. First, aspiring schools will be included automatically in a development program in preparation for increased autonomy and accountability. Second, successful and well regarded principals of Independent Public Schools will add their expertise to the development program and the selection process.

Under this new approach will every school eventually become an Independent Public School?
Every school will be given the opportunity to be selected once they meet the high standards required to become an Independent Public School. One of the unique aspects of how autonomy is being implemented in this State is that school communities have the choice about whether they want to consider Independent Public School status. Each Independent Public School then has a choice about many of the flexibilities it wishes to adopt. Some flexibilities trialled in Independent Public Schools have already been made available to all schools. This will continue as a strong system of distinctive public schools is further developed in Western Australia.

Why are changes needed?
Changes have come about in response to feedback from school communities as well as the independent evaluation panel that in previous years has assessed expressions of interest from schools and made recommendations to the Director General. The new approach will enable school communities that wish to become Independent Public Schools to develop a comprehensive case with the support of experienced Independent Public School principals. It will maintain the current momentum of this successful initiative as well as retain the rigour necessary to ensure its integrity into the future.

Why are changes being made before the Independent Public Schools initiative has been evaluated?
These changes are specifically to the way schools demonstrate their readiness to be selected as Independent Public Schools. An independent evaluation by The University of Melbourne is looking at how the whole initiative has been implemented, its strengths and impact on the system. The evaluation will help inform the Independent Public Schools initiative.

Are standards going to drop because of this change?
Definitely not. There are many communities where the desire to become an Independent Public School is strong but where some support is needed to meet the stringent requirements of the program. This is what the development program is about. Further, the selection criteria are exactly the same as in previous years and schools will continue to take part in a comprehensive transition program before they start operating as Independent Public Schools.
When will the new approach come into effect?
The development program will be designed in the first half of 2013. The 2014 Independent Public Schools prospectus will be published in the second half of 2013. It will include application information and guidelines as well as details of the responsibilities and authorities of Independent Public Schools. This timeline allows for the independent evaluation by The University of Melbourne to be considered. This is one of the major reasons why there will be no intake of Independent Public Schools in 2014.

When will aspiring schools be involved?
The 2014 Independent Public Schools prospectus will invite aspiring schools to a comprehensive one day briefing to be held regionally towards the end of 2013. Following this, principals, in consultation with school council chairs, will decide whether to take part in the development program the following year to demonstrate readiness for increased autonomy and accountability. The development program and selection process will run in the first half of 2014 and successful schools will be announced mid-year. A transition training program for successful schools (as in previous years) will take place before schools start operating as Independent Public Schools in 2015.

What will the development program involve?
The development program will assist schools to meet the three selection criteria for Independent Public School status and involve principals of Independent Public Schools. This ensures consistency with the previous selection process and maintains the level of rigour required for schools to operate with greater autonomy and heightened accountability. The selection criteria are:
- capacity of the school to assume greater responsibility for its own affairs
- level of local support, including staff support
- clearly articulated potential benefits to students and the broader school community.
Will schools that have been unsuccessful in the past be given priority in this new process?
Each school will be considered individually. In some cases, a school may be granted exemption from a stage of the development program if it has provided significant evidence in the past of meeting a specific selection criterion.

How will schools be selected?
Schools will be assessed at each stage of the development program before they progress to the next stage. For schools which progress through each stage, the culmination is a structured presentation to specially trained practising principals of Independent Public Schools and other educators for final selection. In this presentation each school must demonstrate they have met the selection criteria. These criteria and the high standards that have characterised the Independent Public School selection process in the past remain unchanged.

How many schools will be selected for the next intake?
As in previous years, there is no pre-determined quota. Schools that are deemed to be ready for increased autonomy and heightened accountability after they have undertaken the development program and completed the selection process will be granted Independent Public School status.