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WA SCHOOL STUDENTS AMONG BEST IN DEVELOPED WORLD: COMPETITION IS DRIVING SYSTEM TO PERFORM BETTER

According to a new report being launched today, Western Australian students are amongst the best performers in the developed world at comparably little expense by international standards. 15 year-old West Australian students score amongst the world's best in science, reading and maths.

The report, *Top of the Class: Making the most of Western Australia's school system*, will be launched this morning at the West Australian Club.

The report finds that the reasons for the strong results in West Australian schools include:

- The system of federalism fosters a healthy level of competition between state education systems
- Competition between government and non-government school systems and between individual schools is also healthy because parental choice keeps these providers motivated and focused; and
- WA teacher salaries are attractive by national standards which increases the quality of teaching.

"Western Australia performs well because there is competition in the school system which drives it to perform better. By contrast, countries with highly centralised school systems are not inherently nimble – mistakes tend to be maximised, innovation tends to suffer," said the author of the report, Matthew Ryan.

"So, contrary to what some will argue, it is not 'wasteful' to have multiple state education bureaucracies, ministers of education and school systems. Competition is likely to be the unsung hero behind our wonderful student results," he said.

Matthew Ryan is a public policy expert on human capital issues. He was a senior official in the Commonwealth Treasury and was Australian delegate to the *GrowthProject* of the OECD which examined the links between education and economic growth.

Project Western Australia is a joint program between the Institute of Public Affairs and Mannkal Economic Education Foundation. The project seeks to develop new approaches to policy formation in Western Australia.

For further information and comment:

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Top of the Class: Making the most of Western Australia's school system is available at www.ipa.org.au.