



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Education Services

# Rossmoyne Senior High School

2013

Independent Review Findings



Independent Review of  
Independent Public Schools

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## **Disclaimer**

This document has been based on the findings of the independent reviewers' verification of the school's self-review. The school's self-review has been complemented by information provided by the Department of Education, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.

The findings of the independent review are forwarded to the Minister for Education, the Director General of Education, the Principal and the Board Chair.

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## School and Review Details

<b>Principal:</b>	Ms Leila Bothams
<b>Board Chair:</b>	Professor Gordon Parkinson
<b>School Location:</b>	1 Keith Road, Rossmoyne WA 6148
<b>School Classification:</b>	SHS Class 6A
<b>Number of Students:</b>	1661
<b>Independent Reviewers:</b>	Mr Rees Barrett and Ms Audrey Jackson AM
<b>Review Dates:</b>	Self-review presentation: 25 February 2013 Review visits: 18 and 19 March 2013

### 1. About the Independent Review

The purpose of the independent review of Rossmoyne Senior High School is to provide an assurance to the Minister for Education, the Director General of Education and the school community on the extent to which the school has met its commitments as outlined in its Delivery and Performance Agreement (DPA) and associated Business Plan. The focus of the review is on:

- how well the school has improved the standards of student learning (achievement, progress and engagement) for all students
- how well the school has created an environment that promotes student learning
- how well the school is placed to sustain and improve its performance.

The school has been required, under the DPA, to undertake regular self-assessment. The outcomes of these assessments formed the basis for the school self-review which was presented to the reviewers for verification at the commencement of the independent review.

Prior to the presentation of the school's self-review, reviewers were provided with information on the school's educational achievements, its processes and its student performance data from a number of sources which include, but are not limited to:

- the *My School*<sup>TM</sup> website
- the Department of Education School Performance Monitoring System
- Schools Online reports
- School Curriculum and Standards Authority Year 12 Student Achievement data.

Reviewers visited the school for a half-day presentation of the school's self-review by the Principal, the Board Chair and other key stakeholders chosen by the school. Subsequently the reviewers analysed the evidence presented in the school's self-review documentation and developed lines of enquiry where further verification was required.

An agenda for a two-day review visit was then negotiated with the school to enable the gathering of further evidence to clarify or confirm the claims made in the school self-review. During these two days the reviewers sourced information and evidence to support the school self-review claims through observation and discussion with teaching and non-teaching staff, board members, parents, students and the school leadership team.

The evidence provided by the school, along with information gathered by the reviewers prior to and during their review visits, was used by the reviewers as the evidence base for their verification of how well the school has met its commitments as outlined in its DPA and Business Plan.

This document reports on the findings of the independent review.

## **2. Summary**

Rossmoyne Senior High School has responded effectively to its context. Commitment to the vision of achieving and sustaining academic and non-academic excellence is evident throughout the school's community and its operations. The school has a high functioning Board, a team of expert staff, effective community partnerships and targeted use of resources. This provides a strong foundation as the school addresses challenges flowing from globalisation, its aging infrastructure, size of student population and enrolment of Year 7 students. Achieving an appropriate balance of local and selective enrolments will be critical to sustaining the school's reputation for excellence.

Overall, Rossmoyne Senior High School achieved its aim of sustaining and broadening academic and non-academic excellence over the three-year period of the DPA. Outstanding student achievement was evident in Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) scores, improved completion of Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications, Year 9 NAPLAN results, student attendance and Year 8 to 10 grades that are consistently well above like schools.

The learning environment at Rossmoyne Senior High School is characterised by a culture of high expectations underpinned by a strong focus on pedagogy, student support and pastoral care. There is a willingness to change programs and approaches to learning where data analysis and evidence gathered through surveys of student and staff opinion indicate that change will benefit student learning. Strong partnerships with parents, the Alumni initiative and alliances with business and tertiary institutions are integral to the achievement of the school's vision for education. The school's focus on improvement, including the rejuvenation of its infrastructure, creates an environment that fosters excellence and promotes learning for all students.

Overall, the school's leaders are aware that the sustainability of performance can only result from a focus on continuous improvement. This is reflected at many levels within the organisation. Board operations and succession planning, analysis of data, surveys of student and community opinion, workforce planning, the contribution of corporate services and the leadership of the Principal and assistant principals are all focussed on the goal of providing an education that meets the needs of all students. In the context of Rossmoyne Senior High School, this education challenges and extends the able student and equally supports those at educational risk.



The following **commendations** support the school's claims of significant strengths and areas of improvement:

- Achievement of nearly all targets related to improved student learning, particularly in the breadth of excellence of student achievement across all learning areas, in literacy and numeracy, and university and training pathways in the senior secondary years.
- Successful implementation of a broad and demanding curriculum and teaching/learning strategies that seek to challenge, engage and improve learning for all students.
- Fostering a solution-centred approach to enhancing teaching and learning.
- Creation of the Alumni and involvement of former students in mentoring and tutoring.
- Modernisation of business processes for increased efficiency and effectiveness.
- Refining business practices with a focus on targeting resources to improve teaching and learning.
- The inclusion of programs such as the Constructivist-Oriented Learning Environment Survey, which result in:
  - improved pedagogy to meet the needs of students
  - sharpened focus on performance management
  - the recruitment, development and retention of passionate, expert teachers.
- Revitalisation of community engagement with the school including the breadth of alliances with a wide range of organisations to improve student learning; including universities, business and industry.
- The priority placed by school leadership on the primacy of evidence-based review throughout the school.
- The Board's operational structures, scope of representation and engagement with the school community.

The following **affirmations** support continued implementation of strategies and initiatives or areas for improvement identified by the school:

- 'Value adding' as the basis of the school reviewing its success, particularly considering the high calibre of its student intake.
- The focus on the needs of the learner as the driver of curriculum change.
- Building capacity for cultural change as an ongoing endeavour.
- The focus on the continuing transformation of the built environment.

- Identifying the sustainability of improvements as a key element in planning.
- The priority given to workforce planning and development matching people to the ethos of the school.

The following **recommendations** are made to add value to the school's improvement and review processes:

- That a measure of the 'value added' by implementing a particular strategy should be included, wherever possible, as the overarching school performance indicator for each priority area, and linked with the learning improvement targets in the Business Plan.
- That the Board engages with a survey of community opinion (staff, student and parent), which focuses on the teaching and learning environment and the community's understanding of the role of the Board.

### **3. School Context**

The vision of Rossmoyne Senior High School is to maintain and broaden a tradition of academic, sporting and cultural excellence that achieves international recognition. The school's mission is "to develop outstanding young adults and future leaders imbued with a culture of service to the local and global community". It aims to achieve this through the belief that self-discipline, high aspirations and commitment to excellence provide the foundation for personal and academic success.

The school is located 10 kilometres south of Perth CBD. It is well served by public transport. The majority of school buildings were constructed in the 1960s, however Stage 2 of the building redevelopment plan was completed in 2012. It has resulted in a landmark building housing 'state of the art' teaching and learning facilities. Together with the new Performing Arts Centre and staff room, it will form the centrepiece for Stage 3. A Wellbeing Centre funded by the school and its Parents and Citizens Association (P&C) is currently nearing completion. Government funding has been allocated for new buildings to accommodate the Year 7 students who will join the school in 2015.

There is a widely held view in the school community that completion of the redevelopment plan needs to have high priority. Notwithstanding this belief, the school community has worked hard to achieve high standards of maintenance and optimal use of the older school buildings.

The student population currently exceeds 1600 and is expected to grow to around 2200 by 2015. Consequently, the school gives high priority to its student support and pastoral care systems and structures. Students have a relatively high socio-economic background (ICSEA 1139). Traditionally, 80% to 85% of school leavers gain entry into university. The student population is also diverse with over 58 nationalities represented. A wide range of student talents is attracted to the school through the mix of local and selective program enrolments (Gifted and Talented Languages, Specialist Classical Music, Specialist Mathematics and Volleyball Programs). The Languages Program typically accounts for 20% of the total enrolment (17% 2012) and accounted for approximately half of the school's Year 12 students who achieved an ATAR of 99+ in 2012. The Volleyball Program provides access to elite level sport for 10% of the students.



The school has implemented a Workforce Plan that gives priority to recruiting and retaining a talented team of teachers with a wide range of expertise and experience. Individualised career pathways, mentoring and succession planning are used effectively.

The school's annual operating budget is approximately \$14 million, including special funding for the Gifted and Talented Languages Program. The reviewers noted several indicators of the school's efficient and effective use of its financial resources. A corporate restructure and increased use of the online environment have resulted in efficiencies.

The school prides itself on its traditionally strong links with community, business and other educational institutions. It is evident that these partnerships have received increased prominence since 2010, as the school has pursued improvement in student learning opportunities and outcomes. The new School Board has played a key role in this area.

The Board commenced in second term 2010. It has 15 members: the Principal; two staff members; a parent nominated by the P&C; eleven members from parents, community and business/industry. In addition, up to two student representatives, without voting rights, are included on the Board. There is a mix of elected representatives and members selected for their specialised expertise. Board membership has been stable over the three-year period of the DPA. The new constitution, carefully negotiated to meet system and school needs, provides for a staggered turnover of members, to balance continuity and change.

All indicators point to a high functioning Board that significantly 'adds value' to the school's performance, particularly through its leadership in shaping the school vision and strategic oversight. The Board's *Vision 2020* statement focuses on desirable dispositions for 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. It shapes decision-making as the school community addresses challenges related to a globalised economy and society.

Commitment to the vision of achieving and sustaining academic and non-academic excellence is evident throughout the school's community and its operations. The school has established a high functioning Board, a team of expert staff, effective community partnerships and targeted use of resources. This provides a strong foundation as the school addresses challenges flowing from globalisation, its aging infrastructure, size of student population and enrolment of Year 7 students. Achieving the appropriate balance of local and

selective enrolments will be critical to sustaining the school's reputation for excellence.

#### **4a. School Performance - Student Learning**

The 2010-2012 Business Plan identified four priority areas – Sustainability, Global Citizenship, Technology and Alliances. The Plan described 26 Key Performance Indicators and 8 indicative strategies for these areas. Targets specifically related to student learning outcomes, aligned with system priorities, were included in the school's annual operational plans. The Board received quarterly reports on these targets. Achievement of the following learning outcome targets was verified:

- 95% of students achieving at or above National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) Minimum Standards each year – in all but one case (94% in Writing in 2011) this was achieved well above the target
- School performance in Year 9 NAPLAN significantly greater than 'like schools' in Western Australia – this was also evident in WA Monitoring Standards in Education (WAMSE) standardised tests for Science and Society and Environment
- 80% of Year 12 English as an Additional Language or Dialect students successfully complete Stage 3 courses
- 97%+ Year 12 graduation rate each year - this was in the context of over 80% of students studying the most challenging Stage 3 courses, sometimes contrary to course counselling advice
- 95% of students achieve regular attendance (i.e. attend 90% per term) in Years 8 to 12 – the school actually achieved 95.6% in 2012 (compared with the State average of 88%).

One learning outcome target was not achieved – *no significant difference in engagement of males and females in learning areas by 2013*. This is a broad, aspirational target measured through grade achievement across all lower secondary learning areas. The gap in girls outperforming boys in English, Society and Environment, Languages and Technology does typically narrow from years 8 to 10. The gap in boys outperforming girls in Science also narrows. There is no significant difference in mathematics.

Reflecting future changes to the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) requirements, Minimum Attainment ATAR scores equal to or greater than 55 or completion of VET Certificate II or (better) is also monitored.

Nine additional targets relate to student participation or teaching and learning strategies. The school achieved six of these targets and the reviewers noted:

- The VET participation target was achieved. More significant however, was the completion of nationally accredited Certificate II and above VET courses increasing from 7% in 2009 to 17% in 2012. This represents a significant broadening of the senior secondary curriculum and achievement. It illustrates the value of using outcome indicators, rather than participation indicators, wherever feasible.
- *All students receive one or more school Letter of Commendation each year* – although not quite achieved, the reviewers noted this as an example of a worthwhile teaching and learning strategy target. It is aspirational and focuses attention on mitigating the risk of some students ‘becoming lost’ in a relatively large population.
- *Increased number of students and staff participating in overseas visits* – the reviewers noted this as an example of a participation target that should be restated as an outcome target, particularly given its link to the priority area of Global Citizenship. The school demonstrated that it has considerable expertise in the use of innovative, qualitative surveys that could be applied here.

In order to assess performance the school compares its performance with National and State standards and ‘like schools’. For example:

- The school’s 2012 median ATAR was 87.9 compared with 75.9 in like schools, reflecting a consistent trend.
- Over the three-year period, the school’s performance (Year 9) in all five NAPLAN domains was higher than that of like schools.
- School/like schools comparisons of student progress from Year 7 to Year 9 in NAPLAN domains were more mixed e.g. slightly lower progress in Numeracy 2011, higher in 2012; Reading higher in 2011, lower in 2012.
- Department of Education analysis of school performance through the School Performance Monitoring System (SPMS) indicates that the school performs ‘above the expected performance range’ on nearly all measures. For the teacher judgement measure (grade allocation in



Years 8 to 10) the school performs consistently well above expected levels relative to its socio-economic index (SEI = 113.26).

The Board and school staff members are currently reviewing the Business Plan and targets for the next DPA. The reviewers affirm the view, recorded in the 30 March 2010 School Board Minutes, that 'value adding' will be the basis of the school's success, particularly considering the high calibre of its student intake. It is recommended that, wherever possible, a measure of the 'value added' through implementing a particular strategy should be included as the overarching school performance indicator for each priority area and linked to learning improvement targets in the Business Plan.

The school is commended for achieving nearly all targets related to improved student learning, particularly in the breadth of excellence of student achievement in literacy, numeracy, across learning areas and in both university and training pathways in the senior secondary years.

Also commendable is the successful implementation of curriculum and teaching/learning strategies that seek to challenge, engage and improve learning for all students. The breadth and depth of the school's curriculum improvement is demonstrated through the effective implementation of:

- teaching and learning strategies to extend the most able students and scaffold learning for lower achievers
- Access 10 (Alternative Pathways) program featuring the Duke of Edinburgh Award and linked with a high status VET Certificate Pathways program
- strategies, such as *English Counts*, targeting improvement of learning for sub-groups of students
- selective Gifted and Talented Languages and Specialist Classical Music, Mathematics and Volleyball Programs. The school has conducted comprehensive quality assurance reviews of each program.
- Stage 3 courses for a high and increasing proportion of Year 12 students.

Overall, Rossmoyne Senior High School achieved its aim of sustaining and broadening academic and non-academic excellence over the three-year period of the DPA. Outstanding student achievement was evident in ATAR scores, improved completion of VET qualifications, Year 9 NAPLAN results, student attendance and Year 8 to 10 grades that are consistently well above expectations.



#### 4b. School Performance - Quality of Learning Environment

Inherent in Rossmoyne Senior High School's success is an expectation of a high level of student achievement and a commitment to learning. The school is aware that this leads to a perception of elitism and seeks to counter this through the range of programs available to students across the spectrum of academic ability. This is reflected in the increase in the number of completions of WACE Stage 3 courses and equally by the increasing proportion of students achieving Certificate II qualifications.

There is also a perception that the size of the school could lead to students feeling 'lost'. This has led to a review of the pastoral care program and to change in the tutorial structure. The school acknowledges that this is a work in progress and has established a team to develop the structure using the Department of Education's *Change 2* program. The willingness of the school to pursue the change process in order to achieve its desired outcomes is affirmed as a reflection of its capacity to address change proactively in the context of the school culture.

For students who require additional support with learning, including students at educational risk, there is a comprehensive support structure involving the Student Support Team which includes:

- the School Psychologist
- Year Coordinators
- Change 2 staff
- the Senior School Manager (10 to 12)
- Year 7 to 9 Manager
- the Learning Support Coordinator.

Case conferences are held on a regular basis and address all issues that may impact on the performance of such students. It is a reflection on the school's responsiveness that the position of Learning Support Coordinator has been reinstated in 2013 as a means of supporting all students to achieve their potential.

It was evident during classroom visits that teachers employ a wide range of techniques to promote learning. There is an increasing use of laptops in the school with teachers using them in a variety of contexts from presentations to the use of electronic learning objects and software that can be used to extend learning (for example, *Assesson* used in Year 9 Maths extension class) teachers are supported in the development of pedagogies linked to the use of

interactive whiteboards and laptops through professional learning. The laptops have been provided by the school as part of the Australian Government's 1:1 initiative. Students undertake a Cyber Citizenship program which promotes the ethical use of communication technologies.

In developing alternative study pathways, the school has linked to well-recognised programs. For example, the Access 10 program provides students with the opportunity to achieve the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award through community service, skill acquisition and outdoor education challenges.

In its endeavours, the school is well supported by the parent community through the work of the P&C. The interactive whiteboards and the new Wellbeing Centre have been funded by the P&C. There has been significant growth in membership of this group since the school achieved IPS status.

The inaugural Alumni Day in 2012 focussed on the school's tradition of excellence in academic, sporting and cultural pursuits. Creation of the Alumni and involvement of former students in mentoring and tutoring is commended.

In the wider community, the school has established significant alliances with 90 companies providing work placements to students pursuing VET pathways. An alliance with Rossmoyne Rotary Club has resulted in the establishment of an Interact Club and activities such as job interview practice. A variety of partnerships has been established with Curtin University particularly in Mathematics but also through the COLES program which engages teachers in an analysis of classroom environment and its links to learning. The school is commended on its commitment to improving pedagogy in meeting the needs of students. COLES is a fine example of such an initiative and of the effective use of partnerships to achieve the school's goals.

The built environment contributes to student learning and in recent years the construction of facilities for the teaching of Languages, Music and Science has created functional and attractive learning spaces. The school has plans to continue the transformation of the built environment and the work of the Board is affirmed in this aspect of school development.

The learning environment at Rossmoyne Senior High School is characterised by a culture of high expectations underpinned by a strong focus on pedagogy, student support and pastoral care. There is a willingness to change programs and approaches to learning where data analysis and evidence gathered

through surveys of student and staff opinion indicate that change will benefit student learning. Strong partnerships with parents, the Alumni initiative and the alliances with business and tertiary institutions are integral to the achievement of the school's vision for education. The school's focus on improvement, including the rejuvenation of its infrastructure, creates an environment that fosters excellence and promotes learning for all students.

#### **4c. School Performance – Sustainability**

The Board, Principal and staff are committed to ensuring that Rossmoyne Senior High School continues to offer a quality education relevant to the needs of all students and that meets the expectations of the school community. In planning for sustainability the school is aware of the challenges, notably that posed by the increase in size which will result from the enrolment of Year 7 students from 2015. However, the school has demonstrated that it embraces a culture of improvement focused on student needs through a cycle of continuous improvement, both of which are critical to sustainability. The reviewers affirm the school's focus on the sustainability of improvements as a key element in planning.

In order to achieve this goal a culture of evidence-based improvement is fostered, built on comprehensive data analysis, student feedback and a range of professional learning activities. Each Learning Area undertakes extensive analysis of data sources such as NAPLAN, WAMSE and WACE and uses the information to modify and augment courses as required. The school's self-review provided examples of these analyses and discussion with teaching staff affirmed their centrality to the planning of teaching and learning programs. The school is commended on the embedding of an evidence-based approach/data analysis in its culture. The information gained is used by staff to improve or enhance the teaching and learning process and it was clear during the review that this approach is considered constructive.

The school's annual Operational Plan, developed by the staff with Board oversight, documents targets for student learning. It includes action plans, which in turn are linked to timelines and supported by resource allocation. The Operational Plan underpins the Business Plan developed by the Board. Progress against the goals of the Operational Plan, and hence toward the achievement of the KPI's for the four key priority areas in the Business Plan, is reported to the Board on a regular basis. While this relationship is clearly



understood, it would be of benefit if the Business Plan for 2013 to 2015 made direct reference to the role of the Operational Plan in achieving the desired goals.

The community perception survey conducted in 2011 provided feedback from parents, teachers and students. A generic Department of Education pro forma was used and while providing some useful information the values of such a survey would be improved by ensuring that it was customised to reflect the Board and School. It is recommended that there is greater Board involvement in shaping the next survey with community perception of the learning environment and awareness of the role of the Board as key areas of focus.

The school has a comprehensive performance appraisal structure clearly linked to professional learning. This is enhanced by a number of programs that have the specific aim of improving pedagogy. Of particular note is the COLES program in partnership with Curtin University. Teachers engage in a survey-based program to improve student performance through addressing components of the classroom learning environment. In 2013, 24 teachers are engaged in the program. Recognition of Rossmoyne Senior High School's focus on teacher improvement through professional learning is reflected in its selection to lead an Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) study in this area. The school has a focus on growing teacher capacity as evidenced by the active encouragement and support of teachers who seek accreditation as Level 3 Classroom Teachers. In addition, the Growth Coaching International program engages more experienced teachers in supporting their colleagues. This focus on teacher quality is a critical part of the school's plan to support student learning.

Rossmoyne Senior High School is mindful of the need for succession planning particularly in difficult to staff areas and actively seeks to employ passionate, expert teachers and understands the need to facilitate their professional growth. Mentoring and induction programs are well established to ensure that those new to the staff understand the culture of the school and its goals for student learning. The priority given to workforce planning and development matching people to the ethos of the school is affirmed.

The Corporate Services structure has been redesigned to effectively manage both the financial resources and the infrastructure of the school. Rossmoyne Senior High School is commended on refining business practices with a focus on targeting resources to improve teaching and learning. Detailed financial reports are presented to a sub-committee of the Board for review prior to



presentation at board meetings. School facilities are extensively used by the local community and this is well managed by Corporate Services personnel. Other services critical to the effective operation of the school, for example the management of absentees and enrolments, have been refined to better match the needs of the school. Within Corporate Services there is a focus on multi-skilling to ensure continuity. In its most recent audit the school received a rating of 'Excellent' on all aspects of its business process. Further an audit of enrolment practices conducted in the context of the change in entry to secondary education the school was found to be 100% compliant.

The Board has developed a significant presence in the school community engaging with parents, staff and students in the planning process. This has resulted in significant interest in membership from members of the school community. In order to maintain continuity and to fulfil its overarching goal of value adding to the school the Board seeks members with appropriate expertise. In addition to those members appointed by election from parents, teachers and staff, other members with the desired expertise join by invitation. A succession plan is in place for the staged rotation of membership. While the Board is fully briefed on the activities of the school and has oversight of financial management, there is a healthy separation between governance and management. The Board is commended on its operational structures, scope of representation and engagement with the school community.

Overall, the school's leaders are aware that the sustainability of performance can only result from a focus on continuous improvement. This is reflected at many levels within the organisation. Board operations and succession planning, analysis of data, surveys of student and community opinion; workforce planning, the contribution of corporate services and the leadership of the Principal and assistant principals are all focussed on the goal of providing an education that meets the needs of all students. In the context of Rossmoyne Senior High School, this education challenges and extends the able student and equally supports those at educational risk.

## 5. Declaration

We the undersigned hereby confirm that the information provided in this findings document is to the best of our knowledge true and correct and is based on our assessment of the evidence provided by Rossmoyne Senior High School as part of the Department of Education Services' independent review process. The Principal and Board Chair have had an opportunity to comment on any matters of fact contained within this document.



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(Signature of Rees Barrett, Lead Reviewer)



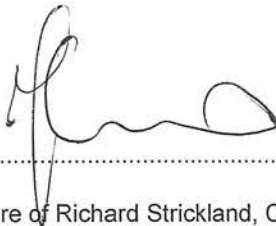
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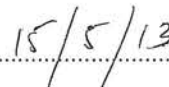
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(Signature of Audrey Jackson AM, Reviewer)

13 May 2013

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(Date)



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(Signature of Richard Strickland, CEO, Department of Education Services)



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