

Independent Review into Education (IER) in Tasmania

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute ideas which may assist with evidence based, implementable, and impactful reforms to education in Tasmania.

I submit these ideas in the hope that they may be read, and considered as part of this very important Review.

I hold a BA, DipEd, AMusA, TMusA, a Grad Dip in Business Admin, and advanced skills status from WA, and I have taught in WA and Tasmania, both public and private systems. Subjects taught included humanities, english and music in primary and secondary schools, as well as diverse subjects when I was used widely as a relief teacher.

I consider this Review is timely and critical to improving educational outcomes for young Tasmanians, to improving the state's adult literacy, and hopefully it may assist in retaining young teachers who are suffering increasing burn-out.

There is nothing more important than thorough and inspirational teaching, well supported by recognised quality teaching materials and schools where students are clear about what will be expected in terms of behaviour and engagement. I consider these are all important for effective student learning and success.

The IER Terms of Reference cover process and outcomes. However, I would suggest that **two inputs to our education system, schools and colleges are absolutely critical.**

In my professional opinion the following two inputs are of fundamental importance:

- 1 Teacher training** – so that all teachers are well prepared to:
 - a) explicitly teach reading whether the OG or Spaulding phonics methods based on pedagogical evidence about literacy and brain development. These methods can greatly improve literacy outcomes. Years ago, informally surveying several young teachers, I was told that they were never taught how to teach reading in their Uni teacher training course. I hope this has changed now with the push for explicit phonics teaching.

b) better manage student behaviour. Classroom management has always been challenging but we cannot continue to blame increased screen time, bullying and other social factors all of which impact student performance. Clear boundaries around school expectation and student discipline are important. More than ever there is a huge need for professional counsellors to assist with behaviour management and mental health in schools/colleges. It may be that this need for professional counselling support extends to teachers also.

2 The use of class sets of text books should be re-introduced- especially for core subjects which are fundamental to all round student success. Why re-invent the wheel when there are many outstanding texts for students? Why download all teaching materials for core subjects?

National curriculum resource material is obviously critical and may be usefully accessed on-line but class sets of printed text books would supplement and complement downloaded materials. It would be far easier for relief teachers, even allowing seamless teaching when relief teachers are inevitably called in.

Additionally, these class sets of textbooks would no doubt save time for permanent teachers who in addition to teaching are required to assess work, provide student reports, be available for parent interviews, continually manage student behaviour as well as the required mandatory reporting obligations and supplying data to the Education Department. The expectation on teachers is becoming unworkable and many would say completely unrealistic.

The internet has an obvious and important role to play in education and research of course, but downloading material for all subjects taught in the course of the whole day is a massive extra task for time-poor teachers. As well as creating a big hole in school budgets, and over reliance on the school printer, the endless sourcing of material on-line no doubt causes massive stress to teachers. Even when away sick, I understand they have to provide teaching materials for the relief teacher.

I repeat, why re-invent the wheel when core subjects such as literacy and maths already have excellent teaching materials?

To conclude, in my professional experience the following inputs are crucial for improving student outcomes:

- enhanced teacher training for explicit teaching in literacy/maths,
- teacher training to better assist with classroom behaviour management and
- the use of class sets of text books for core subjects.

These issues are also important in the view of other highly qualified and hugely experienced teachers known to me.

I understand many OECD countries comparable to Australia as well as those competing with Australia in our region, will be aligned on these important issues.

Education is perhaps the biggest investment a government can make towards our future society. It is critical that we look at evidence based ideas for schools and student learning, and also that our community understands,8 appreciates and values the huge contribution of teachers, many of whom feel greatly undervalued.

I trust my comments may contribute something to the conversation and Review. I am happy to discuss at any stage.

Thank you and regards,

Anne Harrison



