Submission to the Independent Education Review

Response to Public Consultation Paper

13/10/2024

1. Response to Public Consultation

1.1. Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the independent review of the K-12 education system in Tasmania. I appreciate the commitment to examining our educational framework and ensuring it meets the evolving needs of students, educators, and the broader community.

In this response, I aim to contribute constructive insights and suggestions on various aspects of the system. My feedback reflects the experiences and perspectives of those directly impacted by our schools and aims to highlight both strengths and areas where improvement could enhance educational outcomes for future generations of Tasmanians.

I look forward to seeing the results of this review and hope that it will shape a more inclusive, effective, and future-focused education system in Tasmania.

1.2. Review Process

1.2.1. Scope of Review

I am concerned that the scope of this review was unfortunately too narrow, limiting its ability to fully address the complex and interconnected challenges facing the K-12 education system in Tasmania.

Without any disrespect to the excellent work that seems to be underway by the reviewer and her team, the review was from the start, under-resourced such that key areas essential to a comprehensive holistic system-wide understanding were necessarily omitted, and thus recommendations would be constrained further within the narrow scope.

Such lack of resources may have hindered its capacity to gather extensive, high-quality data and conduct the in-depth analyses required to inform meaningful improvements.

A broader scope and more robust resourcing would have allowed for a more thorough examination and generated more actionable insights to guide the future of our education system.

As such, this is not really the review that was envisaged by those who called for it, nor seemingly promised by either political party.

It is crucial that future reviews be appropriately supported to ensure they can deliver the comprehensive recommendations necessary to build an effective, inclusive, and resilient educational framework for all Tasmanians.

1.2.2.   Timing

Due to the accelerated timeline of the review, some information was necessarily not able to be obtained.

Some key stakeholders of organisations were not able to meet to agree to organisational responses, and several responses were rushed, such as this one.

The submission date for *this* response to the consultation paper document is the last day of the School Holidays. I appreciate this is not deliberate and is due to the time constraints of the review.

1.3.   Firm Commitment to Review Outcomes

1.3.1.   Just Another Review to File

One need only to look in the department's "bottom drawer" for a pile of reviews and reports where recommendations have either been ignored, partly implemented, never tracked, sparingly implementing pending further funding which never came, implemented only in a manner that is politically expedient, or outright forgotten about.

This includes 5-year and 10-year plans which have been tracked aggressively for 1-3 years, then silently forgotten about as a new report asking for similar but slightly rescoped analysis to be conducted came along and superseded the previous report. Or that the department responsible for its delivery has been disbanded or mogged into a new entity.

Many reports into specific areas have been buried with no fanfare, perhaps due to the political embarrassment that could come about if they were to see the light of day.

I would sincerely hope that the reviewer has been provided access to that "bottom drawer" full of reports and could perhaps summarise the recommendations of those reports, with a cursory assessment of how many have actually been implemented, as that could simply account for a hundred pages annex for the review's own report.

Pessimistically, this could tarnish the review's optimism that positive change will result from its work.

1.3.2.   Funding – Review Outcomes

No provision has been made in the Tasmanian Budget for implementation of any review outcomes. This has been the result of so many reviews, where a great list of recommendations are generated, but the government and bureaucracy of the day can duck and weave from meaningful change due to the lack of an identified pot of funding to implement it from, until it is ultimately forgotten.

It is generally prudent for a state budget to include some form of earmark, contingency or allowance for potential outcomes of significant reviews, such as this, even before the final report is delivered. Earmarks for actions, whatever they may be, can ensure that the government has resources ready to act on key recommendations promptly. This can help avoid delays in implementing beneficial changes, especially if the review highlights urgent issues.

Pre-emptive budgeting allows the state to begin developing long-term plans based on anticipated findings. This can aid in resource allocation, workforce planning, and other logistical preparations that may take time to implement fully.

While the specifics of the final recommendations will still need to be assessed for full budgetary implications, establishing a preliminary allowance can streamline the process and enable more efficient implementation of the review's outcomes once finalised.

In the absence of that, some savings identified in this document could be put to use.

The lack of any defined, even preliminary, budget allocation signals that the government's commitment to improvement may only be a façade. I genuinely hope that actions from the review are implemented.

A review in 2011 (which I'm sure the review team have heard of) created a funding methodology which has been updated by the Commonwealth Department of Education, but at no point up until now, has Tasmania committed to provide appropriate levels of funding under this model.

1.3.3.   Funding - Education

Despite ongoing calls to increase funding, in the recently handed-down Tasmanian budget[i], funding to education was seemingly cut (such as through 0.6% efficiency dividends) across the forward estimates for 2024-2029. A "tough economic situation" is cited as the reason, notwithstanding many other "pet projects" with very low benefit-cost ratios being funded.

The Tasmanian and Federal governments recently announced an increase in funding under the SRS to "full funding", however, Gonski's base level is set to 80% success (which, when developed, was noted that it should increase[ii]), "fairer" agreements allow for a 4-5% deduction from full funding to be made
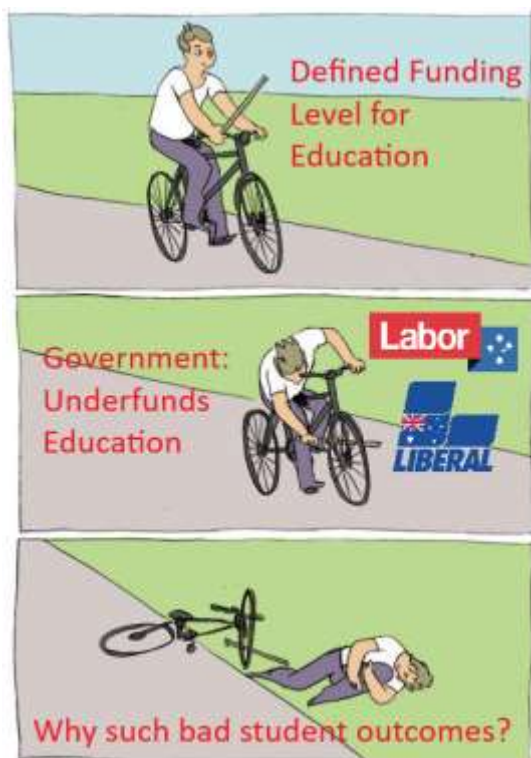
Figure 1 Representation of Government Education Funding Policy Since Gonski in 2011. Source: Memegenerator.

1.4. Recommendations Generally

1.4.1. Political Objectives

From a cynical perspective, and in terms of defining educational success, the ambition of politicians will always be for the government of the day to claim that they have improved educational success rates, through a change in how it has been reported, without having *actually* done anything.

1.4.2. Evidence-Based Changes, Or Gaming The Numbers

The Review Team may either recommend:

- changes that meaningfully improve education and the lived experience for our children and future generations of Tasmanians;
- changes which re-align or improve our data and reporting, resulting in an underlying change; or
- a combination of these, but in doing so, lose some ability to transparently and objectively assess the efficacy of its recommendations.

This submission asserts that the Review team should recommend a combination of improvements and measurement/methodology changes, *but must* integrate methods of independent measurement to account for *any* change in data methodology to ensure success

can be accurately measured, and more importantly, cannot be claimed for ineffective or counter-productive measures. Such should also be recommended in government policy in response to the review.

Parallel to Numbers Gaming in Road Safety Policy

To draw a parallel, such has been recently played out with road safety programs.

Tasmania's *Towards Zero Tasmanian Road Safety Strategy 2017-2026[iii]* states an objective that "Driving the Towards Zero Strategy is the long-term vision of a Tasmania where no one is seriously injured or killed as the result of a crash on our roads" and "In the short term, our target is to reduce serious injuries and fatalities to fewer than 200 by 2026." Both are simply unrealistic, resulting in numerous distracting and novelty-biased initiatives and counter-productive changes. Tasmania's "Towards Zero" road safety strategy's key metric is the number of serious and fatal crashes. If the metric were economic, or reflective of underlying factors and causes, more focus would be placed on safe systems, fatigue management and demand reduction.

In support of this strategy, a mandate was put in place by the Minister to Tasmania police to verify all reported 'serious' traffic crashes with hospital admissions[iv], which has reportedly reduced the serious accident rate (with a corresponding increase in the minor accident rate).

The numbers have been gamed to achieve an artificial end for political purposes. The government of the day will, presumably prior to the election, claim that their policies are working, and the department secretary is seen to be effective, when in practice, there is no material difference in the actual experience and if anything many supposed improvement measures have resulted in demonstrable reductions in road safety (such as crashes with a demonstrable causal link to poorly implemented "road safety" upgrades).

How does this tangent relate to Education?

This parallel is born out in the education system in terms of NAP, TCE or VET attainment whilst in the school system, with relevant measures of Year 7/9 NAPLAN being met by around 75%-85% of Tasmanian students (at the time), compared to measures of post-school literacy (where PIIAC and PSTRE sat in a similar measure for people aged 15-34, with a notable peak in 25-34).

Where "reading at or above level 2" (e.g. high school level) reading is aligned to material produced *by the Tasmanian government* targeted at the public .

It is, according to Flesch-Kincaid[v] Analysis and SMOG2, inaccessible to a majority of Tasmanians[vi], much like this section of text. We see also in measures recorded by TASC some disparity in numbers through different reporting mechanisms.

2. Theme 1 – Defining Educational Success

We need to ensure that our education system has clearly agreed objectives that are transparently reported. What does success look like after the formal years of schooling in the Tasmanian context and how do we better encourage our young people to aspire to achieve?

The reviewer has clearly identified the first major problem being that there is no consistent answer for the question "*What does success look like?*".

This comes down to key elements of:

- Prevailing government and community expectations,
- The opinion of experts in the fields of education and participation (including the population health sector, further education sector, business groups, economists),
- The system's ability to achieve them given its resources (social capital, funding, personnel, collective knowledge, facilities, ability to execute),
- Alignment to and comparison with national, standards and benchmarks, and
- The government's ability to effectively measure and report.

Looking to the *Education Act 2016 (Tas),* as noted by the public consultation paper, a definition is prescribed, and that is the participation in an approved program until the completion of Year 12 OR until attaining age 18.

Looking to the most recent pact between State and Federal ministers, the *Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA)* last made its pact as the *Melbourne Declaration*[vii] in 2008, which is now 16 years ago (when The Hon. David Bartlett MP was Tasmania's Premier and Minister for Education in addition to being the MCEETYA chair).

If the minister is not satisfied with the definition of educational success, then amendments to the *Education Act 2016* would be a key lever available at a ministerial level.

2.1. What Should Be Expected of Students?

The Review wants to hear what you think should be expected for students by the end of Year 12.

Problem: There isn't consensus on what should be expected.

The non-controversial view of "success" looks like any/all of the below:

- Completion of Year 12 in formal study, by award of a TCE with an ATAR.
- Completion of Year 12 in formal study, by award of a TCE without an ATAR.
- Completion of Year 12 in formal study, by award of a TCEA.
  - Noting that this is not reported as 'success' in all forums currently, despite being equivalent to other states recognised attainment pathways – such as NSW's life-skills/attendance pathway for awarding the HSC.

- Award of an International Baccalaureate at equivalent level to Year 12.
  - Noting that this is not reported as 'success' unless combined with TCE.
- Completion of a Certificate III[viii] course (AQF Level 3) by the end of the second year following completion of Year 10.
  - Noting that this is not reported as 'success' in all forums currently, due to reported issues with non-recognition of RTO-issued certificates against a TCE.

It is put that under the current *Education Act* requirements[1], the definition of "success" should also include diversified alternate pathways[2] for students who have reached the age of 18:

- Completion of Year 11, plus demonstrated attendance and engagement in Year 12 up to their departure from schooling, combined with demonstrated employment or enrolment into another recognised training pathway.
- Completion of Year 10, plus attainment of a qualification at or above AQF Level 2, combined with employment at greater than 25 hours per week in the related field.
  - in the case of apprenticeships and programs in-progress or structured over a longer duration, continuous progress along an approved pathway.
- A TCEA-equivalent for completion of Year 10, combined with a work history sustained since leaving school, completion of a recognised 'life skills' course (e.g. Certificate I in Life Skills, Certificate I in Transition Education, Certificate I in General Education, TASC Essential Skills – Reading and Writing), combined with part-time enrolment and continuous progress in any AQF Level 1 or above recognised program.
- Unsolicited award of TCEA-equivalent, without advance application requirements, where basic literacy and numeracy standards (e.g. NAP Level 8) can be demonstrated through prior learning for learners who have disengaged with the education system. Noting that some students may have non-disability circumstances which are partly or entirely beyond their control.

Solution: Strengthen or reform the TCE to bring it more inline with other states.

Solution: Strengthen alternate pathways and recognition methods.

Solution: Changes to enrolment ages (suggested elsewhere in this submission) would negate much of the requirements around catering for 18-year-olds who leave school to demonstrate "success".

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[1] Although it is my view that Year 12 should be completed and the current enrolment age and lack of requirement beyond 18 is problematic.
[2] Similar to the WA Pathways to Post-School Success Review

2.2. What is Success after School?

What does success look like after the formal years of schooling in the Tasmanian context?

Problem: There isn't consensus on what is a successful life.

There is not a universal view of a successful life. There is success through attaining, accomplishing or progressing goals, however goals are unique to each person and reflect their unique intrinsic world view. Because goals[ix] are self-created, some individuals will set goals which are objectively unattainable, and others lacking in ambition will set the bar excessively low and be content once these goals are met. Objectively successful individuals are noted to have a low view of their relative success in a high-performing environment[x]. Furthermore, the current generation of school leavers has demonstrably decreasing levels of happiness with their life as a whole, with neutral and negative sentiment about the future exceeding 40% (up from 30% in 2012)[xi].

It is my personal view that success after school includes:

- Through life, to be a "contributing member of society"[xii] and an "active and informed citizen"[3].
- Gaining suitable, suitably challenging and fulfilling employment so as to provide the necessities of life[xiii], safety, belonging, esteem and to pay taxes and dues, with meaningful interpersonal relationships.
- To be a life-long learner and adapt to inevitable change.
- Having a community that is universally literate and numerate to basic levels.

This may include, for some individuals:

- Going to University, completing a further 10 years of study, through an Undergraduate Degree, Honours, Masters and PhD course, before potentially entering the workforce as a highly-qualified but entry-level worker (such as some Clinical Practice pathways), working for 30 years, retiring at 60 after having 3 broken marriages and 2 children who you barely know.
- Going to University, completing a further 10 years of study, through an Undergraduate Degree, Honours, Masters and PhD course, before deciding it is all too much and obtaining a job working on a fishing boat.
- Obtaining a job working on a fishing boat and doing this until age 70.
- Working part-time doing odd jobs, caring for your elderly mother.
- Obtaining a disability pension due to crippling anxiety, and volunteering for an hour a week at an animal shelter.
- Simply, getting out of bed in the morning.

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[3] Melbourne Declaration (2008)

Success could exclude individuals whom, through a lack of engagement have gone on to poor societal and labour force participation, who consider of their own free will that it is their right to be supported[4] by the rest of society with no, even asymmetric, reciprocity; or necessitated acquisitive[xiv] tendencies. *"You are mistaken when you think that the world owes you a living. The world owes you nothing; it was here first."* [5]

There is no universal way to measure success after school without applying our own unique values, or the values we reasonably expect other reasonable individuals to have. Notwithstanding, I would suggest benchmarking against:

- Youth unemployment and participation: Labour force data Australia for 15-24 years old (ABS[xv]) – the ratio of employed persons and those in full time study against NILF+Unemployed.
- Youth educational attainment: Reporting for 20-24 year olds around AQF Attainment at Certificate III and higher.
- Literacy and Numeracy: Proportion of Tasmanians not attaining basic literacy and numeracy standards (e.g. PIAAC[xvi], PSTRE).
- Over a long period, measures linked to educational outcomes:
    - Multifactor labour productivity (ABS Labour force series / National Accounts; controlled for population and participation).
    - Life expectancy[xvii].

Solution: Nationally consistent measurement against specific short/medium term measures (school completion, employment, enrolment in further study), correlated to objective long-term standards.

2.1. The TCE represents elitism

It appears that broadening the definition beyond the Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE) could be considered as 'lowering' the standard

Problem: Views opposing dilution of the TCE are fundamentally elitist, and are common in the assessment space for the TCE.

The TCE is often perceived as focusing heavily on university preparation, which can marginalise students interested in vocational or trade pathways. While TCE does include VET courses, the emphasis on university-bound courses can sometimes create a perception that these other

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[4] Lamb & Huo (2017): "To the taxpayer, each disengaged young person imposes a cost which is equivalent to $411,700 as a current lump sum across their adult years."
[5] Robert J. Burdette, 1883. Often mis-attributed to Mark Twain.

pathways are less valued, potentially alienating students who aren't interested in pursuing higher education.

A measure of attainment, such as a TCE or HSC should be fit for purpose. There is no significant value served by withholding a document called a "TCE" from students who have completed school (in line with the discussion above about "what does success look like").

Higher/Further Education and Employers *with* specific requirements will be concerned about *those* specific requirements (e.g. "what was your ATAR score?", "did you pass general maths 2?"). Otherwise, success is success and should be celebrated.

Solution: If resistance amongst those precious about the TCE persists, create a new school certificate, calling it something else (a "TSC" Tasmanian Schooling Certificate), and grandfather the TCE. This will hopefully result in an exodus of people in the assessment space hanging up their grey cardigan, allowing for renewal and fresh ideas.

2.2. Comparing Tasmania to other states is inconsistent

Problem: Attainment and "success" criteria between states/territories is not consistent. As highlighted above, there are several scenarios in other states which count as "success" which do not count in Tasmania in all circumstances.

The only way to make consistent comparisons is to be able to standardise on mechanisms of measurement, and control other variables.

Direct comparison can be effectively made with other states if those states are on the same footing and using the same methodology.

Solution Option 1: Tasmania should continue to do its own thing for a population of 500K and wonder why nothing matches up. This is clearly not working.

Solution Option 2: Tasmania should adopt a bi-lateral agreement to standardise system-wide, including testing and success criteria, with a mainland state or territory.

Solution Option 3: Apply a nationally consistent approach to success criteria and entry age. This will require a nationally consistent approach to be agreed between all states and territories.

Solution Option 4: States transfer responsibility for K-12 education to the federal government.

2.2.1.   Is Tasmania's Attainment Really This Low?

Problem: Either our attainment IS very low, or it is artificially low in comparison to other states.

Data presented by ACARA[xviii] suggests that our attainment level is the lowest of all states.
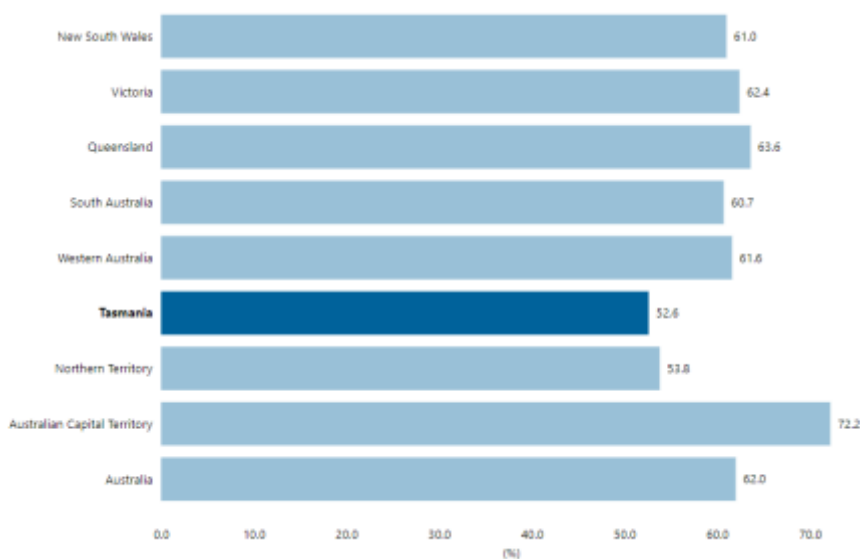

Figure 2 Proportion of people aged 15-24 who have completed a Year 12 or equivalent or AQF certificate III or above 2023 - ACARA
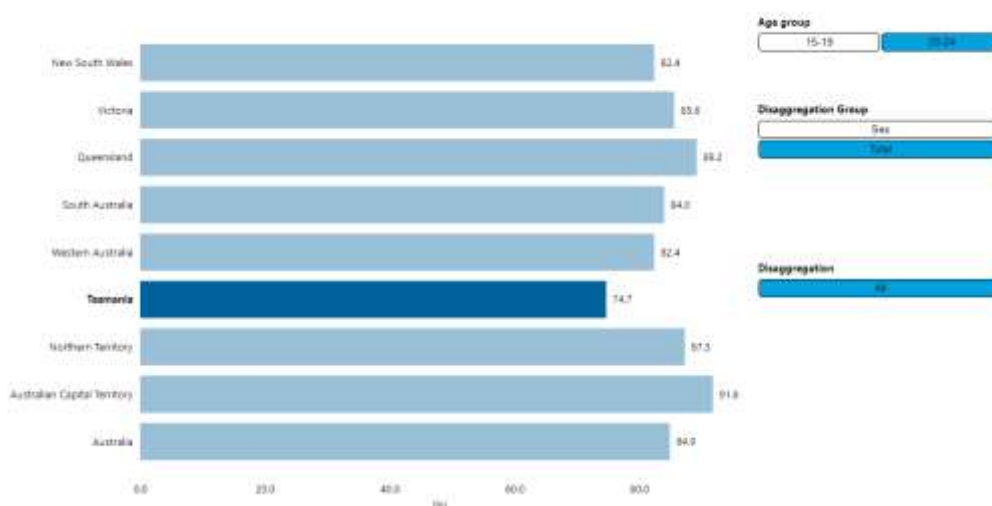

Figure 3 Proportion of people aged 20-24 who have completed a Year 12 or equivalent 2023 - ACARA

2.3. Data within Tasmania is inconsistent

Problem: Data based on individual students across public and private education sectors within Tasmania is inconsistent. Many private schools utilise systems which identify students uniquely to that school.

To accurately track data across students and systems, there needs to be a unique identifier used for all students in Tasmania, and for this to be used in all student-centric datasets.

Federally, DEEWR/ASQA introduced a "universal student identifier" (USI) for the vocational and higher education sector to overcome similar challenges.

A state-based school ID number should be universally utilised, and issued as part of births/deaths/marriages or at first school enrolment. A Tasmanian school ID should be linked to the federal USI at the earliest opportunity.

Furthermore, a standardised data dictionary set is needed across sectors, for example, drilling down to CAT/PAT results and attendance data so that it can be consistently shared and compared.

Solution: A unique student identifier should be issued at first school enrolment (e.g. Pre-Kinder or Kindergarten).

Solution: All schools should be required to consistently report more data.

2.4.   Measurement within Tasmania is biased and inconsistent

Problem: There is variance and bias across sectors in relation to the collection of reported metrics.

For example, several independent schools are known to utilise NAPLAN Preparation materials and interventions, which (reportedly) optimise their students' raw scores in these tests, and ensure underperforming students are non-participants[xix]. Other schools are reported to provide greater student support aligned to moderated assessments, or encourage parent involvement in moderated/CAT tasks.

This is reflected in a slight bias for these students to score lower on objective (e.g. independently proctored) tests. For example, public school students typically achieve higher university grades than private school students despite the latter achieving higher university entrance scores.

Objective assessment is required with randomised and controlled verification of student performance against standards. A mechanism needs to be created to permit standardised individual testing of individual students across the sector to identify gaming of data.

Solution: Independent assessment and verification of data.

2.5.   Data not available, data availability uplifts success

Problem: Data is not shared publicly and outside of specific sectors.

Public data is deliberately presented in forms which prevent independent analysis and comparisons. The reasons cited include to prevent the creation of 'league tables' and

privacy/re-identification in small data sets. In preparation of responses to the Review, several groups have cited frustration with the lack of available data.

DECYP, Skills Tas and TASC should be directed to follow the principle of *Open By Design*, as defined in the Tasmanian Government's *Open Data Policy*[xx] which states "*to maximise use and reuse of data, agencies start from a position of data openness, with the expectation in favour of data release unless there is an overriding reason for not doing so*".

Their sector-wide non-public but de-identified data should be made available to qualified organisations under appropriate protection agreements for independent review. Studies[xxi] have shown positive outcomes associated with making public data available, although there is expected further data publication may result in increased propensity of results- gaming and other perverse incentives.

Solution: All data should be made public available unless there is a compelling reason not to.

Solution: De-identified raw data (such as that linked to a unique student ID) should be made more readily-available to relevant organisations for analysis (under NDA or other embargo to prevent reidentification), such as for research, analysis and public policy purposes.

2.6. Long-Term Reporting (to age 25)

Problem: There is no consistent and useful reporting of long-term student outcomes.

For example, the University of Tasmania has some difficulty in approximating Year 12 leavers to those who[xxii] enrol in undergraduate courses immediately following completion of Year 12.

Measurement of success needs to align to peak literacy measurement and likely initial completion of further education, as such this would necessitate reporting on students for several years following completion.

Surveillance reporting of students following Year 12 completion should be carried out, until at least the age of 25 in relation to ongoing education and employment pathways and attainment. This may include by polling/sampling and extrapolation, or the implementation of an 'education census'.

Solution: Periodically undertake a statewide 'education census'.

Solution: Continue to track data until Age 25.

2.7. Reporting and School Contact

How do we know whether a child or young person is on track?

Problem: School reporting and regular parent communication.

In the government school sector, successive department initiatives and union actions have continued to interfere with parents' ability to actively understand their child's progress in relation to standards.

Inconsistent application of guidelines around parent engagement (such as conflating an invitation posted in a school newsletter to a barbecue during business hours, attended by 5-10 parents, with a term worth of parent engagement for all parents) have resulted in a significant disconnect between a child's progress and a parent's understanding of it.

It is also important for parents to understand a child's relative growth in the reporting structure. As such, the fact that an underperforming student has progressed greater than an average year of progress within a year, despite still being below average, should be celebrated and understood by parents. Such metrics are not typically shared except to parents who already understand them and request specifically.

Private schools typically provide more frequent and detailed reports, covering academic progress, PAT/CAT test scores, behavioural observations, and sometimes feedback from multiple teachers. Private schools typically include narrative comments and personalised feedback on each student. The same should be available through government schools.

By fostering a home environment that aligns with and supports the curriculum, parents can enhance their children's learning experiences, reinforce academic content, and promote a love of learning that goes beyond the classroom.

Solution: Legislate minimum parent engagement in the Education Act.

Solution: Review parent engagement in the government school system. Provide parents with ALL available information about their child's progress by default. Ensure that parents are aware of the curriculum and what their child is currently learning.

Solution: Reporting should also have consideration to Individual Student Growth.

2.8. Aspiration

How can we better encourage young people to aspire to achieve their ambitions?

Problem: Aspiration is notably absent in many areas.

A high-performing culture is needed for our learners to aspire and extend themselves. Our learners need to be connected and supported to aspire and grow.

As an aside, DECYP recently updated its strategic values for education to remove aspiration, including a culture of high expectations and high achievement, and merge this into growth.

Department of Education Values (pre-2023)	DECYP Values (2024)

Respect	Respect
Growth	Growth
Courage	Courage
Aspiration	*Merged into Growth*
	Connection
	Responsibility

Whilst "connection" (building positives relationships and a sense of belonging), is a welcome addition, it is concerning that aspiration has been removed, given that it should be on level footing with growth.

Both growth and aspiration are important, and they complement each other. Growth provides the steady progress and skill-building needed for long-term success, while aspiration fuels motivation and gives students a sense of purpose and direction. Ideally, educators can foster a balance between these two, encouraging students to make continuous improvements while also inspiring them to set and pursue ambitious goals.

Growth establishes a strong foundation of skills and promotes the development of a resilient, lifelong learning mindset. This is especially important in lower primary education, where building basic skills in reading, writing, and math sets the stage for all future learning.

For Secondary School, aspiration should play a more prominent role, as students start to think about their futures, make important academic choices, and set career goals. Aspiration can motivate students to take challenging courses, engage in extra-curricular activities, and work toward college and career readiness.

An ideal educational model integrates both growth **and** aspiration, recognising that students benefit from continuous progress, but also need the drive and motivation that come from setting and pursuing ambitious goals.

For teaching staff, aspiration should be for their students to aspire.

3. Theme 2 - Strengthening supports and engagement for all learners at all stages of their education

How can we collectively support Tasmanian learners to get the most out of their entire education experience and ensure all students reach their potential?

3.1.   Lack of Value of Education

Sustained family engagement is essential before and throughout all stages of education to maintain high expectations and support.

Problem: There is a perceived lack of value of education amongst some cohorts.

Whilst equality of opportunity is an essential element of a just society, its key measure of success is intergenerational mobility[xxiii] [xxiv] [xxv]. Some families have low engagement with their children's education, others demonstrably *do not* value their child's education. In the government school sector, this is reflected in a correlation with Student Wellbeing and Engagement Survey results[6] (for example a response to 'positive sense of culture and identity – school belonging'[xxvi] and 'learning – cognitive engagement') correlate with CCD/SA1s with low social mobility.

OECD data suggests high performance and more positive attitudes towards schooling among disadvantaged 15-year-old students are strong predictors of success in higher education and work. Furthermore, families within these SA1 areas who place higher value on education are more likely to enrol in the independent/catholic education sector, or seek out of area enrolment within the government school sector.

There is some suggestion that regional towns may have some different causal factors to cities/suburbs.

Solution 1: Campaigns and ongoing outreach to increase the value of education amongst student's family, peers and support networks within identified catchments and SA1s.

Solution 2: Greater awareness and possible short-term linkage of financial benefit to children's engagement and qualifications, such as 'retention bonuses'.

Solution 3: Adopt policies to encourage greater school involvement and integration in communities[xxvii] and service delivery (beyond purely 9-3 school education). Students will ultimately benefit from the school's planned and proactive engagement with parents/carers and the broader community.

Solution 4: Work with the Federal Government to more closely integrate concentrated disadvantage into the SRS loadings for SEA.

3.2. Social Cohesion, Parent Contact, School Belonging

Teachers and school leaders who build effective and collaborative partnerships with parents can significantly shape the education and wellbeing outcomes of their learners.

Also: "It's the school calling, what have they done this time?"

Problem: Parent Engagement, Parent Contact, School Belonging

As noted above (see Reporting, 2.7), parent contact and school belong is problematic in some sectors, particularly the government school sector. The private school sector generally does this far better.

There is research which backs school-community cohesion, including the student's involvement in extra-curricular activities[xxviii][xxix], and the parent-child involvement in support. Engaged communities[xxx][xxxi] are more likely to support school initiatives, from fundraising and extracurricular programs to educational reforms. Schools with high levels of family and community involvement see better student grades and test scores, higher attendance rates, and more positive attitudes toward school.

As such, a key reporting measure needs to be a school's standing and connectedness to the community it serves, as improving this measure will likely lead to improvement in other outcomes.

In a high school and above setting, government school parents only infrequently provide volunteer and extra-curricular activities, where this is commonplace in private schools who in some cases mandate student participation through mutual obligation agreements as part of enrolment. There are unwritten expectations amongst private school teachers of the necessity to provide limited before and after-school enrichment, where the culture of the government school system seems to be that the minimum possible should be done.

Some private schools have performance indicators for parent involvement as a condition of enrolment, such as a requirement for parents to attend performances, and assemblies, in addition to student-led parent-teacher conferences at least quarterly. Conversely, government schools seem to shun the involvement of parents.

As such, it is necessary to adjust the human resources aspects of teachers and school staff to ensure that they can support a minimum level of extra-curricular activities and community involvement with their school, outside of core teaching hours without this being seen as 'voluntary' and 'optional' by many staff.

Solution: Measure social cohesion dimensions as a key performance indicator for schools.

Solution: Encourage connections between the child, school and parent; through direct and regular engagement and extra-curricular activities.

Solution: Legislate minimum parent engagement in the Education Act.

Solution: Review parent engagement in the government school system.

3.3. Erosion of Area Government Schools by Other Schools

On the other hand, some stakeholders question whether this narrative reflects the reality or whether it is a system-reinforced perception that overlooks the potential and aspirations of these communities (Beswick, 2019).

Problem: Student enrolment at other schools (private, out-of-area) erodes in-area government schools.

Disadvantage is concentrated in a small number of communities within Tasmania. Six areas (6% of locations) account for 36% of the most disadvantaged ranks across all indicators. This is a six-fold overrepresentation.

Analysis of census data for school-aged children residing within concentrated disadvantage areas against aggregated enrolment data (such as inferred SES score and funding calculations) for their in-area school suggests that the children enrolled at in-area government schools are disproportionately disadvantaged over and above the population of the area.

This is supported by anecdotal evidence where parents "who care" disproportionately seek out-of-area government school enrolment, or failing that where means permits, catholic schools. Several government schools are noted to have significant enrolments from nearby suburbs, for various reasons.

As such, private schools and out-of-area schools accepting students from these areas are "cream skimming" whilst leaving those students with the highest needs for the government school sector. The lack of a single favoured-destination school also further erodes the possibility of greater social cohesion within the school and its community.

This is a classic "Tragedy of the Commons" where individuas, acting in their own self-interest, deplete or degrade a shared resource, ultimately harming the collective good. This theory can be applied to publicly funded private schools and their impact on education overall.

The outcome is often that public schools are left with fewer resources and struggle to maintain quality amid higher needs and fewer funds.

Solution: Repatriate out-of-area students to in-area schools.

Solution: Redistribute government funding from private schools (generally) towards government schools in concentrated disadvantage areas.

3.4. Early Childhood Education

There is significant research which suggests that children who participate in quality early childhood education are more likely to make a successful transition to school, enter school with stronger literacy/language/maths skills, stay longer in school, ultimately continue to further education and fully participate in employment and community life as adults.

The following successful programs are noted:

- Launch Into Learning Programs.
- Pre-Kindergarten programs offered through kindergarten schools (often delivered with LiL on different days, targeting only next-year enrolled students),
- Private 'lighthouse' pre-kindergarten programs, such as Rainbow.

Key challenges to Early Childhood Education are:

- Accessibility of school-based LiL-style and pre-kinder programs for working parents.
- Awareness of and compelling associations with LiL and other programs for non-working parents.
- Accessibility and cost of services, and interaction with long daycare.

There is a reported shortage of approximately 4500 childcare places, and regions such as Tasmania's west coast are significantly understaffed. Towns/regions with under 1000 population are typically unable to support services.

I note that organisations such as the Australian Childcare Alliance are disseminating information supporting their member business interests over and above the common good.

Suggestion: Operation of long daycare as business enterprises through primary schools in under-serviced areas, with interlocution with LiL style services.

Suggestion: Requirements for long daycare operators in-area to facilitate transition visits with LiL and pre-kinder for in-area schools.

3.5. Kindergarten

In Tasmania, enrolment in Kindergarten has for a long time been practically universal – all children of Kindergarten age generally enrol to attend.

Problem: Kindergarten is near-compulsory, but it's not really. It is not aligned with care.

A key problem with Kindergarten enrolment is the alignment between age limits for outside school hours care providers and childcare providers for working parents.

Schools should ensure arrangements exist for childcare/outside school hours care providers to support all kindergarten enrolments, including transport arrangements if necessary.

Solution: Make formal Kindergarten compulsory, either directly or through a care program.

Solution: Require schools to engage with outside school hours care to ensure adequate arrangements are provided for enrolled students, including Kindergarten.

3.6. Kinder Enrolment Age – Reduce by 6 Months

Problem: Tasmania's current kindergarten entrance age has knock-on effects for the age of school attainment (see "18 year olds" discussed elsewhere).

The minimum standard age of children entering Year 1 / Year 7 in Tasmania is up to 7 months older than NSW (July), QLD (June), WA (June), SA (April) and VIC (April).

It is necessary to solve this problem by reducing the kindergarten entry age to align with other states. Such a change could initially be phased in by implementing a reduction of 1 month each year, until reaching 4 months (to align with SA/Vic), before a decision is taken to align with other states.

Solution: Reduce the kindergarten entrance age by 6 months to align with other states.

3.7. Assessment and Diagnosis

Problem: Diagnosis and assessment of students is needed to provide interventions sooner.

Success in some students is limited by pre-existing conditions.

In government schools, average waiting time to see a school psychologist in Tasmania are reported at in excess of 168 days for "intervention" services, and 80% of students were provided no assistance beyond 180 days. There are multiple examples of children who have waited >18 months for assessments related to learning difficulties. Parents are reported to have taken out personal loans to fund private assessments (which themselves have a waitlist of >6 months in many areas).

However, 'prestige' independent schools are keen to identify students who are underperforming due to underlying developmental and cognitive conditions which can be managed in their school, through private psychologists and clinicians on retainer with the school. It is understood that additional funding and supports are readily available once a diagnosis is obtained, these being reportedly supported by state funding and NDIS, and

evidenced by the existence key commercial retainer and relationships with service providers (psychologists, occupational therapists, tutoring providers).

Solution: Allied health integration to the system as a whole needs to be improved. This includes working through the allied health backlog in the government system. Specific allied health review should be undertaken of students in a learning context and diagnostics should be prioritised.

3.8.   Private Schools Do Parent Engagement Better

Problem: Family and carer engagement is poor in government schools. This is demonstrably linked to student outcomes.

Out of necessity, Private Schools do parent engagement well, as each and every parent interaction is a marketing opportunity. They typically provide more frequent and detailed reports, covering academic progress, PAT/CAT test scores, behavioural observations, and sometimes feedback from multiple teachers. Private schools typically include narrative comments and personalised feedback on each student. The same should be available through government schools.

Some private schools have performance indicators for parent involvement as a condition of enrolment, such as a requirement for parents to attend performances, and assemblies, in addition to student-led parent-teacher conferences at least quarterly. Conversely, government schools seem to shun the involvement of parents.

In a high school and above setting, government school parents only infrequently provide volunteer and extra-curricular activities, where this is more frequent in private schools who in some cases mandate student participation. There are unwritten expectations amongst private school teachers of the necessity to provide limited before and after-school enrichment, where the culture of the government school system is that the minimum possible should be done.

Catholic and Independent Schools	Government Schools
Foster a culture that emphasises active parental involvement as part of their educational model. May have explicit expectations for parent participation in school activities, governance, or volunteer opportunities. Culture is frequently communicated as part of enrolment, establishing a shared understanding that parents play an integral role in the school community.	Hold a barbecue at the beginning of term Send home reports with no verbatim comments. Limit duty of care to required hours.
Many private schools view parent engagement as essential to the school's success and actively encourage participation in decisions affecting	Engage through school associations (which are mostly about fundraising).

school policies and curriculum, creating a partnership approach to education that parents are eager to support.	Present 'consultation' for policies as department-supplied templates which cannot be modified, and must be adopted.
Since private schooling involves fees, parents feel a stronger sense of investment in their child's education. This financial commitment often translates into a greater willingness to participate in school events, monitor academic progress, and advocate for resources or programs they believe will benefit their child. The *parent* is the *customer*.	Many parents have the capacity to pay higher levies than are charged. Levies are typically low. Neither the *parent* or the *child* is the *customer*.
Parents *perceive* a higher quality of education and therefore are more motivated to actively support the school's mission and objectives, both to maximise their child's educational experience and to ensure they receive value for their investment.	Parents accept lower quality as there is limited ability to influence delivery.
Dedicated resources for parent engagement, such as parent *events*, *workshops*, and volunteer programs, which provide structured opportunities for involvement.	Often shun parent involvement and volunteers. Often do not open assemblies and performances. Almost never run parent workshops.
Offer (and mandate) extracurricular activities, special events, where parents are encouraged to volunteer and attend. These events foster a sense of community and give parents multiple avenues for participating in school life beyond academics.	Usually do not engage with extra-curricular activities unless organised exclusively by parents. Do not require staff to convene and supervise extra-curricular activities.
Often have selective admission processes, resulting in more homogeneous community of families who share similar values and priorities around education. This can create a cohesive environment where parents are more likely to engage with each other and with the school, as they feel aligned in their educational goals and philosophies. Unsatisfied parents will enrol their child elsewhere.	Required to accept all in-area enrolments. Required to deal with unengaged parents. Required to deal with troublemaker parents (for example, through parent exclusion from site).

Solution: Encourage connections between the child, school and parent; through direct and regular engagement and extra-curricular activities.

3.9. High School Transition

The Review heard that family engagement decreases through schooling, particularly as young people enter high school.

Problem: Engagement drops with High School transition.

Problem: High School is when a lot of problems manifest, engagement needs to be higher.

The transition to high school occurs around the time of key developmental changes in children. As such, high school is typically the greatest opportunity for students who were previously engaged in their learning to change to be less so.

In many cases, the transition and sudden drop of engagement coincides with a lack of context within the new school and its staff, of individual students.

The parliamentary Inquiry into Discrimination and Bullying in Tasmanian Schools has heard truly harrowing stories, a majority of these (when excluding countless misinformed letters exclaiming that there is no such thing as discrimination and bullying in faith-based schools) suggested an increase in bullying commencing at around Year 7. Studies suggest the increase can be attributed to the social adjustments students undergo, where peer hierarchies are reestablished, often leading to power imbalances and increased bullying behaviours for some groups (such as new or socially vulnerable students) during their early high school years. Responses including public surveys also noted that of Tasmanian respondents, a majority experienced bullying in years 7-10 only, as opposed to Primary school or in years 11-12. Studies suggest that students who experience bullying during this transition may face mental health impacts such as increased anxiety and depression, with these effects sometimes lasting well beyond high school, including higher levels of psychological distress later in life, particularly if they lack adequate support during these formative years. Such support for students should be considered part of the family-school-community partnership.

Reports of parent engagement[7] were compared between schools where a primary school feeds into a high school, along with information from another sector which suggests that parent-school engagement is reduced substantially more for the government sector where multiple primary schools feed to one high school; when compared to on-campus transitions with the same school cohort as occurs at District Schools and in some K-10 Catholic schools. Further anecdotal evidence suggests that same-cohort transition to Year 7 at a different school/campus (as occurs at several Catholic schools) is closer to the government school experience in terms of parent involvement. It is noteworthy that some schools with high "continued parent engagement" across the Year 6-7 transition (through a single one-campus K-10 school) appear to have among the best Year 5 to Year 7 NAP uplift (despite having lower raw scores overall compared to nearby government schools, when controlled for other factors –

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[7]

likely due to compulsory religious education within their curriculum delivery detracting from actual learning, and lower average student IQ).

This is supported by research from overseas which indicates that maintaining parent and community engagement during the transition to high school can significantly benefit student outcomes[xxxii]. According to a study published by the ERIC database, systematic family engagement efforts during this transition period can lead to better academic results, particularly in the ninth grade. Schools that actively work to involve parents through programs and outreach report improved student attendance and higher homework completion rates, which are critical factors for success in the early high school years. This engagement is especially important in helping students adapt to the more demanding academic and social environment of high school, which can be a challenging transition for many.

The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth[xxxiii] Parent and Family Engagement implementation guide suggests that engagement should reduce, however at the key transition points in lower high school it is suggested that "primary school" level engagement with parents should be encouraged.

Solution: Implement strategies to improve parent engagement with high schools for students transitioning to Year 7.

Solution: Require schools where a transition occurs implement enhanced strategies to promote parent engagement with high schools for students transitioning to Year 7, including through volunteering and parent help and more regular parent-teacher involvement.

3.10. Connection

3.10.1. Someone Cares

Problem: Does someone really, truly, care?

Many students will recount how some teachers in their past did truly, genuinely, care about their success.

Research links the connection between teachers and individual student outcomes [xxxiv xxxv xxxvi] and engagement across the school year and future years. Students who report having caring and supportive teachers tend to perform better academically, are less likely to drop out, and are more likely to pursue higher education. Teachers who genuinely care about their students have a lasting impact on their lives.

DECYP has commenced an initiative that someone in a school should be personally responsible for every student. This is great, but one has to query whether this should already be occurring!

It is observed that current arrangements don't work well currently through "Home Group" in high schools (with some high schools removing these completely), as home group teachers are often class teachers, so at odds with providing 'pastoral' care over 'classroom crowd control' and 'educational needs'.

Within a primary school environment "Cares For" teachers may commonly be a music teacher or support teacher, rather the regular class teacher. Or this may be a previous year's teacher.

A connection must be two-way, a parallel could be made to finding a good GP.

As such, this initiative has merit, but it must be student-initiated and a genuine connection must be made.

Solution: Someone, preferably multiple staff members, must have a connection with each child and advocate for their interests within the school environment.

3.10.2.   Role Models

Problem: There are not always role models.

Positive role models, particularly those from similar backgrounds, can be powerful motivators for our children. Seeing someone who has achieved similar goals can help children visualise their own success. Programs that connect students with mentors, whether professionals in their desired field, college students, or successful community members, can provide guidance and inspire ambition.

A 6-year-old boy who says they want to grow up to be a fireman probably won't see his mid-40s female class teacher as a role model. Some children see role models in parents, grandparents, top-tier sportspeople, but these people are either too close to home or artificial.

Staffing schools with staff with a diversity of backgrounds, especially life experience may provide greater modelling, in addition to "walking the talk" by participating in genuine constructive endeavours and engaging third parties (the token scientist in a lab coat) more frequently into the classroom environment supports better role models.

3.10.3.   Mentors

Problem: Lack of individual student mentoring programs

Some primary schools adopt mentoring programs through "buddy classes". Some private schools require students to identify mentors (often sourced from the "old boys club" alumni) to provide guidance to individual students who express an interest in a given field – be that physics or football. Such schools also task from time to time non-teaching staff to build connections with individual students to support engagement.

Mentoring programs are suggested to support particularly students in a senior secondary context to achieve success, and disengaged students to achieve engagement[xxxvii]. Just as teachers are encouraged to seek mentors in their professional practice, the same logic applies to students helping students set and achieve goals by providing personalised support and a sense of belonging.

Some colleges have engaged working professionals to provide talks in their field to students (such as inviting a Chemist to a speak periodically at their advanced Chemistry class, a Data Scientist to their Statistics class and a marine biologist to their biology class), and encouraged students to correspond with these professionals in interest areas, sometimes resulting in work experience and summer jobs for students.

Personal mentoring could also be better achieved within school support networks, such as by replacing chaplains with qualified career and guidance counsellors (and/or social workers).

Solution: Develop more/better mentorship programs.

3.11. More Money

Problem: Most government schools in Tasmania are underfunded.

Some schools are overfunded but still receive public funds.

The Federal expert review panel (Gonski, et al) in 2011 recommended that the funding model for schools should be based on fair, logical and practical allocation of public funds, in response to needs[xxxviii]. Investment of government funds in wealthy private schools whilst politically expedient is neither fair or logical. It established a per student dollar amount as a resource standard and a series of loadings aimed to outcomes benchmark that at least 80% of students in reference schools are achieving above the national minimum standard, for their year level, in both reading and numeracy, across each of the three most recent years of NAPLAN results. The Department of Education has provided adjustment and indexation of this standard since the report.   Tasmania's government schools have been consistently funded below 90% of the amount required for 80% of students to achieve the national minimum standard. The national minimum standard is achieved (until 2022) by attaining the 2nd achievement band for each grade; simplified this means that for a Year 9 student to achieve the *minimum* standard, that they have achieved what is the *average* result achieved by a Year 5 student, with 1 band of improvement in 2 years.

This is a very low benchmark, and is below the level of literacy required for engagement with government services. The Grattan Institute recommends a baseline of 90% in the 'strong' and 'exceeding' categories[xxxix] which is incompatible with Tasmania's funding model. The proportion of students who attained the National Proficient Standard in reading literacy was 50% in Tasmania based on PISA[xl] for 15-year olds.

Substantial evidence in other jurisdictions demonstrates[xli],[xlii] that the cost of this investment is made in Tasmania's future productivity, with long term improvements in Gross State Product projected in the range of 3-7% and positive returns within 10 years.

As such, additional funding has, generally, a significant benefit-cost ratio.

Solution: The current level of funding to government schools in Tasmania should be increased to 100% of the Schooling Resource Standard immediately.

3.12. Better Use of eSchool and Distance Learning

Problem: eSchool is an application-based pathway

For various reasons, students are losing engagement with traditional classroom schools. The system has in its arsenal the Tasmanian eSchool which is capable of delivering education to all students who have issues with engagement with traditional learning in classrooms.

This can include students with a disability and students travelling – anywhere with an internet connection, microphone and camera.

For example, currently Ashley Youth Detention Centre has its own school and principal. This could be replaced with teachers and teacher assistants by Ashley participants undertaking eSchool instead.

Similarly, several unsustainably small schools such as Sassafras and Wilmot could be made "campuses" of a central distance learning school, reducing the need for teachers, principals and support staff at these schools and potentially providing an overall better option.

Self-paced VLCs are provided for some units which are far less engaging than instructor-lead online instruction. In a senior secondary setting, it would be preferable to provide a single statewide "Psychology 3" class for example, given that most colleges lack the number of enrolments to offer it.

eSchool is not routinely offered for students and requires an application-based pathway and for all students to have a Learning Plan. Anecdotal reports suggest that the pathway to eSchool is 3-6 months for most students with educational needs-based enrolment, but varies substantially with the requesting school's familiarity with the process. eSchool students are understood to be dual-enrolled, with the base school funding amounts from their SRP which may make them reluctant to progress students with eSchool.

Solution: Make better use of eSchool and distance learning in unsustainably small schools.

Solution: Remove barriers to eSchool entry for students.

3.13. Copy more from interstate

Problem: We have "little state syndrome".

This results in unnecessary re-invention of the wheel in respect of implementing the Australian curriculum and courses.

Solution: Copy from others' homework by better leveraging material developed by larger states.

4. Theme 3 - Outcomes at the conclusion of the formal years of schooling

Noting the specific challenges that emerge as young people progress through schooling; how can we improve attendance, retention, attainment and student outcomes to better support choice of learning and career pathways?

4.1. Critical Mass & Centres of Excellence

Problem: Some courses, especially those requiring specialist facilities or teachers, need minimum enrolment numbers to be viable.

Arguing between fewer schools offering specialised and advanced courses versus more schools offering standardised courses with fewer students centres on various factors, including educational outcomes, equity, and resource allocation.

In regional centres, if all schools offer only standard curriculum, students from lower-income or underserved communities may lack access to specialist or advanced courses, creating gaps in educational equity.

How can a school with under 20 students within a year level provide an educational program tailoring to student option choice and educational stratification with any meaningful variety?

In areas with higher populations, such as Hobart and Launceston, focus should be made on concentration of centres of excellence. This can also link to facilities and unique skill integrations, and could, potentially, include high schools in some cases.

In other jurisdictions, magnet schools or schools with specialised programs often outperform their counterparts in standardised tests and ATAR metrics because they can offer advanced curricula with specialised staff. There is some evidence[xliii] that networks of high-achieving students increase success in their peers through modelling and osmosis, however, greater evidence exists for the negative (peer effects).

As discussed elsewhere, research consistently shows that teacher quality is one of the most important factors in student achievement (outside of the student's/parent's own background). By concentrating highly qualified teachers in fewer schools, students may receive a higher quality of instruction. Fewer schools offering specialised programs concentrate resources and skilled teachers in particular locations. Particularly VET subjects requiring physical environments and facilities, such as automotive and construction benefit from concentration of delivery. Centralising VET offerings into fewer schools ensures students have access to industry-standard equipment, partnerships with local industry, and instructors with relevant professional experience.

Cross-sector dual-enrolments could be encouraged. This could allow schools to provide more challenging and enriching content (e.g., providing STEM and creative thinking subjects to catholic schools, or International Baccalaureate on an opt-in basis to government schools) and ensure that teachers are highly qualified in specific subject areas.

Solution 1: Centres of excellence.

Solution 2: Break down the barriers between education sectors.

Solution 3: Fewer schools running duplicated programs can lead to more efficient resource allocation.

4.2.   Year 11-12 Extensions Schools & Problematic Aspects of ACER 2016 Review

Amongst other reforms, a review in 2016 of Years 9 to 12 was intended to modernise the curriculum approach and to build or strengthen networks between schools for these senior years in Tasmania. This Review has heard that the intention of these reforms still has some way to go in terms of its outcomes being realised. While there is some networking and collaboration between colleges and high schools, the change a student experiences between Year 10 to Year 11 is not always seamless and does not prepare some of them well for the experience in Years 11 and 12.

The ACER 2016 Review[xliv] was written a specific world view and within constraints. For example the review coloured:

- The expectation that students would be *required* to complete Year 12;
- That Years 9-12 should be continuous as they are in other states, but did not seek to structurally decouple from K-8 or 7-8 learning (as it is in some other jurisdictions) as it was out of scope;
- Various undisciplined analysis of data, incorrect interpretation of the lay of the land, with spurious conclusions.

It did not comprehend practical issues in the delivery of education, such as:

- That around 90% of the community, including students, staff, experts and community members did not support the model[xlv].
- That Tasmania has a small population, concentrated in greater Hobart, Launceston and the three North-West cities. That the model suggested target enrolment per school between 1500 and 3000 students which could not realistically be achieved other than in one or two cases (such as closing Taroona High School to merge with Hobart College).
- Almost all cited examples were in cities with populations greater than the entire state of Tasmania.

- That suitably qualified senior subject specialists could not practically be recruited or exist in extension schools as fractional FTEs.
- Realities around public transport and dedicated daytime student bus transport within collectives have simply not materialised, and that parallels to multi-campus schools are not appropriate (9.3). Metro Tasmania is lucky to get buses to show up on key trunk routes.
- Claims that all existing infrastructure would be re-used, which is not the experience given the amount spent and proposed to be spent on redevelopments justified by the addition of Year 11-12 students.

Several proponents of the abolition of standalone Year 11-12 Senior Secondary Colleges (such as a prominent economist who attended the Hutchins School, and the well-meaning authors of a petition prior to the state election) have attached excessive weight to some aspects of this document which were based on flawed observations, logic, or impractical recommendations.

Several changes have been initiated by the department, schools, and well-meaning governments, most have which have been somewhat resource-intensive yet materially ineffective when assessed objectively.

The document furthermore did not consider transition to high school, which it is (as noted elsewhere), because it was out of scope.

Whilst the report made strong and evidence-backed observations and recommendations in many areas, its recommendations in respect of removing dedicated Year 11-12 Colleges in areas already well-served by excellent Year 11-12 Senior Secondary Colleges, and extending *all* High Schools to Year 12 were demonstrable off the mark, as evidenced by the wasteful duplication we have now playing out in Hobart, Launceston, Devonport and Burnie (noted elsewhere).

There are, however some demographics where this policy HAS been beneficial and that is particularly in areas of concentrated disadvantage.

4.3. Dedicated Year 11-12 Colleges

Problem: There has been little uptake of Extension Schools while Dedicated Year 11-12 Colleges provide demonstrably better offerings.

Tasmania's Year 11-12 Senior Secondary Colleges bring together enough students to offer specialised academic subjects, taught by knowledgeable and experienced teachers. This arrangement, essential for advanced subjects, isn't feasible for every high school due to logistical challenges like student numbers, access to specialist teachers, and budget limitations.

Senior Secondary Colleges already possess the necessary facilities for advanced courses in various areas, although some of these facilities have been seemingly neglected from a capital

expenditure perspective. They also cater to specialist VET/vocational training interests and job-demand areas, benefiting students who would not otherwise have access to these programs in extension schools with under 200 Year 11-12 students were dedicated Senior Secondary Colleges to be abolished.

Enrolment data and surveys confirms that students vastly prefer the dedicated Year 11-12 Colleges in preference to Extension Schools within High Schools, at least within reasonable proximity to the existing Colleges.

Analysis of enrolments to the colleges also suggests a "bypass" rate for even distant extension schools and district high schools, despite complex travel and in some cases weekday lodgement arrangements. Students from the East Coast/North-East are reported to favour Launceston and Newstead Colleges, the Derwent Valley preferring Elizabeth College (skipping past Claremont respectively), the Tasman and South-East preferring Rosny or Elizabeth (skipping Sorell) and the West Coast and Far North West preferring Hellyer.

The consultation report from the Hobart City High School Partner Schools (a partly-abandoned initiative to somehow merge Elizabeth College with Ogilvie and New Town High Schools) suggested that 90% of surveyed community members, students and parents preferred the model where the College remained separate. It cited the College experience providing a unique identity, age-appropriate and specialised offerings and a "fresh start" for students.

At one High School it was reported that despite having a small number of extension school enrolments that those students never attended the school (all being either dual-enrolled, undertaking self-paced VLC work from home, or never showed up for "other" reasons; as such there was no need to accommodate them). It is suggested that this is not uncommon with palatial facilities having been recently constructed achieving only infrequent use by a small number of students.

Some High Schools have been required to secure additional premises with multiple dedicated FTE staff in support of less than a class cohort of students, most of whom are dual-enrolled with a College.

The social and emotional advantages of the college setting are also significant. These environments promote maturity, allowing students to interact with peers their age, build independence, and form friendships based on shared interests.

Dismantling these senior secondary colleges would reduce options for students and eliminate the unique benefits they provide, ultimately disadvantaging many young people. Moreover, there is strong community support for maintaining the college system, with evidence suggesting that most people oppose disbanding these valuable institutions.

As long as the dedicated Year 11-12 colleges exist, and provide a better educational experience (actual or perceived), the nearby Extension Schools in High Schools will fail to achieve support, thus further limiting their already limited offerings.

The government must accept when it has implemented changes which have failed, and learn from these. This includes accepting some heat for sunk costs, with the best use made available of these new facilities in supporting 7-10 education.

It is necessary to move to a policy once more supporting Colleges, except for rural/regional areas and areas of concentrated disadvantage. This will allow for certainty and investment within the Colleges to continue.

Solution: Provide certainty by a long-term commitment to dedicated Year 11-12 Senior Secondary Colleges.

4.4.   Extension Schools

4.4.1.   Outcomes of Extension Schools

Problem: Changes to require extension schools in high schools have largely not contributed to success. Learning outcomes and attainment rates in government 7-12 high schools are lower than dedicated 11-12 colleges.

Completion rates are surprisingly good in terms of Catholic and Independent schools which have extended to Year 12, despite their limited learning offerings. Independent schools have continued their 90% TCE attainment and 70% ATAR. The model of a single 7-12 Catholic school in each of Launceston, Devonport and Burnie serves as a useful comparison against Hobart, where Guilford Young (which has dropped by around 50 enrolments) can be compared to MacKillop, St. Virgils and St. Mary's more closely resembling the government school sector.

Solution: Cease Government 7-10 high schools to offer years 11-12, in areas already served by a nearby established Year 11-12 Senior Secondary College.

4.4.2.   Minimal Enrolments, Unsustainable Programs

Problem: Most extension schools have unsustainably low enrolments.

The following schools within proximity (20km) of colleges have had under 20 enrolments (most under 5 enrolments) for at least 3 of the last 5 years:

- Traditionally feed to Hobart College:
    - Taroona High School
    - Kingston High School
- Traditionally feed to Elizabeth College:
    - Hobart City High School (majority through *Big Picture Academy*)
- Traditionally feed to Rosny College:
    - Rose Bay High School
    - Clarence High School
- Traditionally feed to Claremont College:

- o   Cosgrove High School
- o   Montrose Bay (Rosetta) High School
- Traditionally feed to Launceston College:
  - o   Kings Meadows High School
  - o   Prospect High School
  - o   Exeter High School * (more than 20km)
  - o   Riverside High School
- Traditionally feed to Newstead College:
  - o   Brooks High School
  - o   Queechy High School
- Traditionally feed to Don College:
  - o   Devonport High School
  - o   Reece High School
  - o   Sheffield School
- Traditionally feed to Hellyer College:
  - o   Parklands High School
  - o   Burnie High School
  - o   Penguin District School (Penguin High School)
  - o   Wynyard High School
  - o   Yolla * (more than 20km)

Reportedly, a majority of Year 11-12 students in the schools above are dual-enrolled, and their attainment is below the average for the nearby colleges.

Only 3 schools within 20km of a dedicated Year 11-12 college can be considered successful in this regard, specifically:

- Ulverstone High School * (just under 20km)
- Bayview Secondary College (Rokeby)
- Jordan River Learning Federation (Bridgewater)

Outside of the 20km radius, there are several successful implementations as extension schools, and others with mixed success. The most successful noted as Huonville High School.

As such, with the exception of more 'remote' schools and the 3 schools listed above (which have some similar demographics, two of which include concentrated disadvantage areas) this policy has demonstrably failed, as many detractors at the time predicted it would.

There are some district schools which are struggling to provide quality Year 11-12 offerings where it would seemingly make sense for these schools to cease and for the offering to be replaced by that from another school within 30 minutes with appropriate transport provided. For example:

- Merging Year 11-12 for St. Helens into St. Marys.

- Merging Year 11-12 for Lilydale into Brooks or Scottsdale
- Merging Year 11-12 for Tasman into Sorell
- Merging Year 11-12 for Mountain Heights and Rosebery
- Merging Year 11-12 for New Norfolk & Glenora into Brighton

Given the low number of students involved and the proportion who have driver licences already (due to most already being 17 and living in areas where driving is ubiquitous) it would be cheaper to fund a car for each of them, pay for fuel and make them car pool when possible; rather than running a bus!

Provision of dedicated Year 11-12 facilities are planned to be included in, or a key justification for, several projects as part of the $188m capital works plan, including (approximately $10-25m each):

- Hobart City High School.
- Clarence High School.
- Exeter High School.

The whole situation represents simply an enormous waste of resources to support such low student numbers, with mostly worse outcomes, and such waste should be ceased immediately. Detractors of cessation argue about the significant sunk cost in upgrading facilities, such as building standalone Year 11-12 areas at high schools (several of which are currently empty, rarely used, or used for other programs).

The government must accept when it has implemented changes which have failed, and learn from these. This includes accepting some heat for sunk costs, with the best use made available of these new facilities in supporting 7-10 education.

Solution: Fix this wasteful policy, remove the mandate for extension schools within 20km of a college, and divert these valuable resources elsewhere. Move to a policy supporting Colleges, except for rural/regional areas and areas of concentrated disadvantage.

4.5.   Where Are Year 10 Students Going?

Problem: Students are disappearing at the Year 10 to Year 11 transition point, even within Extension Schools. Students are disappearing during Year 11 and Year 12.

Continuation data suggests that a significant proportion of students are 'disappearing' from the system at the transition point from Year 10 to Year 11, *during* Year 11, and *during* Year 12.

4.5.1.   High/Extension School Leakage

Problem: High/Extension schools are leaking students.

Students are noted as leaking from extension schools at a greater rate than colleges. Whilst much of this is attributed to the Year 10-11 transition, a larger problem exists in Year 11 and 12 retention.

Some examples of Extension Schools which have better figures and reduced leakage within the public system include:

- Ulverstone High School (Secondary College)
- Huonville High School

Extension schools with greater leakage include:

- Bayview Secondary College (Rokeby)
- Jordan River Learning Federation (Bridgewater)
- Port Dalrymple School (George Town)
- Sorell School
- Almost all of the schools (noted elsewhere) with "unsustainable" Year 11-12 enrolment numbers.

There may be some contributing factors to this based on demographics and school communities.

Solution: The previous-year school should be responsible for identifying where their students are going in the following year, and this should be consistently reported.

Solution: Enrolment to Year 11 must be completed automatically through a default pathway.

Solution: Students who are unaccounted or otherwise "leak" need to be targeted for follow-up, such as through a "truant team".

Extension School Lost 35% of Students

In the example below, for an extension school:

- In 2020 there were (*reportedly*) approximately 80x Year 10 students at the start of the year:
    - TASC data suggests the number was 51x.
    - This suggests a possible **loss of 29x students *during* Year 10**[8].
- Of the 51x in Year 10[9] during 2020:
    - 43x students continued on to Year 11 in 2021.
    - 21x students enrolled in Year 11 at that school in 2021.
    - 22x students enrolled in Year 11 at a different school in 2021 (it is reported that "about 20x" students went to a specific standalone Year 11-12 college in a nearby major centre).
    - Basic mathematics suggests that **8x students were "lost"** in the transition from the start of Year 10 to the start of Year 11.
    - Only 12x of 21x students were enrolled at that school in Year 12 in 2022 (but of those in year 10, the number was also 9 lower).
    - **9x students were "lost" during Year 11, all at this extension school.**
- Of the 12x Year 12 students in 2022:
    - 7x at the extension school were awarded a TCE (having 120 points etc).
    - A further 2x met minimum literacy/numeracy standards but were not awarded a TCE.
    - A total of 10x "completed senior secondary school", this suggests that:
        - 3x students completed a VET certificate only,
        - 5x students completed a TCE in addition to being awarded a VET certificate.
        - The VET certificates were, of 13 total students enrolled (total courses enrolled was approximately double), specifically 3x Cert II Building (of 6

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enrolments), 3x Cert II Hospitality (of 9 enrolments), 1x Cert III Human Welfare (of 1 enrolment) and 1x Cert I Maritime (of 1).

- o By deduction, 19x of the 22x students who went to a different school for Year 11 obtained a TCE.
- o **2x students "vanished" during Year 12.**

		Numbers				
Year 10		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Year 12		2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Year 10 Cohort		69	55	80	62	51
Year 11 Students		57	33	63	49	43
Year 12 Students		48	28	55	38	34
Achieved the TCE		28	17	37	18	26
Achieved an ATAR		11	9	11	6	7
Attained a VET Certificate		16	7	25	16	13

Figure 4 Extension School "A" using TASC 2022 methodology

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Year 11 Students	23	37	37	21	36
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Continued to Next Year of Education and Training	16	22	24	12	18
Achieved TCE	2	11	7	7	7
Achieved ATAR	0	0	1	0	0
Attained VET Certificate	1	10	10	5	6

Figure 5 Extension School "A" using TASC 2023 methodology

	Numbers by year				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Year 12 students	23	12	24	18	11
Not Australian citizen or permanent resident	-	-	0	0	0
Aged over 19 years	-	-	0	0	0
No TCE credit points achieved in Year 12	-	-	5	2	1
Year 12 students aged 15-19 who are Australian citizens or permanent residents, and achieved					
	22	12	19	16	10
Achieved TCE	**13**	**4**	**11**	**6**	**7**
Participation and Achievement Standard					
120 TCE credit points	13	4	12	6	7
80 TCE credit points at or above TASC Level 2	15	5	15	8	8
Everyday Adult Standard					
Reading, Writing and Communication (in English)	19	11	17	12	9
Mathematics	20	11	17	11	9
Use of Computers and the Internet	20	11	16	10	8
Average TCE credit points	104.0	99.0	121.3	93.8	120.7
TASC Level 1-4 courses	78.2	81.0	76.6	67.5	88.5
HAP/UCP courses	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Vocational Education and Training (VET)	26.7	18.0	44.7	26.3	32.3
Recognised Formal Learning	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Figure 6 Extension School "A" from Attainment Profile

Figure 7 Completion data for same school from MySchool

From this example, 17 of 51 students disappeared. It is unlikely that any action under the Education Act was taken in relation to the matter.

4.5.2.   TASC Reporting Methodology

Problem: TASC reporting data methodology and availability.

Changes in 2022 to TASC reporting methodology results in less availability of data. The data for 2022 is significantly more useful than that reported for 2023, especially when combined with the 2023 "within school" data.

When that the same data is presented in the old and new format, and compared to MySchool data, there are often discrepancies, suggesting issues with the methodology.

Data needs to be published for continuation and attainment which covers:

- For a given school the number of students enrolled at the commencement, mid-year census, and conclusion of each of Year 10, 11 and 12.
  - With a separate category for students who are long-term absent (e.g. enrolled, but not attending).
- Which approved programs those students went into for the following Year, *broken down by enrolled destination school* (including separate line items for any students not confirmed as enrolled or uncertain).
- For the final year, whether a completion standard was met (discussed elsewhere); and of those, whether a TCE, TCEA, ATAR or VET certificate was awarded.

Solution: Continuation data should be published based both on Year 10 to any destination (old methodology); and Year 10-12 for within-school year-by-year comparisons.

Suggestion: Continuation data for primary school (Year 6) to high school and TCE/VET attainment would be beneficial.

4.6.   Why is Year 12 Retention Better in Catholic Schools?

Problem: Year 12 and TCE completion is low in government schools, compared to catholic schools.

Regardless of colleges or extension schools, Year 12 completion and TCE attainment rates are lower in government schools. Weighted for similar SES, government students outperform on average achievement, catholic schools substantially outperform on completion and TCE attainment.

This is reflected through measures I504 (currently 58.4%, down from 61% last year) and measure I505 (currently 71.8%). Given the proportion of students in each sector, this supports the assertion that retention to Year 12 in the private sector (including catholic schools) is near universal, and mathematically *over* 95%.[10]

In the catholic and independent system, schools with single-campus 7-12 education appear to have >90% continuation from Year 10 to Year 12 completion, and >80% attainment for a TCE. There is understood to be some leakage from the system, but mostly due to enrolment with other schools who provide more relevant educational offerings (such as for a student who moves to another school to complete a particular course not offered). National Catholic Education Commission data[xlvi] suggests that Catholic school students have higher Year 12 completion rates compared to the national average.

Within Hobart and Burnie, there is significant cross-movement to schools such as from Dominic College and St. Virgils to Guilford Young, but the destinations are considered to be >97% "within the system".

But, correlation is not causation, and blind faith is not the answer (it never is).

The parent cohort of catholic schools:

- Generally have advantageous factors to their child's engagement and completion, including education, income and social mobility.
- Receive social pressure from within the school community ensuring that their young adults are not disappearing from the system.
- Are generally more strongly engaged[11] their school communities, which has a direct impact on student outcomes (as noted elsewhere).
- Make a more significant financial investment in Catholic education, so may place a high value on completing Year 12, which can create additional motivation for students to finish their schooling, even if they are not legally obliged to do so.

Catholic schools:

- Generally invest more (ACER[xlvii]) in resources and student support programs, contributing to better retention and completion outcomes.

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- Have greater structured avenues for parent involvement and support, which can reinforce students' motivation to stay.
- Aspire to a supportive school culture, high parental involvement and apply subtle pressure of completion and educational achievement.
- Structure financial arrangements to discourage disengagement (such as contracts and Year 12 fees being paid upfront).

Students in Catholic schools:

- May themselves feel a strong sense of obligation, which can motivate them to complete their studies even beyond the compulsory schooling age.
- Are generally more likely to act on the instructions and wishes[xlviii] of their school and parents.

Solution: Apply factors for completion within Catholic schools specifically to government schools. Most of these individual factors are discussed elsewhere in this submission.

4.7. Employment Impacts on Completion

Problem: Student employment *can* negatively impact school completion and success.

It is reported[12] that around 50% of Year 12 students currently engaged in study have part-time employment, with an average of 10 hours worked per week.

Whilst employment is an excellent *opportunity* and positive experience for some students, but for others it represents a barrier to their school learning and completion.

Two key problems around employment are:

- Students being employed during school time by employers who do not honour the student's school commitments.
- Students transitioning to "minimum skill" employment instead of continuing school when they reach Age 18.

It is reportedly common[13] amongst Year 11-12 students that they are rostered by their employers for shifts which conflict with scheduled classes. Due to the power imbalance with their employer, the students are not willing to make waves to get their shifts changed. It is suggested that >10% of absences[14] are caused by this factor.

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In relation to employment within school time, some employers are "notorious" for requiring part-time employed students to miss class time.

Some time ago, it was commonplace for employers to seek permission from the school around employment of students during/around school hours. It is unclear whether this was voluntary. Reinstituting such requirements may assist in continued engagement – such as by the addition of an offence under S16 of the Education Act for an employer of a school-aged child to require the child to work within ordinary school hours without permission of the principal.

Solution: Add an offence to Employers under S16 of the Education Act for *employers* to provide employment to a student during regular school hours/terms without permission from the Principal.

4.8. Year 12 Completion and Continuing Education

Observation: Lack of Completion of Year 12 limits further study in both post-school VET and Academic pathways and long-term disadvantage.

National data suggests that a lack of completion of Year 12 will inhibit future engagement in further education.
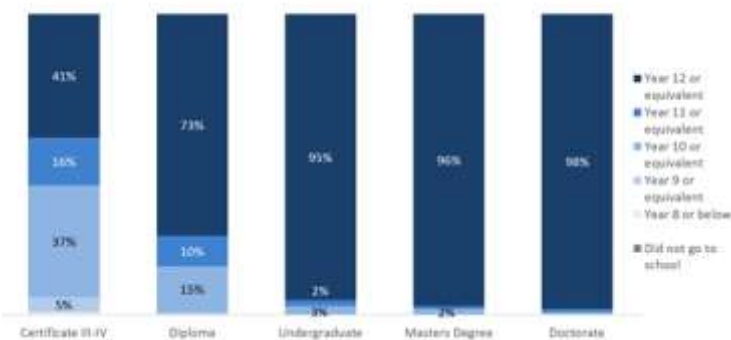

Figure 8 Highest reported level of schooling by highest reported level of educational attainment in the Australian population, not currently studying, aged 30-64, 2016 (2016)

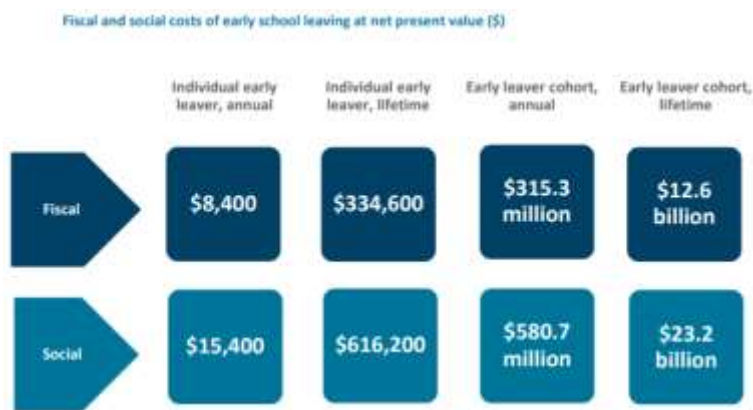This is then carried forward into lifetime disadvantage[xlix].

Fiscal and social costs of early school leaving at net present value ($)

	Individual early leaver, annual	Individual early leaver, lifetime	Early leaver cohort, annual	Early leaver cohort, lifetime
Fiscal	$8,400	$334,600	$315.3 million	$12.6 billion
Social	$15,400	$616,200	$580.7 million	$23.2 billion

Figure 9 Fiscal and social costs of early school leaving at NPV $ (Huo, Lamb; 2017)

4.9. Collaborative Technology

Problem: Collaborative technology is underutilised for live teaching, VLCs are not very good.

Greater use of collaborative technologies, such as video conferencing, and aligned timetables would permit geographically isolated students to more effectively participate in dual-enrolment programs through a centre of excellence for academic programs, resulting in only occasional onsite attendance.

Around 20 years ago, several private schools installed multiple video conferencing rooms to link their disparate campuses, negating the need students to travel by bus to the other campus for specialised courses. Staff provided supervision and tutorial assistance for the remote rooms. These were observed to work well, although not all of those schools are still using the original technologies.

However, such is not being observed to be used within the government system.

The current "virtual learning centre" arrangements are "not very good" where those VLC modules are ostensibly provided as "instructor-less" self-guided modules; when compared to instructor-led education (even if delivered online).

An achievement culture can elevate the overall educational experience at (for example) regional extension schools, rather than achieving students travelling to cities to participate in programs such as "advanced" maths.

Solution: Replace self-paced VLCs with live instructor-led multi-site online instruction, supervised by on-site staff, or deliver these courses exclusively as instructor-lead via Tasmanian eSchool.

Solution: Ensure greater use of collaborative technologies.

4.10. Students Who Become Adults

4.10.1.   Youth-Targeted Programs

Problem: 18-year-old students are problematic in the delivery of school-adjacent programs and high school programs, in the context of safeguarding and vulnerable people.

There are countless recent examples where programs have been restricted, reduced or discontinued due to issues integrating programs involving high-school and college aged students into their child and youth safe frameworks.

There have been reportedly examples where this has resulted in incidents, due to the presence of adults in educational facilities which are required to accommodate children potentially as young as 11.

Solution: Reduce the school entry age by 6 months.

4.10.2.   Unwise Decision-making

Problem: 18-year-olds are still teenagers.

Teenagers know everything, or at least they think they do. To improve TCE attainment and "educational success", teenagers and their families, peers and support network need to value education and the completion of Year 12.

They are not well-equipped to make decisions around cessation of education "mid year" when they turn 18.

Solution 1: Modify the definition of the TCE to cater for students who turn 18 during the calendar year that they are attending Year 12.

Solution 2: Create a parallel standard to the TCE for a certificate issued to all adults who have satisfied 10(b)(ii) of the Education Act a document which is equivalent to a higher school certificate (such as the NSW Record of School Achievement, RoSA) and treat this as educational success accordingly. This could be achieved by awarding these students a TCEA (based on a Qualifications Certificate), rather than the student needing to apply for it or engage under an IEP.

Solution 3: Legislate to require these students stay in Year 12 until they complete it, even if they turn 18.

4.10.1.   Children Born Jan-Apr More Likely to Drop Out of Year 12

Problem: Students born in the first part of the year are more likely to drop out of Year 12.

Analysis by others[15] and anecdotal evidence[16] indicate that Tasmanian students born earlier in the year are disproportionately more likely to drop out of Year 12 over and beyond a correlation with the number of remaining days to completion.

Whilst there are several studies which correlate increased academic performance of children who are the oldest within a cohort beyond what can be otherwise controlled for their age[l], there are also studies which link compulsory attendance to varied retention outcomes[li]. This effect is not as pronounced in the catholic and independent sector, which links to "value of education" concerns noted elsewhere.

Reducing the minimum entry age and/or offsetting the "in school by" to mid-year (e.g. Jun-Aug), thus aligning Year 7 entry with QLD and NSW would solve this problm. Tasmania's Kindergarten entrance age requires for children to be at least 4 years old on or by 1 January to commence in a given calendar year, with a requirement to participate from age 5. NSW permits children who turn 5 on or before 31 July but requires compulsory schooling in Prep before age 6, thus earlier-than-mandated and mid-year entry is anecdotally[17] more common.

Note: Offsetting the "in school by" age without adjustment to the "minimum" age could result in an increased prevalence of mid-year commencement/enrolments, however Government school programs such as Launch into Learning and, Opposition-proposed policy around early childhood would likely provide greater integration.

Solution: Reduce the entry ages to kindergarten by up to 6 months to align with other states.

4.1. Education Linkage to Age 25

Problem: Our reporting stops, basically, at Year 12 or Age 18. Data suggests the benefit in close tracking to Age 25 and providing TCE-equivalent education to this age group.

Assessment of PIIAC and PSTRE data suggested a peak for key measures at age 25, over and above the numbers for younger ages. This suggests an increase in functional literacy. There are number of reasons. This is most likely out of the scope of the review.

It would be advantageous to target literacy-based and numeracy-based learning programs, through organisations such as TasTAFE to students who have not met minimum baselines in their most recent testing whilst in the school system.

This could be supported by linkage of completion of these programs to incentives, such as cash payments and through government supports (Job Seeker, Ausstudy etc).

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Note: This links to the suggestion elsewhere relating to conducting an 'education census'.

Solution: Provide zero-cost enhanced support to age 25 through TasTAFE.

Solution: Ensure data reporting to Age 25.

5. Theme 4 - Support for our teaching workforce

How do we attract, support and develop teachers and school leaders to be effective and successful practitioners who can confidently deliver high quality, evidence-based teaching that meets the needs of students at all levels?

5.1. Why Do Teachers Leave?

There is much public commentary about the plight of teachers, particularly high workloads and expectations that are leading to burn out, teachers leaving the profession, and not making the job sound attractive to future potential teachers

5.1.1. Why does anyone leave?

The most common reason for people leaving permanent employment is stress and conflicts with management, particularly the immediate supervisor.

5.1.2. Weed Out Low Performers

How can we keep the existing workforce feeling energised and supported so they stay?

Problem: Low performing staff and quiet quitters.

Whilst teacher burnout may be due to several factors, one key factor that this submission seeks to point out in order to support a high-performing workforce it is necessary to ensure that the momentum of the organisation and impetus to deliver is shared by all team members.

To quote the adage, "*It's hard to soar like an eagle when you are surrounded by turkeys.*"

Teachers who have left the profession inevitably include multiple teachers who really care, and consistently go above and beyond, but have their efforts criticised for "making others look bad" and "setting the bar too high".

Research suggests that retrenching low-performing staff can contribute to a high-performing culture by maintaining or elevating overall standards. One perspective on this approach comes from the concept of "*stack ranking*," which businesses worldwide adopt variants of, where the consistently lowest-performing staff are identified and through improvement plans, either improved or shown the door.

This motivates staff in general by demonstrating a commitment to high standards and encourages a culture of accountability. Evidence suggests that removal of low performers improves morale among high performers who see that underperformance is addressed rather than tolerated, resulting in greater retention of top talent[lii] . Low performers can negatively

impact workplace morale and productivity, particularly when high performers are burdened with extra work to compensate. Dismissing low performers has been associated with improved innovation and higher overall productivity, as it allows resources to be focused on more effective staff who drive growth and improvement, and reduce turnover among high performers, who might otherwise leave if they perceive tolerance for mediocrity.

Such practices are controversial and are not without drawbacks, particularly in the government system they are intrinsically incompatible with state service principles and the desires of the AEU who seek to progress their members interests at times over the quality education of our next generation.

Ultimately, there is a need for more consistent mechanisms to identify underperforming teachers, those who contribute the bare minimum, and 'quiet quitters'. In government schools, we can ensure KPI/KRIs are tracked through data, including year-by-year student achievement uplift against teaching staff, and adopt more rigorous performance management techniques aimed at remediating poor performing teachers, or ultimately moving low-performing teachers to other more suited professions.

Solution: Remove the 'dead wood' to lift the profession.

5.1.3.   Weed Out Ineffective Management

How can we keep the existing workforce feeling energised and supported so they stay?

Problem: Ineffective Management.

A key reason people quit is because of "management". This can be immediate supervisors, or feeling powerless within the hierarchy.

As such, it is suggested to review reporting structures for teachers and Principals in schools. It may be worthwhile considering a management strategy which has been deployed in other sectors, where the "People Manager" is a different person to the "Output Manager", thus more effectively aligning the two, sometimes competing, goals.

Regardless, people managers such as Principals should be moved to performance-based, fixed-term contracts (for example, 2 years) with a greater focus on staff performance.

Principals should be empowered to better fight for their cause within the machinery of the Department. And ,entoring programs, independent of Principals, should focus primarily on teacher performance improvement.

Solution: Changes to management practices.

5.1.4. High Schools: Unsupported Crowd Controllers

Problem: There is a particular challenge with high school teachers.

There is a particular challenge with retention of high school teachers. Many teachers are thrust into high schools where students will have already had multiple teachers in the current or previous year.

There are obvious problems with the effectiveness of behaviour management and policies for students within their class. They feel that they are doing "crowd control" not teaching.

Research[liii] has examined the impact of disruptive classroom behaviour and the lack of social support on teacher burnout, in addition to the "school social environment", suggesting that such environments increase emotional exhaustion and stress among teachers, contributing to higher turnover rates. There is also substantial evidence to suggest a poor learning outcomes from students in similar environments.

This is a particular problem with *some* classes in *some* schools, and not others. For example, teachers of drama, music and "advanced" maths classes rarely face these challenges.

Solution: Ensure effective behaviour management tools available to teachers, and support calm school environments to reduce teacher burnout.

5.1.5. Administrative Burden

Problem: Teachers feel that a large amount of administrative burden is being placed on them at the expense of teaching.

This includes mandatory training that they consider irrelevant or unnecessary to their role.

Notwithstanding, teachers are typically onsite for less time than other full-time employees, and have much more generous holidays.

Solution 1: Realign the teaching workforce parameters to shift the training and administrative burden into school holiday periods, to more closely align with the regular workforce and optimise service delivery in student contact time. This could include professional learning days and moderation days.

Solution 2: Administrative burden to other staff, such as administration staff and teacher assistants, and adopt a "red tape reduction" attitude.

Solution 3: Reconsider the need to educate a high school maths teacher about early childhood teaching advances.

5.1.6.   Industrial Relations

Problem: Our current industrial relations environment for teaching.

What if we could pay the best performing teachers more, and the worst performing teachers less?

What if we could have individual contracts where specific educators could be paid more, like the catholic and independent sectors *reportedly* do in some cases?

Why is it near-impossible to fire someone in the state service?

Solution: The industrial relations landscape needs to change.

5.2.   Is There a Skills Shortage?

Problem: We have a "skills shortage".

The concept of a "skills shortage" is often misleading, as such shortages are typically symptoms of larger issues related to the pipeline of workers entering a profession and the attractiveness of that profession. Many so-called skills shortages are the result of inadequate investment in training, unattractive pay, or poor working conditions, rather than an actual lack of capable people willing to fill roles.

Any profession that is perceived as undervalued or high-stress will struggle to attract and retain workers, regardless of training or availability. Those seeking teaching as a profession could chose alternate pathways for lower-stress higher-reward outcomes.

Economists often highlight that what is termed a "skills shortage" is frequently a mismatch between pay levels and the skills required. If wages were raised and conditions improved, we would likely attract more and better qualified candidates. Higher compensation signals the value of the work and respects the skill level required to perform it.

The key group to attract to the teaching profession should be professionals with other qualifications and work experience seeking a change for *non-economic reasons*. These individuals should be actively encouraged to join the profession.

Solution: We don't have a skills shortage, just constraints that precipitate one.

5.3.   Too Much Union Influence

Problem: Teachers as a profession are getting an easy wicket, and the AEU has too much power[liv].

Some teachers do quite a lot with their time. Many teachers don't. The unions have paralysed any effort to get teachers to do more, even when it is justified. Each new agreement results in industrial-strength retraction of previous duties.

Many restrictions on what teachers will and won't do need to be reviewed and removed, as they have stuck long after the "industrial action" period as part of wage negotiations.

A "re-set" is needed.

Solution: Analyse and remove all current union stipulations, ensure that practice forces previous stipulations to be overruled.

Solution: Change teachers to a 4 week annual leave regime or make teachers work at school for the equivalent daily hours given the greater holiday time.

5.4. More Teachers, Quality Teaching: Education Workforce Roundtable Action Plan

How can we get more great teachers and school leaders and help them do their jobs well?

Problem: All Plan, No Action.

We have an Education Workforce Roundtable who claim to be "building a workforce of talented people to deliver outstanding teaching and learning outcomes". We have a "More Teachers, Quality Teaching Action Plan" which claims to have action in that space.

This plan consists primarily of motherhood statements, and non-specific actions.

The plan does not address systemic issues within the system, such as retention and attractiveness of the profession.

Solution: Create an actual plan incorporating specific measurable deliverables with timelines attached, and report on attainment.

6. Theme 5 - Accountability for improved outcomes

How do we ensure that policy initiatives are implemented, and resources are used to improve learning outcomes?

6.1.   Data for Teachers and School Leaders

What helps teachers and school leaders implement initiatives so that the focus on improvement is maintained?

Answer: Data. Continuing to measure, even after initial 'completion' or targets are met.

6.2.   Data for Parents

Problem: Parents and the community do not have data.

Information about the performance of individuals, schools and systems helps parents and families make informed choices and engage with their children's education and the school community.

Parents and families should generally have access to:

- all data about their children's performance in the context of other students
- how their school is performing, including in-class and class-to-class comparisons
- what should be expected of their child

Parents, families and the broader community should generally have access to:

- data on student outcomes
- data that allows them to assess a school's performance overall and in improving student outcomes
- contextual information about the philosophy and educational approach of schools, and their facilities, programs and extracurricular activities
- information about a school's enrolment profile.

Solution: More accessibility and transparency of information.

6.3.   Remove Politics and Politicians

Problem: Politicians and political parties.

Politicians repeatedly announce wasteful and poorly considered projects to win votes and favour.

Some recent Tasmanian examples include capital spend for school redevelopments on a school campus which is less than 30 years old to create new buildings and demolish existing buildings, where teaching staff suggest[18] the new buildings are less fit for purpose than the old, and a fit out which did not adequately cater for projected student demand, resulting in the school being 'at capacity' due to a lack of space, immediately following the redevelopment.

Tasmania's 2018 election commitments included $179 million of funding for new schools and school rebuilds over the 2018-2023 period. Whilst it is accepted that some new schools were needed due to demographics, many of the upgrades were, upon reflection, questionable, and could not be linked to demonstrable increased educational outcomes through increased standardised test scores or attendance (when adjusted for other factors). Furthermore, despite their cost many of these builds were of poor quality, resulting in fittings and fixtures being easily damaged.

A recent example of political decision-making was the transfer of 'regional' swimming pool redevelopment funds to the nearby primary school, when its proposed projects were actually lower on the priority list than other schools.

Solution: Ensure transparency in projects based on assessed need and benefit-cost ratio to prevent white elephant and pork-barrel projects. A bipartisan political approach and discipline would be required. As such, funding announcements by parties in election campaigns could only influence the inclusion of "down the list" projects, based on a promised funding envelope.

6.4. There Needs to be a Ribbon to Cut

Problem: Projects which do not have a photo opportunity are not "exciting".

Projects or initiatives within operational expenditure are not exciting and not generally supported by politicians, as the media cycle does not provided the necessary ego-stroking.

Solution: Politicians need to learn how to cut virtual ribbons on improved outcomes.

6.5. Haves and Have Nots

Problem: The DECYP's priority list is based on schools not projects.

This is understood to be as a result of political necessities rather than good decision making, efficiencies, or project governance.

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As a result, bundles of capital works are frequently set forth together resulting in greater disparity between facilities at various schools.

Solution: Bias spend towards smaller capital projects including "capital works" which are ostensibly renewals and maintenance.

Solution: Plan capital maintenance and renewal programs in advance such as through asset renewal programs for depreciated assets.

6.6. Wasteful Works

Problem: DECYP asset strategy has specific mandates around some items which are not risk-aligned, unnecessary and wasteful, when a risk-based approach would address higher risk items. An example of this is the Switchboard Upgrade[lv] program, where a department mandate required a school with a leaking roof over a recently-installed (less than 15 year old) switchboard which was fully compliant to AS3000 including "safety switches" to have the switchboard replaced prior to the rectification of water ingress in the vicinity.

Solution: DECYP needs more qualified and skilled staff to make informed decisions rather than the reliance on external consultants, engineers and contractors.

6.7. Stop Over-Funding Private Schools

Problem: The government is providing top-up funds to already over-funded private schools.

Multiple independent schools receive approximately $13,000 of recurrent state and federal funding per student (approximately the SRS outright), despite their private parent fees and charges alone approaching double the SRS.

Another common example is high-ICSEA catholic schools having total net recurrent income around $1000 more than a nearby lower-ICSEA government school, despite achieving lower student attainment and with no other notable loading factors.

Solution: Redistribute government funding from private schools with total net recurrent income exceeding the amount provided to government schools.

6.8. Close Unsustainable Government Schools

Problem: Unsustainable government schools are an inefficient use of resources.

Problem: Politicians don't want to be the ones to close schools.

There are areas where small schools[lvi] do not adequately meet the needs of their communities.

For example, Ouse District School has enrolments, and students are bused to Westerway Primary School or Glenora District High School; yet reportedly there are multiple staff *including a Principal*.

Sassafras, Natone, Wilmot and Redpa are similarly unviable where the additional transport time to the next-nearest school is under 30 minutes daily. At least one of these schools is close to the residence of multiple state politicians, and therefore closure is considered unlikely due to politics.

Unsustainable schools with less than 2 classes should be generally considered for closure where bus transport to an alternate school is less than 30 minutes. Public transport should be equipped to maximise learning opportunities.

Solution: Close unsustainably small government schools.

Problem: Communities value small schools in their local communities.

6.8.1.   Community School Program

Notwithstanding the closure of small government schools, a program could be established to permit department-*supported* community-operated small schools (e.g. 1-2 teacher), with operation in former government schools space which have been closed down as unsustainable.

Such would provide the wishes of the community through an initiative which they can support and invest, and accept a more efficient delivery (such as not requiring more FTE staff than students by accepting a 'lead teacher' as principal, a remote school business manager, and parent/volunteer facility attendant). It is likely that several areas would be well-placed to adopt such a model, such as Cape Barren Island.

A model along these lines has previously existed in Tasmania in several towns.

Solution: Establish a "Community Schools" program.[19]

6.9.   Review Implementation

Problem: Review findings rejected by government, bureaucracy, or fizzle out.

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19 ██

The Tasmanian education system has a history of ambitious reforms that were well-intentioned, but they were not always effectively implemented. This situation is not unique to education, and it is not unique to Tasmania.

Often the issue is a gap between policy ideas not translating to actual improvements in the classroom, and the lesson seems to be that it is equally crucial to focus on what changes are needed along with how to apply them effectively.

7. Other Observations

7.1. Parent Background

We can see clearly in data that our largest underperformers are where parents did not themselves achieve Year 11, or work in specific bands (e.g. Occupation Group 4).

NAPLAN achievement for Year 9 in reading by parental background, Tasmania 2024

Subgroup	Average NAPLAN score (confidence interval)	Exempt	Needs additional support (NAS)	Developing	Strong	Exceeding
Parental education: bachelor	598.7 (±6.5)	1.1%	4.4%	15.1%	49.6%	29.9%
Parental education: diploma	551.3 (±8.3)	2.5%	11.9%	28.5%	46.4%	10.9%
Parental education: certificate	530.4 (±7.0)	2.7%	18.7%	32.6%	38.8%	7.5%
Parental education: Year 12	520.7 (±19.0)	5.6%	23.7%	29.7%	33.9%	7.1%
Parental education: Year 11	490.9 (±9.8)	5.0%	32.3%	33.0%	25.8%	1.1%
Senior managers and professionals	591.6 (±8.4)	1.1%	6.5%	16.3%	48.1%	28.0%
Other managers and associate professionals	550.0 (±8.5)	1.4%	11.3%	26.5%	46.3%	14.5%
Skilled trades, clerical and sales	541.4 (±7.2)	2.6%	15.2%	30.0%	42.2%	9.2%
Unskilled manual, office & sales	512.9 (±8.8)	4.0%	25.3%	33.9%	31.7%	5.1%
Not in paid work for 12 months	490.6 (±15.0)	7.5%	32.1%	31.1%	24.2%	5.1%
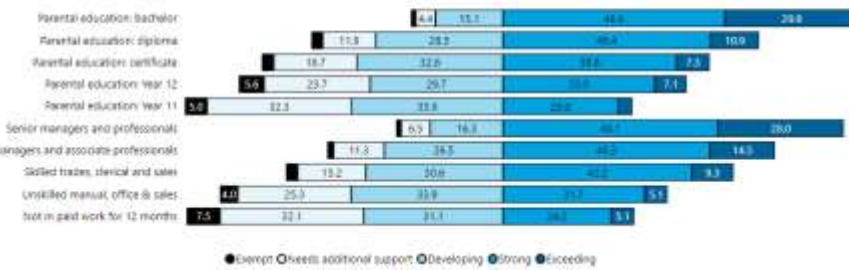
Figure 10 Parent Background - ACAARA
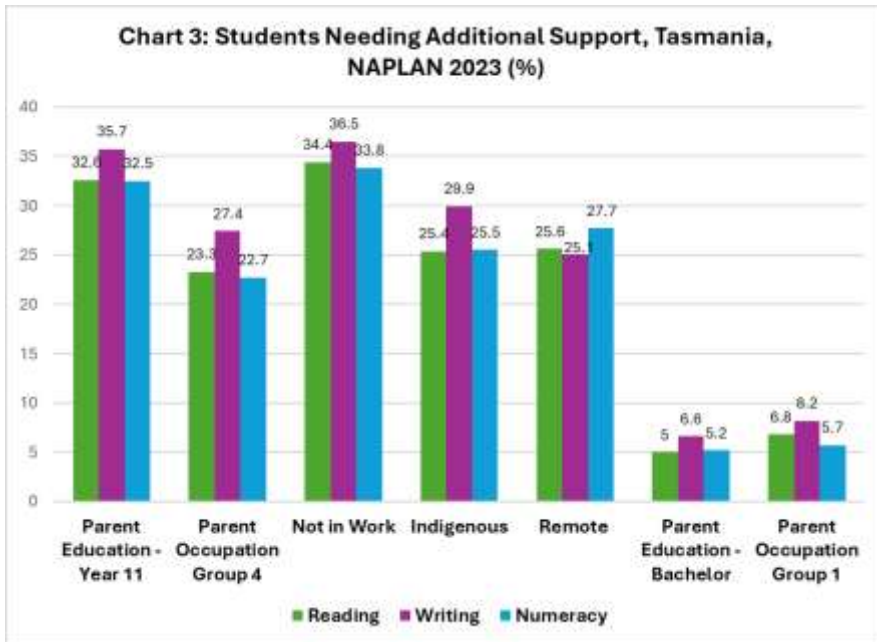
Figure 11 Source: Save Our Schools

Other than remoteness (remote/outer regional) and indigenous status, students themselves have a lower influence on results.

NAPLAN achievement for Year 9 in reading by student background, Tasmania 2024

Subgroup	Average NAPLAN score (confidence interval)	Exempt	Needs additional support (NAS)	Developing	Strong	Exceeding
All	553.9 (±5.8)	2.6%	14.5%	25.8%	41.9%	15.2%
Male	543.6 (±12.0)	3.2%	18.4%	26.2%	28.8%	13.8%
Female	563.9 (±9.0)	1.9%	10.8%	25.8%	43.8%	18.7%
Indigenous	511.2 (±11.8)	4.3%	27.0%	32.1%	31.1%	5.4%
Non-Indigenous	558.3 (±9.0)	2.2%	12.8%	24.7%	43.5%	16.8%
Major cities	-	-	-	-	-	-
Inner regional	559.9 (±13.5)	2.7%	13.3%	24.0%	42.4%	17.7%
Outer regional	539.6 (±9.0)	2.2%	17.0%	29.8%	40.9%	10.0%
Remote	525.5 (±42.9)	10.0%	21.0%	34.5%	25.0%	9.5%
Very remote	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.
Non-LBOTE	552.0 (±9.0)	2.6%	14.9%	26.1%	41.7%	14.8%
LBOTE	571.6 (±15.0)	1.2%	10.6%	22.5%	43.1%	20.5%
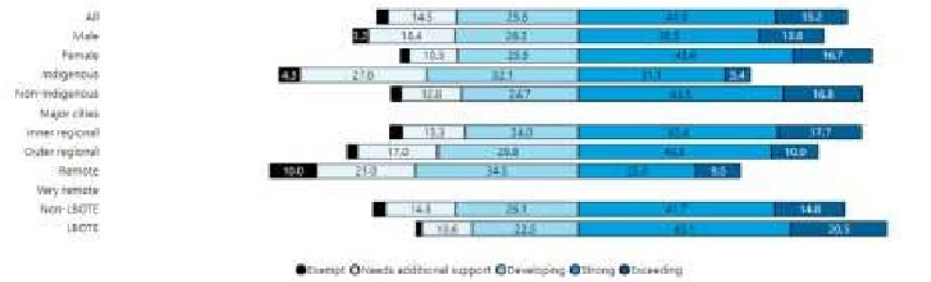
Figure 12 Student Background

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