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Independent Review of Education in Tasmania

*The Department Response to the Public
Consultation Paper*

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Introduction

The Department for Education, Children and Young People (the Department) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Consultation Paper for the Independent Review of Education in Tasmania. This response includes the perspective of school staff. It provides the opportunity to highlight key resources and supports in the Department, what is working well and recognise the important work of our school staff every day as well as areas for improvement across each theme identified in the Consultation Paper.

The Department was established in October 2022, bringing together the Department of Education and the Department of Communities to deliver better outcomes for all Tasmanian children and young people across all our settings. We are here to create bright lives and positive futures for children and young people in Tasmania.

Our new Strategic Plan 2024-2030 was developed through wide-ranging consultation to outline a shared vision for children and young people in Tasmania and strategic direction for the Department. The Plan provides the scope for tightening our focus to improve educational outcomes for children and young people.

The Strategic Plan connects the work of everyone in the Department to both 'Our Why' and 'Our How', and describes shared beliefs, values and foundations. It is more than just a document to be guided by, as the strategic plan framework supports the Department's planning and decision making to focus effort and initiatives to achieve better outcomes for children and young people in Tasmania. Work is underway to further develop how we support and measure success through building accountability for outcomes through our new Outcomes Framework.

Recognising and understanding the Tasmanian context is important for how we support children and young people. Tasmania has a small and dispersed population, and we recognise increasing high rates and concentrations of disadvantage which continue to grow over time, including lower digital accessibility, as demonstrated by a range of social and economic indicators¹. This has seriously impacted the outcomes of Tasmanian learners with lower levels of attendance, achievement and attainment that is statistically significantly different to the national standard. Even before COVID-19, key national indicators showed declining health, wellbeing and learning outcomes for many Australian children, particularly for those most socioeconomically disadvantaged. These trends are present in Tasmania and have detrimental social and economic consequences for individuals, communities and society². Ultimately, entrenched disadvantage is the major barrier to positive learner outcomes in Tasmania.

A key strength of the Tasmanian education system has been the continued Tasmanian Government investment in the necessary services and supports for our youngest children and their families to thrive. Research confirms that participation in quality early childhood learning and education provides positive development outcomes for the child³, and improves children's cognitive

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia.

² Reinventing Australian Schools for the better wellbeing, health and learning of every child (2023) Sahlberg, P, Goldfeld, S, Quach, J, Senior C and Sinclair C. University of Melbourne, Murdoch Children's Research Institute & Southern Cross University.

³ Literature review of the impact of early childhood education and care on learning and development (2015) AIHW, Canberra.

outcomes and school readiness, particularly for those experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability⁴.

The challenge is to sustain consistent educational growth for all children and young people throughout their formal schooling years. It is in this context that we are focusing on building on the foundational elements for learning. An example of this tight, new focus is the minimum schooling guarantee for reading⁵ which mandates a structured (systematic and explicit), evidence-based approach to the teaching of reading for all students across all school years through implementing a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework. Tasmania is the first jurisdiction in Australia to mandate an evidence-based approach to reading across our whole school system.

The Department has set four targeted priorities for 2024-2025:

- **Lifting Literacy** - children and young people have the reading skills they need for life because we are implementing structured literacy instruction and a multi-tiered system of supports to help all learners to be engaged, learn and succeed.
- **Workforce** - we need a plan that addresses our immediate workforce challenges, that supports our people feeling safe, well and valued, while keeping line of sight to the transformation necessary to create bright lives and positive futures for our children and young people.
- **Participation and Empowerment** - we have more consistent and embedded practices for engaging children and young people in decision-making, so that they have a stronger say in decisions that affect them.
- **Safe and cared for** - we need strengthened capacity to provide support at the right time and ensure the rights of children are upheld in all that we do.

These Priorities are not new ideas, they are the foundations for tightening our focus for high leverage initiatives to increase educational outcomes. The Department recognises that change in these areas will help us have the biggest positive impact for children and young people now. This work is underpinned by strong project management principles to ensure risk mitigation, senior accountable officers, resourcing and organisational alignment.

We need to remain aspirational while ensuring the foundations for learning are in place. The foundations must be evidence based, targeted and implemented with fidelity. Our vision into the next 10 years and beyond is for all Tasmanian children and young people to have the foundations to be curious, adaptable and capable of achieving bright lives and positive futures.

Theme 1 – Defining educational success

Our education system is critical in supporting our young people to gain the skills they need to fully contribute to our community and economic future. The Department believes that every student deserves to leave school with the skills they need to thrive in life, learning and work, and that their achievement of these skills should be valued. Educational success can also be envisioned as encompassing not only academic achievements but also personal growth, developing social skills, and building a sense of purpose.

⁴ A path to universal early childhood education and care (2024) Productivity Commission report.

⁵ The minimum schooling guarantee was recommended in the Literacy Advisory Panel final report, 2023.

Across Australia we know some young people are not completing their education or being fully prepared to enter the workforce and Tasmania's education system experiences the same challenges. We need to make changes to education provision to meet the needs of young people.

At a cross-sectoral working group in May 2024 students shared what alternative ways of learning would look like for them, including:

- They do not want to feel aimless. They want to have a plan, feel happy with 'where they are now' and to know what success looks like.
- School plays an important role in providing work experience and different options for learning (not just university).
- They want schools to provide more exploration of different career pathways, more diverse electives, more work experience in different fields, and more support with practical skills like writing resumes and managing personal finances.
- They want teachers to listen more and collaborate more, and they want teachers to ask more about personal circumstances, rather than making assumptions.
- Most students prefer in-person learning with a teacher in comparison to online learning. This helps them feel focused and engaged. Some students asked whether school could be reduced to three days a week, to allow them time for paid work.

"The best teachers are the ones who take the time to get to know you and celebrate all your small wins. My wins might be different from other students, but that doesn't mean I'm not doing my best" young person, Student Engagement and Attendance Team (SEAT) student consultation, 2024.

Further work needs to be done to understand how to address the causes of student disengagement in senior secondary. Through the Advisory Council for Education (ACE) we have started collaborating with non-government school sectors to explore a holistic definition of success in senior secondary that is underpinned by the perspectives of diverse Tasmanian young people, parents and carers, teachers and employers.

The findings of the Independent Education Review Final Report will inform the scope and focus for the cross-sector collaboration.

Theme 2 – Strengthening supports and engagement for all learners at all stages of their education

The Department recognises the importance of supporting children and young people to attend school and be engaged with their learning, and by adopting the current research base directs our next steps. Now more than ever the investment in the early years is providing foundations for growth and improved educational outcomes, although we accept there is more to be done to support our children and young people throughout their learning journey.

DECYP recognises that with the right evidence-based supports at the right time every student can achieve regardless of their background, disability or language. With the focus provided by our Strategic Plan, the Department is committed to providing respectful and inclusive learning environments for all Tasmanian children and young people, through ensuring they have the essential skills, supports and adjustments to attend school and engage in learning.

The Strategic Plan allows us to tightly focus on a few, key priorities to ensure every child is known, safe, well and learning every day. We have started with a tight focus on literacy to ensure more learners leave school with foundational life skills and to open opportunities for each young person to have a bright life and positive future.

Early years and families

The early years are crucial for a child's development, education, and long-term success. Evidence-based research continues to point the direction into how quality early learning leads to improved education and life outcomes, particularly for children who engage in early learning prior to schooling.

Strong foundations are in place and, drawing on the evidence, a tighter focus for initiatives that support families is the next phase of work. This means that the range of different initiatives and programs in the early years offered by the Department will be refined to further engage and support children and their families in positive learning experiences. By facilitating partnerships between families, educators and the community, these programs ensure that children are well prepared for their educational journeys.

Programs supporting engagement in learning for the early years include Child and Family Learning Centres (CFLCs), Early Childhood Inclusion Services (ECIS), Launching into Learning (LiL), Learning in Families Together (LiFT), Early Learning for Three Year Olds initiative (EL3) and the Working Together program.

Our Together with Families Approach is the framework to build a culture of and capacity for family engagement across the Department, including expectations for schools, CFLCs and our libraries. Families are the first and most important influence, inspiration and support for children and young people. The Department recognises that sustaining an appropriate level of family engagement throughout all stages of education is important for maintaining high expectations and support for students.

Supporting wellbeing for learning

The Department recognises and supports the rights of children and young people to a quality education. We understand that student wellbeing is crucial for achieving good educational outcomes. These efforts to improve wellbeing are underpinned by the views of children and young people, with almost 30,000 students completing the Student Wellbeing and Engagement Survey each year telling us how they feel about their wellbeing. The Department also undertakes family surveys each year to understand parents' and/or carers' satisfaction with their school and education services.

School Support and Wellbeing Teams (SSWT) are responsible for whole-school planning and processes relating to support and wellbeing, targeted support for cohorts/groups of students and oversight and coordination of individual support for students including monitoring data on attendance and student behaviour.

Specialised teams of professional support staff including school psychologists, social workers and school health nurses in schools work closely with specific students and families to support access, participation and engagement. The specialised wellbeing intervention and supports these Student Support Teams provide include:

- specific learning interventions, assessments and diagnoses undertaken by School Psychologists and Speech and Language Pathologists to inform the learning program and address the barriers to education
- wellbeing and educational intervention provided by school health nurses

- the Back on Track program supporting young people who have not transitioned from Year 10 to an Approved Learning Program for their senior secondary years of schooling.
- Inter-agency Student Support including Safe Homes, Safe Families
- flexible Tier 3 and 4 (intensive intervention or re-engagement) education provision.

The Department has a range of additional resources for schools to support students with disability and students impacted by trauma.

The Model for Supporting Students Impacted by Trauma identifies and addresses need at a universal, whole-of-school, and individual student level. Through this multi-tiered approach, the Department aims to build system-wide capacity in trauma-informed practice.

Inclusive education for students with disability

The Department is committed to delivering high-quality inclusive education for students with disability, providing a range of additional funded programs through the needs-based Educational Adjustments Disability Funding Model and specialised services to support students with disability and ensure that inclusive education practices remain a key priority.

Supporting students with disability in our schools is influenced by the current broader reforms of the NDIS Review and Disability Royal Commission. It will be important that policies, procedures, and processes in Tasmania continue to be refined to support students effectively within this evolving landscape.

The Department is refining the Educational Adjustments Model to ensure the right supports are provided for our students with disability by implementing several actions. These include:

- A professional learning program for staff, which elevates the quality of inclusive education and provides training for new Principals.
- Making targeted updates to key resources and further tailoring the support provided to schools.
- Strengthening our complaints process and giving parents clear avenues for input.

Knowing our learners and their needs is essential for effectively helping our children and young people reach their learning goals. We are committed to increasing the influence and agency of children and young people in schools and across the Department through the development and implementation of a Participation and Empowerment Strategy. This work will ensure we have more consistent and embedded practices for engaging children and young people and will guide our support approaches.

Case Study: Wellbeing for Learning

Student wellbeing has a critical impact on educational outcomes. The significant time that a child spends in our education settings gives us an opportunity to positively impact their overall wellbeing and life outcomes. Schools have Student Support Teams made up of a range of specialised support staff such as Psychologists, Social Workers, Speech and Language Pathologists, School Health Nurses and Inclusive Practice Coaches, as well as other specialised teams (Aboriginal Education Service, English as an Additional Language and gifted). They are all committed to enhancing students' wellbeing and learning.

Knowing our students means we tailor support and connect them with services that meet their needs. Fostering strong relationships is important. It creates a safe and inclusive learning environment that enables students to thrive.

Our Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy, *Wellbeing for Learning*, creates a shared understanding of how wellbeing affects learning. It embeds this into our school and system improvement efforts. We use the following domains⁶ to define child and student wellbeing: Loved, Safe and Valued; Learning; Healthy; Material Basics; Participating; and Positive Sense of Culture and Identity.

This is a data driven approach. The Department is committed to every child and young person being known, safe, well and learning⁷. Tasmanian Government schools listen to students in many ways. This includes the annual Student Wellbeing and Engagement Survey, now in its sixth year. Resources are provided to schools to facilitate discussions of the survey results with students. This gives students agency in responding to the data.

The Department collates valid and reliable data, to help us understand student wellbeing over time and guide future efforts and planning. The works also aligns efforts and targeted resource allocation based on evidence and data.

For instance, supported by data, all schools are required and supported to have a School Support and Wellbeing Team (SSWT) to coordinate interventions for children and young people requiring additional support. We provide expert-led professional learning and curriculum resources on various wellbeing topics, including: Trauma Informed Practice in Schools, Restorative Practices, Respectful Relationships and Consent Education, Social and Emotional Learning teaching resources and Classroom Management resources that offer proven, practical strategies helping teachers to create safe and supportive learning environments.

Supported by data, the Tasmanian Government continues to make significant investments⁸ in student wellbeing, including:

- \$24 million to support students impacted by trauma
- \$14.6 million to expand the School Lunch Program
- \$6.2 million for increased access to School Health Nurses
- \$8.6 million to expand professional support staff.

Theme 3 – Outcomes at the conclusion of the formal years of schooling

Young people are telling us they want a wider range of learning options with stronger connections to the workforce and more holistic support from earlier in their secondary schooling.

⁶ These domains are adopted from the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) 'The Nest' wellbeing framework.

⁷ Department for Education Children and Young People Strategic Plan 2024 - 2030

⁸ Figures according to the 2023-24 State Budget, projected across the forward estimates.

“Year 12 is seen as a time for personal growth, exploring different areas of learning, and preparing for future aspirations” staff member, DECYP Independent Education Review Survey 2024.

The Department recognises that our secondary education system must remain flexible and adaptive to the changing world and that we need to do things differently to keep more young people engaged in education and training. Evidence tells us students who stay at school have better life outcomes. An ongoing focus for our education system is to improve literacy, attendance, retention, attainment and student outcomes to better support choice of learning and career pathways.

We know fewer Tasmanian students are staying in school until Year 12 and more Tasmanians are getting qualifications later in life. This means fewer students are reported as achieving a senior secondary certificate at the end of Year 12 when compared to interstate counterparts.

There are limitations in focusing solely on the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) or the Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE) as a measure of attainment. Young Tasmanians aged 20-24 are approaching national attainment rates when Vocational Education and Training (VET) pathways are included in the measure. Therefore, we want to ensure VET learning outcomes including apprenticeship and employment learning outcomes are recognised and valued.

There is still room for improvement to increase community understanding of the many options and pathways available for learning, especially in Years 9 to 12 and beyond.

The adoption of a structured approach to teaching reading is showing early indications that we are on the right track to engage learners, and improve attendance, retention and attainment, with success stories already emerging.

Case Study: Lifting Literacy – Launceston College

As part of the introduction in all Tasmanian Government schools of an evidence-based, structured approach to the teaching of reading, Tasmanian senior secondary students who struggle with reading have been receiving additional literacy support in 2024.

The literacy team at Launceston College have been working with Year 11 and 12 students with complex disabilities as well as students whose first language is not English, to trial a range of interventions aimed at improving their decoding skills. Decoding skills are one of a number of key skills we need to be able to read well. Usually, they are learnt in the first few years of school. But, where students have missed out on this learning, they need additional support. Ensuring they get this, when they need it, is a key focus of the Department’s comprehensive approach to lifting literacy for all students.

Providing appropriate intervention can be challenging in senior secondary school, due to compulsory course contact hours and other structural constraints, but the team at Launceston College have shown how it can be done and it’s making a difference for individual students.

After working with Advanced Skills Teacher Jo and Quality Teaching Coach Chris, using the MacqLit intervention program since February this year, one student at Launceston College, Harry, who has multiple diagnosed disabilities and was a very reluctant reader at the beginning, told staff ‘now I might be able to get an apprenticeship!’.

Harry has doubled his reading fluency this year, and his teacher reflected that she sees him applying his learning and the confidence he has gained in his reading in class as well.

Pathways support and guidance

The Department has heard from our young people that they need support for understanding pathways and career guidance early in their schooling⁹.

Through regional partnerships and collectives, we are providing students with more choice and alternative pathways. Regional Partnerships are made up of colleges and secondary schools, who work together to improve opportunities for all students to complete Year 12.

The Department has supported the development of Careers Practitioners through supporting staff to enrol in and complete a Graduate Certificate in Career Development Practice. There are now 54 Career Practitioners across 29 schools and in all 7 Regional Partnerships.

In addition to this, the Department has developed approaches to identify students at risk of disengagement and who are not on track to achieve their TCE, which includes provision of targeted support including through the 'Back on Track' team. Forty-four per cent of Year 11 and 12 students supported by the 'Back on Track' team this year have already re-engaged or otherwise met education requirements.

Through the Applied Capability Qualifications, we have developed short employment skills-based units that count towards TCE, and we are expanding them to meet student requests. Virtual Learning Tasmania and Regional Partnerships give all Year 11 and 12 students the opportunity to enrol in courses not offered at their school. In 2023 up to 35 per cent of senior secondary students had shared enrolments to access courses not offered at their base school.

Providing options for education and vocational training

A 2016 Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) Review of the Years 9-12 in Tasmania noted that the attractiveness of VET and vocational learning in schools is one factor positively influencing the State's education retention rate. The ACER Review reflects the valuable role of VET and vocational learning and the importance for all sectors to work collaboratively, consulting with industry, to ensure VET, apprenticeship and vocational learning courses are seamlessly integrated into senior secondary schooling in Tasmania.

In Tasmania, there are currently around 2,500 students enrolled in a VET in Schools course with the Department, and 1,200 participating in an apprenticeship or traineeship. The Department's VET in Schools program involves over 140 specialised teachers delivering 39 qualifications in 36 campuses (schools) across the state and provides work-based learning services that help students understand the world of work.

"What's great about doing an Australian School-based Apprenticeship (ASbA) is that I'm getting the opportunity to start the career I want" Karlie Morgan, Careerify, June 2024

The Tasmanian Government is committed to creating a cohesive and engaging education system that supports lifelong learning and skill development. The Department will invest over \$36 million over the next six years to expand VET in secondary schools through delivering priority upgrades, growing the specialised VET workforce in schools and better preparing Year 9 and 10 students for apprenticeships with vocational learning options.

⁹ Tasmanian Association of College Students (TACS), August 2024

There is a growing acknowledgement of the value of offering a broad range of education and training options for young people in the senior years of schooling, and the importance of these being flexible to cater to diverse student needs and aspirations. These Complementary Program options include:

- International Big Picture Learning Credential
- Applied Capability Qualifications
- Packages of Learning
- Brand Tasmania Ideas Lab
- Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Senior Secondary Curriculum and supports

Our goal is to increase the number of young people participating in meaningful pathways. Through the Years 9-12 Project, the Department undertook a program of wholesale curriculum renewal. We developed and produced 41 contemporary new senior secondary courses which currently have over 2000 enrolments.

These courses were supported by a suite of resources for teachers including instructional videos, professional learning packs, implementation guides and online professional learning. Other outputs included the Year 9-12 Curriculum Framework, the Accreditation Framework and a Vision for Vocational learning and VET in Tasmanian Schools to 2030.

Our focus going forwards includes:

- develop or otherwise access short qualifications that focus on key life skills
- explore recognition of smaller chunks of learning to support re-engagement
- review the current curriculum to determine what needs replacing, retiring, or amending
- use existing courses and qualifications in a more targeted way – by mapping, packaging and promoting key pathways in, through, and out of secondary schooling
- build the capability of our secondary school workforce to provide critical pathway advice
- align our work with the Youth Jobs Strategy.

Supporting attendance to support positive outcomes

Everyone is capable of learning, irrespective of their background or previous educational experience. However, not all learners fare well in traditional school environments. There is a growing understanding that personalised, flexible and socially inclusive education service provision is essential to engaging a significant proportion of our learners.

“I dropped out of College I felt like I had no other choice but to leave (it) works really well for the people that it works for (it’s) really built for people that can work in that type of environment, but they don’t really have much support for people that can’t ... (that is) people who have ADHD, social anxiety, mental health issues or who don’t learn from sitting and listening” young person, SEAT student consultation, 2024

Noting national and state declines in school attendance, the Department continues to prioritise attendance as a key focus for each school’s annual improvement plans, through phased implementation of a whole school approach to improving attendance and reducing absences. Applying a MTSS framework ensures evidence-based, structured and systematic

implementation across all our schools. This prioritised and clear focus was initiated during 2024.

School Support and Wellbeing Teams (SSWT) continue to monitor and proactively mitigate risk in relation to attendance and students at risk of disengagement, applying intervention and supports as outlined earlier under Theme 2.

Theme 4 – Support for our teaching workforce

A foundation of our Strategic Plan is a valued and capable workforce. We want to attract, train and support the right people to keep them in the teaching profession. We want our Government Schools to be supportive environments where teachers can build on their quality teaching practice, pave a career path, and reach their full potential - while empowering learners to reach theirs.

“I was really behind when I got to primary school, and I had a Grade 5-6 teacher that helped me so much. He got me back up, got me to high school ... but I almost gave up in Year 7. Then in Year 8 a teacher noticed ... (they) actually took time to connect with every individual person... (and) used different ways for everyone to learn. People he taught years ago still come to visit his classroom, because he helped them that much” young person, SEAT student consultation, 2024.

Tasmania, like the rest of Australia, is facing a shortage of teachers. Increased workloads, complexity of student needs, declining professional status, and health and wellbeing concerns are impacting decisions to enter and remain in teaching. Our size, remoteness and the complexity of what it means to be a teacher, can make it hard to attract and keep great teachers.

Making sure we have enough staff to provide a great education for every student, in every school, every day is a challenge. Addressing teacher shortages is not just about recruiting more teachers. It's about recruiting the right teachers, with the right skills, like maths and science teachers and then matching them to the right location. It is also about providing the right support to encourage people to join and stay in the teaching profession.

To support our early career teachers to be classroom-ready, the Department provides early career teacher training, mentoring for new teachers, and placement supports for final-year students.

Recruitment

We are working to ensure every community has quality teachers, especially in rural and remote areas and hard to staff schools. This includes recruitment campaigns such as 'Be That Teacher' and 'Teach Tasmania' and the Teach for Australia program to provide quality teachers for hard to staff areas. Teachers in places like the West Coast are provided extra benefits, including help with relocation and housing, plus payments for staying long-term.

The *Education Workforce Action Plan* (EWAP) is our future plan for how we will attract, recruit and retain a quality education workforce. This Plan will be released at the end of this year for implementation across 2025 to 2028. It will have four focus areas: growing, expanding and optimising workforce supply; improving job readiness and building capability; increasing support, sustainability and job satisfaction; and building a future Tasmanian education workforce.

The Plan recognises the importance of the *National Teacher Workforce Action Plan 2022* but goes further to address challenges unique to Tasmania. A specific action stream is to build on the

nationally funded Maximising Time to Teach Program to identify and trial ways to re-design role of teachers and rationalise workload.

Through Better and Fairer Schools Agreement the Tasmanian Government has committed to work under the national reform direction to build a strong and sustainable workforce. Tasmania is in the process of finalising its bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth that will include specific initiatives on accessing high quality and evidence based professional learning and strengthen teacher and school-leader wellbeing.

The Teacher Workload Reference Group was established through the *Teachers Agreement 2023* with representation from the Australian Education Union (AEU) Tasmania Branch and the Department. The purpose of this reference group is for members to represent their respective school networks and help identify opportunities to maximise time for teachers to teach in Tasmania.

DECYP Whole-of-Agency Workforce Strategy

The EWAP sits within the broader DECYP Whole-of-Agency Workforce Strategy. Over the last 12 months the Department has undertaken scoping and project initiation to support the development of a whole-of-agency program of work which is informed by contemporary approaches to workforce planning across sectors and jurisdictions.

The resulting roadmap improves all aspects of our human resource management across the employee lifecycle including actions relating to attraction, recruitment, professional development, wellbeing, retention, leadership and culture, succession planning and governance.

This is important work that needs to be done to realise a valued and capable workforce and will pave the way for further and more transformational change. The initiatives to be implemented as part of the workforce program will provide an aligned, cohesive and systemic response to our workforce challenges.

We want to prioritise school principals' time to focus on educational service delivery, pedagogy leadership and stakeholder relations, and to maximise time for teachers to teach.

This whole-of-agency approach to addressing workforce issues will flow through to improving our school and teacher staffing and supports.

K-12 curriculum supports

The Department has undertaken a Curriculum Implementation Project focussing on how to improve curriculum implementation in schools and classrooms. This included data from survey results of nearly 500 Tasmanian educators to support identification of strengths and areas to improve, including

- supporting the planning for multi-age classes
- building middle leaders' expertise in curriculum
- developing further quality resources for curriculum and assessment.

A consolidated team of curriculum experts continue to provide access to essential professional learning and support resources, albeit with a reduced ability to provide subject specific support in all areas.

In Years 11 and 12, re-formation of subject matter reference groups will ensure schools have access to subject matter expertise to support teaching and learning.

In Prep to Year 10, the work of the Australian Curriculum leads has become more generic, providing support focused on quality teaching, understanding curriculum provision and implementation more broadly, as well as quality assessment practice.

Extensive support resources continue to be available to schools to support teaching and learning including:

- The Department's Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) which provides school leaders and teachers with curriculum, pedagogy, assessment resources and toolkits to improve quality teaching practices.
- The Years 9-12 website which features a suite of resources to support senior secondary curriculum and complementary programs.
- The Department's 'Careerify' website, featuring a wide variety of information, profiles, and case studies to support learners' career and life planning.
- The online 9-12 course guide which supports learners and families with subject selection and pathway information.

Case Study: Lifting Literacy

Literacy is foundational to all other learning. It is essential to succeed in work and life. Building workforce capacity to support early language and literacy to teach reading in an evidence-based structured way within a MTSS framework.

Not enough Tasmanians have the reading and writing skills they need and too many Tasmanian students have been leaving school without the appropriate skills and knowledge in literacy.

Our opportunity is to ensure every Tasmanian can access quality, evidence-based literacy support. The Department is delivering on the opportunity to make the changes that are needed to ensure that we give the best possible, evidence-based literacy learning opportunities to everyone, from our youngest Tasmanians in our early years programs, to students in our schools and colleges, to adults accessing literacy support through our libraries. This is how we will achieve better literacy for all Tasmanians.

We are making improvement informed by evidence and building a valued and capable workforce through the provision of tools and resources including:

- Establishing clear expectations across our system and building shared knowledge and understanding
- Providing schools with the tools and resources they need to deliver a minimum schooling guarantee for reading¹⁰
- Establishing consistent approaches to screening and assessment for learners
- Working with the non-Government school sectors to promote consistency across our state
- Strengthening support for adult and community literacy through libraries
- Establishing a team within Libraries Tasmania to support school libraries.

¹⁰ As recommended by the Literacy Advisory Panel, since June 2023 DECYP has been working towards implementing a minimum school guarantee for reading, a mandated structured (systematic and explicit) evidence-based approach across our whole school system

This is a whole-of-system and whole-of-school approach that identifies student learning needs early and provide tiered and targeted, intensive supports, in line with evidence-based teaching and a 'multi-tiered systems of support' approach. This is the level of focus, collaboration, commitment and vision to make real change.

Staff Wellbeing

“Teachers are overwhelmed with multiple responsibilities beyond teaching, such as administrative tasks...reducing these additional burdens can help teachers focus on their primary role of teaching” staff member, DECYP Independent Education Review Survey September 2024.

The Department is in the second year of implementation of our *Staff Wellbeing and Inclusion Action Plan 2023-24*, ensuring a sustained and collective focus on improving supports for all staff and leaders, including those in schools. The Action Plan is guided by staff wellbeing data collected through an annual Staff Wellbeing survey, which provides a rich data set from which to track and measure progress over time. Following the release of summary results to staff in November 2023, work has been underway to respond to the findings to ensure evidence-based staff wellbeing supports and programs are in place and fit for purpose.

DECYP organisational alignment work

Over 2025 and 2026 the Department will be making some changes to help deliver our Strategic Plan and provide the best possible support and education for children and young people. There are six organisational changes to be implemented over time with organisational areas in particular aiming to have flow on effects to support the teaching workforce by improving school leader and teacher workloads over time:

Communities of schools and CFLCs

There is strong evidence that collaboration between schools can deliver positive gains for students and schools¹¹. Communities of schools are networks of schools that work together through executive leadership that are accountable for improved student learning.

Through the Communities of Schools and CFLCs initiative the Department is consulting with school principals and senior leaders to better support improved learning and wellbeing outcomes for all children and young people by fostering collaborative practices, resource sharing, and targeted support strategies for communities of schools and CFLCs.

Communities of schools can reduce duplication across schools, particularly small schools, reduce administrative burden on school leaders and teachers and provide professional networks to share practice to develop teachers as effective educators.

Student and Client Management Systems improvements

Another area of support for schools is considering how information is communicated and assisting schools to focus on critical functions. School Principal and School Business Operations portals provide schools with the critical information including school resourcing and staffing.

¹¹ Mary Atkinson et al. Interschool collaboration, a literature review, Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), 2007 p. xi.

DECYP's student and client management systems are critical tools in ensuring children and young people are known, safe, well and learning. These systems provide staff and the Department with key information for planning and decision-making around how to best support the children and young people they work with.

Long-term systems planning must evolve along with changes in technology and learnings from other jurisdictions. The Department's focus is modernising and consolidating student and client management systems, and ensuring longer-term planning remains fit-for-purpose in a dynamic environment. This includes working towards a more integrated user experience for our busy staff, so they can engage with Department systems as simply and efficiently as possible.

A comprehensive Data and Systems roadmap is being developed to set strategy to 2030. This is a vital step in making sure our systems are renewed and ready to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future.

The roadmap will take a big picture view. It will consider the replacement or modernisation of current aging student and school administration systems, and how we deliver a more integrated user experience which will support our teaching workforce by easing the burden on busy school leaders.

Theme 5 – Accountability for improved outcomes

The Department acknowledges the importance of implementing strong, consistent, and evidence-based practices to ensure that our children and young people are known, safe, well, and supported in their learning. This is achieved by enhancing our governance, culture, systems, and practices, keeping the wellbeing of children at the heart of everything we do.

The Department is prioritising implementation of the recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings Final Report (2023) and the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability Final Report (2023) to deliver on our commitment to promoting the rights and safety of children and young people and protect them from harm.

Based on experiences from the *Education Act 2016* implementation, the Department is taking steps to build system-wide capability to improve implementation of policies and initiatives and are now taking a different approach which is evidenced by the Lifting Literacy priority, the Commission of Inquiry work and using contemporary project management processes and practices.

Accountability and leadership

"There is a need for stronger leadership and accountability...differences in school improvement approaches between regions highlight the importance of consistent and inclusive leadership" staff member, DECYP Independent Education Review Survey September 2024.

To support stronger accountability and leadership the Department is in the process of implementing six organisational changes to be implemented in the medium term, including continuing to build consistency in the implementation and evaluation of policy initiatives.

By adjusting how the Department is organised to work, the Department will be in a stronger position to 'do the doing'. This improvement work has a long lead time in many cases, to ensure the

Department can plan the details and timing of the changes to get them right. This includes building in any findings from the Independent Review of Education and other evidence approaches that are relevant to these organisational improvements. The organisational improvements will be linked to an outcomes framework that will support implementation and accountability across the Department.

School and System Improvement

School improvement is critical. It is underpinned by the establishment of the culture and conditions that enable improvement to be the work of every staff member, in each school, for the benefit of every child and young person. As individual schools or as part of a collective, school improvement requires schools to use valid evidence to acknowledge and understand contextual challenges and then to apply practical, targeted and sustainable strategies for improving learner outcomes.

Recent feedback from school principals indicates the need for more consistent supports to enhance all areas of school improvement to ensure practices are evidence informed, use a range of corroborating evidence and use contemporary evidence-based practice.

Our Approach to School Improvement (OATSI) is the system framework guiding school improvement across the Department, aligned to the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) School Improvement Tool and centres on the belief that there is no limit to what can be achieved when we have high expectations for our learners, our schools and our whole system. It establishes expectations for quality Learning, Teaching and Leading, aligned to strategic priorities.

Schools are supported in their improvement journeys by a number of teams and initiatives, including Improvement Consultants, Improvement Partnerships, Inclusive Practice Coaches, the Student Engagement and Attendance Team, and data-driven dashboards, reports and tools.

Skilled leaders in schools

The Department has partnered with the ACER to develop the Principal Capability Framework as a practical, evidence informed tool to drive professional growth in principal capability. This captures the capabilities that have the biggest impact on student learning and school improvement and describes what principals need to be able to know, do and be like to effectively lead our schools. It provides clear expectations for principal growth in a complex and changing education landscape.

Conclusion

Our Strategic Plan 2024-2030 sets a clear direction forward to ensure we are delivering the right educational provision and supports for improved outcomes for all children and young people in Tasmania, and is now more closely linked to outcomes and accountability through the newly developed Outcomes Framework. It provides a step change in alignment with our wider whole-of-agency focus on all children and young people.

The Strategic Plan provides a tight focus for the Department to develop the foundational elements for learning through evidence-informed programs for the early years, student wellbeing supports and inclusion, school attendance and engagement, safeguarding our children and young people, Lifting Literacy and supporting our teaching workforce.

We want to sustain learning growth from birth throughout the years of schooling, and the Strategic Plan provides a clear line of sight of what success is for our children and young people through being known, safe, well and learning.

As a system the Department is committed to school improvement and to supporting and improving the educational outcomes and achievements of all children and young people in our Tasmanian Government Schools. A range of data tools and evidence-based practices have been implemented in schools to positively impact achievement outcomes for all students at the classroom level.

We recognise that sustaining an appropriate level of family engagement throughout all stages of education is important for maintaining high expectations and support for students. Clearly defining what educational success looks like now and in the future and communicating this to our schools, students, families and communities will demonstrate the many forms education success can take for bright lives and positive futures. We are pleased to be working closely with all school sectors through the Advisory Council for Education to develop a clear holistic definition for all Tasmanian children and young people.

We look forward to your recommendations, which will inform our collaborative efforts to improve Tasmania's education system, and ultimately learning and life outcomes for Tasmanians, in the years to come.