

Elizabeth College School Association
c/o Elizabeth College
256 Elizabeth St
Hobart TAS 7000

Ms Vicki Baylis
Independent Education Review
c/o Office of the Independent Education Regulator
contact@ier.tas.gov.au

**RE: INDEPENDENT EDUCATION REVIEW
PUBLIC CONSULTATION SUBMISSION**

Dear Ms Baylis & the Independent Review Team,

Please see below our submission to the public consultation for your review.

I. SUPPORT OF TASMANIAN YEAR 11 & 12 STANDALONE COLLEGES

The Elizabeth College School Association committee wishes to express its unwavering support for Tasmania's senior secondary college system.

It is noted in the review's consultation paper that "Some argue that [standalone colleges are] to blame for Tasmania's apparent poor education outcomes by the end of schooling, and that abolishing colleges is the solution". To the contrary, we are concerned that simply disbanding senior secondary colleges in favour of Year 11 and 12 classes in all high schools would greatly diminish education opportunities for Tasmanians.

The *Hobart City High & Elizabeth College Future Model Community Consultation Report (November 2023)*¹ from 3P Advisory noted:

- The overwhelmingly preferred model is for Elizabeth College to remain separate from Hobart City High School (89% of 322 consultation participants including educators, parents, students and the broader community).
- Stakeholder feedback predominantly supports the retention of [colleges'] unique identity and its specialised offerings. The preference for this model largely stems from its perceived critical role in providing bespoke educational experiences and facilitating an age-appropriate transition for students, marked by a 'fresh start.'
- The model and the concept of stand-alone colleges is strongly embedded as a feature of the Tasmanian education system that is valued by the students, families, staff and the community, overwhelmingly due to the perception that this model is essential in being able to offer students a tailored educational experience.

We assert that similar views are shared across the community, including experts, in respect of other senior secondary colleges.

While there is solid logic for providing year 11 and 12 classes in rural, regional and 'select' high schools, to disband the senior secondary colleges would be extremely disadvantageous to many students.

¹ <https://publicdocumentcentre.education.tas.gov.au/library/Shared%20Documents/Hobart-City-High-Elizabeth-College-Community-Consultation-Report.pdf>

Elizabeth College currently offers the Elizabeth College Advanced Academic Diploma (ECAAD) program, which is a supportive Home Group program of expert teachers and motivated students who want to achieve their academic best and who want to be part of an intellectually thriving, active and caring community of learners. The ECCAD program provides a pathway to tertiary education for a cohort of learners likely to achieve ATAR of 90+. We do not think that such a program would be feasible in a combined high school environment.

Tasmania's Year 11-12 colleges bring together the critical mass of students needed to offer specialised academic subjects taught by expert and experienced teachers, which is not feasible for every high school due to practicalities, including a lack of critical mass, specialist teachers and budget constraints. Colleges like Elizabeth College already have the facilities needed for advanced programs in Science, Technology, and the Arts, which high schools generally lack.

Colleges also support students with practical and vocational interests—those who might struggle with the options and constraints of smaller extension schools. Programs like cookery/hospitality, automotive, construction, and children's/community services engage students who previously resisted school, and equip them with job-ready skills in high-demand fields, something not achievable in all high schools.

While online/virtual learning is an alternative, it often misses the benefits of in-person environments with like-minded peers—especially important for gifted students. Online formats also fall short in hands-on subjects requiring specialised equipment, like chemistry labs or automotive workshops.

Colleges provide social and emotional benefits through a mature, tailored environment, allowing students to develop responsibility and independence within a larger similar-aged peer group, and to establish friendships with more diverse students with shared interests. Such maturity is crucial for preparing students for university, further vocational training, or the workforce.

Dismantling the senior secondary colleges would limit options whilst eliminating the unique benefits the college system provides, ultimately disadvantaging many young people. Furthermore, evidence suggests that disbanding colleges is not supported by the vast majority of the community.

2. ACCOUNTING FOR VET CREDIT WITHIN TCE

One member of the EC School Association has raised concerns in relation to having VET certificates and module completion (undertaken with a third-party organisation outside of the school), being recognised as part of a student's TCE.

Whilst this may be an isolated case, other anecdotal reports suggest this may be a systemic issue in relation to the way that some RTOs, especially those who do not receive state funding including national & enterprise RTOs, do not report student results to TASC/Skills Tasmania.

3. DEFINING SUCCESS

We agree that the TCE as a sole measure of success is not inline with the measure of success adopted by other states.

We assert that vocational pathways and alternate pathways such as those based on student's skills and preparedness for life should be valued as they are in other states.

We are especially concerned that community supports for otherwise-capable students with "life challenges" are insufficient (especially beyond Year 12/age 18). Colleges often provide stability and support for students who have other "life" impediments, such as family, financial, medical, mental health, and homelessness. These life challenges can severely impede or prevent completion and attainment of a TCE (or TCEA) in the normal sense. We assert that a pathway should exist for every student to have their achievements recognised, in spite of their challenges.

4. ACCOUNTABILITIES AND OUTCOMES

We note our concern about half-implemented and unsustainable uplift changes across the system.

Previous initiatives are noted to have had significant enthusiasm, but this has been lost as a new focus comes along.

For example, the roll-out of Year 11-12 in high schools in close proximity to colleges is generally attracting low enrolment (with the exception of programs like *Big Picture*), with many students being dual-enrolled. As such, this is an example of a possibly failed change, but there has been no impetus to re-visit, roll-back or improve the situation in the light of accumulated evidence, perhaps because it is derived from a government mandate.

We assert that current and future changes need to be tracked/measured and communicated following 'completion'. This includes communication of changes and initiatives which have been superseded or abandoned.

Yours sincerely



(signed)

Nadia Iusupova
Chairperson
Elizabeth College School Association