

Glenorchy City Council is pleased to respond to the Independent Review of Education Public Consultation Paper because we believe that a strong education system is vital to a city with our demographic profile.

## **The importance of a robust education system for Glenorchy:**

Glenorchy has experienced significant growth in recent years. From 2016 to 2021, the City's population increased by over 4 000 people or nine per cent. The largest change in age over this time was an increase of nearly 3 500 people in the 25 – 34 year age group. With a median age of 37, we have the equal second youngest demographic in Tasmania.

A strong education system is essential for meeting the needs of our growing population. This demographic often includes individuals starting families so the demand for quality schools and early childhood education is increased.

A robust education system will ensure that Glenorchy can provide these services and remain an attractive place for new residents to settle and thrive. Good schools and educational opportunities make the city more attractive for businesses and workers alike, fostering a cycle of investment and prosperity.

Glenorchy is also culturally diverse, with 26.1 per cent of our residents born overseas. Of this cohort, 33 per cent arrived from 2016 onwards. Our residents come from 72 different countries and nearly 19 per cent speak a language other than English at home.

A strong education system can play a key role in building social cohesion and helping newcomers integrate into the community. It can provide language programs and support for children and families, helping them to build connections within the community. This not only benefits the individuals but also contributes to a more inclusive city.

Providing language support and culturally responsive education ensures that students from various backgrounds have equal opportunities to succeed. This is crucial for preparing a diverse, skilled workforce that can contribute to the local economy and drive further growth.

Over five per cent of the City's population identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, which is a higher proportion than the Greater Hobart area.

A strong system can help close educational gaps, support Indigenous-led initiatives, and foster an environment where cultural knowledge is respected and shared, promoting social cohesion and community pride.

As a result, Education is a central priority in Glenorchy's Community Plan 2015–2040. Our community goal, "Making Lives Better," envisions a future where young people and their families an active part in their education and their community.

## **How we have responded:**

Elected Members and key staff were invited to review the Public Consultation Paper and encouraged to respond to the guiding questions for each of the five themes.

This feedback has been compiled and is provided below as Council's response both in terms of key themes and

This feedback was endorsed by Council at its 28 October 2024 General Meeting.

Elected Members and staff were also encouraged to respond to the Independent Education Review survey on an individual basis.

## **Summary of Council's response to improving the education system:**

- Recognise that formal schooling isn't ideal for every student, offering flexible and personalised learning options is crucial. This includes practical alternatives like traineeships and TAFE courses, mentorship, and tailored career guidance.
- Flexible approaches to education ensures that students stay engaged and can find success through diverse pathways, whether through traditional education, trades, or other specialised interests, ultimately fostering personal fulfillment and future opportunities.
- By respecting and valuing different paths to success, the education system can ensure that each student can reach their full potential.
- To ensure a thriving teaching workforce, it is essential to focus on comprehensive support, recognition, and professional development for teachers and school leaders. This includes offering competitive compensation, especially for those in challenging roles, and providing additional classroom support like teacher aides.
- Mentorship programs for early career teachers, investment in trauma-informed training, and fostering a collaborative school culture help educators feel valued and supported.
- By maintaining consistency in policies and avoiding constant changes, the education system can create a stable environment that encourages teachers to remain engaged and motivated, leading to better educational outcomes.
- For successful implementation of policy initiatives, it is crucial to reduce administrative burdens and ensure that educators have a voice in the decision-making process.
- Providing clear goals, adequate resources, and a focus on collaboration helps teachers and school leaders stay aligned with improvement objectives.
- By reducing bureaucracy and focusing on practical, sustainable approaches, policymakers can ensure that resources directly contribute to improved learning outcomes and that initiatives resonate with the needs of students.

## **Council's response to the guiding questions across the five key themes:**

### **Theme 1 – Defining educational success**

#### ***What do you think are the reasons for finishing Year 12?***

It is important for students to recognise the long-term significance of completing their education, not just for their own future but for the well-being of their families and the broader community. Awareness of how education can affect their future financial stability, job prospects, and overall quality of life can motivate students to stay committed to finishing Year 12. Reasons to complete Year 12 include:

- **Learning and skill development:** Year 12 provides an opportunity for students to deepen their knowledge and skills, which can be important for both personal growth and future career prospects. However, for those students who find traditional classroom learning challenging, practical alternatives like traineeships or TAFE courses can offer similar benefits in a more hands-on environment.
- **Social interaction and support:** The social environment of school up to Year 12 helps students build relationships, communication skills, and networks that can be beneficial for their personal and professional lives. These social aspects can be vital for developing teamwork, resilience, and a sense of belonging.
- **Further education qualification:** Completing Year 12 is often a stepping stone to higher education, such as university or specialised training. It provides students with the qualifications needed to access these pathways and pursue their desired careers. Specifically, the Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE) is an important qualification that signifies the completion of Year 11 and 12. Therefore, the purpose and value of the TCE should be made clear to every student, including those who may be disengaged or struggling with the traditional school setting. Understanding how the TCE impacts their future opportunities is crucial.

#### ***What do you think success looks like during and after the formal years of schooling in Tasmania?***

Success is multi-dimensional, encompassing both an individual's personal growth and their ability to navigate and contribute to the world around them. Generally, success can be defined by a combination of personal fulfillment, contribution to society, skill development, and practical preparedness.

- **Personal fulfillment:** Success means feeling happy, content, and fulfilled in whatever path is chosen—whether it's further education, entering the workforce, or exploring personal interests. A sense of well-being and satisfaction with life choices is a key indicator of success.
- **Contributing to society:** A successful transition from school includes finding ways to contribute to the community, either through paid work or volunteer efforts. This contribution helps build a sense of purpose and connection to society, while also allowing individuals to give back.

- **Increased self-confidence and opportunities:** Completing formal education should result in greater self-confidence and access to a wider range of opportunities. Ideally, this would lead to better employment prospects and the potential for higher income, enhancing an individual's ability to achieve their goals.
- **Academic and life skills development:** Success is also about acquiring a blend of academic knowledge, life skills, and social abilities. This includes learning in specific interest areas like sports, arts, drama, trades, and music, as well as gaining broader social and communication skills. Making life skills education a core component of the TCE, alongside subjects like Maths and English, would be transformative. Practical courses in consumer studies, money management, and financial literacy are essential for equipping students with the skills needed for real-world challenges.

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

Encouraging young people to pursue their ambitions involves offering personalised support, fostering engagement, and highlighting the value of diverse career paths. This can be done by:

- **Meeting them where they are at:** Recognise that formal schooling doesn't suit everyone. Providing learning and support that is tailored to each student's unique needs and interests can help prevent disengagement from school and society. This approach can keep them on a positive path by making education more relevant to their lives. For students who are not academically inclined, it's crucial to identify what excites and motivates them, then structure their education around those interests. Success doesn't always mean pursuing a professional career—what matters is that young people feel happy and fulfilled in whatever they choose to do.
- **Mentorship and career engagement:** Mentoring by community leaders and greater exposure to career opportunities can help young people see the possibilities for their future. Having role models and mentors can provide guidance, motivation, and inspiration, making the pursuit of ambitions feel more attainable.
- **Clearer pathways beyond formal schooling:** Streamlining access to career advice and support can make a significant difference. Instead of requiring appointments with career counsellors who may offer only minimal support, providing more proactive and enthusiastic guidance can help students better understand the paths to achieving their dreams.
- **Valuing all career paths equally:** It's important to emphasise that all career choices contribute meaningfully to society. Highlighting the value of diverse paths—whether in trades, arts, or professional fields—helps students see how their choices can impact not only their future but also their families and communities. Understanding the long-term impact of today's decisions can encourage young people to aim high and pursue their aspirations with purpose.

### ***What is working well and why?***

- **Flexible learning options:** Different educational models that cater to a variety of learning needs have been established, providing more flexible options for students who don't fit into the traditional mould. These alternatives can help keep students engaged and learning for longer, especially those who might struggle in a standard classroom setting. Promoting and valuing these options more could help reach even more students.
- **Dedicated teachers:** There are many dedicated teachers who are committed to helping students succeed. Their efforts make a positive difference in the lives of students and support those who are engaged in the learning process.
- **Success at the top tier:** Academically, the system seems to be effective for high-achieving students, providing them with the resources and opportunities to excel. However, the middle and lower-performing students often face more difficulties, indicating a need for more tailored support to ensure their success.

Despite the successes, the challenge remains in addressing the needs of those students who are disengaged and not regularly attending school. Emphasising flexible education models and pathways and providing more targeted support for all students could help bridge these gaps.

### **Theme 2 - Strengthening supports and engagement for all learners at all stages of their education**

#### ***What do families do well to support their children and young people in their learning?***

Families play a crucial role in supporting their children's learning through a combination of valuing education, providing advocacy, and engaging in activities that foster learning. Families can contribute significantly to their children's success, creating a supportive environment that helps them thrive in their education.

- **Valuing education:** Many families emphasise the importance of education, encouraging a positive attitude toward learning. This mindset helps children understand the value of staying engaged in their studies and striving for success.
- **Providing support and advocacy:** Families often advocate for their children, especially when challenges arise within the formal education system. This includes working with schools to address issues and ensuring that their child's needs are met, helping them navigate any difficulties they may encounter.
- **Awareness of alternative options:** It's important for parents to be informed about the variety of educational pathways available, particularly if the traditional school environment isn't working for their child. By being aware of alternatives like flexible learning models or vocational training, families can guide their children toward options that better suit their needs and interests.
- **Engaging in reading:** Reading to children is a foundational way that families support learning, particularly in the early years. It not only helps develop literacy skills but also fosters a love for reading and learning, setting a positive tone for their educational journey.

### ***What support helps families to do this?***

Supporting families to help their children succeed in education involves a range of coordinated efforts, resources, and community support. This support creates a stronger foundation for families, enabling them to play an active role in their children's education and overall well-being.

- **Coordinated approach to education:** A well-coordinated approach across the entire educational system can help families navigate the resources and support available to them regardless of which school they are at, and whether they move. Consistent communication between schools, community organisations, and families ensures that everyone is working together to support the child's learning journey.
- **Clear guidance for parents:** Providing parents with clear, practical instructions on how they can support their children's learning is crucial. This includes tips for encouraging daily school attendance, creating a positive learning environment at home, and fostering good study habits.
- **Improving parents' literacy and numeracy skills:** Helping parents enhance their own literacy and numeracy skills can better equip them to assist their children with homework and other educational tasks. Adult education programs or community workshops can play a significant role in this area.
- **Emphasizing the importance of education:** Ongoing communication about the value of education and regular school attendance is important. Reminding families of the long-term benefits of education for their children's future can help reinforce the habit of attending school daily.
- **Support for disengaged students:** Support from schools and community members who recognise when a child is struggling or disengaged can be vital. Providing encouragement and acknowledging the effort, even if it's just "doing their best," helps maintain a positive attitude toward learning and school.
- **Addressing generational influences and socioeconomic factors:** Addressing broader social issues like generational poverty, access to safe and secure housing, and support for families escaping domestic violence can create a more stable environment for learning. When families are secure and stable, they are better able to focus on their child's education.

***What can be done to better support students who are struggling or at risk of falling behind to get back on track?***

It is important to provide personalised support, practical learning opportunities, and systemic changes that help all students find their path to success, whether it be through academic or vocational avenues. Suggested strategies include:

- **Promoting and valuing alternative pathways:** There should be greater recognition and value placed on alternative education options, such as traineeships, apprenticeships, and vocational education. Making these pathways more accessible and visible within schools can provide students with a clearer sense of direction and a tangible goal, especially if they are not thriving in a traditional academic setting. The process of securing a traineeship or apprenticeship should be made easier and more transparent. Currently, access to these opportunities often depends on parental connections, making it challenging for many students. Schools should actively offer and promote these pathways, ensuring that all students, regardless of background, have equal access to practical learning opportunities.
- **Integrating TAFE and School-Based Apprenticeships:** Allowing students from Year 9 onward to participate in TAFE courses or school-based apprenticeships can be a game-changer for those who are more practically oriented. This would provide students with hands-on learning opportunities alongside their formal education, making the transition into the workforce smoother. A more integrated public education system, combining high school, college, and TAFE, could provide students with set pathways tailored to their goals. This system would ensure a seamless flow from apprenticeships into the workforce or from academic subjects into university. Each path should be equally respected and aligned with a student's interests and abilities, allowing them to explore their potential without being pigeonholed.
- **Early intervention and one-on-one support:** Identifying and engaging students early when they begin to show signs of struggling is crucial. One-on-one support can help address specific challenges before they escalate. A short-term intervention is not enough—students benefit most from consistent, focused support over time.
- **Long-term work experience opportunities:** Providing students with the opportunity for extended work experience can be beneficial. Connecting students with local businesses allows them to gain practical skills and experience, with the possibility of transitioning into employment if the arrangement is successful. This not only helps students build real-world skills but also addresses local workforce needs.
- **Consistent school engagement:** Students should not be allowed to disengage from school without adequate support. Allowing students to attend school part-time without sufficient intervention can diminish the perceived value of education at a critical stage in their development. Schools and the education department need to take responsibility for ensuring all students receive the education and support they need, without exceptions.

### ***How can we ensure all Tasmanian learners get the most out of their education and reach their full potential?***

Ensuring that all Tasmanian learners get the most out of their education and reach their full potential requires a more individualised, inclusive, and supportive approach. Key strategies include:

- **Personalised support and meeting learners where they are:** Tailoring education to meet students at their current level of ability and interest can help keep them engaged and motivated. Recognising that every learner is different, schools should offer a range of options that cater to diverse learning styles, whether academic or vocational.
- **Broadening career pathways beyond university:** It's essential to move away from a one-size-fits-all approach that emphasises university as the primary route to success. Providing students with better, tailored career advice can help them explore other paths, like trades, apprenticeships, or vocational training, that align more closely with their skills and interests.
- **Enhanced discipline and respect in schools:** Addressing behavioural challenges and fostering a culture of respect within schools is crucial. This includes reinforcing discipline and ensuring that consequences are meaningful. A respectful learning environment can enhance student engagement and improve the overall educational experience.
- **Support for teachers through additional resources:** Teachers should be supported with more resources, such as additional teachers' aides, especially in classrooms where students face diverse social or disability-related challenges. This support allows for more individualised attention and better management of the classroom, leading to a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

### **Theme 3 - Outcomes at the conclusion of the formal years of schooling**

#### ***How best can students be supported to successfully complete and achieve by the end of Year 12?***

Supporting students to successfully complete and achieve by the end of Year 12 requires a focus on personalised learning, engagement, and adequate resourcing. Key strategies include:

- **Personalised learning:** Recognising that every student learns differently is crucial. The education system needs to adapt to diverse learning styles, ensuring that students have options that go beyond formal academics. By offering varied learning pathways, such as hands-on, vocational, or creative approaches, students are more likely to remain engaged and motivated.
- **Ensuring student engagement:** Keeping students engaged in their learning journey is essential for their success. This may mean offering alternative methods of learning or providing opportunities that align more closely with their interests and strengths. Engaged students are more likely to stay in school and complete their education.



- **Better resourcing for schools:** Schools need to be equipped with the necessary resources to support students effectively. This includes having competent and committed teachers as well as sufficient support staff, such as teachers' aides, to ensure that every student receives the attention they need. Well-resourced schools are better positioned to address the varied needs of their student populations.

***What are the top 2 or 3 priorities or changes you believe are needed so all Tasmanian young people can complete Year 12 or an equivalent?***

- **Enhanced support and differentiated learning:** Providing better, individualised support is crucial. This means offering differentiated learning pathways that cater to the varied needs, interests, and learning styles of students. It includes focusing on practical as well as academic options, so that all students, regardless of their strengths, remain engaged and motivated. A sharper focus on the importance and value of education, reinforced through tailored support, will help students understand why staying in school is beneficial for their future.
- **Investment in addressing social determinants and creating safe school environments:** More investment in tackling social challenges like poverty, food insecurity, and mental health is essential. Increasing awareness and support for mental health, providing access to nutritious meals, and supporting families experiencing domestic violence will create a stronger foundation for students. Schools must be safe and welcoming environments where students feel comfortable attending. Providing basics like breakfast and lunch, as well as access to student psychologists and social workers, can make schools a more inclusive and supportive space for all young people.
- **More targeted investment in education:** Addressing the under or mis-directed investment in education is critical, as this has long-term impacts on the opportunities available to students. Ensuring that schools are well-resourced, with enough qualified teachers and support staff, will allow them to better meet the needs of their students. Effective use of available resources is also key to providing high-quality education and support, ensuring that the system can respond to challenges and help every student succeed.

***What are the most important ways to support choice for students?***

Supporting choice for students involves a variety of approaches that prioritise their voices and cater to their individual learning styles. We can create a more supportive and flexible environments that respect student choice and encourages them to take ownership of their learning journey through:

- **Active listening and engagement:** Schools and educators must genuinely listen to students and take their perspectives into account. This means creating an open dialogue where students feel safe to express their thoughts, interests, and preferences regarding their education. Understanding what students want and need can help tailor educational pathways that resonate with them.

- **Recognition of diverse learning styles:** Acknowledging that students learn in different ways is essential. Schools should provide resources and teaching methods that accommodate varied learning styles—whether visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, or a combination. This differentiation allows students to engage with the material in ways that best suit their individual strengths.
- **Appropriate resources and support:** Providing the right resources to meet differing needs is crucial for fostering choice. This includes access to diverse educational materials, technologies, and support systems that enable students to pursue their interests and passions. Schools should offer a range of subjects, extracurricular activities, and vocational training options that empower students to make informed choices about their education.

#### **Theme 4 - Support for our teaching workforce**

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

By implementing the following strategies the education system can cultivate an environment that supports great teachers and school leaders, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for students.

- **Empower effective school leadership:** Ensure that school leaders are true leaders, equipped with the skills and vision to guide their schools effectively. Placing strong leaders in schools that are harder to staff can make a significant difference in the overall school climate and student outcomes.
- **Support and compensation:** Compensate and provide adequate support for teachers and leaders working in challenging environments. Rather than viewing positions in tough schools as a punishment, these roles should be recognised as vital and deserving of additional resources, training, and financial incentives. Additionally, ensure that high-performing teachers receive competitive pay and support, including resources to promote discipline and respect in the classroom. Recognising and rewarding effective educators will help attract and retain high-quality teaching staff.
- **Mentoring and professional development for early career teachers:** Offer robust mentoring programs and classroom support for early career teachers. Providing ongoing professional development, especially in behaviour management and trauma-informed practices, will help new educators build confidence and effectiveness in their classrooms. Ensuring that all educators are trained in trauma-informed practices will help them understand and manage the impact of trauma on students' behaviour and learning. This will in turn help teachers create a more supportive and responsive classroom environment.
- **Consistency across the system and within schools:** Strive for consistency not only across the education system but also within individual schools. Establishing clear expectations and frameworks can help teachers work more effectively and foster a sense of stability for both educators and students.

- **Avoid constant changes to the system:** Recognise that educators are change weary and may be resistant to continuous shifts in policy or practice. Instead of chasing the latest educational trends, focus on sustaining effective practices that support teachers and students alike.
- **Invest in early childhood education:** More investment in early childhood education is crucial for teaching students the foundational skills needed for appropriate classroom behaviour. Early intervention can set the tone for future learning experiences and classroom dynamics.

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

To keep the existing education workforce feeling energised and supported, leading to higher retention rates, several key strategies can be implemented:

- **Increase support and compensation:** Offering better pay and benefits for teachers is essential to show that their work is valued. Competitive compensation can help attract and retain talented educators who are passionate about their roles.
- **Value and recognise teachers:** Continuous recognition of teachers' efforts and achievements is vital. Celebrating their contributions, both big and small, fosters a positive work environment and encourages them to remain committed to their roles.
- **Provide additional assistance for special needs:** Increasing support for students with special and additional needs by employing more teacher aides can relieve some of the pressure on classroom teachers. This additional support allows teachers to focus on their primary responsibilities while ensuring that all students receive the attention they need. Target students undertaking teaching courses at university to work as teacher aides during the completion of their course. This provides an increased workforce and valuable in-class experience for the students.
- **Foster a positive work environment:** Creating a supportive and collaborative school culture where teachers feel appreciated and part of a team is crucial. Professional development opportunities, peer mentorship, and open lines of communication can contribute to a sense of belonging and motivation.
- **Professional development opportunities:** Continuous professional development opportunities allow educators to grow in their roles and stay updated on best practices. Investing in their growth shows that the institution cares about their career advancement and personal development.

## **Theme 5 - Accountability for improved outcomes**

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

To help teachers and school leaders implement initiatives effectively while maintaining a focus on improvement, several key strategies should be considered:

- **Minimise distractions and focus on core responsibilities:** Allow teachers and school leaders to concentrate on teaching and supporting students by minimising unnecessary distractions and administrative burdens. Streamlining processes and eliminating "white noise" can help educators stay focused on their primary goals.
- **Involve teachers in policy initiatives:** Engage teachers and school staff in the development and implementation of policy initiatives. When educators feel included in decision-making processes, they are more likely to be invested in the outcomes and committed to executing the initiatives effectively.
- **Provide adequate resources and support:** Ensure that teachers have access to the necessary resources, tools, and support to implement initiatives successfully. This includes professional development, materials, and assistance that enable them to focus their efforts on improving student outcomes.
- **Encourage collaboration and communication:** Foster an environment of collaboration and open communication among staff. Regular check-ins, feedback sessions, and opportunities for sharing best practices can help maintain focus on improvement and keep everyone aligned on goals.
- **Set clear goals and expectations:** Clearly define the goals and expectations for initiatives to ensure that teachers understand their purpose and how they relate to student success. This clarity can help maintain focus and motivation among staff.

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

To ensure that policy initiatives are effectively implemented and that resources are used to improve learning outcomes, several key approaches should be adopted:

- **Engagement with classroom experiences:** Policymakers need to step out from behind their desks and spend time in classrooms to understand the realities of teaching and learning firsthand. This direct engagement will help them grasp the challenges educators face and how their policies impact the classroom environment.
- **Streamline bureaucracy and improve understanding:** The current bureaucratic structure is seen as too top-heavy, often resulting in policies that do not resonate with classroom realities. Reducing unnecessary layers of bureaucracy and involving educators in the policy-making process can help create more relevant and effective initiatives.
- **Learn from other jurisdictions:** Look to other regions or countries with successful educational outcomes to identify practices that have led to improvements in student growth and attainment. Analysing what works elsewhere can provide valuable insights and inform more effective policy decisions.

- **Acknowledge and support educators:** Recognising the efforts of teachers and providing them with adequate support is essential. Educators need to feel valued and appreciated, and they should see that the department and the broader community genuinely care about their work and the challenges they face.
- **Focus on sustainable practices:** With the rapid changes in the education sector over the past decade, it is crucial to establish sustainable practices that do not overload teachers or require them to do more with fewer resources. Ensuring that policies are realistic and supportive of educators' needs will lead to better implementation and outcomes.