

The Honourable Jo Palmer  
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Ms Vicki Baylis  
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Dear Minister Palmer & Ms Baylis

I am writing to you in relation to providing input to the Independent Education Review.

I strongly support the Senior Secondary Colleges and am disheartened to see that their value is again being questioned.

I understand that in rural high schools travel may make attendance at a college difficult, and there can be a place for years 11 and 12 in a high school with online learning provided by another venue.

For the majority of Tasmanian students, the colleges provide a critical mass of students which allow face to face classes for more specialist subjects, academic and vocational, delivered by teachers with real expertise in their field. The colleges, by grouping together students from a number of high schools, have the critical mass to be able to afford specialised learning areas such as science laboratories with specialist equipment, automotive workshops, commercial kitchens etc. The state also does not have enough specialist teachers for appropriate staffing of year 11-12 in every high school.

It is argued that subjects can be delivered online, but this method of delivery fails to provide a working environment with like-minded peers. Where schools are in relatively close proximity, such as a 30-minute bus ride apart, as I see it, one or two students working online on a science subject in a high school, is an inferior situation, compared with being in a college where there is a class of 25 students working together doing experiments, discussing and interacting as they work.

Colleges also provide a break and a change for students who have become disengaged, have had troubled peer relationships, or feel that they don't 'fit in'. I am aware of situations where being able to be away from an individual's previous peer group and make new friends in a new environment has resulted in re-engagement with education. A much larger student cohort means that individuals have a greater likelihood of finding more like-minded and shared interest friends.

The colleges provide a supportive environment in which greater freedom can be experienced, responsibility for self developed, and maturity gained. The colleges play a very important role in preparing students as they transition to the next stage in their lives, whether they are destined for university, for vocational training or directly into the workforce.

Senior Secondary Colleges have provided a great experience for Tasmanian students, it would be a great loss to future students if they were discontinued.

Your sincerely,

Kathleen McMahan  
