

Submission to the Independent Education Review

Introduction

I am very pleased that Minister Palmer has established this Review. Together with Dr Lisa Denny and Saul Eslake, I was a proponent of the Open Letter which called for a review of education in Tasmania.

To make our case we used data from the most recent Productivity Commission *Report on Government Services* (ROGS), which says that in 2022 while 76.3% of the Australian population eligible to gain their Year 12 certificate or equivalent did so, in Tasmania only 53.1% achieved that goal.¹

While we did not highlight it, at least as concerning in that ROGS data is that while in the whole of Australia the gap between the attainment of high and low SES students was 13.2%, in Tasmania it was 21.2%, almost twice as large. Despite Tasmania's high SES students (66.5%) being less likely to gain their Year 12 certificate or equivalent than low SES students in the whole of Australia (69.7%).

We have been criticized for using the ROGS data because, as the Report says, 'data is not comparable across jurisdictions'. Which is certainly true in the simplest sense: South Australia, for example, counts as attaining 'Year 12 or equivalent' for the ROGS not only those young people who get their South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) or a Certificate III (the accepted VET equivalent of Year 12), but also those who those who passed a full year subject at SACE Stage 2 (Year 12). This took SA's percentage of students gaining 'Year 12 or the equivalent' in the ROGS report from 66% in 2010 to 77% in 2011. In 2009 Tasmania had gone the other way, introducing the Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE) and from that year counted only students completing that qualification or the VET equivalent, whereas before Tasmania counted students who had completed 'one senior secondary course'. This change dropped Tasmania's 'Year 12 or equivalent' percentage from 58% in 2008 to 39% in 2009.² All as explained in the notes to the relevant table of the ROGS – for example Table 4A.55 in the 2016 Report.

But we should not confuse the warning that the data 'is not comparable across jurisdictions' with the much more important claim that 'there is nothing to be learned in comparing jurisdictions'. For comparisons of the ROGS data, both cross-jurisdictional and

¹ See the School Education Data Tables, Table 4A.52. Available at <https://www.pc.gov.au/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2024/child-care-education-and-training/school-education>. Accessed 2 October 2024.

² The TCE was introduced by the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority, which along with its independent board was abolished in 2014 after lobbying by college principals and others in the Department of Education. The TQA was replaced by the TASC. The TASC did not have an independent board, the only Year 12 authority in Australia, NZ or any other comparable jurisdiction, not to have its development and administration of the Year 12 qualification overseen by a high level independent board. That decision was reversed last year with TASC now governed by a board.

in time sequences of one jurisdictions, raise important questions for the Review even when they do not provide ready answers:

1. Why is Tasmania's Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate so much lower than the other jurisdictions (including SA when we exclude the students who completed at least one Year 12 subject but did not attain the SACE³)?
2. Is it because the TCE is harder to obtain than the Year 12 certificates of other jurisdictions as some claim?
3. Or because fewer of our young people remain engaged in study for their Year 12 certificate until they have met the required amount of points?
4. If it is because 'the TCE is harder' why has this not been addressed in the years since the introduction of the TCE in 2009, and indeed since the TQA was abolished in 2014, given that Tasmania having a less attainable Year 12 certificate would deny Tasmania's young people a fair chance of gaining a Year 12 qualification compared to their peers elsewhere in Australia?
5. Why is there such a large gap between the TCE attainment of low and high SES students in Tasmania?

I hope the Review will answer these questions, and propose recommendations to change whatever it is that is causing these alarming differences between the Year 12 attainment data for Tasmania and the rest of Australia.

Of course I acknowledge that there are other issues in Tasmanian education which are within the purview of the Review. However, I will focus solely on Year 12 attainment, as from my research with Professor Eleanor Ramsay, we found that senior secondary education was the area in which Tasmania was **most different** to the rest of Australia, and **furthest behind** what is being achieved in other jurisdictions⁴. And the situation has not consistently improved in almost a decade. Here is a brief history of that research which is relevant to the Review.

We began our investigation in 2013 soon after the publication of the Griffith Review edition *Tasmania: the tipping point*. Being new to Tasmania, we were influenced by the essay of Jonathan West in particular, and his claim that Tasmanians do not value education. We thought we could make a useful contribution to our new home by encouraging community leaders to see that all Tasmania's young people should aspire to, and be expected to

³ The percentage of the age cohort that completed their SACE in 2022 was 69.8%, calculated from data on SACE completers available at <https://www.sace.sa.edu.au/web/sace-data/completion> and population data available at

[https://explore.data.abs.gov.au/vis?tm=quarterly%20population&pg=0&df\[ds\]=ABS_ABS_TOPICS&df\[id\]=ERP_Q&df\[ag\]=ABS&df\[vs\]=1.0.0&hc\[Frequency\]=Quarterly&pd=2022-Q2%2C&dq=1.3.A15%2BTOT..Q&ly\[cl\]=TIME_PERIOD&ly\[rw\]=REGION](https://explore.data.abs.gov.au/vis?tm=quarterly%20population&pg=0&df[ds]=ABS_ABS_TOPICS&df[id]=ERP_Q&df[ag]=ABS&df[vs]=1.0.0&hc[Frequency]=Quarterly&pd=2022-Q2%2C&dq=1.3.A15%2BTOT..Q&ly[cl]=TIME_PERIOD&ly[rw]=REGION), accessed 2 April 2024.

⁴ The results of this research can be found at <https://educationambassadors.com.au>, and on Year 12 attainment in particular in Rowan, M., Ramsay, E. *Educational Inequality in Tasmania: evidence and explanations*. *Aust. Educ. Res.* **45**, 277–295 (2018), available at <https://rdcu.be/KTge>

achieve, their Year 12 certificate, the TCE. With the guidance of our mayor Dr Graham Bury, we established Education Ambassadors Tasmania, and soon gained the support of the then Governor of Tasmania Professor the Hon Kate Warner AC as Patron in Chief, and other leading citizens as patrons and ambassadors, including 28 of Tasmania's 29 mayors and around 100 business and community leaders.

In all our discussions with the Ambassadors in every corner of Tasmania we did not find confirmation of Jonathan West's claim that Tasmanians do not value education, especially beyond Year 10, at least not to any greater extent than we might have found talking to mayors or community leaders in all of the local government areas of any other state. But we did hear of a lack of familiarity with senior secondary education in the community, which was often explained by the fact that schooling in the **public** system beyond Year 10 was (at that time) restricted to the colleges in the four cities. As a community leader in Queenstown put it, **'The reason the kids in this town think that school ends at year 10 is that their school ends at year 10'**. Which fact was celebrated by the notorious 'leavers' dinners' as if completing Year 10 in a Tasmanian public school was a stage of life to be marked in the same way as the end of schooling Year 12 formals in the rest of Australia and also by Tasmania's private schools.

However, while we were not surprised by community attitudes to senior secondary schooling, compared to what we had experienced elsewhere in Australia earlier in our careers (as academics, and Prof Ramsay as the senior officer responsible for equity in South Australia's and Queensland's departments of education, and earlier as a teacher unionist) we did find a striking difference in the valuing of senior secondary schooling for all young people in the Education Department itself, in the Australian Education Union, and to a lesser extent in the parliament. For example, the Department established a 'Retention and Attainment Strategy' in 2011, which aimed at 'ensuring that all students registered in Year 10 government schools in Tasmania make the transition to further education and training in the following year', and stated 'It is imperative that we engender the expectation that everyone goes on to further education and training'.⁵

But what was referred to here (and in the title of the Deputy Secretary of the Department responsible for the colleges at the time) as 'further education' was primarily senior secondary schooling. In the rest of Australia at that time, as now, 'further education' meant Technical and Further Education, the province of the TAFE system.

The idea that schooling beyond Year 10 is not school but something different, to which children 'transition' (after their high school leavers' dinner) rather than 'continue', was made clear in the Department's booklet *School Life: Information for parents and carers*

⁵ Ramsay E M and Rowan M B 'Learning to Change Tasmania', paper delivered to the Tasmanian Leaders Foundation, 2014, p. 14. Available at <https://educationambassadors.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Learning-to-Change-Tasmania.pdf>.

about Tasmanian Government Schools 2013. Here is what *School Life* said about education beyond year 10:

School Life is designed for parents and carers of students entering Tasmanian government schools for the first time or transitioning from primary to high school. Students entering colleges should refer to the Years 11 and 12 guide available on our website.⁶

In the whole of the issue of *School Life* published four years after the introduction of the Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE), the official ‘welcome document’ for parents and carers sending their students to a Tasmanian state school, there is **no mention** of the TCE, nor any encouragement to see education beyond year 10 as something for **everyone**, and no indication that the new Australian curriculum (which is discussed in at least page length detail) is a curriculum designed for Foundation to Year 12. The 2011 edition of *School Life* actually had a curriculum map that ended at Year 10! And indeed, soon after reading this we were told by a prominent Tasmanian politician that ‘Year 12 is not for everyone’.

This is not ancient history. The children whose parents received *School Life* in 2013 are yet to reach Year 12. And it is not clear to me that there has been any serious and sustained effort to replace the ‘hidden curriculum’ of *School Life*, that tells parents and students that senior secondary schooling is ‘further education’, with a clear and consistent message that **completing Year 12 is finishing school**. And that all students would benefit from finishing school. And it is the aim of your children’s principal and teachers that your child will finish school, signified by their **being awarded the TCE**.

(It is worth digressing here to stress that the **TCE is Tasmania’s Year 12 certificate**, despite this fact being endlessly muddled by suggestions, including in the Review’s Consultation

⁶ See page 15 of ‘Learning to Change Tasmania’. To understand how exclusionary it was to say ‘have a look at the web site for information about the colleges’ note that last year – ten years after *School Life 2013* referred parents to the Department’s web site for information on senior secondary schools – the Secretary of the Department stated in providing feedback to the Commonwealth *Review of Regional Schooling Resource Standards Loading* that ‘The primary information and communications technology (ICT) issue for rural and remote Tasmanian schools is access to bandwidth. What we found through the response to COVID-19 was that schools and the system had to support both hardware and internet access. To that end, DoE provided schools with 650 internet dongles and loaned approximately 6,400 devices to students without access to a device at home’. Perhaps the Department knew that in 2013 most families without experience of senior secondary education had the ICT skills and hardware at home to access the information on the colleges from the Department’s website, but given that they could not access learning materials in 2023, that seems doubtful. The Secretary’s letter is available at https://www.education.gov.au/system/files/2023-12/consultation-17829/6_Tasmania_DoE_Feedback.pdf, accessed 3 October 2024.

Paper itself, that the TCE is one qualification among a number of others⁷. Certainly the Tasmanian Certificate of Educational Achievement (TCEA) is a certificate of achievement, but as the Tasmanian Year 12 (TASC) authority makes clear, the TCEA is appropriate for a small number of students.⁸ The other ‘certificate’ sometimes mentioned is the Qualifications Certificate. This is not a certificate of achievement, but a record of qualifications achieved.⁹ The Qualifications Certificate would more accurately be called the ‘Qualifications Record’. It bears the same relationship to a person’s qualifications as their bank statement does to their money in the bank. The Qualifications Certificate is no more a certificate of achievement than a bank statement is money.)

As evidence of the failure to drive cultural change through the education system such that completing school at Year 12 is seen as the norm, and will conclude with most young people gaining their TCE, consider the announcements made by governments at the end of last year on the occasion of the release of each state’s Year 12 results.

In NSW, the press release was titled ‘*Student success on show as HSC results released to 67,000 Class of 2023 students*’. The announcement mentioned the HSC seven times, and included quotes attributed to both the premier and deputy premier, who was also the minister of education.¹⁰

In Victoria, the press release was headed ‘*Class Of 2023 VCE Graduates Have Done Victoria Proud*’ and it mentions the VCE a further 16 times with quotes from the premier, the minister for education and the minister for skills and training.¹¹

Contrast this with Tasmania. Our Minister for Education, Children and Youth put out a press release headed ‘*2023 results for Years 11 and 12 students*’.¹² It seems the result of 12 years of study for Tasmanian students is Year 12 results. The TCE is mentioned once in the body of the text almost in passing, in the context of students who excelled in VET study also receiving their TCE. The TCE is not mentioned in a quote from the minister, and there is no quote from the premier or other ministers.

⁷ Available at <https://ier.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/Independent-Education-Review-Consultation-Paper.pdf>. See page 5. The review might usefully consider what could count as successful completion of schooling that could not contribute towards the TCE. I am unaware of any such considered critique of the TCE.

⁸ See <https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022-Tasmanian-Certificate-of-Educational-Achievement-TCEA-Guidelines.pdf>, accessed 7 October 2024.

⁹ See <https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/students/qualifications/qualifications-certificate-qc/>, accessed 7 October 2024. Around 250 students were awarded the TCEA in 2023.

¹⁰ Available at nsw.gov.au/media-releases/hsc-results-released-to-class-of-2023, accessed 30 September 2024.

¹¹ Available at <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/class-2023-vce-graduates-have-done-victoria-proud>. Accessed 30 September 2024.

¹² Available at <https://www.miragenews.com/2023-results-for-years-11-and-12-students-1142701/>, accessed 9 October 2024. Google is no longer able to find this information on the Premier’s website where accessed 19 March 2024..

But most telling are the statistics on Year 12 attainment which go largely unremarked in public discourse when they should be ringing alarm bells all over the state loud enough to drown out concerns over ambulance ramping or the cost of the stadium.¹³ Data from Tasmania's Year 12 authority, Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification, says that just 42.7% of the Year 10s in government high schools in 2020 attained their TCE by 2022.¹⁴ (Previous data put on the public record by Questions on Notice in the Legislative Council show that adding part time completions would not add more than five percent or so, at best.¹⁵)

At individual public high schools, just looking at the 11 in greater Hobart (including the northern, eastern and southern suburbs) the chance of a Year 10 continuing full-time to gain their TCE varied from 9% to 50% with Taroona (the highest ICSEA high school in Tasmania at 1110), the outlier at 75%. Three of our capital city high schools saw less than 25% of that cohort of Year 10s gain their TCE.¹⁶

In fact it appears that of all public schools in Tasmania our low SES city schools offer their Year 10 students the least chance of gaining their TCE, whereas it is often claimed that the system of high schools to Year 10 and colleges for senior secondary years works well for young people in the cities, and it is only in rural schools where alternative senior secondary provision is required. But here is the TASC direct continuation data on ten randomly selected high schools representing lower ICSEA city and rural communities.

¹³ Particularly since increasing the percentage of Tasmania's young people gaining their TCE will be a necessary condition of training more Tasmania doctors, nurses and paramedics, and increasing the productivity of the Tasmanian economy and hence the State's tax base to support improved health services and capital works.

¹⁴ Available at https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/2022_Direct_Continuation_data.pdf. Accessed 1 October 2024. Note that this is the latest data on Year 10's continued schooling available at the time of writing.

¹⁵ The Hon Vanessa Goodwin in response to Question 69 asked by the Hon Ruth Forrest, Legislative Council Hansard Tuesday 24 May 2016.

¹⁶ Data available at <https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/about/data/attainment-profiles-direct-continuation-data/>, accessed 1 October 2024. The schools are Bayview Secondary College, Clarence High, Cosgrove High, Jordan River Learning Federation, and Kingston, Montrose Bay, New Town, Ogilvie, Rose Bay and Taroona High schools. The data for the schools in the table below is from the same source and accessed at the same time.

Table 1: ICSEA vs Location as a predictor of Year 10's later TCE attainment¹⁷

SCHOOL	LOCATION	ICSEA	% YR 10'S GAINING TCE
Bayview Secondary College	City	863	15
Cosgrove High School	City	837	24
Tasman District School	Rural	920	33
Parklands High School	City	897	34
Mountain Heights School	Rural	881	36
Scottsdale High School	Rural	921	36
Brooks High School	City	903	44
Smithton High School	Rural	871	51
Huonville High School	Rural	908	52
St Mary's District School	Rural	924	55
State in total			42.7

This data tells us that Tasmania has a major problem with Year 12 attainment that is most acute for students in low SES city high schools. Most of the students from all of these schools, if they continued beyond Year 10, attended a college, and for the rural students, that would often have required long daily travel or boarding away from home. **But this data tells us that the cultural and economic distance between low SES students and senior secondary education in Tasmania is a much greater barrier than physical distance.**

This cannot be allowed to continue. It would put Tasmania increasingly out of step with the rest of Australia. The recent Report of the Independent Expert Panel's *Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System*¹⁸ set as Target 4 for our education system 'the attainment of Year 12 or equivalent and similar distribution of outcomes' across equity target groups. Their justification for using this as a target was put simply as

The Panel considers that in the Australian context attainment means successfully completing Year 12 or equivalent level of education, or a non-school qualification at Certificate III level or above. This acts as a useful proxy for determining whether the education system has provided students with the skills, confidence and attributes needed to forge a future life that is meaningful to them. [207 f]

Particularly since, as they observe,

Students who complete Year 12 or equivalent are more likely to continue on to study or complete Certificate III level or higher qualifications. Given that nine in 10 future jobs are projected to require post-school education, focusing on post-school

¹⁷ Data available from TASC as above.

¹⁸ *Improving Outcomes for All: The Report of the Independent Expert Panel's Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System*, available at <https://www.education.gov.au/review-inform-better-and-fairer-education-system/resources/expert-panels-report>, accessed 1 October 2024.

pathways is useful for determining whether the education system is successfully equipping students for the jobs of the future.[209]

The Heads of Agreement signed with Tasmania and (at the time of writing) Western Australia and the Northern Territory, set a national target for increasing Year 12 or equivalent attainment by 7.5% nationally, and trending upwards for all equity target groups, compared to 2022, with jurisdiction specific targets to be negotiated and reported to the Commonwealth.¹⁹

Tasmania will need a paradigm shift in our thinking about the provision of public senior secondary education, which remains almost wholly delivered by the colleges, to make it likely that we will be able to achieve this target, considering both the overall low level of Year 12 attainment and the inequality in achievement illustrated in Table 1. Accordingly, while in previous attempts at reform it has been considered too politically difficult to consider whether Tasmania's colleges are fit for purpose as a means of delivering senior secondary education to the vast majority of Tasmania's young people, and if not, how the perception that this is so can be changed, that issue can no longer be ignored. Put simply, without a change in perception of the success of the colleges or an improvement in their performance such that it aligns with current perceptions, or both, almost all students from Year 10 in public schools will continue to proceed to college, where on the evidence to date, most will fail to gain their TCE and around 45% will leave secondary schooling without any qualification at all²⁰.

This Review is Tasmania's chance to reform our schooling system to achieve the *Better and Fairer Schools* targets. If the Review does not make recommendations that enable the changes required for Tasmania to play its part in meeting the national targets, or if the government does not accept recommendations that would implement such changes, we will not have a second chance for some years and Tasmania will fall further behind the nation as a whole.

My evidence for this strong claim is the resistance to change shown by the education system in Tasmania in the past. While it is no more than anecdotal evidence, I have found it common that people talk about change fatigue in the schools and then refer to the introduction and then abandonment of the Essential Learnings curriculum, which took place between 2000 and 2006. Coupled with this is the Department of Education's

¹⁹ Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025-2034, p. 15. Available at <https://www.education.gov.au/recurrent-funding-schools/resources/heads-agreement>, accessed 1 October 2024.

²⁰ On the public record there is no count of the number or percentage of students leaving the colleges **with** a qualification, but we can estimate the figure as little more than 55% since just 42.7% of students in Year 10 in government schools in 2020 gained their TCE in 2022, and 19.9% a VET certificate (see https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/2022_Direct_Continuation_data.pdf) and data on the TCE Attainment Data for the colleges (see <https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/about/data/attainment-profiles-direct-continuation-data/>) shows that around 30% of VET certificates awarded by the colleges were included in students' TCEs.

apparent lack of any sense of urgency for dealing with Tasmania’s poor rate of Year 12 attainment. This inertia is manifest in the history of previous Commonwealth led attempts at lifting educational attainment in Tasmania, which it is instructive to recall.

In pursuit of the overall objective that Australian school students should acquire the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in society and employment in a globalized economy, in 2009 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) established *National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions 2008-2014*, a precursor to the *Better and Fairer Schools* program. The *Agreement* included the following targets:

1. Lift the Year 12 or equivalent (Certificate II or above) attainment rate to 90 per cent by 2015
2. Lift the Year 12 or equivalent (Certificate III or above) attainment rate to 90 per cent by 2020
3. Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy by 2018
4. At least halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020²¹

Thus the *National Partnerships Agreement* was largely focused on improving Australia’s performance in post-compulsory education – Year 12 or the equivalent. This led to all state and territory governments negotiating individual targets as their contribution to Australia reaching the 90% attainment target. Here is a table showing the targets for Tasmania, compared to those for Australia as a whole.

Table 2: Youth Attainment and Transitions targets.

	2008	2012	2015
TAS	75.1%	78.35%	81.6%
AUS	83.5%	86.7%	89.9%

Two matters stand out from these Tasmanian targets. Firstly, by the end of the agreement period in 2015, Tasmania was aiming to get near to the 2008 completion rate for Australia as a whole: that is, by the **end** of this Great Leap Forward, Tasmania hoped to be **almost**

²¹ National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions - 2008-9 to 2013-14, Council of Australian Governments (COAG), Canberra, 2009, previously available at http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/skills/youth_attainment_transitions/national_partnership.pdf, accessed November 2013. This and the quotations from the documents prepared by the COAG and the government of Tasmania are taken from Ramsay E and Rowan M, *Learning to Change Tasmania*, available at <https://educationambassadors.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Learning-to-Change-Tasmania.pdf>, accessed 2 October 2024.

but not quite at the same spot as Australia was nationally at the **beginning** of this period. And secondly, should we have achieved these targets, the gap between the Tasmanian and the Australian completion rates would not have narrowed: ie while we would have improved completion rates here, Tasmania would not have caught up at all with the rest of the country.

The document *Implementation Plan for the National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions - Tasmania*, essentially our response to the COAG Agreement, provided this explanation for Tasmania's targets. While written in 2008-9, it remains relevant to understanding the reform challenge facing the Review and Tasmania now, and I quote it at length.

Currently our post Year 10 retention rates are low with only 61.8% of students staying on to complete Year 12 and we have the lowest post school qualifications in the nation.... Several factors contribute considerably to this situation, particularly demographics, culture and structure of education in Tasmania.

As an island state, Tasmania has unique demographics, where more of the population live in rural and regional communities than in the capital city and we have one of the highest proportions of the population living in areas of low socio-economic status of any state in Australia as defined by ABS Socio-Economic Index for areas (SEIFA)....

Research also indicates that the degree of both rurality and low socioeconomic status impacts on young peoples' aspirations and consequently their participation in education and training. This is accentuated by the limited provision of post-Year 10 sites in regional areas of Tasmania.

Young people in Tasmania living in low socio-economic regions have increased truancy, broken attendance, more suspensions and higher rates of early leavers than their counterparts in other regions. Their family background has considerable influence on their aspirations and participation in education. Of particular relevance are educational background and occupation of parents. Parental aspirations and values in this context are considerable in influencing a young person's desire and motivation, or lack thereof, to engage and complete Year 12 or equivalent.

Culturally this has a significant impact on young people particularly in the development of the social capital of their families and communities. A priority for Tasmania is to raise the expectations of some parents and communities in valuing education and training. Research continually demonstrates that young people turn to their family and friends for advice and unless we raise the expectations of these people in valuing education and training as a means to economic and social independence we can not, by restructuring our education system to provide

increased multiple learning pathways and career counselling alone, increase our participation and attainment targets.

This begs the question of what was done to ‘raise the expectations of these people in valuing education and training as a means to economic and social independence’. Or were the **causes** of past failure to improve educational attainment (particularly in public schools in Tasmania) accepted as immutable, and then offered as **reasons** why the future could not be very different to the past. Certainly the 2011 and 2013 editions of *School Life*, discussed above, suggest that there was no great effort to promote the value of senior secondary schooling to families not already convinced of its necessity for children who will live well into the latter part of the 21st Century. And as observed above in the government’s response to the efforts of our young people to gain their TCE or equivalent, there is little contemporary evidence of a more energetic effort to persuade the community that every child should leave school with a Year 12 qualification, and loudly celebrate those that do.

The Review needs to challenge the assumption that there is anything about Tasmania’s demography or geography that makes it harder to increase Year 12 attainment here compared to other jurisdictions. Certainly it is correct to say, as the Department Secretary did in providing feedback to the *Commonwealth Review of Regional Schooling Resource Standard Loadings Consultation*, conducted last year, that ‘We are servicing the most decentralised population in Australia, with approximately 56% of residents living outside the greater Hobart area.’²² It is also correct that there is a correlation between students living in regional, rural and remote areas and lower Year 12 attainment.²³

But Tasmania does not have a widely dispersed population where access to a high school with a Year 12 class larger than many successful schools in other states would be difficult to provide. Almost all of our local government areas (LGAs) are so small in area that relatively few students would face more than a 30 minute trip from home to school in the largest population centre in their LGA, and virtually none more than an hour. And in all but two of Tasmania’s LGAs, covering 99.7% of Tasmania’s 15-19 year olds, the resident population of this age group is approximately 130 or greater, and even at the lower end, if 80% of these young people were to attend the local high school until Year 12 a class size of around 20 would be achieved.²⁴ In all but six of Tasmania’s LGAs, covering 97.8% of the population of 15-19 year olds, at least 275 15-19 year olds are resident, giving potential Year 12 classes of 40 or more if 80% of the possible enrolment is achieved. At a minimum this is

²² Available at https://www.education.gov.au/system/files/2023-12/consultation-17829/6_Tasmania_DoE_Feedback.pdf, accessed 3 October 2024.

²³ Lamb, S and Glover S, *Educational Disadvantage in Regional and Rural Schools*, available at https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1228&context=research_conference, accessed 3 October 2024.

²⁴ Torrens University Australia, *Social Health Atlases by Local Government Area*, available at <https://phidu.torrens.edu.au/social-health-atlases/data#social-health-atlases-of-australia-local-government-areas>, accessed 4 October 2024.

around twice the size of the Year 12 class of high schools elsewhere in Australia that achieve good results for their Year 12s – indeed, better than Tasmania’s colleges.²⁵ Here is a sample of schools which, on the face of it, it would appear more challenging to offer successful Year 12 programs than any we see in Tasmania, randomly chosen in relation to Year 12 attainment.

Table 3: Year 12 attainment in a sample of small, and mostly remote schools.

Town and state	Population of LGA ²⁶	Distance from state Capital (km)	ICSEA of public high school ²⁷	Number of Year 12s, 2022	Number of Year 12s gaining Year 12 certificate 2022
Bourke, NSW	419	759	686	10	7
Ceduna, SA	3,505	776	861	12	11
Carnarvon, WA	5251	984	735	11	9
Cloncurry, QLD	3,644	1,705	799	12	8
Nhill, VIC	5,698	373	945	14	13
Tennant Creek NT	2,949 (in town)	990	745	18	14

Compared to the vast distances between major towns in the other states (except Victoria), the distribution of Tasmania’s population in our small state should be seen as an **advantage** rather than a disadvantage in increasing our Year 12 attainment, if we organised the provision of senior secondary education to respond to that fact.

As we should, and as the Gonski funding delivered by the *Better and Fairer Schools Program* demands. It cannot be stressed too strongly that the reason for being of education is to liberate young people from the circumstances of their birth where these constrain a young person’s ability to maximize their potential. **It is inimical to education that disadvantage, real or imagined, be it economic, cultural or geographical, should be allowed to become destiny.** This acceptance that nothing can change has vitiated attempts to reform Tasmanian education in the past, where those who are comfortable

²⁵ The average rate of Year 12s gaining their senior secondary certificates from these schools is 81%. Data from *MySchool* shows the average TCE attainment rate for the Tasmanian colleges’ Year 12s in 2002 was 76%.

²⁶ Population data from ABS Quick Stats, accessed 4 October 2020. For example, Bourke data is available here <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA31950> and all other populations are searchable from this page.

²⁷ All school data from *MySchool*, (<https://www.myschool.edu.au/home>) accessed 4 October 2024. Note that for SA, *MySchool* reports only students who attained their SACE.

with the *status quo* oppose all attempts at reform, illustrated with exquisite clarity in the recent public consultation on the issue of whether Hobart City High School should be amalgamated with Elizabeth College: the majority opinion of responders was encapsulated in the comment of one: ‘If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’.²⁸ This assessment of ‘no need for change’ applied to an arrangement of the schools which saw just 46% of the Year10s in 2020 gain their TCE in 2022. **Surely the only government high school in the local government area of our capital city supporting less than half of their middle school students to graduate from senior secondary is broke.** With the Commonwealth minister insisting on major improvement, the Review must provide Tasmania with the leadership to fix it, including recommendations at a level of detail that will ensure that this time the good intentions for reform are implemented in every school and training facility.

The Review’s questions

I will answer the questions posed by the Review as best I can, noting that my information on Tasmanian education is limited to (the commendably comprehensive) publicly available information, and personal communication. I have not conducted in-school research in Tasmania, but I am able to draw on the research of others. Furthermore, I have direct experience of leading teams of academics involved in substantially improving our research and teaching, and creating a new and now very successful university, in positions from Head of Department to divisional Pro Vice Chancellor - and substantial experience leading quality audits of Australian universities.

Guiding questions

- What do you think are the reasons for finishing Year 12?
- What do you think success looks like during and after the formal years of schooling in Tasmania?
- How can we better encourage young people to aspire to achieve their ambitions?
- What is working well and why?

I agree with the answers the Commonwealth and Tasmanian governments have provided to the first two of these questions on the occasion of Tasmania signing *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement*. When signing the Heads of Agreement Premier Rockliff stated²⁹

Tasmanians deserve every opportunity in the world, no matter where they live or what their parent’s income is.

²⁸ Available at <https://publicdocumentcentre.education.tas.gov.au/library/Shared%20Documents/Hobart-City-High-Elizabeth-College-Community-Consultation-Report.pdf>, accessed 5 October 2024

²⁹ Available at <https://ministers.education.gov.au/anthony-albanese/australian-and-tasmanian-governments-agree-fully-fund-all-tasmanian-public-schools>, accessed 4 October 2024.

To which Minister Palmer added

Our education system is critical in supporting our young people in gaining the skills they need to fully contribute to our community and economic future.

This funding agreement will ensure our students are supported to get the educational outcomes they deserve so they can lead their best lives.

The *Report of the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System* made a clear statement on what these outcomes must be, stating³⁰

The Panel considers that in the Australian context attainment means successfully completing Year 12 or equivalent level of education, or a non-school qualification at Certificate III level or above. This acts as a useful proxy for determining whether the education system has provided students with the skills, confidence and attributes needed to forge a future life that is meaningful to them.

Which led to the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement* including as a target³¹

By 2030, increase the proportion of students with Year 12 (or equivalent) certification by 7.5 percentage points, compared with 2022 results, nationally (for all students)

on the basis that

finishing school education is key to ensuring students have the skills and confidence they need to become successful lifelong learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens.

Which, to answer the Review's question, we can distil as: the reasons for Tasmanian young people finishing Year 12 are

1. To gain the skills, confidence and attributes they will need to forge a future life that is meaningful to them;
2. To be able to take every opportunity possible, regardless of their location or parents' income;
3. To fully contribute to our community and Tasmania's economic future;
4. All of which will enable our young people to lead their best lives in a Tasmania that is made better by their achievements.

³⁰ *Improving Outcomes for All: The Report of the Independent Expert Panel's Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System*, available at <https://www.education.gov.au/review-inform-better-and-fairer-education-system/resources/expert-panels-report>, accessed 1 October 2024, p. 207f. The 'equivalent level of education' refers to qualifications such as the International Baccalaureate, which lead to 'post school education'.

³¹ *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025-2034*, p. 15. Available at <https://www.education.gov.au/recurrent-funding-schools/resources/heads-agreement>, accessed 1 October 2024.

From which it follows that success during and after the ‘formal years of schooling’ looks like students

1. First working successfully towards their Year 12 qualification during their schooling,
2. and then on the basis of that credential, continuing their education at university, or furthering their training,
3. or, with the award of their TCE attesting to their having gained knowledge and skills which are valued by a prospective employer, moving into jobs that draw on and reward that learning.

As to what we can do to ‘better encourage young people to aspire to achieve their ambitions’, I would first reframe the question, since **young people’s ambitions are not a natural fact about them, like their eye colour or ethnicity, but a social fact** that is the result of their nurture acting on their nature. And as the great evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould observed

Few tragedies can be more extensive than the stunting of life, few injustices deeper than the denial of an opportunity to strive or even to hope, by a limit imposed from without, but falsely identified as lying within.³²

So I think the question should be ‘What are we doing now to give all young people the courage to be ambitious, and what more can we do?’

Without detailed knowledge of teacher/student interactions, and school/family interactions, I cannot offer a detailed answer to these questions, but as a rule of thumb, whenever we educators interact with a student or their family in a way that a coach encouraging their players to believe they can win the grand final would not do, we are failing to do all that we can to encourage young people to be ambitious and believe they can achieve their goals.

Guiding questions

- What do families do well to support their children and young people in their learning?
- What support helps families to do this?
- What can be done to better support students who are struggling or at risk of falling behind to get back on track?
- How can we ensure all Tasmanian learners get the most out of their education and reach their full potential?

In relation to the first three questions I can only observe that it seems Tasmanian families do relatively well as early educators, at least as measured by NAPLAN, since Tasmania’s NAPLAN results are as close to the national average at Year 3 as they are at Year 9.³³ Others

³² Gould, Stephen Jay. *The Mismeasure of Man*. W.W. Norton & Company, 1981.

³³ See the National NAPLAN Report, State comparisons, available as <https://www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia/naplan-national-results>, accessed 10 October 2024.

will have a much better understanding of this and recommendations for improvement than I do, as indeed the *Better and Fairer Schools* program does with an emphasis on evidence based methods of teaching literacy in particular.

In relation to the last question, I suggest we need to

- encourage and give confidence and ambition to young people as learners,
- ensure their teachers are able to employ proven effective teaching methods, and
- have available to them high quality teaching materials that facilitate learners' mastery of a challenging and worthwhile curriculum, well suited to the students' and community's need for future knowledge and skills.

Guiding questions

- How best can students be supported to successfully complete and achieve by the end of Year 12?
- 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?
- What are the most important ways to support choice for students?

I have commented at a general level on the learners part of the puzzle above, and suggested that the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement* will guide improvement in teaching. The next section of my comments will focus on curriculum and the organisation of schooling which I think will be the key to answering this set of questions .

First, I start with supporting choice for students. We should not confuse choice with a plethora of alternatives, which can easily become a bewildering array of options which students have difficulty assessing.³⁴ Genuine and effective choice is the well-researched selection between valuable alternatives, both as to the content and the means of learning. Our young people deserve to access a senior secondary curriculum in which every subject is based on thorough scholarship and current technical practice, with choices organized into coherent collections which lead to further study, further training or employment, more on the model of a degree program rather than a smorgasbord selection of what looks tasty at the time. **It is vital that what is on offer in senior secondary education is not presented merely as responding to students' current interests, but can be persuasively presented as opening doors to better lives – as the Premier and Minister say.**

Particularly since, as emphasized by Tasmanian economist Saul Eslake in numerous presentations, Tasmanians are poorer than the residents of other states in part because our labour productivity is lower. This will not be improved without our schooling system

³⁴ Linda Darling-Hammond; Peter Ross; Michael Milliken. (2007), "High School Size, Organization, and Content: What Matters for Student Success?" in *Brookings Papers on Education Policy*, No. 9, 2006/2007, pp. 163-203

providing collections of skills and knowledge which increase our young people's capacity to add value to business and industry. *The Better and Fairer Schools* agreement makes clear this requires young people to complete a Year 12 qualification or a Certificate III.

Tasmanian demographer Lisa Denny makes a related point from the perspective of the consumer. Whatever service members of our community seek to have provided, if our school and post-school education system is not equipping our young people with the skills needed for them to provide that service, Tasmania will continue to suffer a shortage of provision, whether in health, education, aged care, or any of the trades and professions.

Tasmania cannot afford to under-develop the potential to contribute to the community of any of our young people, as we are doing now on an unsustainable scale.³⁵

To ensure that Tasmanian schools can end this wastage, either we need to dramatically increase the completion rate and respect for the TCE, or we need to ask whether we should continue with a specifically Tasmanian senior secondary curriculum and qualification. Perhaps our young people would be better served – and our teachers better able to focus on their core teaching role – if Tasmania were to adopt and where necessary adapt the Year 12 qualification of another jurisdiction and outsource the administration of the qualification to that provider.

There is a precedent for this in the Northern Territory teaching a Year 12 qualification which is based on the South Australian Certificate of Education and administered by the SACE Board.

In such an arrangement I envisage the workload of curriculum development and the production of teaching resources being shared between teachers in all jurisdictions teaching the qualification, and representatives of all jurisdictions joining the governing board.

The SACE is the obvious choice if Tasmania was to take this step, since there are already arrangements in place for the SACE to be taught in the NT, and also at schools in China, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Korea and New Caledonia.

I expect there would be substantial benefits for teachers in such an arrangement, reducing the workload of curriculum development, enabling a greater number of teachers with a diversity of perspectives to collaborate in the development of teaching materials, and

³⁵ In a 2014 study comparing the rate at which students at Year 9 enjoy NAPLAN scores for reading and numeracy above the national minimum standard, and the rate at which they gain their jurisdictions' Year 12 certificates, we found that the two percentages are about the same in all states and the ACT, except Tasmania, where 21% fewer young people gain their TCE than were above the national minimum standard for Year 9 NAPLAN. For NAPLAN to be as good a predictor of Year 12 success in Tasmania as elsewhere we would need at least 1,000 more young Tasmanians gaining their TCE's each year. See Ramsay E and Rowan M, *Tasmania's Year 12 Results: we can do much better*, available at <https://educationambassadors.com.au/tasmanias-year-12-results-we-can-do-much-better/>, accessed 9 October 2024.

providing opportunities for teaching and student exchanges both within Australia and widely through Asia.

Perhaps most importantly it would facilitate benchmarking between Tasmanian schools and schools in SA and the NT, making it much easier for all schools to identify practices in other schools which appear to be more effective in supporting student learning and making teaching more professionally rewarding. It would be a major step in the process of ensuring our schools are as connected to and competitive with the rest of Australia and our Asian neighbors as our economy.

Finally, given that of all the other jurisdictions South Australia is most similar to Tasmania in relation to the out of school factors that impact on student success, and our relative sizes, working with SA and the NT has the best chance of being a genuine collaboration with benefits for all, rather than a 'take-over' by a larger state that sees little to be gained from the arrangement.

Second, I understand that there is no movement of teachers between colleges and high schools, which leads to them becoming siloed.³⁶ If Tasmania is to continue with the colleges as the principal providers of senior secondary education, it is vital that the college teachers have a much better understanding of current teaching and learning in the high schools, and contribute their expertise in senior secondary schooling to the strengthening of Years 11 and 12 in the high schools. Likewise, high school teachers would benefit from experience teaching in the colleges. Accordingly, like the ACT with its college system, Tasmania should adopt a teacher placement arrangement where teachers can expect to transfer every five years, and college teachers should regularly exchange places with high school teachers.

Thirdly, on the basis of the evidence of the performance of the Tasmanian education system Prof Ramsay and I came to the conclusion that the college system is not well designed for Tasmania and not amenable to reform that would make it so. As I understand the history, the colleges were created at a time when it was expected only a minority of students would continue school beyond Year 10, whereas now all students are legally obliged to do so. If the colleges are held to remain an appropriate form of provision for this

³⁶ I have written to the Secretary of the Department of Education twice seeking data on how many college teachers seek a transfer to a high school, and was told that the Department did not collect this information. However, teachers tell me the answer is zero. I am told that gaining a teaching position in a college is seen as a 'lottery win' for high school teachers, and once in a college teachers do not move. If true – and the Review would shed much light on the situation by getting this data and putting it in the public realm - this creates in the colleges a privileged group of teachers. This would create a situation where it would be naïve to expect college teachers to participate objectively in a debate about the suitability of the college system for providing senior secondary education to the vast majority of Tasmanian young people, just as, say, it would be naïve to expect the senior staff and shareholders of an oil or coal company to participate objectively in a debate about the future of fossil fuels and climate change at the cost of their vested interest in the matter. As a matter of professional integrity, we should expect teachers participating in the Review to declare whether they have a position in a college, or demonstrate that holding such a position is not a privilege they might be inclined to protect for their self-interest rather than the interests of Tasmania's young people.

changed circumstance, the case for that needs to be made out, particularly when the data on Year 12 attainment shows that the current system of high school to Year 10 then college for Years 11 and 12 sees most public school students – at present around 55% of Year 10 students – finish their schooling without a Year 12 qualification. A useful place to start considering that case would be to query why almost all Independent schools and eight of the 13 Catholic schools offering secondary education do not separate senior secondary from junior and middle schooling, and whether this is part of the reason why these private schools’ students rate of Year 12 attainment is much closer to similar schools in other jurisdictions than our public schools which do split secondary schooling at Year 10.³⁷

Guiding questions

- How can we get more great teachers and school leaders and help them do their jobs well?
- How can we keep the existing workforce feeling energised and supported so they stay?

I am pleased that the first question, in asking how we get more great teachers, recognizes that we do have great teachers, and every year new graduates are added to their number. While I do not assume that a student’s ATAR score is a reliable predictor of their capacity to become an excellent teacher, as we see in negative press about low cut-off scores for teaching degrees, I expect that if the Review considered the **distribution** of entrance scores for teaching degrees at UTAS, it would be found that it includes ATARs that would gain the applicant entry to any degree they liked, yet they choose teaching in recognition of its importance and reward as a profession. That was my experience as PVC (Education, Arts and Social Sciences) at UniSA.

But Tasmania has a particular problem with getting the good news about schools, teachers and young people to the public. As it has been explained to me, the conditions of teacher employment prevent teachers making public comment about their work. This has the effect that the only voices in the media that represent schooling are the minister, and the union. The teacher union is quite properly always looking to secure improved working conditions and payment for its members, and this leads the AEU to emphasize problems rather than successes in education including teachers leaving Tasmania or the profession for better working conditions and pay elsewhere and in other careers.

Much the same applies to the media comment about young people. While I have not attempted to quantify it, my impression is that in the last several years I have seen more in the media in Tasmania about the Ashley Youth Detention Centre than all our schools combined.

³⁷ While I have not done the analysis for all Catholic and private schools, this is the pattern we found in those we did consider in Ramsay E and Rowan M, *Tasmania’s Year 12 Results: we can do much better*, available at <https://educationambassadors.com.au/tasmanias-year-12-results-we-can-do-much-better/>, accessed 9 October 2024.

If we present the public with the message that young people are out of control, that youth crime is endlessly rising, that teachers are stressed and leaving the profession in droves, and there is not enough funding for anyone to achieve worthwhile things in our schools, it is not surprising that we might have difficulties attracting and retaining the best possible candidates to the profession.

So my answer to these two questions is this.

First, we need a major effort in the community to talk up the value and importance of teaching and the skills of our teachers. The leadership of our education systems must not allow negative publicity about schools, teachers or young people to go unchallenged. In particular we need teachers who are enjoying their work and achieving great things with their students to be given permission to be more prominent in the media alongside their industrial representatives that appear to see it as their role to spread doom and gloom about kids and schools.

Second, if it is not already happening, the leadership of our schools and the Department of Education – and similarly for the Catholic and Independent sectors – from the Secretary to their immediate reports and down through the levels of the organisation to the classroom teacher supervising a student teacher on placement, need to adopt an energetic approach to solving the problems of the people that report to them. We should have targets reducing every year in relation to teacher resignations and stress-related leave, and likewise targets for teacher, student and parent satisfaction increasing every year, incorporated into the annual performance agreements of all staff who supervise teachers, aggregating right up to the Secretary or sector head. Progress in meeting these targets should be publicly reported in an appropriately generalized way at school and system level and shared in more detail at school level among principals so that what is working well can be identified and good practice spread around the system.

Third, if there has not recently been an audit of teachers' work to identify requirements and processes that do not contribute to their **supporting and reporting** student learning, this should be done to ensure teachers are focused on the work that makes the most difference to their students. If it takes a teacher longer to organize permissions and transport for a school excursion than they will be able to devote to working with their students to realize the learning objectives of the exercise, that and all similar things need to change. It would be good for model school administrative practices to be identified and widely shared among the professional staff of schools as a means of reducing teacher frustration with the non-core aspects of their work.³⁸

³⁸ I refer here to 'professional' rather than 'non-teaching' staff (as, for example, *MySchool* does). We educators have tended to overlook the importance of staff who do things other than teaching. I am most familiar with universities where for many years staff were divided into 'academic' and 'general' staff. In the mid 1990s UniSA ceased to refer to the staff who were not academics as 'general staff' and used the term 'professional staff' instead. It sounds trivial, but the recognition of the professional skills of the staff whose

In sum: every day, everyone employed in education needs to look for ways to make it easier to be a good teacher, and for opportunities to make it widely known what an extraordinary contribution to our community is being made by good teachers. Everyone, and every day.

Guiding questions

- What helps teachers and school leaders implement initiatives so that the focus on improvement is maintained?
- How do we ensure that policy initiatives are effectively implemented and that resources are used to improve learning outcomes?

Since I do not have detailed knowledge of current processes, rather than suggest answers to these questions I have related questions of my own.

What team in our schooling systems – particularly the Department of Education – has the role of training school leaders and teachers as needed in program design and implementation?

What team in our schooling systems – particularly the Department of Education – has the role of conducting independent program evaluations of innovations to gather evidence of their effectiveness or lack thereof, and disseminate the results of the evaluation through the system?

Who has the budget flexibility to support innovation, and how does a program evaluation – positive or negative – provide input to future budgets at school to system level?

Is every staff member with supervisory responsibilities trained in conducting effective performance planning and review with the staff that report to them?

What is the relationship between the annual performance management goal setting discussion between every staff member and their supervisor, and the annual plan for their school or other area of work or responsibility including the staff members' proposed innovations in their work?

What annual performance improvement targets for learning outcomes are set at system level, and how are these cascaded down through the organisation in every staff members' annual performance plan?

What is the relationship between the annual performance review discussion between every staff member and their supervisor, and the annual review of the performance of their area of work or responsibility, including whatever were the proposed innovations in their work?

contribution to the university was something other than teaching and research had a profound effect on the institution, with professional staff gaining in confidence to lead change in the organisation of university work-flows and the improvement of all kinds of processes, while academic staff were more comfortable in handing over the reins of non-academic work to people who they realized had actually been trained to do it.

What can be the outcome of a staff member's annual performance management discussion in relation to identifying excellent practice that deserves to be rewarded, celebrated, widely disseminated, and implemented elsewhere, or managing performance that does not contribute to improving learning outcomes?

Does every staff member with responsibility for supervising other staff have budget flexibility to support the staff that report to them to undertake further study or training to improve their performance as needed to achieve their negotiated contribution to the cascading system targets?

Recommendations

On the basis of the above – **recognizing that Tasmania faces a crisis of low Year 12 attainment, and has a history of ineffectual albeit well intentioned reform** – I hope that the Review will make whatever recommendations it is thought will maximize Tasmania's chances of our young people enjoying success at school in at least equal measure to their peers in other jurisdictions, including reform to the unique structure and organisation of our public school system, and the opportunities for teachers to work in all year levels for which they have appropriate training, as well as the responsibility to provide their expertise where it is most needed.

In particular, I propose that the Review should make recommendations such as

1. The Premier, relevant ministers, and heads of our schooling systems should state loudly, clearly and repeatedly that it is their aspiration that every young person in Tasmania will leave school with their Year 12 certificate, and/or a Certificate III in some field of technical and further education.
2. The Premier and Minister of Education, as signatories to the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement*, should consult with the heads of the schooling sector and TAFE to set annual performance improvement targets for Year 12/Certificate III attainment at state and sector level.
3. These annual performance targets should exceed what is required of all jurisdictions by the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement* with a view to Tasmania closing the gap to the rest of Australia within a specified period of years.
4. There should be clear accountability for the achievement of the performance targets, for example by
 - a. their being cascaded down to every school and training provider to ensure that collectively our schools and training providers achieve the state wide targets, including closing the gap between current higher and lower performing schools and other providers of training.
 - b. the performance targets at the appropriate organizational level being incorporated in the annual performance management contracts of every manager down to principal level, and

- c. continuing employment in the role generally being conditional on the targets being met.
5. If the statewide targets are not being met after five years a further independent review should be commissioned, with a view to recommending stronger remedial actions as required to any area not successfully reformed by implementation of recommendations of the current Review, including budget, curriculum, teacher training and support, staffing including teacher transfers, and the structure of schooling.
6. The Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE) should be
 - a. confirmed by the Minister as the Year 12 qualification all students should attain, other than
 - i. those few students for whom the Tasmanian Certificate of Educational Achievement (TCEA) is appropriate, and
 - ii. those who are enrolled in technical and further education and seek to attain a Certificate III or higher, without incorporating that learning within a TCE program, or
 - b. if the Minister is not satisfied that the TCE as it exists is an appropriate Year 12 qualification for (almost) all students then the TCE should be reformed to make it so, or
 - c. the Minister should initiate discussion with the relevant authorities in another Australian jurisdiction with a view to Tasmania sharing a Year 12 qualification with one or more other states and territories of Australia.
7. The Department of Education should consider how best to allow teachers to participate in the public sphere to showcase the good work of schools.

Thank you for considering my submission. I look forward to the Review's report with hope and confidence that Tasmanian schooling will receive the searching and sympathetic scrutiny it needs to provide our young people with the education and training they deserve.

Michael Rowan, BA(Hons), Dip Ed, PhD

Emeritus Professor, University of South Australia

Birchs Bay, Tasmania

michaelrowantasmnia@gmail.com