

Submission to the Tasmanian Independent Review of Education October 2024

I have been involved in Tasmanian education in one way or another for 50 years:

- Teacher secondary school 1974-78
- Mother of primary age children and volunteer assistant at the school 1978 – 1991
- Relief Teacher primary & secondary schools 1991-2003
- Temporary teacher in secondary schools 2005-2010
- Grandmother to infant, then primary and now secondary students 2013-2024

Observations re the goals of the review

The goals are admirable but obviously not really showing an understanding of school communities at this stage of our history.

- Implements evidence-based whole of school practices and pedagogy that lead to improved student educational outcomes and behaviour

The best evidence base would be the Finnish system which is widely recognised. The major flaw in the goal is that the best school practices and pedagogy will not necessarily lead to improved student behaviours if those behaviours are a result of problems from the students home, mental health problems, poor diet or drug taking.

- Delivers high quality teaching that is evidence based and meets the needs of students at all levels

If this is really wanted then you need to have smaller classes, more teacher aids with special skills, and ensure students are well fed and and secure at home

- Effectively utilises resources to improve student outcomes and attract and retain a high-quality workforce;
- Contributes to the State's productivity by supporting a highly skilled local workforce to assist local businesses and industry to grow and compete;
Requires detailed analysis of the needs of the state as it faces the risks associated with climate change.
- Is accountable for improved student outcomes, including in remote and rural areas.
Acknowledge that many parents in the Tasmanian community do not see a value in going beyond compulsory education because they and their parents managed quite well without further education. The rural community in which I lived for 40 years certainly had this attitude.

What are the needs of the state in coming decades?

- Understanding and coping with the local risks associated with climate change
 1. Increasing Emergency situations
 2. Community preparedness to support each other through stresses
 3. Understanding soils and food production as people did until the last 50 years so that they can cope with food shortages
- Preparing for and understanding changing international conditions – pandemics, war, droughts etc and their implications for the state's economy with regard to trade and tourism
- Providing for the health and social needs of the community
- Understanding the natural environment and ecosystems and human dependence on them
- Giving residents coping mechanisms

Theme 1 - Defining educational success

We need to ensure that our education system has clearly agreed objectives that are

transparently reported. What does success look like after the formal years of schooling in the Tasmanian context and how do we better encourage our young people to aspire to achieve?

- What do you think are the reasons for finishing Year 12?
Hopefully it creates well-rounded adults who are able to think and make good decisions about their lives.
- What do you think success looks like during and after the formal years of schooling in Tasmania?
A community that can provide for its social and economic needs in an environmentally sustainable way with a workforce that is well trained to enable that provision
- How can we better encourage young people to aspire to achieve their ambitions?
This is more than an education problem. Social inequality is becoming more of a serious issue in all of Australia
Provide information as to the possibilities that are open to them and ensure they understand what will be required to reach their goals.
- What is working well and why?
The college system does work well for the majority of young Tasmanians. It provides a recognition that they are approaching adulthood and provides experience of making choices and understanding the results of those choices in a supportive environment. It gives the opportunity to study a variety of subjects and at levels that in a small state like Tasmania would be impossible to offer at all state high schools. [Apart from anything else, there are not enough teachers with sufficient training to teach matriculation level subjects in every high school]

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?
As the paper mentions reading with them as youngsters. Talking with them about what is happening at school.
- What support helps families to do this?
Under this theme the paper makes assumptions that both parents are involved in education discussions and decisions. This is not my experience.
- What can be done to better support students who are struggling or at risk of falling behind to get back on track?
The paper also does not recognise the number of students who do not live with both parents and does not acknowledge that associated problems affect attitudes to education which are outside the remit of teachers and schools.
Drug related problems in our society also affect the school and learning environment and should not be ignored in a report hoping to improve learning outcomes.
I am not sure how schools and/teachers can help with these struggles.
Various programs have been instituted to provide for this and generally they have been very good. The flaw is that they suddenly find the funding has stopped. Some students need individual support. One particularly effective one involved students working for some time outside the classroom with a specialist teacher who trained them to build outdoor

furniture or repair chairs and through this their classroom behaviour and attitude to study became more positive. These programs need to be on-going.

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

The number of external factors in a student's life that impact their school life mean that smaller classes which would give teachers more time with each student would be a good starting point. Private schools are able to provide this so why not state schools.

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?

Most of the students who have difficulty in achieving this goal come from poorer socio-economic backgrounds.

They and their parents need to understand from early primary years that there are jobs where they are needed and will be valued

- 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?

I wonder if many students feel that they are at school too long. Many start with pre-kinder at 4 then kinder and through the system until they are in year 12 at 18 and wondering what it is all about. Some just find it boring.

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

Staff need to be well trained on job possibilities, training required and be able to talk to parents and students about these matters.

Most students feel very unsure about making subject choices. Many choose what they see as easy or what a mate is doing. They need guidance

Theme 4 - Support for our teaching workforce

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

There are very few real innovative leaders in schools. Leaders need to spend a good length of time in a school and get an understanding and relationship with their community if they are to be successful. Each school has its own character.

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

Teachers are faced with large classes and students with many different social and learning needs. In these circumstances smaller class sizes would benefit students, teachers and the school community as is obvious from private schools which are able to do this.

Providing stability in the working environment is a distinct advantage. Teachers need to have the opportunity to be prepared for changes in requirements or syllabuses if those changes are to be effective. A past example of this was the Essential Learnings program. It was a good program with many advantages. The training and thought around developing curriculum was beneficial and it was certainly world leading in its objectives.

However teachers were not given guidance as to how it would be assessed before it started. So it was suddenly dropped

I have observed changes in staffing policy which added to teachers stress and feeling undervalued.

Violence from students has become a problem over the last 20 years. Teachers and fellow students must be protected

Theme 5 - Accountability for improved outcomes

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

If staff and students are enjoying it and motivated the improvement will be maintained

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

Education is not always easily measurable in economic terms.

I only learned of this today and I need to submit it to be on time. I hope I have made some points that are useful.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Taylor

