



An Australian Government Initiative



TASMANIA

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Independent Review of Education in Tasmania – Public Consultation Paper

Regional Development Australia Tasmania (RDA Tasmania) welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission for the Independent Review of Education in Tasmania.

The Regional Development Australia program is an Australian Government initiative established to encourage partnership between all levels of government to enhance the growth and development of Australia's regional communities. RDA committees operate under a national RDA Charter and report to the Australian Government on key outcomes. A national network of 50 RDA committees cover the nation and RDA Tasmania represents the entire state of Tasmania.

Quality education extends beyond the availability of public and private schools. It also encompasses a diverse range of pathways, including vocational education and training (VET) programs, apprenticeships, extended subject offerings, career guidance, and meaningful work experience opportunities. By fostering diverse education pathways which are connected to industry needs, communities can better support student aspirations, equip young people with relevant skills, and ensure smoother transitions into employment or further education.

RDA Tasmania's Strategic Regional Plan (SRP) outlines the strategic priorities for regional development, aligning with the vision of the Australian Government, Tasmanian State Government, and local governments. A key focus of the SRP is education and skill development, identified as critical to unlocking regional growth. However, the gap between available jobs and the skills within the workforce remains a significant barrier to business expansion and scalability.

The SRP highlights an opportunity for Tasmania to harness its most valuable resource—its people—as drivers of economic development. By enhancing education, upskilling the workforce, and embracing the knowledge economy, Tasmania can accelerate regional development. Furthermore, leveraging the state's renowned liveability and expanding renewable industries will attract new residents and businesses, positioning Tasmania as a competitive and sustainable economic hub.

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RDA Tasmania are a key partner in both the East Coast Strategic Partnership and West Coast Strategic Partnership which are initiatives that focus on practical solutions to address regional needs and growth for the region and to bring together key decision makers from all levels of government, business, community and industry. Our engagement in these disadvantaged and geographically isolated regions offers valuable insight into the critical role of education in shaping community outcomes. However, regardless of geographical location, it is RDA Tasmania's observation that poor outcomes in education have a significant negative impact on Tasmania's regional development.

Informed by these experiences, we would like to emphasise several key considerations specific to the more remote areas of our state:

The role of education in community prosperity:

In remote and outer regional areas, high-quality education is essential not only for individual outcomes but also for sustaining a vibrant community – economically, socially, and culturally. When education systems thrive, they enhance local workforce capabilities, strengthen community identity, and create environments where individuals can contribute meaningfully to society. Conversely, when education is lacking, the ripple effect extends beyond the individual, undermining broader community development by hindering economic prosperity and social cohesion.

Impact of youth relocation for education:

The migration of young people to attend boarding schools or colleges elsewhere can have a profound impact on small communities, resulting in diminished participation in local clubs, sports, cultural activities, and social networks. This migration also affects businesses that rely on youth for entry-level employment. The cumulative effect is diminished social diversity and a reduced capacity for communities to sustain vibrant, interconnected networks.

Parental relocation and its socio-economic effects:

Poor education outcomes or limited access to schooling often drive families to relocate, with one or both parents leaving the region to seek better education opportunities for their children. This relocation leads to significant disruptions in local economies, as businesses lose both employees and customers. On a social level, the departure of families fragments communities, eroding local networks, weakening community cohesion, and further isolating those who remain. These demographic shifts ultimately compound existing socio-economic challenges in remote and regional areas.

Challenges in talent attraction and retention:

The availability and quality of education significantly influence the ability to attract and retain talent in regional and remote areas, directly affecting workforce capacity and community development. Potential residents, especially families and young professionals, often assess local education offerings when considering relocation. A lack of high-quality education presents a significant barrier to talent attraction, limiting workforce capacity and undermining long-term economic growth. This challenge underscores the importance of investing in education systems that meet the needs of both local communities and prospective newcomers.

Insights from the Break O'Day (BOD) community and business survey:

Findings from the BOD community and business survey highlight the critical link between education and community sustainability. Approximately 30% of respondents are contemplating relocation to access better education or employment opportunities. Additionally, the lack of local education options is identified as a primary factor driving youth migration. Respondents emphasised the need for enhanced educational facilities and improved access to higher education as key strategies to address these challenges, underscoring the urgent need for targeted educational reforms. Strengthening connections between schools, trade training centres, and regional Jobs Hubs presents a significant opportunity to address these issues and retain talent within the region.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our submission. RDA Tasmania welcomes the opportunity for further engagement.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James McKee', is positioned above the typed name.

James McKee

CEO & Director of Regional Development • RDA Tasmania

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