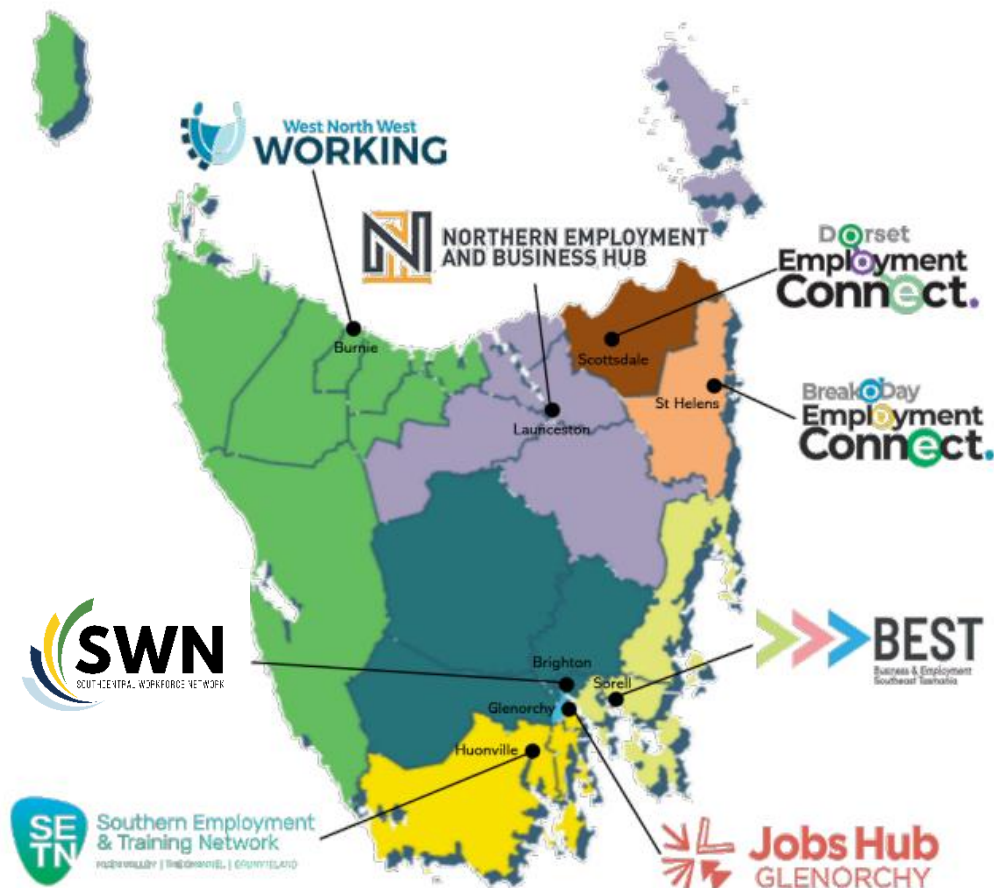


Independent Review of Education in Tasmania

Response to Consultation Paper

Collated through the Regional Jobs Hub Network

The Regional Jobs Hubs, their Advisory Boards and Jobs Tasmania work as a state-wide network that advances regional issues to collectively inform statewide policy and program implementation. This involves sharing and harnessing diverse expertise and learnings through a common model, identifying as a networked community with a shared ambition and policy agenda, and collaboration between the Hubs and government. (Evaluation Report – Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) (2024)



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Independent Review of Education in Tasmania Response to Consultation Paper

Please note: the terminology 'parents' is used throughout the document. This definition includes anyone who the parental responsibility for the child/young person.

The Job Hub Regional Network [referred to in this submission as Jobs Hubs] provides a strong foundation [across the regions of Tasmania] to support local young people, employers, and education and training providers to connect to, and create mutually beneficial job opportunities and workforce solutions. Tasmanian Government (2024), p.16

The following information has been compiled through the above Jobs Hubs who have facilitated collective input including the following people. Their individual as well as collective response is greatly appreciated.

Andrew Benson, Chair, SWN Jobs Hub, Deputy General Manager Southern Midlands Council, former State Sales Manager SKILLED Engineering Pty Ltd (Labour Hire & Recruitment), former CEO Local Government Training Board Ltd.

Andrew Hyatt, Program Leader, BEST Jobs Hub.

Annette Barwick, Chair, BEST Jobs Hub, General Manager, Learning, Development & Inclusion, Lady Gowrie Tasmania Inc, and Early Childhood Australia Tasmania Branch President.

Anthony McConnon, Project Manager, SWN Jobs Hub, former Team Leader Searson Buck Recruitment.

Dearne Stone, Employment Manager, SWN Jobs Hub, former Senior Training Advisor, Group Training.

Elliott Booth, Deputy Chair, SWN Jobs Hub, CEO Andrew Walters Constructions Pty Ltd

Emma Churchill, Team Leader, BEST Jobs Hub.

John Brown, General Manager, Break O'Day Council

Julianne Booth, Andrew Walters Constructions Pty Ltd, former class teacher from Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten through to Grade 11 Vocational English over 11 years, also as a Support Teacher of 5 years' experience, with the following qualifications: Bachelor of Sociology, Bachelor of Teaching, Graduate Certificate of TESOL, Masters of Inclusive Education, Certificate and an Advanced Certificate of Orton-Gillingham Literacy Instruction

Kathleen Ettlin, Chair – West North West Working Jobs Hub, PhD Candidate researching Future of Work in Regions, Former Chair Circular Head Education and Training Consultative Committee

Mike Frost, Board Member SWN Jobs Hub, VET Consultant, former AP Rosny College, Awarded the Trevor Leo Medal (for significant contribution to VET over the last thirty years) at the Tas. Training Awards 2024

Rob Banfield, Chair – Southern Employment & Training Network

Susie Bower, Chair - Northern Employment and Business Hub

Tania May, General Manager - Northern Employment and Business Hub

Introduction

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) stipulate that *education and learning are fundamental rights for every child*. However not all children have equal access to quality and inclusive education and learning. ARACY (2024) pg. 5

Although this submission focuses on the role and outcomes the Jobs Hubs Regional Network is realising within our communities, we must acknowledge in the first instance that education commences long before school. Early childhood has been recognised as a crucial phase during which essential foundations are laid. Therefore, it is important for quality, inclusive and affordable education and care facilities to be available not only to support workforce participation across Tasmania, but to ensure every child can actively participate, grow and learn and set foundations for the future. The increased focus on the early years has increased immensely to create a more integrated, interconnected and holistic approach that includes

- the interconnectedness of all areas of children’s learning, development and wellbeing (e.g. physical, social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, personal, spiritual and creative)
- the importance and respect of children’s voices
- the importance of relationships
- genuine partnerships
- the social and cultural context of each child
- connections with the natural world and communities.

This approach needs to be replicated in the formal school system to ensure barriers are removed for children and young people so as they are supported to thrive.

To develop an education system that meets the individual needs of young people today, we need to understand how young people grow and learn in today’s rapidly changing world.

Advances in neuroscience and the study of brain plasticity have demonstrated the capacity of the human brain to develop and learn through the lifespan; however, there

are key critical periods, one being the early years. Another critical period is adolescence.

Rudling, et al., (2023 p.9) outlines up until the age of 24, the brain has high levels of neuroplasticity which allows the individual to both 'learn and adapt' in order to acquire independence; however, plasticity also increased an individual's vulnerability toward making improper decisions.... With the evolution of AI, it is paramount that any educational reform adequately considers both the risks/challenges but also the benefits. More than ever, human skills (soft skills) are vital, to support students think critically, ethically and reflective. Core competencies that AI cannot replicate. It is essential that young people continue to have the wrap around support structures in place to minimise the risk of disengagement with learning, both through school and beyond.

The middle years (5-15 years) school attendance rates have been falling over the past decade (ARACY p.6), therefore compounding disengagement in years 10, 11 and 12. According to UNICEF, Australia ranks in the bottom third of OECD countries in providing equitable access to quality education.

Therefore, the Education Review must consider the broader systems and policy areas that indeed contribute to inequitable outcomes. ARACY, p.21 cites an increasing amounts of government funds have been directed to non-government schools, chronic underfunding of most public schools has exacerbated inequities and contributed to higher concentrations of disadvantaged students in public systems, and declining equity of outcomes in Australia. Combine this with other barriers including transport, access to outside recreation activities, cost of living in regional, rural and remote regions, our young people continue to feel less positive re: emotional wellbeing and resilience (p.23)

Teaching and learning needs to be refocused to give greater priority to the development of thinking skills, deeper conceptual understanding and students abilities to apply what they learn to meaningful context.

We need to ensure a middle ground between what can be described as a crowded curriculum without falling into a flat curriculum to ensure that we can move away from time pressure, relatively superficial forms of learning and an overemphasis on rote learning and memorisation for reproduction in tests and examinations. (OECD p.186)

Children and young people need purpose in their learning to be engaged and excited about what they are learning and the why? They need highly attuned teachers where young people feel valued and recognised. In saying this, school environments need to provide the environments and support for teachers so as they can be the best they can be.

It is important to recognise that learning in the 21st century needs to draw in the resources of the wider ecosystem within which schools operate (OECD p.161) and this is where the Jobs Hubs are an essential component of that ecosystem.

Theme 1 - Defining Education Success

As outlined in OECD Education at a Glance (2024) students staying in education longer do not indicate better learning outcomes. This is evidenced by the proportion of low-performing 15-year-olds in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) which has remained unchanged or increased since 2012. Moreover, the skills acquired by young adults often do not match labour market needs.

There is a need for strong foundation skills that facilitate lifelong learning and relevant employability skills that support individuals in their careers. This is where strong connection and collaboration between schools and the Jobs Hubs can make a difference. Job Hubs are located within community and operate through a place-based community development approach; therefore, supporting genuine need.

Ensuring students leaving the system have gained a level of education and support which provides them with the intrinsic motivation to achieve emotional and financial success in their field of choice. This can range from academic excellence which leads to a university or VET education, to a pathway which provides essential numeracy and literacy skills, underpinned by connections to industry and services, allowing every individual, regardless of their academic ability, the opportunity and confidence to be the best they can be.

The completion of year 12 should be a choice of the individual and their family network, which allows the student to gain the qualifications needed to progress through to university and/or VET pathways or gain an entry-level employment position where they are building essential life skills.

We must be mindful not to pressure students to remain in the education system to gain a qualification, which is either beyond them at that stage in their development or of no interest as they may miss early employment opportunities which will provide them with financial independence and a feeling of self-worth. Our education system allows for opting in to a degree or a Grad Dip/Grad Cert, or VET qualification as a mature age student and there are many examples where this has happened as the person grows in their chosen career and/or changes career.

Experience, shows that parents with low literacy, low numeracy or with neurodiverse challenges, also tend to devalue education at the grades 7-12 stage and withdraw support due to:

- their own negative educational experiences
- intimidated by the perceived school intellectuals judging their efforts; and
- the inability to support their students with homework, social/online support, or monetary support.

This withdrawal can be despite the best efforts of the teachers, support staff and the school as a whole. Judging the teacher's quality is not productive nor conducive to

retaining people in this profession. They try tirelessly to the best of their ability in every grade.

Suggestions:

- Involve parents with information, and student/parent discussions about what pathways are available to their children (grades 3-12). Normalise the information.
- Supply information about VET roles as a valuable option vs only high education qualification information.
- Connect and collaborate therefore leverage from other programs (such as Job Hubs) that will enable teachers to have more time for an individualised student-centred curriculum.
- There is a need for an intermediate body to engage and educate specialising in empowering Tasmanians into their preferred work, and to give all parents the power to be of assistance. Taking away pressure by letting the young people know they may have between 3-7 careers in their lifetime. Everyone starts somewhere, and upskilling can happen at any time.
- Teachers do so much but the parent's voices are the main model for their children. Use the high engagement time of grades 3-6 to normalise VET vs higher education educational choices. Take away the pressure to make one choice only.
- Continue to provide encouragement, support and linkages to community and career/job prospects throughout high school/college.

Success can have multiple definitions therefore a broader definition is required to support inclusivity and equity. Top education systems like Finland highlight an all-inclusive approach to success where wellbeing, social and emotional development and life skills rate as high as academic achievement. Success can include qualifications other than TCE – these include VET qualifications, Units of Competence and Skill Sets; they also can include achievement through voluntary work, through part time work, sporting achievement. Students are more likely to stay engaged with life-long learning if it is meaningful, purposeful and instills a strong sense of self and confidence.

- Achieving a full-time job can also be a perfectly reasonable success story.
- The Jobs Hubs are already playing a role in promoting employment and training opportunities in particular the uptake of School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships getting actively involved in the contract sign-up and ongoing support; however when reviewing the education system it is paramount to re-look at VET which historically was structured for an adult learning environment

so as to ensure students/young people are supported in their study and early career opportunities.

- Job Hubs are already engaging with students in schools promoting regional employment and career opportunities and alternative pathways for students unlikely to complete a TCE.
- Job Hubs have a role to play in providing safe-havens for young people to talk about issues – one-on-one with Job Hub counsellors/coaches and groups independent of teachers.
- Tasmania has a record of high engagement with both students and parents up until and including grade six. Parents recognise the need to foster independence in their children from grade seven onwards and tend to disengage to a small extent from the school. Some schools actively encourage parents to drop students at the door for this reason. Many students also bus to school with working parents. This creates a distance-based separation. Schools need to be more open to families to create a genuine partnership in children and young people's learning.
- Stronger engagement with families as a students first teacher vs what can sometimes feel a power over, authoritarian approach partnership in a school environment.

Theme 2 – Strengthening Supports and Engagement for all Learners at all Stages of their Education.

Supporting students who are struggling and increasing family involvement in education is crucial to ensuring every student reaches their full potential. High family engagement through a genuine partnership approach, flexible learning plans, other funded organisations like 26TEN available in schools and individualised support assists in keeping students engaged and on track. Inclusive education ensures no one is left behind, meeting the needs of all students. Within this environment, students must be able to see the value and meaning in what they are learning to be engaged. We need to think outside of the traditional education discourse and think of new and engaging ways of empowering students in their learning. Job Hubs can be instrumental in providing students through career exploration opportunities, connections with business and industries therefore bringing about a more positive discourse about young people entering the workforce and the absolute value different generations bring to the table.

Another consideration is reviewing the 'commencement of formal school currently based on age by the end of December as this can cause inequities e.g., children born in December in Tasmania start school at age four, while children born earlier in the year can be nearly a year older. This system puts younger children at a disadvantage. Instead of basing education on age or year levels. Students should be supported at

their own learning level. Every child should have the chance to progress at their own pace, rather than feeling pressured to keep up with a set year level. The current system favours students who can keep up and leaves others behind, widening the gap as they move through school. This can also play the other way, where students become disengaged as they find the curriculum 'boring' and not challenging enough.

Understanding each individual students' circumstances, capabilities, barriers and ambitions, and provide the support they need to remain motivated and access all, which they can gain from the education system.

Bridging the School-to-work Gap

Students should have access to information and resources, which allow them to make informed decisions around the career, which suits them best. The ability for students to experience a wide range of workplaces allowing them to see, smell, touch, hear and do all which is involved in each role, motivates them to choose an appropriate career and achieve the necessary levels of education to secure that position.

Findings from the latest OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) showed that 37% of Australia's 15-year-olds had not spoken to a career's advisor at school ACER (2024) analysis showed that 81% of students at advantaged schools had a career counsellor on staff, compared with 59% of students at disadvantaged schools. On the other hand, the percentage of students at disadvantaged schools where a specific teacher was responsible for providing career counselling – rather than a dedicated school careers advisor – was more than double that of students from advantaged schools (39% compared with 17%). This analysis supports the integration of Jobs Hubs support within DECYP with appropriate funding to carry out this essential role for our young people.

Jobs Hubs

- have strong working relationships with employers and industries within their regions that can create timely linkages for schools to leverage from.
- have the potential to work directly with students who are or have disengaged by working through employment and training opportunities, matching them to regional and local jobs, re-negotiating a pathway back to finish aspects of schooling (for drop outs) including non-traditional schools like the Indie Schools ([Indie School](#))
- could convene parent and student regional job opportunities events
- engagement could lead to part-time work opportunities for young people at school as part of their job brokerage role – part-time work can lead to further and full-time work as well as further education and training
- help promote lifelong learning with multiple entry points at different times across one's working life

- can work with schools but as a mechanism for supporting students at risk and potential early leavers to provide real-world information about what lies ahead pending student decisions
- could provide work-based options where students are given an extended period to engage in work and training on-the-job and away from school
- can help schools by giving students clearer, real-world pathways to employment. They provide information about local job markets, industries in demand, and vocational training options. By bringing career coaches and industry experts into schools, they can help students explore a wider range of careers, like apprenticeships, trades, or new industries, therefore broadening perspectives on both employment and education pathways available to them.

By working together with Jobs Hubs, schools can broaden their curriculum to better match the needs of individual students to local industries however this requires a strategy to be developed to ensure suitable teachers are available to teach the courses in demand from industry, so young people have access to career opportunity explorations within their region. This is where a strong partnership and collaborative approach with Jobs Hubs and Industry is an essential component.

This ensures students are learning the skills needed in high-demand areas, helping them compete in the job market. Schools could also use Jobs Hubs to strengthen vocational education and training (VET) programs, giving students more options if they don't want to pursue university. This would help raise the value of vocational education and training (VET) and address local skill shortages. Also allowing enrolled students, the ability to access funded training.

Ensure students from years 9-12 experience workplace learning through Work Experience, Structured Workplace Learning programs and Vocational Placement programs a part of VET in Schools initiatives.

Undertaking part-time work which for many students is their first encounter with the world of work and may include accredited training – for example McDonalds customer service and food-handling skills are recognised as part of the McDonalds Training Package.

Jobs Hubs

- can promote VET outcomes as valid, equivalent and career-focused to higher education – putting young people on realistic pathways that might involve school, TAFE, community service, part-time jobs that allow them to work toward a VET qualification and TCE.
- can facilitate employability skills by continuing to provide training and other job-support and employability actions.

Pathways from school to TAFE are much less evident than to Higher Education, yet are likely to be less expensive, with no HECs debt.

Many school cultures still favour an ATAR score and TCE rather than a VET qualification – current career counselling supports this assumption.

Theme 3 – Outcomes at the Conclusion of Formal Years of Schooling

The focus is on increasing attendance, retention, and performance, particularly as students' progress through high school. High-performing systems, like those in South Korea and Japan, provide strong student support through after-school programs and mentoring. They offer a range of vocational and academic options tailored to student interests, ensuring high retention and completion rates. Local employment programs that engage both families and students can play a crucial role.

Students need practical life skills, an understanding of their learning style (and all learning styles celebrated) confidence and agency, work experience, and opportunities to connect with industry while still in school. The Jobs Hubs provides ongoing support as students transition from school to the workforce. Jobs Hubs Programs help by finding or creating solutions to barriers faced by young people. By knowing families, local employers, and the community, The Job Hubs can connect students with relevant opportunities that align with their personal challenges and interests, ensuring that no student is left behind.

The funding model for schools needs to change. Schools need to receive financial incentives for the following:

- If students go into full-time employment or an apprenticeship/traineeship from any year level.
- Disengaged students should be able to attend other programs outside of school and this results in an outcome for the school. For this to be successful, Jobs Hubs or any other organisations need to be an approved activity by DECYP/Jobs Tas or an independent approval committee.

Theme 4 - Support for the Teaching Workforce

Teachers have a lasting impact on students, both positive and not so positive. However, it should also be recognised that leadership of the school (School Principals) have a big influence on a school's culture, connection with community, and priorities for our young people. Families living in regional communities do not have the options available to move their children to a different school if the curriculum delivery and individualised learning support is not meeting the child's basic human rights to a quality education. Therefore, greater oversight and investment is required to ensure regional communities can grow and retain a place-based future workforce and children from regional communities have every opportunity to thrive.

To ensure teachers can do their best, it's important to provide them with robust training and opportunities for professional growth. When hiring teachers, we should focus not only on their academic results but also on their personal qualities and skills.

Enable teachers to teach to their strengths. Every employee is at their best when they are working in a role they enjoy. As with students, provide teachers with the support they need to remain motivated and achieve success in their role. Lighten their workload by allow them access to outside resources such as industry expertise, which can support students through the process of identifying, working towards and securing employment in the sector which suits them best.

Reducing the administrative load on teachers and giving them more independence in their roles will help keep them motivated. Strong mentorship programs, especially for new teachers, are also essential to building a capable and engaged workforce.

The high administrative burden on teachers, especially when completing risk assessments for student work experience, is unnecessary. (My parent point of view) When someone starts a job, no one conducts a risk assessment for them, so why is it needed for students? Parental or guardian approval should be enough for work experience. The new Child and Young People Framework doesn't seem to reduce these admin pressures either. It's important to review which administrative tasks are merely "tick-the-box" exercises, remove those without real value, and focus on what truly supports teaching. We need to stop creating extra work that doesn't benefit students or teachers. Julieanne Booth (2024)

Teacher's Aides, who support the most vulnerable students, are often undervalued. While teachers manage large classes, Aides work with small groups of students who may have high support needs including challenging behaviours. They play a crucial role, yet their contributions often go unrecognised.

Temporary contracts can also affect teacher retention.

As evidence and feedback given by the principal and teaching staff through the Youth Connector Pilot Project in 2023 and 2024 (Southeast Region), it was highlighted that the support provided by the Job Hubs Youth Connector played a crucial role in supporting the teaching staff by connecting students with job-ready skills, and work-based activities. From the student's point of view, the project was a success, due to having access to a consistent/regular contact who built trust and the flexibility to work one-on-one with students. A person outside of the teaching staff to talk to. Providing the whole community support which lifts DECYP staff morale and seeing positive outcomes provides job satisfaction and lifts the whole school environment. The project saw positive outcomes for disengaged students which resulted in less pressure on the teaching staff having the same battles with these student's day in and day out.

The Jobs Hubs have connections to industry and training providers which can provide students with the support and direction they require to make informed decisions around careers pathways and employment opportunities. This support is already being provided by the Network in regional areas of Tasmania at no cost to the education system. With appropriate funding this service could be increased and provide a structured program which supports teachers in their roles; (*see SWN Operational Involvement in South Central High Schools*).

Representatives of the dual pathways of our education system go to each and every school, job fair, work experience meeting and home, if necessary, are required in each

Tasmanian region. This would be an investment in supporting Tasmanian intergenerational indifference to education and the confusion around relevant pathways.

Effort should be put into normalising the VET / (TAFE) and Tertiary education dual pathway model through job support teams with a mandate to educate from primary school where there is higher parental engagement through to college level:

Job Hubs

- are neutral, non-school, safe places where students are treated like adults and equals – these can become major facilitators in youth engagement and re-engagement; and
- could establish a school presence – a Jobs Office (facilitated externally from DECYP and connected with local industries)
- might be one strategy where regional opportunities are promoted to young people. Marsden HS in Brisbane had such an office back in the day run by a woman they called the “Jobs Lady” – did a roaring business in all the areas mentioned.

Accountability

Ensuring that educational reforms lead to real improvements requires a fair system where everyone is accountable. Create a user-driven model. Review current service providers allowing more flexibility. Is there the ability for regional schools or collective schools to have a voice of who is best to deliver the support schools need?

Job Hubs can provide schools with up-to-date local job market data, enabling career coaches to offer relevant advice based on the latest trends. Connecting schools with local businesses strengthens community ties and ensures schools are aligned with the needs of the workforce. This collaboration helps integrate schools into the local economy and supports students in making informed career decisions.

As quoted in the Tasmanian Youth Jobs Strategy by the Hon Felix Ellis, MP (Minister for Skills and Training) and Hon Jo Palmer, MLC (Minister for Education), (2024), we want all young people in Tasmania to lead happy, healthy, productive lives, empowered to learn, dream, and make decisions about their future, knowing that support is available when they need it to help them reach their goals. And we want our employers and industry to have the confidence to make young people part of their workforce, knowing that we are equipping them with the skills and capabilities to be productive employees and support innovation and economic growth.

In Closing

Job Hubs do provide programs and support options based on place-based needs with a clear difference from other programs is the Jobs Hub knowledge of community and connections with Industry within their regions therefore the ability to provide ongoing

support as students transition from school to employment or further education. With sufficient funding, this support can be effectively implemented in schools to equip students with the skills, local connections, and support needed for successful transitions into their chosen pathway, whether this be employment or further education prior to employment.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Jobs Hubs for further information and/or clarification.



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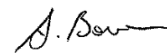
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