



# Independent Review of Education in Tasmania

St Michael's Collegiate submission

October 2024



## Executive Summary

St Michael's Collegiate strongly supports the work undertaken by the Independent Review of Education, and seeks to contribute to this work by offering practical, actionable solutions that can be implemented across all Tasmanian Schools.

Despite multiple attempts to improve educational outcomes, increase engagement in school, and enhance completion rates, we continue to see these numbers decline. This in turn affects the State's productivity, as access to better paid jobs reduces, average incomes fall further behind the rest of Australia, and cost of living and quality of life diminish. Without higher productivity we cannot grow the economy fast enough to enable the government to fund health care for our rapidly aging population or provide adequate levels of the services we need.

Education remains the most powerful mechanism we have to turn this around.

We believe the Tasmanian Education System has many strengths, and by undertaking a few pragmatic changes, that can be implemented at scale, we can see improvements quickly, without adding unnecessary burden to already overworked teachers and under-resourced schools.

This can be achieved if we:

- **Strengthen vocational pathway in schools, including earlier introduction of career education and resilience building to improve educational outcomes**
- **Bring families into the educational network so they understand and can work effectively in the School system**
- **Expand assessment measures to include student competencies that measure skills and abilities as well as quantitative knowledge and skills**
- **Provide systematic support by developing 'ready to go' curricula, a behaviour support structure, and support personnel**
- **Review current initiatives to reduce and prioritise and leverage resources from existing systems to reduce duplication**

Meeting the challenges we face in improving educational outcomes will require sustained and coordinated partnerships between the Tasmanian government, Schools, industries, universities and the communities we serve across our regions. Our submission provides a pathway to meeting these challenges.

## *Introduction*

Education is an imperative to a progressive society. It is the vehicle through which knowledge and skills are strengthened. It helps to overcome poverty, injustice, and inequality, promoting human rights while benefiting our environment, health and economic outlook. It has also never been more important that all in society have access to high quality learning. It is forecast that by 2050, 80% of all jobs will require tertiary education qualifications from a university or TAFE<sup>1</sup>. That means 90% of school students will need to complete school and attend higher education.

Despite the attractions of living in Tasmania and strong population growth during COVID, Tasmania has since slowed its progress. We face serious challenges in increasing employment and participation both now and into the future. Tasmania has a disproportionately high number of people facing disadvantage in all its forms, including those living in rural and remote areas, First Nations people, long waitlists for GPs and health specialties, and the lowest digital literacy in Australia. Tasmania has the highest proportion of people living in the most disadvantaged areas (37%<sup>2</sup> compared with 22% nationally). We have the highest rate of disability (26.8% compared with 17.7% nationally)<sup>3</sup>, and we have some of the poorest health outcomes in the country. Tasmania also has the lowest proportion of people with a university degree at 16.2%<sup>4</sup>, and 48% of adults are functionally illiterate<sup>5</sup>.

Central to what makes these challenges hard to address are low levels of educational attainment in Tasmania. Currently, only 55% of young Tasmanians are getting a TCE, and only 31% get an ATAR<sup>6</sup>. Tasmania has the highest proportion of adults with only year 11 education outcomes or below. In the last five years while we have seen our potential year 12 population shrink by 5.8%, the number of students completing their TCE has fallen by 11.8%, and the number getting an ATAR by 11.9%. The number of students completing the subjects needed for university admission has fallen by 10.4%. It is critical that we stop this decline and make a shift to improve how we deliver education in Tasmania.

This review will play a crucial role in identifying opportunities to enhance things that work and pare back initiatives that are not making their intended an impact.

This submission offers insights and feedback across each theme outlined in the **Independent Education Review Public Consultation Paper**.

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<sup>1</sup> [240514 - ATEC.pdf](#)

<sup>2</sup> ABS 2016 Census, Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage

<sup>3</sup> Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2018

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/6>

<sup>5</sup> ABS (2018), 2016 Census QuickStats

<sup>6</sup> [Briefing Note to the Minister for Education \(DOC/24/90676\) \(tasc.tas.gov.au\)](#)

## **Theme 1: Defining Educational Success**

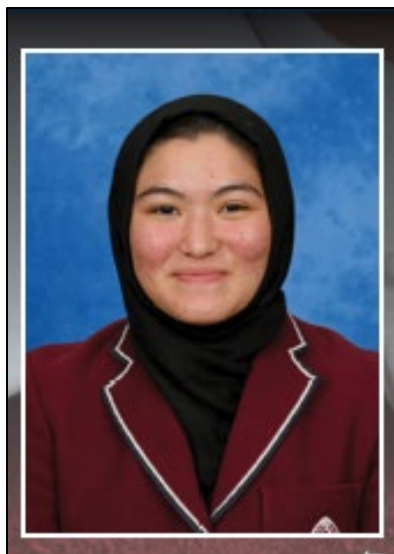
### **Strengthen vocational pathway in schools, including earlier introduction of career education and resilience building to improve educational outcomes**

The Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE) is a critical credential that opens doors for young people to access a range of pathways, including university, vocational education, and employment. By 2050, 80% of all jobs will require tertiary education qualifications from a university or TAFE. That means 90% of school students will need to complete school, compared to the current rate of 55%. By broadening the narrative of what success after Year 12 looks like, we can ensure that all pathways are valued equally. This would motivate students to pursue personalised and fulfilling career routes, rather than focusing solely on university as the primary objective.

Understanding the individual needs and aspirations of students allows schools to effectively introduce and support vocational pathways. Vocational education should be better integrated into the school's narrative of success, ensuring that students see value in these options as well.

#### **Actions to achieve this:**

- **Introduce Early Career Exposure and Resilience Training:** Integrate career education and resilience-building activities into the curriculum starting from Year 7 or earlier in Junior years. This could include career talks, internships, workshops, career expos, and information sessions to showcase various post-TCE pathways, including university, vocational education, apprenticeships, and employment options.
- **Strengthen Vocational Pathways in Schools:** Increase partnerships with local businesses and vocational institutions to create more robust vocational education programs within schools.
- **Launch Campaigns Promoting Year 12 Completion:** Partner with industries and local businesses to create marketing campaigns that emphasise the importance of completing Year 12, with testimonials from successful local figures.



*Since 2018 St Michael's Collegiate has embedded vocational education in their curricula, supporting students to complete their TCE while undertaking formal qualifications in the workplace.*

*In 2023, Mohadisa Hussaini was a finalist for the Equity Vocational Student of the Year, in recognition of the significant barriers and disadvantage she has overcome to complete vocational education.*

*Mohadisa's goal to be the first Afghan woman to join the Tasmanian Police Force has come out of her experiences from VET and learning that there are many opportunities for women to serve the community.*

## ***Theme 2: Strengthening Supports and Engagement for All Learners***

### **Bring families into the educational network so they understand and can work effectively in the School system**

Families play a crucial role in supporting their children's education from an early age by fostering an appreciation for learning and accepting their child's individuality. Parental collaboration with schools ensures a unified approach to both academic and wellbeing outcomes.

Our system must provide parents with the tools and education to effectively collaborate within the school system. Empowering families with strategies on how to best support their children's learning strengthens the overall school-home partnership.

Equipping parents with the knowledge to support their children's education ensures a unified approach between home and school.

#### **Actions to achieve this:**

- **Introduce Parent Education on System Navigation:** Offer workshops and resources for parents on how to understand educational processes and work effectively with the school system.



*Across July and August each year, Collegiate parents are **invited to attend a series of information evenings** to understand and assist their children in choosing subjects for the following year.*

*These **'taster' events are well attended**, enabling students (and parents) to try different subjects and meet with staff to ask questions and learn more about these exciting subjects.*

***Taster events have improved educational outcomes**, as students are more informed in their subject selection and transition between subjects less as a result. **Parents engagement has also improved**, as they better understand what to expect and how best to support their child.*

### **Theme 3: Outcomes at the Conclusion of Formal Years of Schooling**

#### **Expand assessment measures to include student competencies that measure skills and abilities as well as quantitative knowledge and skills**

Traditionally, curriculum-based assessments have focused on whether students have acquired specific content. Increasingly though, employers are expecting transferable skills such as communication, critical thinking and problem-solving, in addition to academic grades. Australian schooling is ready for a paradigm shift to ensure young people are educated and assessed in a way that sets them up for the future.

Competency-based assessments focus on students' mastery of knowledge, skills and abilities, including providing meaningful and actionable feedback to students with an emphasis on improvement in performance rather than merely focusing on test scores or grades.

By introducing assessments that measure both content knowledge and transferable skills (e.g., collaboration, communication, critical thinking), and report these alongside academic grades. This holistic approach motivates students to value lifelong, career-relevant skills, fostering well-rounded development beyond focusing solely on marks. This method will also help motivate students to value skills that are relevant to their future careers and personal growth. This broader assessment approach encourages students to develop lifelong skills, shifting the focus from merely achieving high marks to becoming well-rounded individuals prepared for various pathways

#### **Actions to achieve this:**

- **Implement a competency-based assessment framework:** that measures not only content knowledge but also transferable skills such as collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Regularly report on these competencies alongside academic grades to provide a more holistic view of student development.

 <p>REIMAGINING SCHOOLING TO CREATE FUTURE-READY STUDENTS</p> <p>A UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIP WITH AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS</p> <h2>NEW METRICS FOR SUCCESS:</h2> <p>TRANSFORMING WHAT WE VALUE IN SCHOOLS</p> 	<p><i>In January this year St Michael's Collegiate partnered with Melbourne University and Melbourne Metrics to <b>support the creation and validation of new metrics.</b></i></p> <p><i>The New Metrics research partnership aims to <b>improve ways to teach, assess and report on complex competencies.</b> Complex competencies are important for future employability and will assist young people to navigate the world beyond school.</i></p> <p><i>The program <b>seeks to advance the cross-sectorial national agenda for improved and broader recognition systems,</b> and engage directly with policy-makers, industry leaders and global innovative practitioners.</i></p>
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#### **Theme 4: Supporting the Teaching Workforce**

### **Provide systematic support by developing ‘ready to go’ curricula, a behaviour support structure, and support personnel**

Despite the introduction of the [Systemic Curriculum Delivery](#) resource in 2020, learning outcomes remain low, and inconsistent across Tasmanian Schools<sup>7</sup>. Coupled with this is the increasing pastoral care needs placed on teachers, which takes time away from curriculum development, marking and critical lesson planning time.

Teachers need more time and systematic support to effectively deliver quality education. Ready-to-go curricula, a clear behavior support structure, and a robust team of aides and student management personnel are necessary to alleviate teacher workload.

Mentorship helps new teachers build confidence, while paid Teacher Aide (TA) roles provide practical training and a pathway into teaching. A structured mentorship program for early career teachers can help develop their skills and confidence. Offering paid TA positions to student teachers provides practical training and helps develop a future workforce of well-prepared educators.

#### **Actions to achieve this:**

- **Provide Time and Systematic Support for Teachers:** Reduce administrative tasks for teachers and provide a behavior support structure, along with ready-made curriculum resources.
- **Introduce Mentoring and Paid TA Opportunities:** Develop a mentoring program for new teachers and offer paid teacher assistant (TA) positions for university students pursuing education degrees.



*Founded by our strong belief to ‘grow our own’ and to help address the teaching workforce shortage, **St Michael’s Collegiate has been supporting teachers in training to develop their practical knowledge.***

*We have had many teachers who have all started their time at **Collegiate as teacher assistants while studying a Bachelor of Teaching.***

*Collegiate has supported these staff to work and continue their study, including creating opportunities for them to teach in a supportive environment. One TA recently stated ‘It has been an amazing experience to be a teacher assistant, while studying to be a teacher, it **gave me the opportunity to observe exemplary practice.**’*

<sup>7</sup> [Student learning data - Department for Education, Children and Young People \(decyp.tas.gov.au\)](https://decyp.tas.gov.au)

## ***Theme 5: Accountability for Improved Outcomes***

### **Review current initiatives to reduce and prioritise and leverage resources from existing systems to reduce duplication**

As outlined in the Consultation paper, over many years a number of initiatives have been developed and implemented to try and improve educational outcomes in Tasmania. This approach has made navigating the system difficult, and led to competing demands and resources.

Eliminating unnecessary initiatives and ensuring that policies are practical and manageable is essential. Teachers need time to focus on core teaching responsibilities or supporting young people's wellbeing rather than navigating complex administrative tasks. By prioritising initiatives and giving them adequate time to be fully implemented will lead to better outcomes.

The Education department may consider leveraging resources developed in other jurisdictions, such as Victoria's VCE, to avoid duplicating efforts when our resources are limited.

#### **Actions to achieve this:**

- **Streamline Initiatives and Focus on Prioritisation:** Conduct an audit of current initiatives and remove those that are not contributing to measurable outcomes. Prioritise initiatives that have a clear and direct impact on student learning and teacher workload reduction.
- **Leverage Resources from Existing Systems:** Consider adopting or adapting successful programs from neighboring states (e.g., VCE in Victoria) to reduce the need for duplicative resource development.
- **Balance Curriculum Choices:** Evaluate and streamline the subject offerings, ensuring that students have sufficient options to meet their interests without overwhelming resources.



*In 2018, St Michael's Collegiate engaged with Solution Tree Australia to **streamline and systematize its teaching and learning framework.***

*Leveraging the 'New Art and Science of Teaching' and 'high reliability in schools' models, **all Collegiate staff underwent training and development across 2019 to redesign their teaching and learning approaches** to support students' to build cognitive capacity for learning, positively influence students' emotional states and engage all students for success.*

***Now in its fifth year of implementation, the framework is deeply embedded, creating a consistent, efficient and engaging approach to teaching.***