



TASMANIAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS INC.

ABN: 28 261 465 779

Office: 15 Rowitta Road Lindisfarne phone: 03 6234 9488
PO Box 183 Lindisfarne TAS 7015 email: eo@tasso.org.au

TASSO SUBMISSION to ACER Review Years 9- 12 September 2016

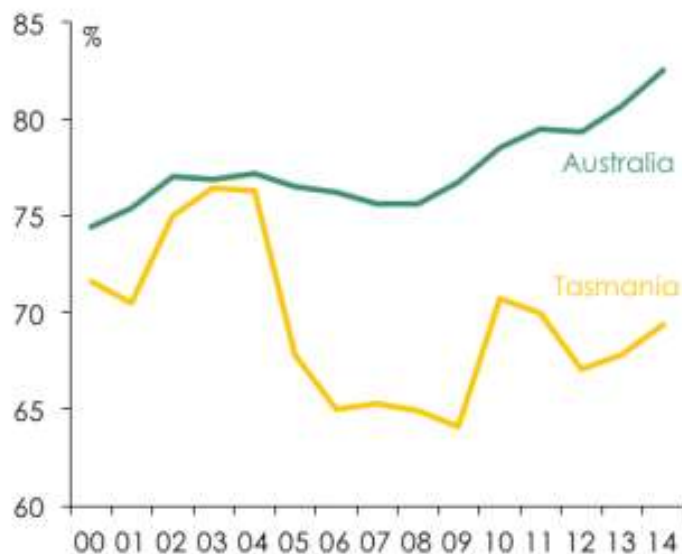
The Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations Inc. (TASSO) has provided feedback into the Review at the Focus Group held in Hobart and at two Public Consultations sessions. We take this opportunity to reiterate the points raised in those forums through this formal submission process.

Retention data

Tasmanian figures do not capture students who do not finish year 11 or 12 but continue on to a trainee or apprenticeship or successful employment. They are successful but recorded as drop-outs, and their success is not captured in the figures.

There appears to be a lack of rigor in the data, with variations between sources existing of approx. 40% to 70%. If we look at the retention data over 2000-2015 for example, we see that in the 2003 Tasmanian ABS school data, Tasmanian retention numbers were virtually equal to the National retention figure. This was then followed by a sharp decrease, due to large educational structural changes – Tasmania Tomorrow. (Chart copied below). Source: TCCI Tasmania report 2015. <http://www.tcci.com.au/getattachment/Home/TCCI-Tasmania-Report-2015-FINAL.pdf.aspx>

Chart 4.6: Year 12 retention rates, Tasmania and Australia, 2000-20



Source: ABS, Schools, Australia (4221.0), 2014

A model that can be applied Nationwide would be beneficial to ensure there are more accurate comparisons made between the states and territories.

Transition

There are many issues that can prevent students from successfully transitioning from year 10 to

11. For example: -

- The effects of poverty and family support needs on retention at post year 10 levels must be considered.
- The cost and availability of transport and urban/rural boundary definitions mean that some students are eligible for travel concessions and some are not – even for those for whom the travel to school is eligible for a concessionary fare but the return trip to their home is not.
- The threshold for eligibility for the Student Assistance Scheme (STAS). The Commonwealth Health Care Card is a well-accepted measure of eligibility for state and federal concessions, however the threshold for STAS is lower than the Health Care Card. Also a factor for travel concessions.
- The impact from the loss of Pathway Planners has been keenly felt in Tasmanian State Schools. Given the model on offer for the ‘Extension of High Schools’ and the options for dual enrolment etc. and also the recognition that students at school will continue on to many career changes in their life time. The crucial role of a Pathway Planner that can build a direct connection between students, industry and secure employment options is more important than ever.
- The loss of boarding facilities may also be possible factor, in the past it has almost been a rite of passage for rural students to attend college and stay in student accommodation during the week and travel home for the weekend, for those students their peer group was their support network.
- For many students, including those that may have spent their entire school years ostracised by their peers, or subject to bullying and other forms of discrimination, the change from High School to College provides the opportunity for a fresh start and to re-invent themselves and meet other likeminded individuals.

Curriculum

Communication and the inclusive transition process from school to college has been and will continue to be important to ensure that when students arrive at their next phase of education they are ‘up to speed’ and ready to embrace the positive learning challenges ahead of them.

It should be acknowledged what a negative effect unpreparedness can have on student’s morale and mental health. Some primary schools liaise with their high schools to help ensure primary teachers are preparing students in step with the high school requirements of subjects like maths.

Moderation

Moderation is essential and very beneficial.

Subject Choice

Subject choice is valued by both students and parents. For some students the availability of one specialised course is the only factor continuing to keep them engaged in their education. Not all considerations should be linked to financial concerns although there may be benefit in reducing the amount of courses with very similar course content on offer.

Subject length – Year long was seen as beneficial to allow a ‘taster’ or less daunting commitment or feeling of being locked into a subject students may no longer have a passion or interest in.

VET subjects currently offered are limited to Cert. I and Cert II. When consulting with industry on appropriate VET course levels offered industry has responded that students with Cert. I were more desirable to employ or engage in a traineeship as this enabled the employer to be eligible for concessions.

If the student were qualified at a Cert. II or III level they would not be an attractive employment option as they are essentially more expensive to employ (as the employer receives no incentive to employ them).

TCE.

One of the quirks of the process has meant in the past that students studying a higher level Maths for example, but either do not complete the course or fail two criteria (resulting in a course fail) do not gain any recognition of their achievement even though it would be at a much higher complexity than the minimum maths requirement - therefore do not receive the Maths ‘tick’.

Students can pay to complete the maths component online, but if it is not a course requirement for University entry there is no incentive for them to go back and obtain it, even though they would be well equipped to pass the test.

Additional needs students may be currently excluded in effect from TCE awards. The outstanding work of the Newstead College additional needs unit is a wonderful example of progress. Many students not engaged in year 10 are now fully engaged in year 11 at Newstead College. At the end of 2015 all students exiting Newstead from that program had pathways into supported employment or further education and training.

Subject specific text books for TCE subjects would be beneficial addition – currently there is little direction for course content and left to the whim, enthusiasm and capacity of the teacher.

It must be considered what effect on TCE results could be attributed to teachers teaching outside of their area of expertise.

Teenage Motherhood

Another factor to consider is teenage mothers, some colleges do run integrated programs to allow young mothers to complete their TCE. More accessible programs to encourage capacity for these students to complete their study would be beneficial.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide information into this review and look forward to seeing the final report.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ant Dry', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

**Ant Dry
President**