



TASMANIAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS INC.

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MEDIA RELEASE

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School Fees & Levies

Review needed regardless of who is in power.

The Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations (TASSO) commends Labor MP Michelle O'Byrne, Shadow Minister for Education, proclaiming *School fees need fresh review as Tasmanian families hit hard*, on January 24th 2018.

Lisa Gillard, TASSO President said – “TASSO policy is that state schools should be free of fees and levies. However within the current system a full and transparent review of school levies, fees, the difference between what schools charge, Student Assistance Scheme (STAS) and the cost to families associated with studying at school is needed, regardless of the election outcome. We have been calling for this for many years.”

More and more families are under financial strain, school fees and costs of children returning to school does nothing to reduce the strain. Having multiple children, the cost of school levies, text books, uniforms and other incidentals that children need for school, add up to more than a weekly wage for some families. The loss of the Commonwealth School Kids Bonus has hurt families. It was used to help alleviate part of the cost of children returning to school.

“The STAS threshold needs to be raised and at a minimum align with that for a Healthcare Card. Some families receive a Commonwealth Healthcare Card which entitles them to concessions on utilities such as electricity, water, vehicle registration and rates but not education. STAS exempts very low income families from paying school fees and levies.”

An investigation into why there is a discrepancy between schools and what they actually charge in levies and fees, school are teaching the same curriculum, is warranted. We are aware that students do pick subjects based on their parent's ability to pay when it comes to specialty courses or options.

There needs to be greater flexibility and consideration when it comes to payment plans for fees and the due date for finalization of payment. Some parents have more than one child. Children from the one family can be attending two, three or even four schools and this needs to be taken into account. A payment plan set up for example at the rate of \$40 per fortnight per child equals \$120 per fortnight for 3 children at school and will not mathematically allow for fees to be paid by the end of second term if the total fees and levies are greater than \$1320, which in some cases for 3 children they are.

Fees and levies are not the only cost that parents are faced with in preparing children to return to school on February 7th 2018. Other costs include transport and uniform, in 2017 we had reports of students being prevented from attending school activities for failure to have correct uniform. There are other costs as well for some such as stationery, text books and electronic devices.

“Education is the cornerstone of the foundation we build our lives on. For everyone to have the ability to reach their full potential barriers need to be removed like transport and the financial burden, children shouldn’t be disadvantaged or excluded on the ability of their parent being able to pay school fees.” Said Lisa Gillard.

For further comment

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