



TASSO
INCORPORATED

BUDGET SUBMISSION

2018-19

RESEARCH PROJECT OFFICER

OUR VISION: TASSO a vital part of Education

OUR MISSION: To promote and protect the interest of parents and students in state school

“The Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations hold that an education should be provided to all which enables the development of their abilities.

This provision should ensure that all achieve their maximum potential irrespective of capacity to pay, class, disability, gender, culture, level of ability or where they live.

The school system should provide a broad curriculum to enable the student to participate fully in society; a learning environment that encourages them to build on their culture, experience and skills and an education setting which is safe, nurturing and welcoming.

TASSO holds as a tenet that an effective school system is a partnership of students, parents, teachers and ancillary staff and as such can best meet the needs of all its participants."

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SUMMARY

Recommendation 1

Recognise and acknowledge parents as the first and primary educators of their children and empower and allow them to exercise their rights as educators.

Recommendation 2

To recognise the importance of parental engagement in a child's education.

Recommendation 3

To recognise and understand the barriers that can inhibit parental engagement in our schools.

Recommendation 4

The ability to change and educate the system as to the importance of parental engagement in a child's lifelong learning

Recommendation 5

Recognise that educators need to have parental engagement implemented into their training.¹

¹ <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards>

INTRODUCTION

Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations Inc (TASSO), is the peak parent body representing all Tasmanian state school communities, we are a not for profit organisation who provide guidance, advocacy for parents and students in state schools and assistance to school associations and other parent groups. We are a committed group of volunteers, who are a voice on departmental committees and working groups as well as in the broader community on the issues affecting all our children. We are committed to the promotion and protection of student and parents' interests in state schools and colleges throughout Tasmania. Earlier this year we celebrated our 70th birthday, a true reflection of the commitment and support we have for public education. In previous submissions we have lobbied for:

- ◆ **Senior Secondary College Funding** TASSO affirms its absolute support for the continuing operation of Senior Secondary Colleges in Tasmania, including offering at least the current levels of curriculum choice, student support services and activities. An increase in funding for infrastructure, provision of student accommodation, transport and staffing.
- ◆ **Qualified Support Staff** we need more Psychologists, Speech Pathologists and Therapists, Social Workers, Student Support Workers, School Nurses at all school types. An increase to the number of Teacher Aids with better employment conditions and formal training.
- ◆ **Student Assistant Scheme (STAS)** TASSO believe that state schools should be free of fees and levies and a review of STAS and school fees is called for. We also believe the State Government should set the STAS at a level based on the actual costs of educating a student to ensure schools are not disadvantaged by the number of students receiving assistance.
- ◆ **School transport** TASSO support free transport for all students attending the nearest or designated Government school of appropriate level and that the safety of students in transit is of the utmost importance. Where Year 11 and 12 is being provided at the local school, free bus transport must be provided to that local school and the designated Year 11 and 12 College.
- ◆ **Parent Engagement** The increasing role and function of TASSO is consistent with the state government's increasing acknowledgement and engagement of parents and community as an essential element of children's learning. Recognising the value of parent and community engagement in education through programs such as Launching into Learning (LiL) and Learning in Families Together (LIFT) reflects this acknowledgement.

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Out of all the items we have submitted in the past the one item that is of the highest significance is that of Parent and Community Engagement, the tool reported to be the most influential in any child's success. Particularly if a strong foundation is laid at the beginning of a family's involvement with formal education, the cornerstone which our children will build upon to reach their ultimate potential.

TASSO's strong belief in the importance and value of authentic parent engagement, where parents are true partners walking beside professional educators, forms the basis of this year's budget submission

BACKGROUND

Parent Engagement

What is Parent Engagement?

²Parent engagement involves all people in the life of a child or young person working together to create a stimulating and supportive environment for their learning and development.

For parents and families this means taking opportunities in the everyday interactions they have with their children to promote and support learning, and to connect learning at school, in the home and in the community. For schools it includes looking at ways to work in partnership with families, helping to build their capacity for effective parent engagement.

Why does it matter?

A large body of research supports the value of parent engagement from birth and throughout the school years. Parent engagement affects what children achieve, how they experience school, and assists in the transition to school and into post-secondary education.

Parent engagement has also been shown to reduce the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on educational outcomes. This means that families have a key role to play in helping their children to become confident and motivated learners, regardless of their occupation, education, or income.

WHY IS PARENT ENGAGEMENT IMPORTANT?

Parent engagement is associated with improvements across a range of indicators, including:

- ◆ better education outcomes
- ◆ enhanced engagement with school work
- ◆ more regular school attendance
- ◆ better behaviour
- ◆ and increased social skills.
- ◆ Parent engagement is one of the four pillars of the Australian Government's *Students First* reform agenda for schools.

<https://www.studentsfirst.gov.au/engaging-parents-education#why-is-parent-engagement-important>

² Information and definition directly from Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth website.

In June 2014 the Tasmanian Minister for Education and Training and the Commonwealth Minister for Education signed a project agreement for the Community Empowered Schools Initiative. This Initiative was developed in a partnership with TASSO and the Professional Learning Institute. Under this agreement we developed and implemented workshops and online training modules for parents, community members and staff of school associations to support them to be effective and confident in school governance, decision making and to support the engagement of the wider school community, to support student learning. We know that engaging parents as partners in their children's education does have a positive impact on their learning. The vital role of parents as in all educational programs is recognised in Learners First and is the core value that underpinned this project. The Community Empowered Schools Initiative was aimed to develop a self-sustaining model through the development of resources and building capacity with a focus on decision making. Research has found that changes which involve or have been led by parents and community members have significant achievements.³

Community Empowered Schools provided the first step in the journey of true partnerships between parents, community and schools by means of best practice in school governance and decision making. TASSO believe that it is now time to take the next step, families and schools side by side improving educational outcomes. Fifty years of international research has identified how the barriers preventing parent engagement can be removed. The answer is, by using the fountains of expert knowledge that professional educators possess and authentic pairing with parental knowledge to develop programs with students at the center.⁴

³ Harris et al, 2009

⁴ Dr Karen Mapp research and practice focus has been on cultivation of partnerships in parent engagement

PROJECT

With the increase of social and work pressures that exist in today's society, it is no longer feasible for organisations to rely on its volunteers to undertake many of the hands on and promotional roles and responsibilities as they did in the past. TASSO over the last three years have worked with various stakeholders in the area of parental engagement.

- ◆ On-line modules
- ◆ Board Game Resource
- ◆ Development of a workshop relevant to school association's

The feedback on the developed and evolving resources has been very positive. The level of anticipation for more school and parent partnership projects delivered by facilitators who participants readily identify with through shared current experiences is encouraging for a positive outcome going forward.

The work to date has led to the identification of a lack of understanding of what true authentic parental engagement is about and the hurdles to get that understanding across. Further work is needed in this space to enhance the work we have already done. To do this work TASSO need to employ another person and provide them with adequate resources to undertake the next stage of this project.

The vision is that a suitably qualified person would be employed for three years to develop and deliver a sustainable and cost-effective program by the way of:

- ◆ Researching available data and compile a report around strategies and directions for future ideas.
- ◆ Use the research to identify the barriers and devise solutions.
- ◆ Consultation with parent groups not only in school's communities, but outside these communities in areas like the Child and Family centres.
- ◆ Develop and implement a project around parental engagement.
- ◆ Incorporate KPI's, methods to measure success and review.
- ◆ Development of a sustainable model.
- ◆ Development of training modules, workshops and necessary resources.

Estimated Costings for a 3-year research project

Employment of a Research Project Officer	\$240 000
Development and production of resources	\$100 000
Consultation Forums and associated costs	\$150 000
Additional staff related cost to development of the project	\$120 000
Total cost of the Parent Engagement Project	\$610 000

FINAL STATEMENT

As a community organisation we have had a few names and many changing faces since establishment in 1947, but TASSO fundamentals have stood the test of time with the benefits supported by Australian and international research and practice. The fundamental is to encourage and foster parental engagement at all school levels. We are aware and know of the research that has been happening and all the talking that has taken place over the years, all of which reinforces the objective of TASSO and this budget submission.

The Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations, commonly known as TASSO, looks forward to continued opportunities to be included in consultation and to work collaboratively with the Tasmanian Department of Education to achieve our shared goal of enabling all students to reach their fullest potential. We are of the strong belief that embedded authentic parent and community engagement across every facet of formal education is the most cost effective and sustainable method of achieving our common goal.

Education must be a priority to ensure not only a viable financial future for Tasmania but also in the best interests of the nation. Education is a proven method of reducing government expenditure in health and justice. Strong investment in education must be ongoing and a sincere reflection of its value to the people of Tasmanian.

It is with all the fore mentioned that the TASSO Management Committee, all volunteers elected by their schools from through out Tasmanian, believe that they are best positioned to contribute via the proposed submission to improving educational outcomes for all students of government schools and strengthening the esteem that parents have for education.