



TASMANIAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS INC.

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Dear Sir/Madam,

The Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations Inc (TASSO), is the peak parent body representing all Tasmanian state school communities. TASSO is a not for profit organisation with committed volunteers, who provide guidance and advocacy for parents and students in state schools and assistance to school associations and other parent groups. We are committed to the promotion and protection of student and parents' interests in state schools and colleges throughout Tasmania.

TASSO provides representation to many Education Department committees, working groups and community organisations, providing input on the issues affecting state school children. In 2017 we celebrated our 70th birthday, which is a true reflection of the ongoing commitment and support TASSO have for public education.

A major focus for TASSO is that of parent and community engagement, a tool reported to be one of the most influential in ensuring a child's success. A strong and positive connection at the beginning of a family's involvement with education, provides the foundation and cornerstone children will build upon, to reach their full potential on their journey of lifelong learning.

TASSO calls on all candidates and parties to make a genuine commitment to:

- ◆ **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. TASSO does not support the introduction of Years 11 and 12 into urban schools.
- ◆ **Qualified Support Staff** state schools need more Psychologists, Speech Pathologists and Therapists, Social Workers, Student Support Workers and School Nurses at all school types. As well as an increase to the number of Teacher Aids, with better employment conditions and formal training, especially to meet the needs of students with disabilities and additional needs.

- ◆ **Student Assistant Scheme (STAS)** TASSO policy is that state schools should be free of fees and levies. Within the current system a review of STAS and school fees is called for.
- ◆ **School transport** TASSO policy calls for 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 State College.
- ◆ **School Buildings, Grounds & Facilities** For many years schools have questioned the process for allocating infrastructure and maintenance spending by government. TASSO supports greater transparency and accountability, in the allocation of resourcing to state schools requiring upgrades for aging infrastructure or additional facilities, to cope with expansion in school populations or additional requirements for students with additional needs. A process which is publicly available that is used to formulate upgrades and maintenance is required. The Government should also conduct an annual survey and publish a register of the physical resources of every State School. School communities must not be left for years to shoulder the responsibility for extensive upgrades. There needs to be a fairer system to ensure that urgent corrective action is taken, regarding any essential works, not presently being met or adequately planned for.
- ◆ **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.

- ❖ ***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.

- ◆ **Funding for Parents.** Parents are required to be part of special committees, Reference Groups, Policy Committees and Steering Committees as well as Principal Selection Panels. It is unsatisfactory not to fund parents who take on these tasks without compensation, whilst DoE staff and others with whom they work receive salaries and reimbursement of expenses. It is an inequitable position and may limit the cohort of parents or carers available to be to carry out such roles on behalf of the state school parents of Tasmania.

TASSO is seeking an equitable provision to ensure parents are not prevented from representing the wider community in these groups.

TASSO invites and encourages political parties and candidates to provide comment on the above issues via email to info@tasso.org.au so the 85,000 parents of students in state schools and colleges and stakeholders can be made aware of your responses. All responses will be posted on the TASSO website and Facebook page.

Yours sincerely,



Lisa Gillard,
President.