

Qualified Support Staff

TASSO believe that:

- (a) Each high school should be provided with social workers who can also work with their associated primary schools.
- (b) The allocation of Guidance Officers or School Psychologists should align with the recommendations of the Australian Psychologists in Schools.
- (c) Special Schools should have sufficient access to Guidance Officers or School Psychologists to enable each child to be assessed on a regular basis and consideration be given to the time required to assess these children.
- (d) The Government should ensure that the number of speech pathologist and social worker positions adequately serve the needs of children in these crucial areas.

Additional resourcing for qualified Psychologists within our school communities has been identified as an ongoing need. More funds are still required to ensure that more school aged children receive the assistance and early intervention to aid in better mental health outcomes, together with more professionals who may then be able to communicate and work in conjunction with other community based health services like CAMHS to provide continuity of care.

At many recent TASSO State Conferences there have been a number of motions to provide additional qualified support staff including School Psychologists and Social Workers in schools. These in-schools services are a valuable resource to assist students, their families, school leaders and educators.

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.

The program to extend high schools to provide years 11 and 12 relies upon the colleges as a central hub of resources and teaching expertise. It is essential to ensure this model does not result in a reduction of direct funding to colleges resulting over time in an unsustainable drain on resources that may ultimately cause the collapse of the college system.

TASSO seeks a commitment from this Government that sustained funding for colleges is treated as an absolute priority in ensuring high quality outcomes in Senior Secondary education.

Review of STAS and school fees

TASSO believe that state schools should be free of fees and levies.

TASSO believe the State Government should set the Student Assistance Scheme (STAS) at a level based on the real costs of educating a student to ensure schools are not disadvantaged by the number of students receiving assistance.

Governments should:

- (a) Increase all education allowances annually in line with CPI (consumer price index);
- (b) Publish and distribute to school communities the criteria for Student Assistance (STAS);

The threshold for STAS has not increased outside of CPI for many years. TASSO repeat the call to undertake a review of both the Student Assistance Scheme (STAS) and the disparity between the STAS award and actual school fees and levies as essential elements of forward planning.

In the interests of equity and reducing red tape the income test for STAS must be increased to align with the Commonwealth Health Care Card concession. The Health Care Card is already widely accepted by the state government as an indicator of eligibility for many subsidies and STAS should be included in this.

State school fees vary greatly from one school to another, while it may be argued the setting of each school's fees is a school-based decision our concern is focused on equity. With fees and levies ranging from \$80 to over \$1000 per student per year and additional subject fees for senior secondary students that can amount to many hundreds of dollars, this can and does lead to unfair impacts on those students and families with the most to gain from high quality education.

There is a real need to compare the amount schools are charging to promote equity and ensure individual schools are financially within the means of families within their home area. The decision to enroll in one state school over another should not be influenced by financial considerations outside of travel and home area locality.

School Transport

The cost and availability of transport and urban/rural boundary definitions mean 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, the return trip is not. These arrangements require further investigation and the removal of the unfair disadvantage that the current system imposes.

TASSO's 2016 budget submission requested a review of School Transport, we are pleased a review of transport will be conducted in 2018 and look forward to taking part through the consultation process.

TASSO supports free transport to 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 Government College.

Conveyancing Allowance

Further to our recent consultation with Minister Hidding, TASSO request a review into all aspects, including eligibility criteria, of the Conveyancing Allowance.

School Nurses

TASSO believe:

- (a) Health Professionals/Nurses should be employed by the Department to work within schools on a full time basis;
- (b) Health Professionals/Nurses should be encouraged to visit parents and students at home where necessary;

(c) There should be no restrictions on visiting schools in country areas.

TASSO have been assured school nurses will be allocated to district schools in future funding allocations, however TASSO would like to see the roll out of school nurses in district schools implemented as a priority.

Transition Programs

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 along with the recognition that students at school now 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.

TASSO would like to see funding allocated to ensure schools are once again able to run effective transition programs.

Gonski Funding

TASSO is pleased to see the state government's commitment to deliver \$134 million of Students First funding over the scheduled 6 years and count on support to continue to lobby the Commonwealth for needs based funding in line with the principals of Gonski.

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.

TASSO believe that funds should be allocated to schools to provide pre-school early educational and transitional programs for children aged 0-4.

TASSO recognises the commitment to parent and community engagement in education through programs such as Launching into Learning (LiL) and Learning in Families Together (LiFT). TASSO seek a commitment the Government will to continue to fund LiL at the current level of funding as a minimum and ensure LiL remains in ALL primary and district schools now and into the future.

TASSO recommends the provision of qualified specialist teachers and support staff to cater for the needs of lower grades in primary schools.

TASSO would like to see LiFT funding extended to be delivered all primary and district schools.

TASSO looks forward to continued opportunities to be included in consultation as the importance of authentic parent and community engagement becomes embedded across every element of education.

Education must be a priority to ensure not only a viable financial future for Tasmania but also in the best interests of the nation as a whole. Education must be recognised in an ongoing genuine strong budgetary commitment reflective of its importance to the future of Tasmania.