



State Budget Submission – 2022-2023

Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations

MAIL – PO BOX 183, LINDISFARNE, TAS., 7015

EMAIL – MANAGER@TASSO.ORG.AU

PHONE – 6243 7718





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Contents

- INTRODUCTION** 3
- The Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations Inc. (TASSO) 3
- Family-Community-School Engagement..... 3
- RECOMMENDATION 1 - SCHOOL ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE ENGAGEMENT** 4
 - PROPOSAL - *Accessibility, Continuity & Sustainability of Information*..... 6
- RECOMMENDATION 2 - FAMILY ENGAGEMENT** 7
 - PROPOSAL - *Pro-active Engagement*..... 8
- CONCLUSION** 9
- CONTACTS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION** 10

INTRODUCTION

The Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations Inc. (TASSO)

TASSO is the peak body representing all Tasmanian state school associations, and their communities. We are a not for profit community based organisation providing guidance, advocacy and support for the families of students in public education, and have been in existence since 1947, albeit with some name changes. TASSO is governed by a Board of committed volunteers elected by their peers from throughout the state.

In relation to education, TASSO provides the parent voice to governments, on departmental committees and working groups, serves on and provides information to other likeminded community organisations.

TASSO steadfastly believes 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, 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.

Family-Community-School Engagement

The driving force behind what TASSO does is the belief, supported by decades of national and international research, that an effective school system must have a culture of genuine family engagement in education. A partnership of families, teachers and staff and as such create a collaborative and nurturing environment, which allows all participants to thrive and provides positive outcomes for students.

Family-school and community partnerships support positive parent engagement and bring together family and community resources to enrich student learning and wellbeing. Effective partnerships focus on student needs and are motivated by a common and often shared purpose. They recognise that partners offer different knowledge, expertise and resources to support children's education.¹

The importance of family-community-school partnerships is documented as being critical to supporting a child and young person's progress through school in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration 2019.² This increasing role and function of TASSO is

¹ <https://www.dese.gov.au/supporting-family-school-community-partnerships-learning/family-school-partnerships/parent-engagement-learning>

² <https://www.dese.gov.au/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration>

consistent with the state government’s increasing acknowledgement, that engagement of parents and greater school communities are an essential element of children’s learning. Recognising the value of parent and community engagement in education through programmes such as Launching into Learning (LiL), Learning in Families Together (LIFT), the development of Child and Family Centres, the Department of Education’s (DoE) 2019 review of Family Engagement and DoE’s establishment of the Family Engagement team and their development and work on the Family Engagement Approach, reflects this acknowledgement.³

It is school association committees, family engagement and mentoring that TASSO present the following recommendations for consideration as part of the 2022-2023 State Budget consultation process.

RECOMMENDATION 1 - SCHOOL ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE ENGAGEMENT

Community Empowered Schools, a federally funded initiative spanning from 2014 to 2018 saw the DoE’s Professional Learning Institute work in collaboration with TASSO in the first step in the journey of true partnerships between TASSO, school association committees, their families, 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 programmes with students at the centre.⁴

The third priority of the Community Services Industry Plan 2021-2031, -

...acknowledges that 95% of boards [committees] in Tasmania are run by volunteers, it is important to ensure those leaders who take on roles in governance with organisations and communities are appropriately skilled and supported.⁵

³ <https://www.education.tas.gov.au/parents-carers/together-with-families/>

⁴ Dr Karen Mapp – senior lecturer on education at the Harvard Graduate School Education and the faculty director of the Education Policy and Management Master’s Program. Research and practice focus has been on the cultivation of partnerships.

⁵ https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0022/184621/Community-Services-Industry-Plan-2021-2031-web.pdf

PROPOSAL - Pro-active School Association Engagement

Additional funding per annum \$60,000

In conjunction with the DoE, we establish a program where 64 State school per year undergo a review of their school association committee, how they are operating and undertaking their duties as laid down in the Education Act 2016 and subsequently their Constitution and Secretary's and Minister's Instructions. Looking at the systems each school has, how functional the committee and each person in their role or roles is. Supporting them in the principles of best practice through face to face support, the provision of resources currently available and those to be developed. With 190 State Schools currently in Tasmania every school would be reviewed at the least every 3 years.

TASSO believe, the proposed program will enable us to be truly pro-active with all school association committees on the ground and from within their communities, therefore reducing many of the conflict driven, complex and resource consuming situations TASSO, DoE and the Minister, currently have and have had to deal with in the realms of school association committees. For this program to be effective it will require the support of the DoE and buy in from all parties including principals and school staff, to gain an accurate assessment of how school association committees are performing.

This program will present the need and benefits of working as a team with quality communication, clear planning and better practice processes. It is envisaged that better support offered to all in the school and community will enhance and increase valuable contributions to the betterment of the school and our primary focus the students.

The design of the program will harness the best in all at the table, remove individual's egos and personal agendas in the decision making process, and always place student learning and wellbeing at the centre of each and every decision.

The additional funding to TASSO and would be utilised for:

- Development of review process with support of DoE.
- Co-ordination of the reviewing of schools.
- Delivery of review.
- Development of resources with the support of the DoE.
- On-going support to reviewed schools in both material and human resources.

All \$60,000.00 would be used in the employment of staff within TASSO to achieve these objectives.

RECOMMENDATION 2 - FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Please note, within the recommendation ‘family’ is an inclusive term which is all-encompassing of all family units, and includes parents, carers, guardians and communities caring for children and their formal education.

What is Family Engagement?

Family 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.⁶

For 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, this means all employees, not only the teachers, to look at ways to work in partnership with families, helping to build their capacity for effective family engagement.

For the Department of Education, this means providing the leadership, tools, mentoring and support to the current and future workforce to understand how the process of family engagement can be undertaken and its importance in the success of the child.

Why does it matter?

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

Family engagement has also been shown to reduce the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on educational outcomes. Families have a key role to play in helping their children to become confident and motivated learners, regardless of their occupation, education, or income.⁷

Families and school communities are recognised as being important to the mental wellbeing of students, which the Tasmanian Department of Education recognises as having a correlation to educational attainment and life outcomes.⁸

⁶ <https://www.aracy.org.au/the-nest-in-action/parent-engagement>

⁷ <https://www.aracy.org.au/the-nest-in-action/parent-engagement>

⁸ Department of Education Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy Implementation 2019; Mental Wellbeing

PROPOSAL - Pro-active Engagement
3 Year Funding

\$130,000

TASSO's proposal is broken into 3 clear parts.

YEAR 1 - \$50,000.00 - Assessment and Development of Role

Recent assessments undertaken by the TASSO Management Committee on the organisation, has identified an increased rate of contact from individual parents and carers, school associations, their committees and communities, this paired with increased involvement in working groups focused on family engagement in education, has resulted in an area of our organisation being left behind. The area identified, is our ongoing communications streams to our membership, school communities and boarder communities alike.

We are having to operate in a reactive manner due to the level of workload on day to day operational matters with limited personnel. We have identified the current staffing of 1.75 full-time equivalents are managing the day to day operations but are being forced to leave the ongoing marketing of the organisation and the development of resources and training packages.

The TASSO Board believe if we create a casual or part-time position focussing on the distribution of current information, the updating of existing and development of new resources, conducting surveys, provision of timely feedback from members to all stakeholders in the area of education and marketing via a variety of mediums, we will become a more pro-active organisation. This would potentially result in a reduction in the number of contacts relating to governance and policy issues and requests we are currently fielding from those we represent. A bonus may also be a reduction in contacts made to DoE relating to these issues.

YEAR 2 - \$40,000.00 – Development of an Engagement Survey and Framework

The success of the LIL and LIFT programmes clearly show engagement with families can be achieved and sustained over those early learning years. But there is clear data that from the P-1 years onwards family involvement and engagement with the school commences a declining trend throughout the remainder of primary school and then takes a further and quite often rapid decline throughout the child's secondary education.

Speculation to the reasons for the decline of family involvement can include, – financial pressure, need to return to work, family pressures, teenagers not wanting their family involved or engaged, just to name a few. There is an unfounded belief that it is solely the decision of families not to continue to engage with the school. We are not questioning that the pressures presented are not real, nor make up part of the decision to disengage with the school, but we believe through a lack of understanding the school may unwittingly disengage with families, thus leading to the spiralling decline in family engagement and involvement within the school and thus a child's education.

We would propose some research be undertaken through a series of targeted surveys conducted by TASSO over a 2 year period with a diverse demographic of parents within the Tasmanian public school sector. Focusing on the 4 key year groups across a child's school life:

- Kinder.
- Prep and Grade 1.
- Transition from Grade 6 to Year 7.
- Transition from Year 10 to Year 11.

Partnering with a strong research organisation, such as the Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment or the University of Tasmania for the development of surveys and subsequent analysis of our results would be beneficial. But we believe TASSO with its core business being the parents and carers voice would be able to achieve a greater impact with school communities and the variety of demographics.

We consider a partnership with the University of Tasmania as important because the findings of such a project could be key to the development of practical and tangible training resources used by the University in its Bachelor of Education course.

YEAR 3 - \$40,000.00 – Collection and Analysing of Data

Finalise research, present findings for the creation of workable tools.

CONCLUSION

As a community organisation we have had a few names and many changing faces since establishment in 1947, but TASSO's core business has stood the test of time with the benefits supported by Australian and international research and practice. Our core business is to encourage and foster family 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 family 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 Tasmania.

It is with all the aforementioned that the TASSO Board, who are all volunteers elected by their peers from state schools throughout Tasmania, believe that they are best positioned to

contribute via the proposed submission to improving educational outcomes for all students in government schools and strengthening the esteem that families have for education.

CONTACTS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like to discuss any part of this submission please do not hesitate in contacting:

Natham Reynolds, President

E: president@tasso.org.au

Jessica Bennett, Treasurer

E: treasurer@tasso.org.au

Debra McOrist-Mitchell, Operations Manager

E: manager@tasso.org.au