



## **TASSO SUBMISSION**

2025 Review of the Disability Standards for Education

***We're in this together.***

***We speak as a proud voice for families within the  
Tasmanian State School community to  
make sure their needs and ideas are heard.***

## Acknowledgements

### *Acknowledgement of Country*

Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations pays respect to the Palawa people as the Traditional Custodians and first educators of the land in beautiful Lutruwita.

We pay respect to elders past, present, and emerging and acknowledge their deep connection to country.

We also express our gratitude that we share this land today, our sorrow for some of the costs of that sharing, and our hope and belief that we move to a place of equity, justice, and partnership together.

### *Acknowledging Parents*

TASSO acknowledges parents and caregivers as the first educators in their child's life. We celebrate and honour the diversity of families and recognise the vital role family and community play in supporting children and young people throughout their learning journeys.

TASSO prepared this submission with consideration of feedback provided by Tasmanian parents and caregivers. We extend our appreciation to all who have shared their experiences and engaged with our Organisation.

A note on language: Throughout this paper, we use the term *parent* to refer to a child's primary caregiver. We acknowledge that this role is fulfilled by a wide range of people, including carers, guardians, kinship carers and other family members.

### *Acknowledging Funding*

TASSO is supported by funding provided by the Department for Children and Young People (DECYP).

## Background

Who is TASSO?

The Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations (TASSO) is the peak body representing the parents and community who form School Association within Tasmanian government schools.

We work to empower the heart of Tasmanian state schools – their community – by supporting School Associations through their committee.

Our work includes providing essential training, resources, and support to school committees. Most importantly, we help them meet their constitutional requirements, support office-bearers in their roles and facilitate valuable networking opportunities, so together the School Association can do great things.

We represent the School Association Committees from within Tasmania's 125 Primary Schools (Kindergarten to Year 6), 29 High Schools (Year 7 – 12), 25 District Schools (Kindergarten to Year 12), 8 Colleges (Year 11 and 12) and 3 Support Schools.

At TASSO, we believe in the value of government education. We are committed to making sure that state school education in Tasmania delivers the best possible education for Tassie kids. We speak as a proud voice for families to make sure their needs and ideas are heard.

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## **Introduction**

The Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations (TASSO) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the 2025 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005. Our submission draws on direct feedback from families across Tasmania's government school communities and focuses on the lived impact of the Standards in practice.

In particular, we provide evidence relevant to Topic 1: Effective implementation of the Standards and Topic 2: Inclusive decision-making, highlighting systemic barriers that prevent students with disability from accessing and participating in education on the same basis as their peers. These include failures in the delivery of reasonable adjustments, lack of genuine consultation in decisions such as suspension or part-time enrolment, and insufficient transparency and accountability for how resources are used to support students with disability. TASSO's recommendations aim to strengthen the implementation of the Standards, ensure accountability for outcomes, and embed family engagement at the heart of inclusive education for all.

## **Educational Adjustment Funding Flaws**

Parents consistently report that the educational adjustment process is under-resourced and often poorly understood. While the Standards make clear that a formal diagnosis is not required to access reasonable adjustments, this is not reflected in practice. Many parents are incorrectly informed that their child must have a diagnosis to qualify for funding, creating unnecessary delays and inequities.

In Tasmania, tools such as the Educational Adjustment Descriptor Tool (EADT) are intended to provide a structured and consistent process for identifying and responding to student needs. However, the tool is poorly understood by many educators and inconsistently applied across schools. The result is a system where decisions about eligibility and support vary widely depending on individual interpretation and local practice, rather than clear and consistent application of the Standards.

Compounding this, funding is pooled at the school level. This means funds allocated for individual students are not always directed to those students' needs. Parents cannot be assured that adjustments intended for their child are delivered in practice. There is minimal accountability throughout the school year.

In many cases, allocations for students requiring intensive support fall well short of the actual cost of providing that support. Schools are left to absorb the shortfall or find workarounds, often without the staffing or resources needed to deliver adjustments consistently and effectively.

The consequence is predictable: students with disability experience reduced educational outcomes. The system must shift to centre the student, guarantee that funds follow need, ensure consistent delivery of adjustments, and accountably report to parents. Measures should be made to ensure that funding and resources are allocated to the individual student, not to the collective good of the classroom. Mechanisms (like centralised access to a parent education portal) should be put in place to keep parents informed on learning interventions taken, shared learning opportunities, and provide accessible channels to raise concerns and complaints.

### **A Centralised and Accessible Parent Portal**

While the Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) already use a centralised system for educators to record Learning Plans, adjustments and disciplinary decisions, parents have no access to this information. Parents repeatedly tell us they are left chasing information, relying on verbal updates, or discovering changes after the fact. A statewide parent portal, connected to the existing internal system but designed for parent access, would provide consistent access to the information they need to support their child at home. This portal should allow parents to view current Learning Plans, agreed adjustments, review dates, suspension documents, part-time enrolment arrangements and progress notes. It would also provide a secure place for schools to share meeting minutes, reports and communications, ensuring that every family receives the same level of information regardless of their school or region. A parent portal would strengthen partnerships, and reduce misunderstandings, while supporting a culture of accountability and transparency for all students and their families.

### **Wait List of Assessments**

Despite the Standards being clear that a diagnosis is not required to access educational adjustments, families and educators tell us that the practical reality feels very different. The time involved in applying, reapplying, and responding to potential refusals of funding is significant and frustrating. Long waitlists for assessments in Tasmania, both within government school services and the public health system, mean that families are often left without timely support. Many parents feel pushed into the private sector to obtain assessments at considerable personal cost. For some, this is simply unaffordable, forcing students to remain on lengthy waitlists.

Access to specialist services should not be a barrier to funding, nor should a lack of assessment result in reduced support or delayed intervention. Students should not miss out because the system around them is overstretched and inaccessible.

## **Family and Student Involvement in Educational Planning**

Planning for a student's learning and support should never be something that happens to families, it must happen *with* them. Parents consistently report that Learning Plans, and Behaviour Support Plans are developed without meaningful consultation, or that they are presented as completed documents rather than genuine collaborative plans. This leaves parents feeling sidelined from decisions that directly shape their students day-to-day experience at school.

Where practical, students themselves should be involved in planning. Their insights into what helps, what overwhelms and what motivates them are critical to designing effective adjustments. Involving students supports self-advocacy, builds independence and ensures their perspectives are at the centre of educational decision-making, as the Standards intend.

Families tell us that many Learning Plan meetings are rushed or limited to checking administrative boxes. Too often, agreed adjustments are not communicated on, leaving parents unsure whether promised supports are being delivered until the end of the school year. This lack of transparency undermines trust and makes it difficult for parents to raise concerns early or work in partnership with the school.

Embedding parent and student involvement in planning is central to inclusive decision-making. When families are recognised as equal partners, adjustments are more likely to be effective and aligned with the Standards' requirement for participation on the same basis as peers.

## **Suspensions**

Too often, suspensions are being used because schools lack the resources or capacity to support dysregulated students. Parents report that children are sent home because "the school can't cope with my child," rather than because suspension is an evidence-based or appropriate response. This practice is not consistent with the intent of the Standards, which require participation "on the same basis". Parents are frequently left out of the loop, receiving little or no consultation when significant decisions such as suspension are made. This contravenes both the Standards' requirement to consult and the draft principles for inclusive decision-making highlighted in the 2025 Review.

Suspensions without adequate consultation or support disengage students, alienate families, and compound inequities.

## **Part-Time Enrolment**

Parents continue to report that students with disability are refused full-time enrolment. Part-time timetables are imposed, often without genuine consultation or adequate support. This denies students the same right to access education as their peers.

Parents describe situations where children are effectively excluded from learning for long stretches of the school week, despite wanting and being entitled to attend full time. This is not a reasonable adjustment – it is exclusion.

## **Tasmanian Support Schools**

Parents who seek enrolment in one of Tasmania's three Support Schools are often advised that their expression of interest cannot be accepted due to capacity limits, rather than the suitability or preference of the child and family. This restricts parent choice and denies students access to placements best suited to their learning needs. Long waiting lists and capped enrolments reflect an infrastructure and staffing shortfall that must be urgently addressed. Every student should have equitable access to the type of educational setting that best supports their development and wellbeing, consistent with their rights under the Standards.

## **Conclusion**

The experiences outlined in this submission show that there is still a clear gap between what the Disability Standards are meant to achieve and what happens for many families in Tasmanian government schools. Families continue to come up against barriers to access, participation and being part of decisions, particularly where processes are inconsistent, stretched, or not well explained.

In line with the focus of the 2025 Review, TASSO highlights that:

- To make the Standards work in practice, schools need clearer guidance, enough resources, and a way to show that reasonable adjustments are actually happening and that funding is reaching the students it is intended for.
- Decision-making needs to genuinely include families. This means clear expectations around consultation, communication and involvement, so parents are not left out of decisions that directly impact their child.

TASSO encourages these priorities to be reflected in the next version of the Standards so that students with disability can participate in education on the same basis as their peers, supported by systems that are clear, consistent and accountable.