



**Tasmanian Small
Business Council**
Uniting Small Business

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Literacy Advisory Committee
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Response to Final Consultation Report Lifting literacy Lifting Tasmania

The Tasmanian Small Business Council (TSBC) appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Final Consultation Report for the Development of Tasmania's Community-wide Framework prepared by the Literacy Advisory Panel.

In our submission to the preparation of the above report, we proposed that a significant step would be made if the Literacy Advisory Panel could bring together the numerous disparate activities presently operating and achieve a coordinated outcome for the betterment of all Tasmanians.

The information now collected suggests that such an outcome is possible. The time is right to develop a Chain of Learning where each link contributes to the effectiveness of the following links and leads back to addressing the present major failing of foundation learning in the home.

The links in this Chain of Learning would be:

- Foundation learning in the home
- Primary Schooling
- Secondary Schooling
- Tertiary and Technical Education and Skills
- Welfare
- Local Community

With enhanced literacy and numeracy, it will become possible for parents to initiate foundation learning in the home.

The TSBC does not claim the ability to implement such a Chain of Learning but offers the following key points that may be helpful to the Literacy Advisory Panel.

Foundation Learning in the Home

Recognizing the need and the ability to deliver foundation learning in the home can only come from adults with the understanding and literacy skills to implement such activities.

Thus, it requires a generational change. That change can only be achieved if the earlier steps in the Chain of Learning can be implemented.



Primary Schooling

It is acknowledged that this is a critical time for developing basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Thus, teachers must be appropriately skilled to teach literacy and numeracy, provided with sufficient time and resources, and be able to draw on specialist learning support when the need becomes evident.

Delivering adequate literacy and numeracy skills must be the prime outcome of primary schooling. It is unacceptable that more than half the students leaving compulsory education are not functionally literate or numerate.

Secondary School

The secondary school provides the opportunity to enhance skills and, where necessary, implement the remedial activity.

Thus, teachers should have the skills and the availability of time and resources to manage specialist remedial learning.

At this point, the State Education System is on trial and must deliver the product for which teachers are paid and the service is resourced.

In a commercial world, any provider that could not achieve more than 50% of the promised service would not be allowed by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to continue to offer the service.

Tertiary and Technical Education and Skills

This is the safety net opportunity. Providers of tertiary and technical education must be required to identify learning difficulties from within the student cohort and offer additional teaching as a component of the graduation qualification.

Thus, this requirement must be mandated by the funding provider, be it the government or private sector.

Believing that a “qualified” person can effectively deliver appropriate performance to the employer without competent literacy and numeracy skills is unacceptable.

Welfare

One disadvantage of welfare recipients is a lack of literacy and numeracy skills. Indeed, this could be the main reason the individual needs welfare support.



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Thus, a component of all welfare programs should be the requirement to accept literacy and numeracy support.

Improved literacy and numeracy will contribute to moving from welfare to personal productivity.

Community

Less than half of the community has functional literacy and numeracy, and these people are beyond the reach of established educational institutions. Still, they live within a community that a Local Government Area can define. If education in Australia is compulsory, and it is, then Local Government provides the most practical pathway to assist.

Thus, Local Governments should be encouraged to offer supportive literacy and numeracy activities to their residents and ratepayers.

The achievement of a generation of adults who understand the need for foundation learning in the home will complete the Chain of Learning.

For future generations, we will no longer be treating symptoms. We will have reduced the symptoms by treating the cause.

Geoff Fader,

Chair

Tasmanian Small Business Council