

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Paper One – Setting the Scene for Tasmania’s Community -Wide Framework (Paper One).

My contribution is from the perspective of a parent of a child with a disability and as a tier three literacy coach working with my son and other struggling young readers.

I adopt an evidence-based multisensory structured language approach with my students using different techniques that best engage the individual I’m working with. Whilst I am very interested in the science of reading and the neuroplasticity of the brain, my contribution to Paper One focuses on my experience on the application of the evidence-based science of literacy rather than the academic discussions itself.

Early Childhood (0-5)

My son and I engaged with the Government’s Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) from two years of age. This service was missed from the Organisational Mapping in Part 1. Education of Paper One.

ECIS supports families of children with a disability or developmental delay from birth to school entry. The eligibility of all children with any developmental delay to this service overcomes the barriers for families having to get a ‘disability diagnosis’ before receiving this support. It therefore breaches the divide between a primary and secondary (targeted) public health approach which may lessen the stigma for some families.

I cannot speak highly enough of the ECIS service. The weekly sessions themselves support the building blocks of literacy development through song, story and play. However, it is the focus on supporting carers build their own knowledge and skills, to be incorporated into the home, that I saw as the real benefit.

My son and I also worked with a speech and language pathologist at ECIS. Although we did not have regular sessions, at such an early stage of our journey, our relationship with this professional set in train our future speech therapy path, so crucial for his literacy development. Again, the focus on working with the carer to incorporate the teachings into home life was the true worth of ECIS.

Like most things, the real value is in the ECIS staff. During my association with ECIS, the staff were effective in connecting with all parents and carers. Like all services delivered centrally, there were parents/carers who were only able to attend periodically; for any number of reasons. Initiatives like giving cab vouchers remove one of only some of those barriers. Service delivery through the Child and Family Learning Centres could be another way to increase participation.

Understanding the prevalence of children with developmental delays continuing to have literacy struggles would be useful in exploring supports to literacy in programmes delivered through ECIS or equivalent.

The Organisational Mapping has not included services, initiatives or programme supporting the literacy skills of children with disabilities¹. There is an opportunity to map the existing service delivery for this cohort, in both the early years and school years so the literacy developments of all Tasmanian children can be a focus.

Summary

- Gap in Paper One– identifying existing services, programmes, initiatives for children with disabilities.
- DoE's ECIS program/ equivalent could be included in the Organisational Mapping.
- Opportunity for future focus of supports to improving the literacy levels of children with disabilities.

School Years (5- 15)

Volunteer programs in schools

Not picked up in Paper One are any initiatives or programmes that are founded in volunteers supporting the literacy of students in school settings. It would be a missed opportunity to omit volunteers partnering with schools/ learning centres in the discussions for a community wide frame-work. A literacy volunteer program attracts people passionate about a community wide focus in raising Tasmania's literacy levels. I am aware of volunteers working to improve the literacy skills of students working in both Government and Catholic schools. Information on existing supports could be sought from school principals.

For my son to learn to talk, read and write, all hands on deck was required - a collaborative network of family, teachers, therapist and friends all working together. For my part, I trained in the Orton Gillingham approach. The results I saw working with my son over 2 years drove me to support other struggling readers.

I have been working 2 x 1 hour/week with one student at South Hobart Primary School (since term 3, 2021) and two students at John Paul II Catholic Primary School (since term 2, 2021). The principals of both schools could be contacted to discuss individual measures with these students. The students themselves may be willing to provide feedback. I see the evidence of success in this approach will be how each student develops in their decoding and applying the rules to 'map' words. With two students, the reward is knowing they are now reading at home.

The following is a brief snapshot of what I have learnt:

- For some students learning to read is more than teaching literacy. Struggling students may have to build confidence, often beyond just literacy struggles. A Tier 3 model provides an opportunity for a real connection between a literacy coach and student and more wholistic supports to the student if needed.

¹ Accessible Island: Tasmanians Disability Framework for Action 2018-21 is listed on page 51 of the Paper as an initiative for the adult years.

- Tier 3 teaching allows the literacy coach to go at the student's individual pace and focus on sounds/ rules that the student has not mastered using a range of multisensory techniques that best suit the learning style of the individual.
- Because there is direct engagement with the student, even if the student is not 'learning ready' on the day (for any number of reasons), a lesson can still have periods of focus.
- The flexibility of the Orton Gillingham tier 3 approach allows the literacy coach to target any speech sound errors the student may have (translating to spelling errors), or incorporate exercises such as those grouped by David Kirkpatrick for students with poor phonemic awareness.
- For some students, even with Tier 3 supports, becoming an independent reader is a long-term commitment for both student and literacy coach.

Tier 3 teaching is resource intensive. This is not to say that the long-term benefits are not worth the investment. Experts can advise the Panel on the cost benefit realised from early literacy support intervention for struggling students via longitudinal studies. However, the reality is that schools cannot provide Tier 3 supports to all students who could benefit. There are many in the community that are passionate about literacy and have capacity to volunteer. There are courses that exist/ or could be designed for volunteers to skill up in an evidence-based approach for supporting students. A mentoring program could be designed to support volunteers to support sustained commitment with a student. This is an opportunity.

Summary

- Gap in Paper One– school based volunteer programs/ initiatives missed from the Organisation Mapping
- Opportunity for future focus

Youth Justice opportunity

Paper One provides a number of initiatives for literacy support to adults in the prison². The notable gap being the lack of initiatives or programmes in the youth justice space. Having represented youths that touch the criminal justice in my early career, I appreciate the complexity in designing literacy support programs for these young Tasmanians. That does not mean we don't try. Youths that touch the justice system may need well designed programmes to support their literacy targets³; programmes that consider a wide range of issues, beyond a literacy focus.

² Lets talk campaign, libraries Tasmania, page 41: University of Southern Queensland, Making the Connection Program, page 41: Connect 42; *Just Sentences, Just Time and Just Moving On* page 44: Tas TAFE, page 47

³ There academic researchers can advise on the prevalence of young people in the youth justice system with dyslexia, developmental language disorder, ADHD and/or other learning differences.

Considering that many young Tasmania's in the youth justice system are not regularly attending school (or are not 'learning ready' if they are), a model that sits outside the traditional school setting could be explored, including:

- Building on the educational initiatives (with a literacy focus), in the Discussion Paper: *Reforming Tasmania's Youth Justice System*⁴.
- A multisensory OG Tier 3 teaching model at the Ashely Youth Detention Centre School (carrying over to the new detention centres). This would allow residents to build relationships with literacy coaches whilst detained with the aim (supported by the model) to continue supports with the same literacy coach when they are back into the community.
- Feasibility for a tier 3 volunteer program (as described above) supporting the literacy skills for Tasmanian youths outside of the school setting. Options to operate through existing community youth justice programmes or youth hubs.

Summary

- Gap in Paper One – initiatives, services or programmes targeting youths that touch the youth justice space (non-school based initiatives).
- Opportunity for future focus.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to a community wide framework supporting literacy skills for all Tasmanians. I am available for further contribution or to provide contacts mentioned in my submission (subject to their permission).

⁴ [Communities Tasmania - Youth Justice Reform](#)