Name: Jo Padgham and Robyn Ewing (co-chairs)

Organisation: Foundation for Learning and Literacy

Question One: Are there any key themes we have not identified to improve literacy across:

The Early Years (0-4 years-old)

- The Final Consultation Report does not acknowledge the crucial role of intentionality in play-based experiences, where carefully planned learning opportunities immerse children in learning experiences that foster literacy development. This is an essential component of The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) with its reference to "Literacy incorporates a range of modes of communication including music, movement, dance, storytelling, visual arts, media and drama, as well as talking, listening, viewing, composing, reading and writing. Active listening and a strong foundation of oral language is key to ongoing and lasting literacy learning" (Australian Government Department of Education, 2022, p57).

- The value of home language is not acknowledged in the Report with a monocultural view being applied. Success for children who are bi or multilingual learners is tied directly to mastery of their home language. Derby (2021), when researching the effects of a home-based literacy intervention on the family literacy practices of Māori preschool children, found that when families engage in interactive shared book reading experiences, they were likely to embed their home language and support their child in building their phonemic awareness.

- The importance of mark making in early literacy development is absent. Such experimentation builds fine motor skills, provides opportunity for creative expression and enhances a child's critical thinking and language development. Much can be done to support children's early mark making and writing, (Graham, Gillespie & McKeown, 2013).

The School Years (5-17 years-old)

- The Final Consultation Report acknowledges that reading and writing are complementary skills that have a reciprocal relationship P31, however the report omits to acknowledge the significance of writing in learning to be literate. 'Early literacy instruction is patently incomplete when teachers focus only on foundational reading skills. Teachers need to provide adequate time and attention to the foundational elements of writing to have a powerful and effective early literacy program in classrooms. If you haven't asked children to take it to writing, then they haven't really mastered the foundational literacy skills they need to succeed.' (Reutzel, 2019, p. 30). Consider writing as a support for reading (Mackenzie & Scull, 2018) and give attention to the significant impact interactive writing

and daily time for children to write have on improving literacy acquisition must be included. Roth, K., & Guinee, K. (2011), Craig, S. A. (2003).

- English orthography is the study of the writing system and while much attention is given to the phonological component, the study of the underlying meaning structure of words (morphology) is neglected in the Final Consultation Report, yet it is foundational to the English writing system. Morphology provides the defining framework for word construction. Graphemes do not cross morpheme boundaries and letters often have functions that have nothing to do with representing sounds. (Venezky, 1999, Carlisle, J. F., 2010).

- Lack of mention of multimodal and digital modes of communication children and young people use, and which are articulated in the Australian Curriculum: English V9. The importance of readers/viewers, writers/creators being able to decode icons, understanding social and cultural context of texts and skills required to navigate such texts (Kress, 2003).

- Effective scaffolding leads to learner autonomy (Fisher, 2023). Teachers can facilitate or mediate the students' interactions with texts in ways that allows students to understand texts more challenging than they may be able to engage independently. Working with teachers to explore these moves and processes is a crucial aspect of supporting all learners.

- The Final Consultation Report suggests that emergent readers of English will be restricted to controlled (decodable) texts until they have mastered the entire phonic code. All readers use their decoding skills when engaging with unknown texts. Limiting vocabulary and concepts through a restrictive reading diet reduces the opportunities for readers. Birch et al (2022) recognised that experience with a variety of texts is still required. Attention needs to be given to the quality of the texts. 'Texts young readers read need to reward attention to letters in words by being mostly decodable based on the letter-sound relationships the children know so far. But they also need to make sense so children can successfully monitor their comprehension—and they need to be worthy of comprehending, so that students want to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words and the text as a whole.' (Duke 2020).

- The Final Consultation Report states that educators should have professional learning on structured literacy and other strategies which will assist them to make adjustments for learners (page 16). Further information is needed to ensure that the intent is understood. Structured literacy can be interpreted in many ways, for example will a child have to master all skills until moving to the next 'level'? This poses an equity issue for our EAL/D learners and raises the issue of subtracting bilingualism from the approach. When thinking of how readers develop, it may be tempting to assign readers of a certain age to a certain stage and instruct them accordingly, but individuals do not learn in a lockstep manner, moving in unison from one stage to the next on a set schedule (Willingham, 2008). The various elements of reading instruction should not be consigned to a single developmental moment. Some elements need to be consistently addressed across readers' development, while others should be focused on according to learners' developmental needs (Kuhn, 2020, de Boer et al, 2018).

- Address inaccuracies and inconsistent naming in the Final Consultation Report regarding the way the report frames literate practices. For example, on page 27 the 'Big Six' are listed as oral language, phonemic awareness, synthetic phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension; and similarly on page 28 but phonemic awareness becomes phonological

awareness. It is not until page 31 these elements are listed more accurately as oral language, vocabulary, phonological awareness, letter sound knowledge (phonics), comprehension and fluency. The practice of using different terms interchangeably, alters the intent and is an incorrect attribution to the Big Six Model as espoused in the [Principals as Literacy Leaders Project](#). Synthetic phonics and phonemic awareness are not the headings in the Big Six (they were 'phonics' and 'phonological awareness') and their inclusion acts as a de facto curriculum that guides teachers away from the Australian Curriculum.

- Return to the source of the Literacy Panel's statement on Page 28 'Notably the *Ontario Human Rights Commission's Public inquiry into human rights issues affecting students with reading disabilities* stated that, word-reading and spelling are a foundation for being able to read and write and successfully interact with different forms of communication'. This is an inaccurate interpretation of the attributed footnote. The original source states, 'Robust evidence-based phonics programs should be one part of broader, evidence-based, rich classroom language arts instruction, including but not limited to storytelling, book reading, drama, and text analysis. Evidence-based direct, explicit instruction for **spelling and writing** are also important to literacy'.
This misrepresented quote demonstrates an attempt to position the reader with inaccurate information. Note that this report also acknowledges the other elements of a comprehensive approach to literacy. 'Explicit, evidence-based instruction in building background and vocabulary knowledge, and in reading comprehension strategies, are all parts of comprehensive literacy instruction. Although the inquiry focused on one most frequent obstacle to students developing a strong foundation in early reading skills, these elements must also be addressed when implementing report recommendations' (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2022).
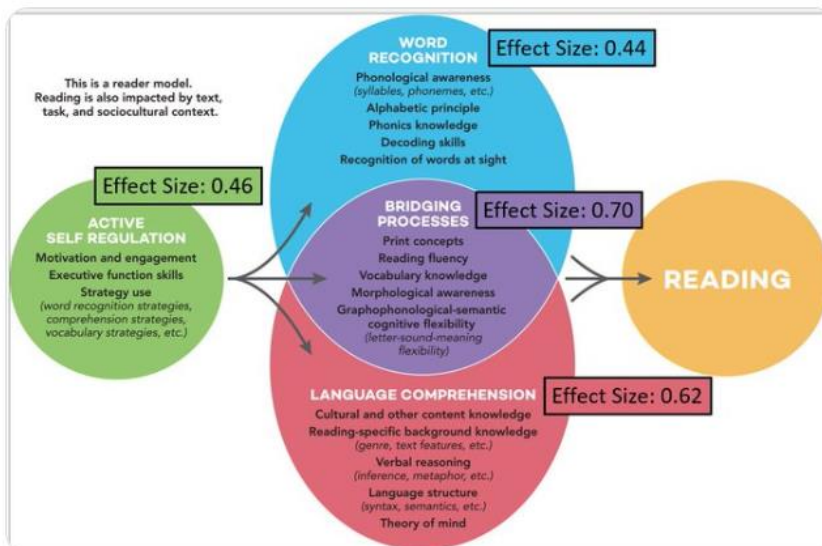
The Adult Years (18+ years-old)

Question Two: What are the three main things we should prioritise doing in:

The Early Years (0-4 years-old)
- Ensuring early years educators are empowered to design learning experiences that provide a simultaneous, rather than sequential, model of reading instruction. Rather than focusing on foundational word reading skills as a beginning focus and then turning to comprehension, the focus must be on the development of phonological awareness, print concepts, alphabet knowledge, oral language comprehension, and including efforts to develop oral comprehension of written language acknowledging and building on the child's first language or dialect (Cervetti, 2020; Swanson et al., 2011, Duke & Mesmer, 2018). This should include, where possible, free reading in both English and the child's first language or dialect (Krashen, 1992, Rosen, 2021).

- Consider how learners move through the transition points and the learning that happens in these areas. This includes, but is not limited to, from home environment to early childhood education and care or day care, entry into kindergarten, progression to high school and so on. Through collaborative processes, create a learning sequence around big ideas, providing teachers with enough variety to differentiate and meet at point of need.

- Foster a love of reading by supporting parents and caregivers to make book-sharing engaging, interactive and fun in both English and their home language where possible. When adults talk about the content of the book and link it to children's interests and experiences understanding of concepts and vocabulary is enhanced.

The School Years (5-17 years-old)
- Making meaning ignites the desire to learn. Darling-Hammond, L. et al., (2020). Begin with attention to motivation and engagement aspects of literacy learning: developing identity as a reader and writer; the importance of attention to purpose, audience, choice, collaboration, connecting to all learning areas which offer the opportunity for authentic purposes for reading and writing. (Gambrell, 2011). Reading and writing are reciprocal processes and will need to be presented as essential components of literacy instruction.

- It is important to prioritise the active view of reading as a reader model, with attention to the fact that reading is also impacted by the type of text, task, and sociocultural context. This model allows educators to identify bridging processes between word recognition and language comprehension and considers the role of active self-regulation. A feature of the active view of reading is that each construct named in the model is instructionally malleable, that is practitioners can affect it (Duke & Cartwright, 2021),

This is a reader model. Reading is also impacted by text, task, and sociocultural context.

WORD RECOGNITION Effect Size: 0.44
Phonological awareness (syllables, phonemes, etc.)
Alphabetic principle
Phonics knowledge
Decoding skills
Recognition of words at sight

Effect Size: 0.46
ACTIVE SELF REGULATION
Motivation and engagement
Executive function skills
Strategy use (word recognition strategies, comprehension strategies, vocabulary strategies, etc.)

BRIDGING PROCESSES Effect Size: 0.70
Print concepts
Reading fluency
Vocabulary knowledge
Morphological awareness
Graphophonological-semantic cognitive flexibility (letter-sound-meaning flexibility)

READING

LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION Effect Size: 0.62
Cultural and other content knowledge
Reading-specific background knowledge (genre, text features, etc.)
Verbal reasoning (inference, metaphor, etc.)
Language structure (syntax, semantics, etc.)
Theory of mind

Active view of reading with effect sizes (Burns, Duke & Cartwright, 2023)

- Reference to the term science of reading in a singular form on page 27, 'The Australian Education Research Organisation suggests that the science of reading provides the strongest evidence about how young children learn to read'. This is an inaccurate use of the term as the report goes on to say, 'understanding the cognitive science behind how students learn to read and the research on effective instruction makes it easier for educators to align policy and classroom teaching with evidence.' Hence acknowledging that there are many sciences that contribute to reading instruction. The use of the singular form contradicts the abundance of research and scientific evidence that could inform the teaching of reading and writing. Many fields contribute to knowledge for the teaching of reading (e.g., education, psychology, linguistics, neuroscience, sociology, biology) and they need to be included in the knowledge base teachers access (Gabriel, 2020).

The Adult Years (18+ years-old)
- Just like learning in all three identified year groups, begin with attention to engagement in order to develop agency. Attention to purpose, audience, choice, opportunities to interact and opportunities to engage successfully with challenging texts that are relevant to their lives. (Gambrell, 2011)

Question Three: Are there any data sets not considered in this paper that should be used to monitor literacy achievement in:
The Early Years (0-4 years-old) • While the AEDC is listed as a data set, it could also be used as a data set shared with Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings. Just as schools are provided with school data, backward mapping that provided data to ECECs would allow them to target responses in their settings.
The School Years (5-17 years-old) • Closing the Gap measures • Motivation and engagement data sets • What makes for effective professional learning, what makes for effective leadership of literacy
The Adult Years (18+ years-old)

Question Four: If you are a provider of a service, what kinds of guidance would you hope to see in the Community-wide Framework?
• Clarity, coherence and cohesion in its approach with sustained throughlines identified with connections to the AC: English and the National Literacy Progressions. • Opportunities for teachers to use the framework to guide the scope of their teaching but with enough freedom to adjust their teaching sequences to meet the identified needs of students in their class. Human learning is a progression but not a linear one although some developments do have to take place in a particular order such as self-regulation and executive function skills which will have unique dimensions in specific periods of life. (Darling-Hammond, L. et al., 2020, page 12). • A focus on precision over prescription. An expectation that any scoping of the learning developed will NOT be a generic offering with rigid lockstep sequence of learning as this runs the risk of retaining students at one level for long periods until mastery is achieved or holding back students who already know and use the skill (prescription). This poses a significant implication for how students see themselves as learners affecting motivation and engagement of both students and teachers. It also ignores the importance of differentiation according to student learning needs - precision in classroom practice (Kuhn & Stahl, 2022). • Guidance should ensure there is not an overemphasis on skills in isolation forgetting that learning how to crack the code is taught in concert with other skills especially for students learning English, learning about English, and learning through English (Halliday, 2004). Shanahan, (2020) reminds us 'often the adoption of new programs or reform efforts aimed at a particular piece of the puzzle lead to greater attention to certain abilities, but to diminished attention to other key parts of literacy. Make sure that you aren't trading more phonics for less fluency work, or more vocabulary for less comprehension. You want to make sure that all components of reading and writing are receiving adequate attention – not going overboard with some and neglecting others.' The art of teaching is to dance between the key components of literacy learning adjusting the focus according to the instructional text and learner needs. • Explore ways to develop student agency and embrace students as informants and participants in research processes, rather than data points or subjects. This will interrupt the status quo that has permitted predominately white and Western theories to dominate

the education of students who are increasingly representative of diverse communities (Gabriel, 2020).

- Consideration for how the 'framework' should be applied across learning areas in secondary schooling. While we recognise all teachers are teachers of literacy, additional supports are needed in this space especially for students learning English as an additional language or dialect (EALD). For example, how to scaffold students into increasing complex texts.

- Invest in teachers:
  - Prioritising time for Professional Learning Community (PLC) processes in schools. Supporting teachers to systematically investigate questions by generating and grappling with evidence in rapid cycles of shared inquiry is research, action research, and could be viewed as an applied science. Inspired by continuous improvement, the emphasis on problem-specific, user-centred inquiry has the potential to promote greater synergy between practical, and theoretical knowledge and the research which underpins such pedagogical choices. Calls for professional learning often focus on training and retraining, focussed on basic content knowledge rather than ways of implementing, generating and sharing knowledge from practice.
  - Investing in coaching and mentoring process for all teachers. Coaching and PLC models support educators to engage with peer-reviewed research informed by theory and to recognise what research is not. Coaching models encourage educators to explore the impact in the classroom of any changed practice. Making note of what is working, for whom and what is not, then thinking carefully about what they will need to learn about or do differently to ensure all students meet with success. This type of systemic learning and improvement requires coordination, collaboration, and a common language for thinking and talking about instructional practices.

Question Five: Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Dear Panel,

We applaud you for seeking feedback on this Final Consultation Report. We recognise that the Tasmanian Government is seeking a future focused policy, operationalised through a clear framework that supports educators, children, young people and society. It is therefore important that the Panel address some of the inequities and inaccuracies that are apparent in the Final Consultation Report.

The Foundation for Literacy and Learning strongly believes that a lock step approach to learning is detrimental to learners of all abilities, specifically those learners who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or culturally and linguistically diverse. Teachers differentiate, they make decisions about what is taught and how, in their selection of curriculum, materials, and instructional strategies; planning; and in-the-moment instructional interactions in a wide variety of educational contexts (Piasta & Hudson, 2022). We recognise that teachers are seeking support to ensure all learners can achieve their learning goals. They need recommendations that provide them with the time to work with children and young people and their colleagues. Providing the right supports honours teachers and aids in the attraction and retention of teachers to the profession.

To foster the implementation of literacy reform, pillars of infrastructure must be aligned, transparent, and feasible (Woulfin & Gabriel, 2020). Aligned pillars contribute to educators encountering harmonised messages on how to continually develop aspects of their practice. We encourage you to engage with teachers in authentic consultation by utilising a co-design process that uses creative and participatory methods to identify their professional needs as empowered learners. The process should incorporate all stakeholders including student voice which reflects

the voices of their communities. Clearly identifying where the focus should be, will support precision over prescription (Timperley, 2015, Fullan & Gallagher, 2020, Robinson & Timperley, 2007).

Thank you for your time and consideration in considering the feedback provided in this response. The Foundation for Learning Literacy committee is happy to elaborate through continued engagements at your request.

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