

Submission to the Literacy Advisory Panel for a Community-Wide Literacy Framework – Final Consultation



The Department for Education, Children and Young People (‘the Department, DECYP’) values the opportunity to provide a submission to the Literacy Advisory Panel’s (‘the Panel’) *Final Consultation Report for the Development of Tasmania’s Community-wide Framework (Final Consultation Report)*. DECYP recognises the significant work of the Panel and its efforts to develop a community-wide framework and associated recommendations that will guide a whole of community response to achieving a literate Tasmania.

DECYP notes that in developing a community-wide framework to achieve a literate Tasmania, the Panel will ‘make targeted recommendations to build upon existing literacy approaches and supports in the early years, school, adult learning environments’ (*Final Consultation Report*). This approach recognises the significant work underway by DECYP to improve literacy outcomes of children and young people.

DECYP acknowledges that themes within the *Final Consultation Report* reflect recommendations consistent with the DECYP submission to the Literacy Advisory Panel’s “Setting the Scene” *Community Consultation Paper 1*. These include the:

- adoption of a broad definition of literacy
- importance of parent and family engagement in children’s literacy development
- recognition of the sustained and continuous approach required to improve literacy outcomes
- importance of a quality, high functioning and capable workforce as integral to supporting literacy development
- recognition that literacy development is inextricably linked to other domains, including wellbeing
- inclusion of an ecological model which places the learner at the centre of all that we do.

DECYP’s submission brings together the perspectives of key areas within DECYP, including:

- Principals
- School Improvement
- Literacy
- Early Learning
- Curriculum
- Aboriginal Education Services
- Professional Support Staff
- Disability Services
- Strategic Policy and Projects
- Education Performance and Review
- Gifted and Highly Able
- English as an Additional Language.

We acknowledge Libraries Tasmania, whilst part of DECYP, has submitted its own individual response.

A Targeted Approach

The content within the ‘*what this tells us*’ sections and the prevailing themes in the *Final Consultation Report* align with the targeted approach DECYP is implementing to lift the literacy outcomes of Tasmanian children and young people.

In 2021 the Tasmanian Government committed that by ‘*Year 7 all young people will meet an expected reading standard that is above the national minimum by no later than 2030*’ (*Final Consultation Report*). Following this announcement DECYP reviewed literacy teaching, curriculum and assessment practices and developed tighter expectations for schools.

Our Approach to School Improvement

The Department's literacy efforts are underpinned by 'Our Approach to School Improvement' (OATSI), which provides a framework that directs each school's improvement efforts, in line with their student learning data, and evidence-based and evidence informed approaches to what matters most in lifting education outcomes. OATSI provides explicit expectations and guidance for schools to drive improvement across learning, teaching and leading at a school level. Additionally, schools have access to a range of supports and resources, to support their school improvement efforts.

Over the past four years the Department has been focusing on improving literacy through the implementation of the *Literacy Framework and Plan for Action*. As acknowledged by the Panel report, time is needed to embed quality practice and teaching in every classroom. Through the implementation of OATSI, the Department is now providing clear expectations and specific and explicit information to schools about consistent, structured, and explicit teaching of literacy through curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. The Department has also set an explicit expectation regarding schools prioritising reading, which is reflected in every Principal's Performance and Development Plan.

Through External School Review, each school is also being monitored for its implementation of the expectations, as part of each school review.

DECYP will continue to adjust and improve its expectations and support through OATSI to ensure the expectations are contemporary and respond to evidence about what makes a difference.

The provision of a community-wide framework will help inform where schools and the broader system needs to focus its efforts into the future and will build on existing approaches and supports.

Quality Teaching Expectations for Reading

The Department's Quality Teaching Expectations for Reading, outlined in the OATSI, define what is expected from all teachers to improve reading outcomes. These expectations are a framework for schools to use to support teachers in knowing where they need to focus their energy and effort. Schools are supported to meet these expectations through clear guidance, quality resources and associated professional learning.

- Quality Teaching Expectation 1 - *Know students and where they are in their reading progress (data, evidence and assessment)*
 - The Reading Monitoring Tool – Prep to Year 10
 - Achievement Standard Guides English – Prep to Year 10
 - Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT) Reading – Prep to Year 10
 - Year 1 Phonics Check
 - Kindergarten Development Check (KDC)
 - Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) every three years
 - The Literacy Tick Years 11 and 12.

- Quality Teaching Expectation 2 - *Know the reading demands and opportunities of the learning area (curriculum)*
 - Curriculum Maps and the Achievement Standard Guides developed by DECYP:
 - support teachers in understanding what to teach and in what order, making the curriculum more manageable for teachers
 - address the issue of variability in the teaching of literacy and reading

- support teachers in planning with a clear focus on the skills and knowledge of English and in particular reading.
- Quality Teaching Expectation 3 - *Use effective evidence informed practices for teaching reading (pedagogy)*
 - DECYP's Pedagogical Framework emphasises five key teaching practices that evidence demonstrates have strong positive impacts on learning:
 - metacognition
 - learning intentions and indicators
 - feedback
 - learner agency and collaboration, and
 - questioning.
 - Teachers are provided with practical resources and advice for how to best teach reading in the classroom.
 - The Reading Instructional Practices support the building of teacher capability to use consistent and aligned practices and common language to describe them.
 - These reading instructional practices are based around the Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework (GRR).
 - Quality Teaching Coaches (Literacy) attended professional learning at the end of 2022 to prepare them to deliver these resources to school staff at the start of 2023 with this professional learning offered again in 2023.
- Quality Teaching Expectation 4 - *Reflect on the impact of teaching and student learning (collaborative inquiry)*
 - Inquiry to improve teaching practice always begins with the student. Student learning data provides the basis for educators and leaders to deepen their understanding of learning and to then identify the areas for improvement in teaching practice. Teaching improvement actions focus on curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy.
 - Resources available for schools include data sets, collaborative processes and protocols, and snapshots of practice, which are being developed on an ongoing basis.

These expectations have been underpinned and informed by the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Teacher Standards (aitsl.edu.au)).

“We should recognise and emphasise... a focus on evidence-based quality pedagogy that reflects our Pedagogical Framework.” (Principal)

‘We should recognise the expertise of teachers – we know that collective teacher efficacy has a 1.57 effect size 0.4 is a year’s growth’. (Principal)

Interventions For Students Not Making Expected Progress

The *Final Consultation Report* highlights the importance of ‘*an explicit, systematic and structured approach to teaching literacy for all students and that it is critical for those requiring additional support*’ (*Final Consultation Report*). This reflects the approach being developed by DECYP that recognises ‘*that initial reading instruction should be taught early, explicitly and well and that instruction should be informed by comprehensive monitoring and assessment of students’ reading skills*’ (NRP, 2000; Rose, 2006, 2005a).

In 2023, DECYP has prioritised the development of evidenced-based guidance, resources and associated professional learning to support teachers to provide timely and specific interventions for students not making expected progress. This guidance includes advice on monitoring tools, standardised reading assessments and appropriate evidenced-informed interventions.

Evidence-based Research

The *Final Consultation Report* highlights the importance of using current evidence-based and evidence-informed research to inform 'how' teachers teach reading and more broadly, literacy. This reflects DECYP's approach for improving literacy outcomes.

DECYP utilises the most current educational research from organisations and institutes such as the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO), the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER) and the Grattan Institute. Working alongside experts in the field of education and literacy enables the Department to use current, evidence-based research to inform the development of guidance, professional learning and resources for schools.

DECYP'S current work with AERO includes:

- The development of evidence-based guidance for secondary schools on how to effectively support students not making expected progress in literacy through the implementation of tiered interventions.
- Using AERO's evidence-based research to inform and guide the development of literacy resources.

DECYP's current work with ACER includes:

- The development of guidance related to the question – What evidence-based advice can be provided to schools and teachers to guide their selection of quality literacy programs and resources?
- A review of research findings about the development of reading skills in the early years.

DECYP'S current work with GRATTAN includes:

- Informing Grattan's current research project to develop a 'Reading Guarantee'.
- Using the recommendations from the following papers to inform advice to schools
 - *Tackling under-achievement: Why Australia should embed high-quality small-group tuition in schools*
 - *How to improve curriculum planning and end the lesson lottery.*

Consistent and Aligned

The development of a community-wide framework provides an opportunity for a consistent and aligned approach for improved literacy outcomes.

Being explicit about the terminology used within the Report and what it means in practice, will ensure the Community-wide Framework is unambiguous and understood by all.

Definitions

1. Literacy

DECYP aligns to the Literacy Advisory Panel's definition of literacy. Whilst the definition of literacy utilised by the Panel is broad, the *Final Consultation Report* 'themes' and 'what this tells us' are heavily focused towards reading. DECYP recognises literacy as the sum of all parts and no strand is more important than another, they must all work in collaboration together to produce improved outcomes.

2. Structured Literacy

DECYP's interpretation of 'structured literacy' in practice includes the same key features as defined by Spears - Swerling referenced in the *Final Consultation Report*:

'Key features of SL approaches include (a) explicit, systematic, and sequential teaching of literacy at multiple levels— phonemes, letter–sound relationships, syllable patterns, morphemes, vocabulary, sentence structure, paragraph structure, and text structure; (b) cumulative practice and ongoing review; (c) a high level of student–teacher interaction; (d) the use of carefully chosen examples and nonexamples; (e) decodable text; and (f) prompt, corrective feedback' Spears - Swerling, Louise (2018) Structured literacy and typical literacy practices: Understanding differences to create instructional opportunities *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, Vol. XX, Mo. X, pp. 1-11

The structured literacy approach of DECYP recognises all elements of quality literacy instruction inclusive of the sub-skills of reading and is reflected in the *Quality Teaching: Expectations for Every Teacher*.

In practice this means teachers:

- use the gradual release of responsibility model of instruction that moves from a continuum of explicit instruction with students actively observing, to the student applying the learning independently with the teacher continuing to monitor the level of mastery
- plan sequences of learning using Curriculum Maps to systematically deliver the curriculum
- monitor learner progress against achievement standards using formative and summative assessments, supported by the Reading Monitoring Tool.

DECYP's *Phonics Scope and Sequence* and associated resources, provide a clear example of an explicit and 'structured literacy' approach to literacy teaching.

3. The Science of Reading and the science of reading

The *Final Consultation Report* uses the terms *The Science of Reading* and *the science of reading* interchangeably in the schooling section of the Report. There is ongoing debate and disparate views about what the term means. DECYP strongly recommends that the Panel adopt the definition used by the national research body, the Australian Education Research Organisation:

'The science of reading refers to a body of evidence that encompasses multi-disciplinary knowledge from education, linguistics, cognitive psychology, special education, and neuroscience. The science of reading looks at the essential cognitive processes for competent reading and describes how reading develops in both typical and atypical readers. These studies have revealed a great deal about how we learn to read, what goes wrong when students don't learn, and the instructional strategies that facilitate the cognitive processes required for reading (Castles et al 2018; Ehri 2005, 2014; Moats 2020)

4. The Big Six – components of reading

The *Final Consultation Report* references the importance of the key components that contribute to successful reading known as the Big Six: oral language; vocabulary; phonological awareness; letter sound knowledge (phonics); comprehension; and fluency, as included in the Australian Curriculum. This definition aligns with DECYP's definition.

Consistency in describing the elements of the Big Six throughout the Report is critical to developing an aligned understanding of the importance of each individual element and, that all elements are interconnected and have interdependency.

An Independent Monitoring System

DECYP recognises the importance of measuring progress for ongoing improvement in system, school and student outcomes.

The External School Review cycle provides DECYP with an objective process to monitor school and system performance guided by the nine domains of the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT). The Review process uses school and system data and from 2023 reinforces the system focus on reading and the importance of alignment to the tight expectations of OATSI.

Monitoring and supporting quality practices for teaching, learning and leading is essential in the early years of schooling. The commencement of the [Kindergarten to Year 2 Improvement Approach](#) in 2023 reflects DECYP's commitment to quality teaching and learning in the early years. The approach is consistent with the National Quality Standards and OATSI and will support schools to review pedagogy and practice for ongoing improvement in literacy in the early years.

DECYP schools are also expected to demonstrate that they are implementing the elements of OATSI and evidence-informed literacy practices through their School Improvement Plans. This is monitored by Improvement Consultants and supported by Lead Quality Teaching Coaches.

All DECYP staff are required to have a Professional Development Plan (PDP) to support ongoing improvement and professional growth. The goals and targets within these plans are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely. Aligned to the system priority of reading, from 2023 all principal PDPs are required to have a reading target for continuous monitoring of reading outcomes.

“Making sure that all schools have whole school approaches in place, backed up by evidence-based teaching resources...as part of the external review process.” (Principal)

Foundational Years and Family Engagement

The *Final Consultation Report* recognises the importance of the first 1000 days of a child's life as a critical period for building the foundations of literacy and language development. DECYP encourages the Panel to consider how all literacy development is underpinned by oral language and how oral language can be prioritised in the early years, in particular:

- supporting parents/carers to understand the importance of a rich vocabulary
- supporting parents/carers to speak effectively to their children
- supporting parents/carers read with children, expose them to quality children's literature, share the joy of reading and to recognise the subsequent impact this can have on later literacy achievement.

DECYP has prioritised the importance of oral language through the *Let's Talk* media campaign and continues to amplify the importance of oral language in early years and family engagement opportunities and initiatives, including:

- **Launching into Learning (LiL)** – provides opportunities for families to support their child's learning from birth to 4 years of age, in welcoming environments provided by their local school, with a particular emphasis on wellbeing and early literacy and numeracy development

- **Learning in Families Together (LIFT)** – to support schools from Kindergarten to Year 2, to build capacity in family engagement, oral language and literacy and numeracy skills
- **Child and Family Learning Centres (CFLCs)** – place-based learning centres for children under 5 years of age and their families to access services to support children’s educational, developmental and health outcomes
- **B4 Coalition** - aims to connect, support, engage with, and encourage individuals and organisations to take action and work together to ensure all children in Tasmania in the early years are nurtured
- **Working Together** - addresses barriers for families to access early learning in the year before Kindergarten
- **Let’s Talk** – media campaign to promote oral language
- **Let’s Read** – media campaign to promote reading
- **Early Childhood Intervention Service (ECIS)** – partners with families to promote all children as capable and competent learners, thriving within inclusive early education and community settings
- **Grammar and Phonology Screen (GAPS)** - aims to identify young learners who may be ‘at risk’ in early language and/or literacy development through screening
- **Nursery Rhyme Project** – aims to build knowledge of nursery rhymes and their importance in the development of children’s literacy, numeracy and social skills

An area to build on is...“linking the existing supports provided by LiL at schools and acknowledging the importance of networks and family partnerships that are formed prior to children and families entering formal schooling.” (Principal group)

DECYP agrees with the Panel’s findings that more work needs to be undertaken in relation to the barriers families face in terms of accessing supports and services which support literacy development within the foundational years.

English as an Additional Language (EAL) Focus

DECYP would like the panel to consider how EAL learners can be supported to:

- further the development of home literacy in their own language (other than English)
- continue speaking and reading in their own language for concept development to be strengthened
- have access to intensive support to assist with their reading and writing development.

DECYP would also like the panel to consider the critical role of educators to:

- be knowledgeable and skilled to support learners who speak another language at home
- ensure the learner has appropriate support in place to develop their English language and literacy skills.

Systematic Approach

The *Final Consultation Report* highlights the importance of using a ‘systematic approach, which cascades to a whole of school approach, led by Principals and which use common language, explicit strategies informed by data, and supported by a literacy team to inform all teachers’ (*Final Consultation Report*). This aligns with DECYP’s approach for improving literacy outcomes as discussed in the Quality Teaching Expectations for Reading section of this paper.

In relation to the statement within the ‘What this tells us about the Primary School setting’ that ‘A structured approach to teaching literacy ensures all students being taught the same concepts and recognises that some will require more time on the content strategies to acquire the necessary skills’ (Final Consultation Report). DECYP encourages the Panel to consider how the final recommendations will reflect the learning goals of all learners including:

Gifted and Highly Able Learners

- ensuring learners will not be required to work at a slower pace
- ensuring learners will not need to demonstrate concepts they have mastered as this can lead to school refusal, poor behaviour, and disillusionment with the school system
- recognising that rigid and specific programs may not allow students to move more quickly through content and provide less opportunity to show mastery of concepts already acquired.

Students with English as an Additional Language (EAL)

- having access to intensive support to assist with their reading and writing development
- recognising the gaps between students, their abilities and their knowledge and their previous instruction
- recognising that many EAL learners have not had exposure to the explicit teaching of phonics.

Students with Disability

DECYP agrees with the concept noted in the report that DECYP provides “ongoing differentiated literacy support and PL to build capacity and capabilities of all staff working with learners” (Final Consultation Report). Consideration should be given to the final report reflecting:

- a holistic view of what ‘literacy’ can mean for children and young people with disability.
- functional literacy, including access to ‘reading’ and ‘writing’ through alternate modes (for example when a person has complex communication needs).
- how learners with a disability that impacts their literacy skill acquisition generally requires additional exposure to key teaching strategies – in addition to the core teaching time. This may include explicit teaching of how to utilise assistive technology to support access to literacy, e.g., speech to text, and text to speech programs.
- how learners with disability do not always have ability to learn and engage in ‘traditional’ reading and writing but require the opportunity to be included in these lessons with their peers.
- differentiated programs that provide evidence based, targeted supports and educational adjustments required for them to participate and learn.
- educational adjustments based on the needs of individual students that are implemented in consultation with the learners’ parents/carers.

*“The reference to Assistive Technology (AT) does not adequately report the array of AT options that are present in both mainstream and support school settings, including the use of tech-based AAC devices, for which there are many.”
(Principal)*

‘... recognition of extending capable students and stretching student learning should be captured in the recommendations’ (Principal Group)

Professional Learning and Workforce Expertise

The Final Consultation Report acknowledges the work of the education sectors in providing differentiated literacy professional learning to build the capacity and capability of staff working with learners across all contexts.

A key theme identified in the *Final Consultation Report* was “A supported, and expert workforce is integral to literacy development. Highly capable educators are required to teach literacy in the early years.”

Through OATSI, DECYP expects educators to have expert knowledge and understanding of literacy teaching, however it acknowledges that each teacher will be on a journey to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and capabilities throughout their careers.

Significant work is underway to support teachers to acquire the knowledge skills and capabilities that support evidence based approaches for the teaching of literacy.

DECYP draws the Panel’s attention to the existing work in place to support all educators in ‘...translating evidence-based research into informed practice to meet the particular needs of their students and for bringing reading and writing to life’. (*Final Consultation Report*). These resources include:

- Frameworks and guidance documents outlined in OATSI
- Research-based literacy professional learning for educators across DECYP contexts
- Scope and sequences and curriculum mapping documents to support ‘what and when to teach’, and
- Data reports and analysis tools to inform whole school, classroom and student priorities.

DECYP values the combined expertise of teachers, school psychologists and speech and language pathologists in supporting improved literacy outcomes. An identified area of development is to establish mutually agreed understandings of the science of reading, leading to consistent and aligned messages for schools and the broader community.

DECYP is also prioritising the professional learning and resources for secondary teachers to ‘*build their knowledge and skills of literacy development to enable them to teach the literacy skills necessary for student to engage, and achieve, in the literacy requirements of their subject are*’ (*Final Consultation Report*) this includes:

- understanding the stages of literacy development – learning to read, reading to learn
- disciplinary literacy - supporting teachers to teach literacy in their specific learning area.

As a critical element of professional growth, DECYP has set expectations and guidance through OATSI for schools to implement collaborative inquiry processes. Collaborative inquiry involves ongoing reflection and review of instruction and impact on student learning to inform next steps in teaching and learning. This strategy forms part of a systematic and structured approach for improved literacy outcomes.

Monitoring and Assessment

DECYP plays a significant role in whether community literacy targets are achieved, given the breadth of services it provides to children and young people in Tasmania, and its role in providing policy advice to

Government and in administering related legislation. However, as referenced by the Panel, it will take a broader cohort comprising communities, families and organisations to drive change. DECYP supports measures that are aligned with OATSI and will align with the DECYP Strategic Plan, once complete, and support aspirational targets within a community-wide framework. Targets should balance aspirational desires with realistically achievable goals.

1. Year 1 Phonics Check, GAPS and the KDC

It is important to distinguish between the purpose of an assessment tool and a screening tool. A screening tool or check like GAPS, the KDC and the Phonics Check, enables teachers to understand the related knowledge of their students and to then use that information to inform their pedagogical approach. In this context, setting a target for a screening tool can detract from the purpose of the tool and places emphasis on improving the check results rather improving the student outcomes related to the knowledge area of the screen.

DECYP supports having appropriate measures and targets for literacy, but the KDC, Year 1 Phonics Check and GAPS are effectively 'precursors' to an appropriate measure and target.

2. Australian Early Development Census

DECYP supports the use of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) as a measure of Early Years literacy indicators, for the domains of 'Language and Cognitive Skills' and 'Communication'. The AEDC is a Census of Prep aged children across the country every 3 years and relies on teacher/educator assessments of their students against the domains.

3. NAPLAN

DECYP supports NAPLAN as a measure for understanding literacy across all Tasmanian students, given it is a uniform national testing regime, administered at the same time across the country, and is a universal test and data set for all Tasmanian students (albeit limited to four year-group cohorts each year).

The Tasmanian Government has an existing literacy target that all Year 7 students will be above the NAPLAN National Minimum Standard (NMS) in Reading by 2030. As the Panel has pointed out, the decision by Education Ministers to change the way NAPLAN is reported to 'proficiency standards', will mean that the NMS will no longer be a feature of NAPLAN measures and reporting.

DECYP notes the Panel's intention that "It is likely that, the Panel will consider a new target such as 'by 2032, all Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 students will meet the national proficiency reading and writing standards'."

The Department agrees that it is prudent to await the further development of the new proficiency standards and how they will be set, before making final decisions on measures and targets for literacy in Tasmania. A key consideration will be what the 'appropriate level' should be. While Ministers have determined proficiency standards labelled 'exceeding', 'strong', 'developing' and 'needs additional support', at this point these labels are yet to be further defined in terms of their meaning and at what measurement point each will be set.

4. Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT)

DECYP has invested heavily in the use of PAT Reading, which has a key advantage over NAPLAN in that it is conducted across all year levels from Prep to Year 10 in Tasmanian Government Schools (relative to only years 3, 5, 7 and 9 for NAPLAN) over a number of years, however it has only recently become a Department requirement that the PAT is used to assess every student from Prep until Year 10.

The Department notes the Panel's proposal that, should aggregated data across all sectors be reported annually, a benchmark will need to be set. Whilst agreeing in-principle with the Panel's intention, it would be

prudent to consider whether it is necessary (or indeed productive) to have both NAPLAN and PAT targets, for essentially similar outcomes.

At an all-sector level, NAPLAN retains the advantage of being a universal national test, but only for the four year-cohorts per year that are tested. That provides a significant wealth of data to which reliability and robustness of comparisons of Tasmanian performance with national and national sub population groups can be formed.

PAT is used extensively in many jurisdictions and is used across many more year levels. However, it is not used uniformly across the country as NAPLAN is, and the testing windows and participation rates vary.

DECYP intends to publish PAT data by year level in future public reporting, but not with associated year level targets. DECYP's view is that once the Panel establishes the NAPLAN proficiency targets for all Tasmanian schools and students, it will examine whether it will need to realign its PAT benchmarking.

5. Senior Secondary Years Literacy – TASC

DECYP supports the proposal that the Everyday Adult Standard for Reading, Writing and Communication be used as a measure for attainment of senior secondary literacy. It is noted that the Panel proposes a target for 'all year 12 students'. Given there are other learning avenues for students other than year 12, consideration should be given to whether the measure should be targeted at 18 or 19-year old's' achieving the standard, rather than just those in Year 12.

6. Attendance (Report On Government Services)

The Panel's proposed measure is what is known as the attendance *level*, but the baseline data that the Panel quoted is the attendance *rate*.

In national reporting, the attendance *rate* is defined as the number of actual full-time equivalent student-days attended by full-time students as a percentage of the total number of possible student-days attended over the period of Semester 1 (the equivalent of Terms 1 and 2).

The attendance *level* is defined as the proportion of students with a certain rate of attendance. The attendance rate used as a national key performance metric under the current National Agreement is the proportion of students attending more than 90 per cent of the time (i.e. 9 days out of 10). Both rates and levels are reported as key measures by the Report on Government Services (ROGs) and the National Report on Schooling, published by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

While the Panel quoted the 2021 attendance rate data in its Report, 2022 data is available and shows that across the country, attendance rates and levels were significantly lower than historically, principally due to COVID impacts during the reported period of Semester 1. The issue of declining attendance (and relatedly 'school refusal') is a national problem that policy makers are examining.

DECYP has a target for Years 7 to 10 attendance levels in its Budget Chapter, for Government schools. DECYP considers either rate or level could be the basis of a target, noting that the attendance level is more sensitive to small increases in absenteeism than the attendance rate.

7. Closing the Gap

DECYP fully supports the importance of Closing the Gap outcomes and that they are supported by appropriate measures and targets to drive action. All the measures proposed by the Panel can be reported by First Nations status for Government school students and most, if not all, can be reported across all sectors. DECYP agrees with the Panel's recommendation to consult with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Communities on specific targets for the language and communication domains of the AEDC, and for Reading, Writing and Communication with regard to adult literacy.

8. Other Possible Targets and Measures

DECYP considers that any measures and targets, whether those proposed by the Panel or alternative/additional ones raised through consultation, must be based on data that are fit for purpose. In considering data sets to base measures and targets upon, DECYP supports the features described in the Australian Bureau of Statistics Data Quality Framework, being:

- Institutional Environment
- Relevance
- Timeliness
- Accuracy
- Coherence
- Interpretability
- Accessibility

Explanations of these seven domains can be found on the ABS website at <https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/home/ABS+Data+Quality+Statement+Checklist>

Nearly all data requires some trade-off decisions between these seven domains. For example, the AEDC is only every three years, which raises questions about its timeliness. However, it is relatively strong across most of the other six domains, meaning that on balance, for the purposes the Panel is proposing to use it, it is a satisfactory measure.

Summary

The *Final Consultation Report* provides findings and indicates recommendations, based on community consultation, assisted submissions, targeted consultation and literature. DECYP values the ongoing opportunity to inform the development of the framework and associated recommendations that will lead to a community driven approach to lift the literacy outcomes of Tasmanians.

DECYP notes that there is significant work underway to embed the evidence based and evidence informed teaching of literacy in every classroom. Clear expectations now exist for the teaching of literacy for schools (through OATSI and school improvement planning), principals through their PDPs, and teachers through the Quality Teaching Expectations for Reading. Monitored through school review, PAT testing for Prep to Year 10 and regular review of NAPLAN data is also building a clear culture of accountability.

To be successful DECYP must continue to build a system that balances supports, expectations and accountability, for learner outcomes.

We welcome the Panel's final recommendations.