

Note: The sections in the Paper which are headed “What this tells us” will be the basis for the Panel’s recommendations.

Where questions are broken into life stages (early years, school years and adult years), you can provide responses to any or all life stages.

Please indicate clearly at the beginning of any responses you wish to remain confidential.

Unless indicated as confidential, responses will be treated as public information and published on our website. Please see the [Public Submissions Policy](#) for further information.

Name: Anita Planchon Director Strategy and Engagement

Organisation: Libraries Tasmania

Postcode:7000

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

The Early Years (0-4 years-old)

The importance of libraries

Public libraries play a key role in supporting a literate Tasmania through accessible and engaging early learning programs. Baby Play, Rock & Rhyme and Storytime and local targeted programs support children to develop early language and literacy skills in culturally inclusive and welcoming spaces, while fostering social connections. These programs help parents and carers to support children’s language and literacy development, with a strong emphasis on modelling behaviours that can strengthen early language development that can be replicated by parents in daily life to develop phonological awareness and vocabulary in particular. This contributes to a community approach to literacy, where everyone is empowered to play a role in lifting skills across our state.

Libraries Tasmania works collaboratively with a range of early years government, community organisations and businesses to support and deliver early years learning and literacy throughout Tasmania. It is a key stakeholder in the ecology of service provision for the early years and should be visible in a framework that seeks to improve the availability and coordination of resources across the state.

The School Years (5-17 years-old)

The importance of school libraries

Well-resourced school libraries and trained school library staff can play a pivotal role in supporting learning and literacy in primary and secondary schools. In the government school sector, additional funding is needed to revitalise school libraries to best support learning and literacy.

To achieve high literacy, it is crucial that we encourage students to read more widely, develop a love of reading and leave school with this as a valuable life skill. School libraries form a critical part of the reading infrastructure and need the right staff and resources to make a difference. While students with low literacy are a focus, libraries can also develop programs to support gifted students. Staff skills and resources are currently variable across the state. To achieve the best outcomes for students, Tasmanian government school libraries need to be connected, supported and reinvigorated. If properly resourced to play this role, Libraries Tasmania, with library expertise

and statewide presence, could provide a central support role to oversee improvement of school libraries, give assistance to Principals and ensure improvement happens on the ground.

The Adult Years (18+ years-old)

The importance of providing adult literacy support delivery options

The panel has noted that the National Inquiry into Adult Literacy Report recommended that Australians with specific learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, have greater support. While early intervention is ideal and diagnosis can enable children to access additional educational support, for adults, diagnosis does not necessarily lead to educational support. An adult diagnosis can enable accommodations to be made in workplaces and educational settings, but this is different to providing access to education to improve literacy skills.

- For this reason, maintaining a focus on providing delivery options for adults wanting to improve their literacy skills should continue to be the priority over increasing availability of diagnostic assessments.

Assessment of adults entering the Libraries Tasmania Adult Literacy Service highlights learning gaps and helps identify indicators of dyslexic tendencies. This information informs individualised instruction. A research-informed instructional approach will address the needs of those who show indications of dyslexia without the need for a diagnosis. This is why adult literacy practitioner training needs to be based on evidence-based approaches for instruction in reading and writing. Approaches based on the science of reading teach the component skills of reading work for adults who are instructional casualties as well as those who exhibit the most common problems associated with dyslexia.

- There is a need to ensure training is accessible and builds practitioner knowledge of best practice instruction – evidence-based, learner-focused, purposeful, authentic and considerate of the barriers that adults face.

Adult Prisoners

The Libraries Tasmania Adult Literacy Service delivers an evidence-based one-to-one literacy tutoring service in the prison and has recently increased resourcing for delivery for a short pilot project with one-off funding from the Tasmanian Prison Service. Feedback indicates that the Adult Literacy Service is positively regarded and valued by prisoners, which provides support for continuing to increase delivery capacity in the longer term. The Adult Literacy Service provides referrals to community-based libraries where released prisoners can continue literacy tutoring. Information about accessing TasTAFE courses on exit is also provided.

- 26TEN provides promotional material in the wider community about how to access literacy support. Improved and appropriately targeted promotions in the prison, pitched to be accessible for prisoners, would help ensure more prisoners leaving the prison were aware of options for support in the wider community.

The report suggests that prisoners should be screened for literacy levels pre and post release. The prison has previously had a focus on literacy pre-screening on entry which did not lead to literacy delivery for prisoners as there were not enough education options to meet needs. We also know that measuring progress is difficult given that adult gains are often slow. Research has shown that if delivery is evidence-based and programs are delivered as intended (frequency and practice

outside of learning sessions, applied to real life context) we would expect to see significant measurable gains 3-5 years after engagement in a program. Rather than pre and post screening, resources would be better used for delivery to benefit prisoners.

- In the prison, priority should be on increasing delivery to meet needs rather than screening. Prisoner learning needs should continue to be assessed as prisoners enter educational programs in the prison.

The report suggests there would be value in ensuring “each person (if identified during screening) has a literacy transition plan for release”. It is important to note that not all prisoners want to engage in education even if their literacy levels are low. Best practice in re-integration includes transition planning for exit. The Tasmanian Prison Service (TPS) Re-integration team already develops exit plans for prisoners that include literacy referrals when a prisoner has been working with the Libraries Tasmania or TasTAFE programs. In the past, TPS, Libraries Tasmania and TasTAFE attempted to create a process for developing learning plans for prisoners who engaged in education in prison but given the multiple stakeholders and the constraints within the prison system where education is not a priority, this proved too difficult.

- For prisoners wanting to continue education on exit, this should be included in the TPS exit planning process.

The principle that diagnostic speech pathology and allied health services are available to address prisoners with specific learning differences (SLDs) is sound. However, diagnostic services need to be supported by provision of recommended supports. Speech pathology interventions may address some specific issues encountered by those with SLDs but will not address the full range of learning needs of those with low literacy.

- Resources for addressing low literacy should hold priority over diagnostic assessment.

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

The Early Years (0-4 years-old)

1. **Continue to provide a range of community-based opportunities for language and early literacy development.** Libraries play a key role in offering early learning opportunities and in providing free access to age-appropriate books. Resourcing to ensure opportunities for families to engage and to access the library must be maintained, and these opportunities could be further extended with additional resources to provide library services to a greater range of locations, for example through a book bus, and help create a literate culture in regional and remote areas.
2. **Continue to provide a range of opportunities for parents to increase their understanding of the importance of supporting their children’s language development and gain the skills to do so.** Library early learning programs are designed to help parents build this understanding and give parents the tools to continue to support their children’s language development at home and in daily life. Continued focus on professional learning for library staff on the importance of this aspect of early learning programs is crucial.

3. **Continue to support parents and carers to increase their literacy**, providing information about the opportunities available. Cross referral from all agencies and organisations working in the early learning space to the Libraries Tasmania Literacy Service and the range of learning opportunities provided through 26TEN (coordinated by Libraries Tasmania) will help ensure parents know they can get help to improve their reading, writing and maths, and become better equipped to support their children's literacy.

The School Years (5-17 years-old)

1. **Improve school libraries.** To achieve high literacy, it is crucial that we encourage students to read more widely, develop a love of reading and leave school with this as a valuable life skill. School libraries form a critical part of the reading infrastructure and need the right staff and resources to make a difference. While students with low literacy are a focus, libraries can also develop programs to support gifted students. Staff skills and resources are currently variable across the state. To achieve the best outcomes for students, Tasmanian government school libraries need to be connected, supported and reinvigorated. If properly resourced to play this role, Libraries Tasmania, with library expertise and statewide presence, would be best placed to provide a central support role to oversee improvement of school libraries, give assistance to Principals and ensure improvement happens on the ground.
1. **Continue to support parents and carers to increase their literacy**, providing information about the opportunities available. Cross referral from all agencies and organisations working in the early learning space to the Libraries Tasmania Literacy Service and the range of learning opportunities provided through 26TEN (coordinated by Libraries Tasmania) will help ensure parents know they can get help to improve their reading, writing and maths, and become better equipped to support their children's literacy.
2. **Continue to improve public libraries across the state.** Our public libraries offer safe welcoming spaces where children and young people can access information and opportunities to read for pleasure and to expand their horizons. These opportunities could be further extended with additional resources to provide library services to a greater range of locations, for example through a book bus, and help create a literate culture in regional and remote areas.

The Adult Years (18+ years-old)

1. **Continue to adequately fund and politically support 26TEN as a state-wide collective impact approach to engaging government, business, community and individuals to address the challenge of low adult literacy and numeracy.**

This includes:

- Strong high-level political commitment to ongoing visible adult literacy campaigns and funded action to reduce stigma and provide opportunities for adults to increase their skills in a range of settings, including community and workplace.
- Increased funding for 26TEN Employer grants, which enable effective literacy support to be provided through workplaces and engage businesses in ongoing support for literacy, with impact on not only business productivity but also families and communities of individuals workers. The existing 26TEN Employer Grant program is highly effective but regularly oversubscribed. Providing additional support to this program would be a

practical way of engaging more businesses in the collective effort of raising adult literacy levels.

- Increased funding for communications campaigns to continue to break down stigma and ensure adults know about available opportunities to get help. 26TEN communications campaigns have made considerable inroads into the stigma surrounding low adult literacy, as demonstrated by the increasing number of literacy learners who are willing to come forward and tell their stories, but stigma remains a significant barrier in key sectors, for example agriculture. A commitment to making a serious difference in adult literacy levels, needs to be accompanied by a substantial increase in the capacity to mount effective targeted communications campaigns.
- Ongoing and appropriate professional development for the adult literacy workforce.
- Support to sectoral approaches through the 26TEN Coalition.
- Increased support to the 26TEN Communities program to ensure the program can deliver on the policy intent of multi-year funding for a number of communities, to achieve real impact (see below).

2. Continue to adequately fund and support the delivery of community-based literacy support services

This includes:

- Increasing the capacity to deliver library services, including literacy support, within the prison by supporting additional structural funding needed to ensure improvements to the prison library in line with international standards. This would enable a dedicated prison library collection and additional staff to extend services to all areas of the prison, as well as further extension of the capacity to deliver one to one and group literacy support, with the priority focus on delivery rather than diagnostic assessment to ensure real outcomes can be delivered within the constraints and limitations of the prison environment.
- Continuing to strengthen the Adult Literacy Service, run in Libraries Tasmania public libraries, as the primary organisation delivering adult literacy tutoring within the 26TEN strategy for Tasmania. The impact of this service could be increased by increasing delivery staff and delivery options through remote tutoring delivery to people unable to attend a library due to other life commitments or geographical remoteness.
- Extension of the 26TEN Communities Program to meet the policy intent to provide longer-term sustained multiple years funding to a number of communities, in response to evaluation of earlier Communities programs which showed shorter-term support did not embed literacy outcomes. At present, this key program is funded under the Adult Learning Strategy until July 2025. An extension of this program would allow the place-based collective impact approach to become embedded in a greater number of communities for up more years (up to five) providing much more significant impact.

3. Continue and adequately resource efforts to build a diverse adult literacy workforce who are able to meet community need in a range of settings, with a focus on delivery.

This includes:

- Addressing barriers to the recruitment and development of quality volunteer tutors to the Adult Literacy Service. Libraries Tasmania is currently working with TasTAFE to develop a bespoke training module for remote tutoring for volunteer tutors. This will enable the service to offer tutoring online.
- The current (TasTAFE) TALL tutor training course is accredited and is therefore more demanding than necessary. Feedback consistently indicates that it is too onerous for potential volunteer tutors to complete and there is a high drop-out rate. There is a need

for a non-accredited tutor training course, that is evidence-based but shorter and more achievable and which would attract more trained volunteer tutors and increase service delivery.

- 4. Continuing to support a literacy culture, by ensuring we have a vibrant and well-used public library service across our state, which is able to provide access to collections that support reading for information and pleasure.**

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)

Libraries Tasmania collects early learning program attendance. The number of children and accompanying adults who attend is an indicator of engagement in these programs that support early literacy. Libraries Tasmania can provide this data.

The School Years (5-17 years-old)

Since November 2022, Libraries Tasmania has provided an eResource lending app (SORA) to government schools to support students to access and loan age-appropriate eBooks and eMagazines. Data on the number of student users, schools, and items borrowed can measure the contribution of this service to creating a more literate Tasmania.

The Adult Years (18+ years-old)

Critical to measuring adult literacy achievement is access to valid Tasmanian population level data through the proposed National Study on Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Skills. Such a study should indicate the level at which adults achieve functional literacy, which would then become a benchmark to measure subsequent study results.

The Federal Government has committed to making \$12 million available for this study and plans to conduct it mid-2024. It is not clear if the results of this study will enable comparisons to the previous PIAAC data or collect a statistically significant number of responses from a Tasmanian population.

In the event that there is no valid Tasmanian data from this study, alternative approaches could include a Tasmanian adult learning survey which includes collection of information that provides indications of literacy practices and skills.

Qualitative data and stories about the experiences of individuals and communities are an important way of being able to measure the impact of literacy interventions. These should continue to be collected and used to measure progress and inform action.

The achievement of Learner goals is also a measure of progress used in the adult sector, particularly by the Libraries Tasmania Literacy Service and is an approach that ensures the adult learner has agency in the measurement of progress.

Question Four: If you are a provider of a service, what kinds of guidance would you hope to see in the Community-wide Framework?

As a provider of services and programs to support literacy and the implementing agency for 26TEN, Libraries Tasmania would like to ensure the framework provides:

- Clear definitions and shared language that can facilitate collective impact.
- Agreed tools / frameworks for measuring literacy across different life stages.
- Agreed benchmarks or milestones for functional literacy.
- Clear referral pathways across the framework from all stages of life for literacy and numeracy e.g. TasTAFE, Adult Literacy Service. Ideally the framework would also set out better coordination between the range of organisations providing services across early years, school years and adult years. (We note that there is a mention of a services directory and consider this would be hard to maintain and would enter an already crowded landscape. One option to consider would be using existing mechanisms such as the Right Place or Find Help Tas and better resourcing these to make them more comprehensive and more seamless.)

The Community-wide framework should be a 'living' document with a clear owner aware of the responsibility to keep it current.

The Framework should also align with any future strategy for adult learning / 26TEN strategy. It needs to be a long-term framework that sets the direction and vision that we can all collectively work towards.

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

The definition of literacy proposed in this report is extremely broad. While there is no denying there are a multitude of literacies (digital, media and information, financial etc) that are crucial for a person to function in the modern world, the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy underlie all of these literacies. A statewide literacy framework that addresses how we will work together to improve these fundamental skills is the key need. A tighter definition of literacy would be more likely to ensure those working together under the framework were genuinely contributing their efforts towards a shared goal.

Libraries Tasmania continues to hope that the framework will:

- Build on the significant investment of successive Tasmanian Governments in adult literacy since 2010.
- Be inspired by the successful 26TEN collective impact model which:
 - recognises everyone has a role to play if we are to ensure everyone has the reading, writing and numeracy communication skills they need for life
 - provides an effective framework to ensure maximum impact to address a complex problem and a vehicle to coordinate and group a range of efforts across the community and make it easier for people to know where to go for help
 - identifies that raising awareness of the issue, breaking down stigma, engaging individuals and organisations across the state in concrete action, and encouraging clear communication to remove barriers for those with low literacy are key to success

- has a timeframe and reporting structure that recognises that tackling this complex problem requires long-term, sustained commitment across the political divide.
- Acknowledge the importance of basic literacy skills (i.e. reading, writing and numeracy) as the building blocks for effective engagement in today’s digital world.
- Recognise the link between raising the literacy skills of adults and better literacy outcomes for Tasmanian children.
- Recognise and facilitate the vital role of public and school libraries in developing and supporting a literate Tasmania in general, as well as Libraries Tasmania’s specific contribution through:
 - the adult literacy service, which supports adults to gain the reading, writing and numeracy skills they need life and work in libraries across the state and in Risdon Prison and Community Corrections
 - early years programs
 - the lending collections.
- Identify the place of Libraries Tasmania in the long-term policy framework for the whole education sector in Tasmania, embracing literacy, information provision and lifelong learning.
- Support alternative approaches for adolescents who find it hard to learn in a classroom setting.
- Recognise the value of ensuring literacy programs for adults and young people are individualised and flexible.
- Support increased availability in Tasmania, including in regional areas, of high-quality training for paid and volunteer adult literacy practitioners, informed by the latest research in the science of reading.
- Commit to ongoing research and evaluation that allows us to learn from what we do and adapt our approaches to be more effective.
- Informed by population-wide data and consider investment in a population-wide survey.
- Have success measures aligned to clear goals.
- Set aspirational targets that support engagement with a community-wide framework while recognising that measures of success must reflect the complex and long-term nature of any efforts to raise literacy.
- Recognise that stories of individual improvement and life changes through improved literacy are a valid measure of success, and that qualitative data telling the stories of improved community resilience, better connectedness and overall improvement in prosperity and happiness would give a fuller picture of impact of a community-wide approach.
- Recommend the Australian Core Skills Framework as a community-wide standard to track improvement in adult literacy.
- Invest in longitudinal studies to measure outcomes.