IMPROVED
SUPPORT
FOR STUDENTS WITH
DISABILITY

Ministerial Taskforce Report

Tasmanian
Government

IMPROVED
SUPPORT
FOR STUDENTS WITH
DIS**ABILITY**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"Recognising the need to promote and protect the human rights of all persons with disabilities, including those who require more intensive support."

Preamble to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The principle that students with disability have the same rights as all other students to access, participate in and achieve meaningful education outcomes underpins the work of this Taskforce. Despite the application of law, policy guidelines, significant funding and committed people, too many students with disability and their families are still experiencing schools and education systems that are not delivering on this principle.

Through its work, the Taskforce has identified significant barriers facing students with disability and their families and has serious concerns about the level of engagement of students in mainstream education, including in the very early years of schooling.

The Taskforce acknowledges significant progress over recent decades towards inclusive education in Tasmania through the tireless efforts of parents, principals, teachers, teacher assistants, support staff and, of course, students. Despite this, much remains to be done to ensure a consistent statewide application of inclusive education practices and compliance with statutory requirements in all Tasmanian schools.

Inclusive education needs to be given priority. This would result in the Tasmanian community and all schools being clear about the benefits of inclusion of students with disability through open conversations with families and community members, clear planning, effective implementation and transparent monitoring.

To achieve inclusive education in Tasmania, the Taskforce has made recommendations based on five key themes that emerged through input from families with children with disability and other experts, organisations and school sectors. These themes are identified as areas in which improvement and change are needed as a matter of priority if inclusive education is to become a reality for students with disability.

DISABILITY READY AND RESPONSIVE SCHOOLS

Achieving inclusive education requires all schools to be both proactive and responsive in relation to inclusion of students with disability. This means all Tasmanian schools:

a. auditing their current approaches and practices to identify and remove barriers to students with disability; and

b. identifying and maintaining relevant skills and resources (and links to professional supports) needed to ensure inclusive education can be delivered; and

c. developing procedures for identifying and assessing the needs of current and prospective students with disability and for working with students and their parents/guardians to respond to those needs; and

d. ensuring all relevant staff members understand those procedures and implement them in a timely, consistent and appropriate way to ensure equality of educational opportunity is the paramount consideration and goal.

Achieving inclusive education requires Government to support and expect schools—both public and private—to achieve this readiness and responsiveness.

Achieving inclusive education also requires all members of every school community to understand and support equal opportunity in education for all students.

QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

The school community's knowledge and understanding of inclusive educational practice is the critical factor in leading change. Effective senior staff can and do influence and enable schools by creating a clear direction for the future and modeling good practice. This needs to be supported by leaders within school systems.

There needs to be much greater clarity about the various professional and para-professional roles that support inclusive education. This includes the need for a dedicated and fully resourced support teacher as part of the leadership team in every school—public and private—to lead and build staff capacity.

Participation in accredited professional learning programs, particularly in the area of inclusive education, should be encouraged and supported. An increased level of formal qualifications within Tasmanian education systems is necessary to the achievement of quality educational outcomes.

All students are entitled to a quality education program designed and delivered by a suitably qualified teacher. It is essential teachers, teacher assistants and support staff clearly understand their particular roles in the delivery of education.

Improvements are needed to the interaction between mainstream schools and support or special schools. These interactions need to reflect integrated service delivery models based on current relevant research.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Genuine partnerships with families lead to the sharing of knowledge and expertise and improved educational outcomes for students. Effective collaborations are required at all levels to determine how best to engage all students in the *Australian Curriculum*. Effective and supported participation of the student and their parent or guardian in key decisions relating to inclusive education is a clear requirement of the *Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)*, of the State and Federal discrimination laws, and Australia's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

The major school systems, professional learning institutions and teacher training providers need to work together to set priorities for professional development in the area of inclusive education, and improve access to those professional development opportunities. This would lead to there being more people with professional qualifications and skills in the development and delivery of inclusive education.

More consistency and clarity of policies is required to ensure the appropriate use of dual enrolments, part-time schooling arrangements, eSchooling and Home Schooling.

A FUNDING MODEL TO SUPPORT INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

The recent findings, recommendations and funding model for all Australian schools outlined in the *Review of Funding for Schooling Report* (Gonski Report) reflects the best proposed approach currently available. The Taskforce agreed the Tasmanian education system should move away from the current funding arrangements under the Severe Disability Register and support for students with intellectual capacity between full scale IQ55-70 and fully implement the recommendations of the Gonski Report.

MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

All Tasmanian schools need to collect consistent data relevant to measuring the educational needs of students with disability, identifying supports implemented to respond to those needs, and outcomes achieved for students, including the number of staff with qualifications and those working towards qualifications in inclusive education. The data needs to be aggregated for school systems and made publicly available in a timely and accessible form. This will ensure that school communities and key stakeholders can be active participants in developing inclusive education. The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) is the means to achieving this.

The Individual Education Plan, developed through collaboration between the school and family, must form the basis for monitoring, assessing and reporting each student's progress aligned with the *Australian Curriculum*, including to their family. Data based on the educational outcomes for students with disability in all schools should be collected, collated and monitored on a regular basis. This collated data can then be used to guide planning, and demonstrate improved educational outcomes for students with disability.

Many of the improvements and changes suggested can readily be incorporated into existing school processes. What is needed is a determined and collaborative focus on achieving improved educational outcomes for all students with disability and a more inclusive school experience for all in each school community.

CONTEXT

The Taskforce's work encompassed all primary and secondary education provision in Tasmania—public and private—and included different modes of delivery such as dual enrolment, e-school and home schooling.

In doing its work, the Taskforce had regard to the state, national and international legal obligations relevant to educational opportunities for students with disability. It also noted current inclusive educational practice developments.

INTERNATIONAL LAW AND POLICY

International human rights laws on the rights of the child and of people with disability articulate the principle of inclusion and the right to an inclusive education. Relevant international laws include the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (United Nations 1989), and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability* (United Nations 2007).

Article 24 of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability* deals with education rights and states adjustments and supports must be made to 'facilitate effective education … consistent with the goal of full inclusion'.

The *Salamanca Statement* (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation 1994) describes 'schools for all - institutions that include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs'.

AUSTRALIAN LAW AND POLICY

The Australian Government has demonstrated a commitment to inclusive education through laws including the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth), and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Cth). These specify that discrimination in education is unlawful and provide minimum standards to be met by educational institutions to achieve non-discriminatory education for people with disability.

TASMANIAN LAW AND POLICY

Since the early 1990s, Tasmanian Government schools have articulated a policy framework and commitment to inclusive education, recognising that:

"… placement of students with disabilities in regular schools is the preferred educational option… educated in the company of their age peers while being provided with curriculum and support that effectively meet their needs. The emphasis is on how schools can change to meet the needs of students with disabilities." (Department of Education and Arts, Tasmania 1994)

Tasmanian discrimination law, the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998*, mirrors the national protection against discrimination in education on the basis of disability. Tasmania has been an active participant in recent national reform initiatives, including the *Nationally Consistent Collection of Data* (Education Council 2014), and the *National Disability Insurance Scheme.* These initiatives, together with the *Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL 2014) Standards for Teachers*, the *Australian Curriculum*, the *National Quality Framework* (*Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority 2012*), and the *Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2009) all contribute to the implementation of inclusive education in Australia. All of these reflect changing and developing understanding of best practice in education for students with disability and the positive impact of this for all students.

DISABILITY

In undertaking its work, the Taskforce was highly conscious of the diversity of disability and the need to consider inclusive education in the context of the diversity of experiences of disability. For some students, they will begin their school careers with a clear diagnosis and readily identified educational support needs. For some others, diagnosis may be unclear at admission and not become clear for some time. There will also be students who develop disability during their school career, and this includes both stable and continuing conditions and those that are episodic in nature.

The Taskforce notes the definition of disability found in the International *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (United Nations 2007), which recognises that barriers and inequalities for people with disabilities arise as a result of the interaction of impairments with the way in which societies' infrastructure, systems and processes are designed. The Convention focuses on meeting the needs of people with impairments in order to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of human rights by people with disability:

"The purpose of the present Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. Persons with disabilities include those with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others." (United Nations 2007 Article 1)

WHAT WE DID

The *Improved Support for Students with Disability* Ministerial Taskforce was established in June 2014 by the incoming Tasmanian Liberal Government, following a commitment during the 2014 election. The Taskforce sought to:

"…examine current provision and support for students with disabilities; review evidence based research and provide informed recommendations to improve educational support for these students and their families."

(Taskforce Terms of Reference 2014)

The Taskforce membership comprised representation from parents, community members, as well as discrimination, disability, disability advocacy and education sectors (Appendix A, Taskforce Membership). Taskforce members came together in eight full-day meetings, commencing in June 2014 and ending in June 2015 (Appendix B, Taskforce Meeting Schedule).

The Taskforce Terms of Reference were drafted at the first meeting of the Taskforce with Minister Rockliff on 12 June 2014 (Appendix C, Taskforce Terms of Reference).

Taskforce meetings provided a forum for members to review, discuss and reflect on material and ideas presented through the various information sources. Taskforce meetings also provided a rich forum for the sharing of member expertise, knowledge and experience.

The Taskforce prepared and published communiqués from each meeting to enable those interested in its work to keep informed about progress.

This report sets out the findings and recommendations of the Taskforce. It is based on the Taskforce's consideration of the following:

PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS

In November 2014, the Taskforce placed advertisements in *The Mercury, The Examiner* and *The Advocate* newspapers inviting submissions from the public.

Thirty-four submissions were received from a wide range of interested parties, including parents, practitioners and organisations (Appendix E, Schedule of Public Submissions).

EXPERT PRACTICE AND POLICY PRESENTATIONS

Experts in their field were invited to attend six of the eight taskforce meetings to present on practice and policy on responding to the needs of students with a disability (Appendix D, List of Expert Presentations).

RESEARCH AND ACADEMIC EVIDENCE

Taskforce members considered a range of research and academic materials identifying best practice and reforms in inclusive education, and effective responses to the educational needs for students with disability. The research identified by expert presenters and public submissions was supplemented by research identified by Taskforce members (included in the reference list).

WHAT WE HEARD

As noted above, in compiling this report and key recommendations, the Taskforce considered:

- **expert practice and policy presentations;**
- **public submissions; and**
- **research and academic evidence**

EXPERT PRACTICE AND POLICY PRESENTATIONS

The Taskforce invited presentations from a range of experts in order to be informed about the workings of the entire Tasmanian compulsory year's education system and better understand the context in which inclusive education is delivered in Tasmania (see Appendix D List of Expert Presentations). In addition, the Taskforce Chair met with and received correspondence from the Tasmanian representative of the Australian Special Education Principals' Association and the Area Director, Health & Human Services North West.

The following is a summary of information gained from these sources.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Department of Education presented its 'Learners First' strategy to demonstrate its understanding of and commitment to the ongoing development of inclusive school communities.

The Department also spoke about the *Respectful Schools Supporting Student Need* (2014), which has an underlying principle of quality education being based on acceptance and inclusion of all students.

The Department identified many publications that are available as practical support resources, for example, *Good Teaching: Inclusive Schools – Disability Focus; Guidelines for Individual Education Planning.*

These policies are supported by funding of:

- individual student supports;
- resource personnel including a regional support service team made up of school psychologists, speech and language pathologists and social workers, and a support teacher allocation to every school aimed at providing a systematic model of support; and
- professional learning structures including the Professional Learning Institute.

The Department emphasised the work it is undertaking to support the implementation of the *Australian Curriculum* for all students, focusing on differentiating to ensure the learning needs, interests and style of every student is met.

THE TASMANIAN CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE

The Tasmanian Catholic Education Office presented information on the processes it has in place to assist its sector schools to apply for funding to support students with disability on an individual basis.

Diagnosis is a precondition for making an application. Funding is allocated according to this diagnosis, for example, intellectual, physical and/or behavioural.

If funding is allocated, the school decides how the funding is used.

The Tasmanian Catholic Education Office has a professional team to provide specialist support to its schools including special learning needs teachers, wellbeing and cultural liaison officers. There is also an allocation for a special learning needs teacher in each school.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS TASMANIA

Independent Schools Tasmania (IST) presented information about the diverse and autonomous nature of its member schools. Each school receives directly funding from Government and is directly accountable to the Federal and State Governments.

The allocation and use of funds for students with disability is determined at the school level.

IST presented on the support it seeks to provide to its members on policy development in the area of inclusive education.

UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

Dr Chris Rayner presented the current pre-service teacher education courses, along with postgraduate courses planned for the future. These are being developed and delivered to better prepare pre-service and in-service teachers to educate students with disability.

Dr Rayner indicated his view that partnerships, effective mentoring, and incentives for teachers to acquire further qualifications are needed to continue to improve teacher training and professional learning and support inclusive education practice in Tasmania.

TASMANIAN PRINCIPALS ASSOCIATION

David Raw highlighted that the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recognises three factors that affect student learning and the level of need for additional support: disability, learning difficulties and disadvantage.

Mr Raw observed that the current focus on IQ to determine the level of support to be provided within Government schools is inconsistent with the OECD's identification of these three factors. He particularly emphasised the importance of considering Socio-Economic Status (SES) as an aspect of disadvantage, given the fact that 31% of the Tasmanian population is in the lower SES range.

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE AGENCY

Pam Steele-Wareham presented information on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). This revealed opportunities and raised questions about the interaction between NDIS funded packages and the school education system. In particular, Ms Steele-Wareham's presentation highlighted the potential for NDIS-funded support packages to respond to the personal assistance and transport needs of students with disability. Results from the current trials will inform future negotiations on the exact nature of this relationship.

It was noted that the current NDIS pilot in South Australia is highly relevant as it covers the school attendance age cohort. The options identified through this pilot included NDIS care packages covering the costs of all personal assistance needs, including in-school personal assistance needs, or such costs being borne by education providers, with the NDIS care packages effectively ending at the school gate.

PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS

Thirty-four submissions were received by the Taskforce (Appendix E, Schedule of Public Submissions; and Appendix F, Themes and Key Messages arising from Public Submissions), highlighting a number of key issues. These key issues have been identified and the Taskforce has included comments from a range of submissions that illustrate those issues.

LACK OF EARLY ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION

Several submissions identified the issue of problems not being picked up and children not being assessed. This resulted in significant stress and loss of opportunity to intervene early and with greater effect. It also put pressure on families who felt they were not being heard and that their views and concerns were not valid. As a result, families felt they had to become more assertive:

"My family were concerned regarding my son's literacy development in Kinder and Prep and raised this with teachers on a number of occasions. Our concerns were brushed aside with reassurances such as 'All children learn at a different pace.' Or 'He's just around the corner. It will all click soon.' This lack of awareness on our part and on the part of the teaching professionals resulted in at least two years of missed opportunity during which time we could and should have been working on developing our son's literacy skills…" (Submission 4)

INCONSISTENT APPROACHES TO INVOLVEMENT OF AND COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

The submissions from parents indicated significant differences in the degree to which parents felt they were working in partnership with their child's school. Connected to this, parents raised the need for more timely and regular communications and assessments. For example, some families reported receiving positive information about their child's achievement and behaviour not only at formal reporting times but regularly via emails, texts, notes and in person. Others heard only from the school in times of difficulty or not at all, unless the contact was initiated by the parents.

These submissions highlighted the inconsistency of practice across all schools and school systems.

"This teacher refused to discuss things with us, sending her helper out to fill us in on his day …we were forced to medicate our son to keep at school (make more compliant) all the good work that had been done has been destroyed in just 12 months … eventually we were told that the school was unable to support our son (no space, no teacher) and he was signed up for eSchool and that was that … the ripple effect … I had no choice but to close a business I had in operation just 2 years. I am not a qualified educator, my son's education needs are not currently being met. At home is just the 3 of us, mum, dad and our son, our son has no friends … looking back in my diary it has been a horrible year, we have found ourselves angry, lost, and victimised by a system that does nothing to support the education of our son …" (Submission 10)

The submissions indicate that this problem manifests in schools dismissing the concerns of parents about their child's development and needs and failing to give weight to approaches that families and previous educators have developed to deal effectively with the child's needs, and in parents rejecting the school's expertise as education providers.

"… the next 4 years our son had his desk in the annexed … area, this helped reduce noise … he still mixed with the main class for most lessons. This worked fabulously for him. All his teachers so far had been fully supporting and willing to educate themselves on his needs. He was also allowed to self regulate by taking himself out of the class to calm and re-focus. Now grade 4 things did not go so well, his teacher seemed to have other ideas on how to handle our son he was issued an untrained and non-qualified aid, and the combination of these two really took their toll on him … then the school gets a new principal, he drops all assistance and declares our son will be Mainstreamed in grade 5… we had very little interaction with his teacher last year and made our point strongly that communication between us was hugely important … all the good work that had been done supporting our son had been destroyed in just 12 months. Eventually we were told that the school was unable to support our son (no space, no teacher) and he is signed up for eSchool." (Submission 10)

IMPACT ON FAMILIES

A number of submissions referenced families feeling they were left with no option other than to home school their child with disability because of the lack of support, engagement by and communication with the school. The age at which some children with disability were disengaging from mainstream schooling was of particular concern, with indications that this is happening in some cases in the first few years of primary school.

"Currently I see 2 boys wanting to learn, but for reasons out of their control they don't get the assistance needed. I have spent many a restless night worrying about these 2 boys' futures. If both boys aren't given the opportunities in the next few years they will become disenfranchised with education and end up on the disability pension." (Submission 11)

These submissions also highlight the very real economic impact on families if inclusive education is not achieved. Parents reported having to pay significant costs for assessments and therapy, having to give up work in order to be available to respond to sometimes daily calls from their child's school to take their child home or to take on home schooling of their child. For some families, these options are simply not available because of their situation.

"We finally had our son privately assessed ($1,500). This was followed by further assessments including hearing and sight ($800), private tutoring ($1,000), attendance at a Melbourne-based centre ($2,500) and now enrolment at a private school ($15,000 pa)." (Submission 4)

Another impact identified in the submissions from families in particular was the effect on other children in the family in terms of disrupted school and home lives and dealing with negative attitudes to their family at school.

"I wonder also if students who have a sibling with a 'diffability' should be 'noted'. Having a sibling can cause enormous disruptions to family life, i.e. sleep, extra stress, etc. I was working with a low ability boy and his teacher told me that his biggest problem was lack of concentration. When I chatted with the student he said he has 2 siblings with autism who scream a lot at night, don't sleep and are unable to attend school. I thought, no wonder this Grade 7 lad is struggling." (Submission 13)

The submissions also highlighted the lack of awareness of the grief many families are dealing with and that this needs to be understood by educators if effective relationships are going to be developed that support inclusive education for students with disability.

KNOWLEDGE GAPS AND CLASSROOM TEACHING AND SUPPORTS

A number of submissions highlighted the importance of knowledge and skills and the problem of teachers and schools being underprepared for working effectively with students with disability:

"We repeatedly see teachers who are skilled in their field feeling overwhelmed by the prospect of including a student with additional needs into their class purely due to a lack of understanding of where to start. Class teachers are like the general practitioners of medicine, they have to know an extraordinary amount about a vast range of topics …" (Submission 1)

"I feel that a sound theoretical knowledge in special education is critical. …there is not specific training in Tasmania for support teachers or special education teachers… students with the most complex and highest needs demand the most skilled teachers…" (Submission 26)

These gaps relate to both general inclusive practice approaches and specific understanding of particular disabilities and how they impact in the education context. This was particularly highlighted in relation to "hidden disabilities" that affect learning, social interactions and behaviour.

The use of teacher's assistants as the primary 'educator' for students with disability was identified in several submissions.

"In most schools the least qualified staff are partly or fully responsible for the teaching of the most needy students. There is an over reliance on teacher assistants to provide support to students with additional needs." (Submission 6)

RESOURCING MODEL

The current resourcing models were highlighted as being a problem that means students with support needs related to disability are not getting support that is appropriate to those needs:

"Funding support is based on IQ level and not needs based. Essentially children who could be productive future members of society are not receiving support at an early age to overcome or manage these learning disabilities …R was deemed to have a cognitive ability above funding levels, despite his inability to complete an IQ test … ask "What is the long term cost (economic and social) of not providing adequate support for children with disabilities in the education system? … Despite the challenges, I have a fabulous team of individuals around R and who are working within a constrained system to maximise his opportunities for the future. However, I feel the extent of the support for children with a disability is almost entirely dependent on proactive parents/carers, who know which questions to ask and are persistent, rather than a system designed to independently identify and support children with additional needs." (Submission 27)

AVAILABLE SUPPORTS

Several submissions also highlighted specialist supports available including vision services, occupational therapy, speech therapy and teachers of the deaf just to name a few.

In every classroom in every school there is a diverse range of student learning needs. Funding should, therefore, be based on need, not diagnosis or sector. Teachers are and should be the biggest single educational influence on outcomes for all students. As such, resources need to be focused on better supporting teachers, including dedicated and suitably trained support teacher roles available in sufficient numbers in every school.

THE ROLE OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS, ESCHOOL AND MIXED ENROLMENT APPROACHES

The role of special and specialist schools needs to be understood within the context of a collaborative approach to inclusive education. Currently regional special schools, eSchool and Giant Steps are viewed by some parents as appropriate, and in a few cases, the only alternative placement for their child.

The practice of dual enrolment (for example, two days mainstream/three days' special school), was available for some students but submissions indicated that this is not applied or available consistently across the state and was not available across all compulsory educational sectors. Current funding models were identified as a barrier to effective implementation of these more flexible approaches to enrolment.

The recommendations in this report have been developed to ensure the main issues highlighted by all submissions can be addressed. It should be noted that the recommendations are to be taken as a suite of measures that will result in a more inclusive educational environment and improved educational outcomes for students with disability. Some of the principles developed through review of the submissions included the following:

• *Shared practice* requires a culture of respect for the diversity of expertise and emphasis on good practice, and should build expectation of continuous improvement and support 'ground up' innovation.

• *Quality teaching and learning* should value special education qualifications and build into all teaching the requirement of continuous learning through ongoing professional development at every level of the education system. The need for highly qualified teachers in all educational settings was highlighted.

• *Education enrolment types* (eSchool, dual enrolment, part-time enrolment and home schooling) need to be clear, with the application of consistent criteria and transparency to ensure the option(s) that will maximise inclusive education outcomes are adopted.

• *Implementation of inclusive practice in schools* requires each school to set inclusive education benchmarks within its plan to monitor its inclusive policies and practice and ensure the senior team leads and supports a whole school team approach to inclusive practices. Many submissions pointed to discrepancies between what is stated in policy and guideline documents and what is experienced 'on the ground' by children and families.

RESEARCH AND ACADEMIC EVIDENCE

An important source of information for consideration by the Taskforce was the writings of respected thinkers and researchers in the field of inclusive education. (See list of references.)

The themes and key ideas identified from these materials are briefly set out below.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

There is overwhelming evidence that the best outcomes for all students are achieved when 'special education' is delivered within mainstream education (Forlin and others 2013), and when 'key components of the classroom and the school environment are in place' (Dempsey 2008 cited in Cologon 2013 p 45). This requires a broader view of special education, particularly within mainstream schools, to effect a significant, systematic and sustained change that secures success for all students in all settings (Caldwell 2014; Gonski and others 2011). Moreover, inclusive education should concern a focused effort from schools with higher levels of autonomy, and resources that reflect that effort (Caldwell 2014).

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND ROLES

School leadership and skilled teachers make the biggest difference to student learning (Ainscow 2010; Forbes 2007). Outstanding schools place emphasis on quality teaching, ongoing learning and teachers working together with the community around collaborative problem solving. In doing so, schools can make the best use of expertise within their school, community and broader context; teachers see each other teaching, talk about teaching and break down boundaries that exist as barriers to working collaboratively. According to these authors, schools partnering/mentoring with other schools is perhaps the most powerful strategy in supporting schools as both schools learn from each other. Indeed, in Finland collaboration between subject, classroom and special education teachers is a matter of course (Caldwell 2014).

Teacher assistants can also make a valuable contribution to support the implementation of individual education plans and student learning (Giangreco 2003). Nevertheless, there remains very little consideration in relation to teacher assistant roles, skills, and expertise. Extensive research by Professor Michael Giangreco (2013) highlights a number of essential practices that should be in place when teacher assistants are used to support instruction to ensure they are used wisely. Giangreco challenges the appropriateness and value of some current practices and school processes that often lead to overreliance by the teacher and individual student on the teacher assistant and an expectation that they do 'teacher-type' work.

"... the heavy reliance on teacher assistants to support the academic and social needs of students with disabilities is ... assigning the least qualified personnel to students who present the most complex learning challenges… change typically requires a sustained multi-year effort aligned with overall school improvement."
(Giangreco 2013 pp 5-8)

A MODEL FOR ALL SCHOOLS AND SUPPORT FUNDING

Giangreco proposes alternatives (Appendix G) to an overreliance on teacher assistants that leads to more collaboration and better outcomes for all students. These alternatives focus strongly on aligning all service delivery practices to influence more inclusive classroom environments and appropriate educational support for all students. The emphasis is for all support staff, that is, support teachers, teacher assistants and other professionals operating in the classroom, to be involved in direct instruction as well as consultative and co-teaching roles. The integration of support services and practices in this way Giangreco indicates can often be cost neutral. He suggests there is no one way and alternatives need to be designed taking account of the school context using the school improvement

process as the catalyst for change and planning actions for short and longer-term improvement. Giangreco highlights a number of areas for discussion and agreement at the school level including, for example, a common understanding of inclusive practice, clarifying the roles of team members starting with professional staff before describing that of the teacher assistant, and a set of principles to guide support services.

Note: The goal in considering alternate service delivery models is improved educational support for students not the reduction in the teacher assistant time although in some instances this may occur.

The Review of Funding for Schooling Final Report (Gonski and others 2011) supports a needs-based, sector-neutral approach to school funding and emphasises priority must be given to support to disadvantaged students. This would result in a significant increase in funding, particularly to Government schools. Often the current measure of success for students with disability focuses on the amount of money notionally allocated to that student and what this equates to in teacher assistant hours rather than educational outcomes achieved through appropriate support responding to educational needs.

"Whether or not funds are deployed effectively depends on a number of factors, including knowledge and skills of specialist teachers… and inspired and visionary leadership." (Caldwell 2014 p 2)

The current Severe Disability Register used in the Government school sector centrally allocates funding and ties it to individual students. This restricts the flexibility of schools and their capacity to take account of the contextual factors that impact at the school level.

The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (Education Council 2014) (in which all Tasmanian schools have participated) enables students' needs to be determined according to the level of educational adjustments required to fully participate and access the educational program. The NCCD places emphasis on educational adjustment rather than diagnosis of a disability to determine the level of funding required.

The *Review of Funding for Schooling - Final Report* (Gonski and others 2011) suggests the development of a "range for a student with a disability entitlement" and this is in addition to the per-student resource amount. It proposes the disability entitlement be "set according to the level of adjustment required to allow the student to participate in schooling on the same basis as students without a disability, and fully publicly funded and applied to students in all school sectors".

PARTNERSHIP AND EXPERTISE

There is evidence of the positive benefits of understanding the role of the special schools as one of support where expertise and resources are identified and shared with and between mainstream schools. This approach supports the implementation of consistent effective teaching strategies and therefore better meets the needs of all students (Forbes 2007).

Where schools partner/mentor with other schools—perhaps the most powerful strategy in supporting schools—both schools learn from each other (Ainscow 2010; Forbes 2007).

WHAT WE FOUND

The diverse knowledge, experience and expertise of the Taskforce membership was drawn on to identify key barriers to achieving inclusive education for students with disability and to develop strategies to remove those barriers.

Taskforce members recognised and agreed on five key priority areas that need to be addressed to achieve inclusive educational policy and practice for students with disability in Tasmania.

DISABILITY READY AND RESPONSIVE SCHOOLS

Findings

A number of the situations considered by the Taskforce indicated a crisis response to the prospective enrolment of a child with disability in a school rather than an active management and support approach. This showed a prevalent pattern of schools having to respond to the enrolment or prospective enrolment of students with disability and the changing needs of students with disability or through acquiring disability without the necessary skills or processes to do this effectively.

Schools and school leaders appear to have very variable understandings of (a) the legal standards that apply; (b) the availability of funding for support and adjustments; and (c) their obligations as educational institutions and how to identify and resource the needs to be met in order to meet those obligations. This results in the experience for the student, the student's family and the school being a negative one, fraught with tension and, in too many instances, failure.

Lack of awareness of disability and the continuing misunderstanding of what particular disability means in an education context results in negative stereotypes dominating the response to students with disability in some school settings. This manifests not only in classrooms, but also in administration and even when families make their initial enquiries about possible enrolment.

The crisis approach to meeting the educational needs of students with disability indicates a failure to identify existing legal obligations and understand how those obligations are to be met in the particular school context.

Key ideas

Some aspects of this problem can and should be addressed proactively, while others need to be addressed through having processes established and understood that can be activated when a child with disability presents as a prospective student.

Amongst all school staff, across all education sectors, there is a need for consistent and shared understanding of what is required to implement inclusive education and the legal obligations for all schools to meet legal obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth), the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998* (Tas) and *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Cth). Achieving compliance with the required inclusive education approach requires both proactive and reactive capacities and strategies.

For all schools to be ready and responsive to the needs of students with disability, the following is needed:

- All schools and school systems need to audit current facilities and processes to pro-actively identify and remove systemic barriers to inclusive education.

- All staff must be aware of their legal obligations to meet the *Disability Standards for Education* and be provided with the skills and tools to understand and implement those obligations.

- Everyone involved in the delivery of education needs to maintain a level of understanding of the diversity of disability and maintain an attitude of inclusion and respect.

- All schools need to develop and maintain clear plans, processes and strategies to ensure inclusive practices in all stages of education, beginning with the provision of information to prospective students and their families, through enrolment, curriculum development and delivery, school events and activities, discipline, and for every significant education transition point.

- Schools need to ensure they develop and maintain structures that support implementation of inclusive education plans and strategies in their school community. This will result in a better match between student needs and school responses. This requires schools and specialist educational supports to work together with students and their families.

- All staff regardless of their position have a role in creating an inclusive school community. Each staff member needs to clearly understand and demonstrate awareness of how their work and interactions support students and their families to feel welcome and included and meet the educational needs of the students.

QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

Findings

School boards and systems must ensure appropriate and timely training in the area of inclusive education for principals and principal aspirants.

Many schools and parents see teacher assistants as the primary educators for students with disability. This is inconsistent with the right of students with disability to receive education on an equal basis to students with disability. Central to fulfilling this right is ensuring students with disability are taught by qualified teachers with input from specialists.

There is a lack of clarity around the different roles of teacher, teacher assistant, and support teacher. This, together with over-reliance on teacher assistants in the delivery of education for students with disability, results in poor educational outcomes for those students.

Until recently, pre-service teachers were not, as a matter of course, provided with the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and deliver inclusive education. This means that many teachers currently in schools are being asked to respond to the diverse needs of students with disability without the necessary skills and support to do this effectively. While some teachers have elected to do further study to enhance their skills, there has been a lack of focus in professional development on inclusive education.

The importance for creative and innovative thinking was highlighted to the Taskforce from many sources and strongly reinforced in research evidence (Caldwell 2014). Taskforce members commented on the constraints teachers felt due to testing and assessment expectations, for example, NAPLAN. These were identified as intruding into teaching and learning time and appear to narrow the curriculum and restrict innovation. The research evidence supported this.

Key ideas

A system-wide mentoring and coaching model could be designed and implemented to more effectively induct school leaders into the culture and understanding of inclusive education.

The biggest influence on learning outcomes for all students is the provision of high quality teaching programs delivered by skilled teachers. The evidence shows that students do best in schools that have quality teachers, where there is appropriate school autonomy, increased family engagement and a robust and relevant curriculum.

The practice of inclusive education has created a demand for specialist teaching expertise in all mainstream schools. The opportunity for ongoing supported professional learning focused on the implementation of teaching strategies and techniques that make the biggest difference to student learning must be strengthened.

The Taskforce identified broad agreement that a designated support teacher position is essential for every school—public and private—to work alongside classroom teachers and teaching assistants to build knowledge and capacity to develop and implement inclusive education practices that meet the needs of students with disability. The support teacher role needs to be acknowledged as a leadership position that is valued by principals, staff and school communities.

The provision of incentives for staff who undertake further professional learning relevant to inclusive education and disability awareness will lead to an increased number of staff with capacity to effectively respond to the educational needs of students with disability.

Schools in all sectors, the Department of Education's Professional Learning Institute, the Peter Underwood Centre and University of Tasmania Education Faculty need to be supported and encouraged to share their expertise and collaborate on the identification and development of effective inclusive education practice.

The *Australian Curriculum* guides teaching and learning in all schools and is the starting point in the development of differentiated programs to meet the needs of all students within the classroom. To develop teacher skills to differentiate what content they teach, the strategies they will use and how they will assess and report on learning requires ongoing professional learning and in school support.

It was noted that in a recent Australian Government response to the *Review of the Australian Curriculum, Final Report* one of the recommendations for ongoing effort was improving accessibility for all students, with a disability focus.

"An area in which the Reviewers are convinced the Australian Curriculum is manifestly deficient is its inclusiveness and accommodation of the learning needs of students with disability. It was clear that some stakeholders, with considerable experience in special education, did not consider that the Australian Curriculum catered for all students … special education experts wanted a greater focus on learning area content – not just general capabilities – particularly for students with an intellectual disability. The Reviewers recommend that immediate effort be focused on making the Australian Curriculum more inclusive."
(Australian Government Department of Education and Training 2014 p5)

Another recommendation related to improving parental engagement with the curriculum:

"Parental engagement with the education of their children is crucial … greater efforts should be made by schools to engage with parents in relation to what their children are being taught." (Australian Government Department of Education and Training 2014 p 242)

Both recommendations are consistent with the findings of the Taskforce. Hence, as the *Australian Curriculum* continues to be implemented and reviewed, it will be important that any adjustments and resources in relation to the provision for students with disability are incorporated into the Tasmanian context.

Develop a consistent approach to the roles of support teacher and teacher assistants that recognises the specialist role of support teachers and values teacher assistants as qualified paraprofessionals who work under the direct and close supervision of classroom teachers to implement professionally prepared learning plans. (Appendix H Department of Education Role Statements)

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO SHARE EXPERTISE

Findings

The public submissions and experience of Taskforce members indicates that effective partnerships are not being consistently developed and maintained between schools and families. Some parents reported that they felt included, valued and listened to, whilst others felt dismissed and not respected as a member of the child's planning team. The latter situation results from misunderstanding, fear, and lack of awareness of needs and available supports.

The importance of partnerships and working together at all levels was a consistent theme to ongoing improvement and progressing towards exemplary practice throughout the deliberations of the Taskforce.

Collaborations within schools, with other schools, with agencies and businesses emphasised the benefits of sharing expertise, resources and learning from each other.

The members of the Taskforce identified inconsistencies across the State in the practice of enrolments and placement. Of concern is the apparent growing number of students with disability being directed into eSchool and part-time attendance, the risk of families opting for home schooling even if they lack the necessary skills to develop and deliver quality education for their child, and dual enrolment between mainstream and special schools.

The roles and responsibilities of special school principals would need to be reviewed in consideration of the development of an extended and more complex support school model to share resources and expertise.

Interagency collaboration is a Government priority and many structures exist to promote this way of working. However, for some of the most vulnerable children with disability living in State care, (where the State is the guardian), there is much work to be done.

Key ideas

Developing a partnership that recognises and values the expertise of families will ensure the best outcome is achieved for each child with disability.

The practice of working in partnership requires professionals to participate in specific training to heighten interpersonal skills and build genuine relationships that allow trust, honesty and mutual respect in order for meaningful working relationships to be achieved in the best interest of improved learning outcomes for all students.

A FUNDING MODEL TO SUPPORT INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

Findings

In the presentations from the three educational sectors—Government, Catholic and Independent—different approaches to funding were evident to the Taskforce.

Funding was regularly discussed during the Taskforce deliberations, particularly in relation to amounts (increased or decreased) and equivalent hours allocated to individual students.

The complexity of resourcing was recognised and the Taskforce was unable to access information detailing the total amount allocated across each educational sector, its source and how it was used within the school context. However, the Taskforce acknowledged and agreed that more funding would only be effective if it was targeted to improvement across all five areas identified in this report.

Key ideas

Money is only one aspect of support. A more holistic view of the full range of resources that are available to support schools to develop inclusive practice is required. Caldwell (2014) identifies "four kinds of resources or forms of capital" that when aligned lead to change: intellectual, social, financial and spiritual.

The research and recommendations of the Gonski Report provides the principles on which funding should be allocated. Using the NCCD tool to focus on educational adjustment is the Taskforce's preferred way for identifying student need. The Taskforce found the current funding model does not adequately reflect student needs and there is a clear need to move away from an IQ-based model to a needs-based model as described in the Gonski Report.

MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Findings

There was an absence of specific data for students with disability (in Government and Non-Government schools) available in relation to operational matters, such as total numbers of students with disability, attendance, numbers of students in dual-enrolment arrangements, home schooling, suspensions, exclusions, part-time participation and accessing eSchool.

A process for measuring how schools are performing in terms of providing an inclusive school community is not currently available.

There has not been a focus on collecting actual data to monitor achievement of students with individual education plans for which the current A-E ratings are inappropriate and do not recognise student learning.

Key ideas

It is well accepted that the vehicle to identify and facilitate the differentiation required for students with disability is through the individual planning process with all relevant parties involved. This needs to be a rigorous and accountable process for every identified student. The resulting document should reside as part of the teacher's active planning with regular monitoring, review and reporting, particularly to families.

A multi-disciplinary team (support teachers, social workers, speech and language pathologists, school psychologists) approach was acknowledged as best practice. The importance of this team regularly meeting to monitor the current program and their professional input should be part of the school's inclusive structures.

The NCCD should be used to form the basis of more comprehensive data collection, collation and publishing to ensure that everyone with an interest in inclusive education is able to understand the current context and contribute to the development of improvements. This should support monitoring of the effectiveness of approaches at both the individual, school, system and statewide levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been developed as a package to
be implemented comprehensively.

1. ALL TASMANIAN SCHOOLS ARE TO BE DISABILITY READY AND RESPONSIVE

a. The Minister of Education and Training to make explicit to Tasmanian schools and community the Government's vision for inclusive education and its importance for a better future for all citizens.

b. Identify and prioritise key performance indicators for all principals to measure improvements and progress towards more inclusive school communities.

c. Collate and develop resources for all schools to use to achieve disability ready and responsive status.

d. All schools to become disability ready and responsive through developing clear and measurable actions within the school's planning process to continually progress towards the goal of inclusive schools, including:

- Undertaking an audit of current processes and facilities to ensure barriers are identified

- Developing and implementing an action plan to prioritise the removal of identified barriers

- Developing and implementing appropriate collaborative processes to assess and respond to need; and

- Planning and delivering professional learning to ensure teachers and other staff are trained to work effectively with students with disability and their families is a whole of school priority.

2. ALL TASMANIAN SCHOOLS CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE THROUGH HIGH-QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

a. Establish a mentoring/coaching model for all new principals and principals with limited experience in implementing inclusive education to increase their capacity to lead inclusive schools.

b. Establish high level expertise in every school through the provision of a promotable position for a discrete and dedicated support teacher operating as a member of the school leadership team.

c. All schools to dedicate professional learning time each year, focused on students with disability, aligned to the goals of the school plan in relation to improving inclusive teaching and learning practice.

d. Provide incentives and scholarships to increase the number of teachers and teacher assistants with and recognised for their formal inclusive education qualifications.

e. Appoint an action research team to review the research findings of Professor Michael Giangreco and implement a pilot project in a number of schools to trial the recommended practice models to ensure that the support teacher, classroom teacher and teacher assistants are used in the most effective way to improve student learning.

f. Establish in each geographic region a senior position to coordinate, oversee and strengthen the role and network for support teachers.

3. ALL TASMANIAN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES WORKING TOGETHER IN PARTNERSHIP

a. Establish and pilot a model for schools to form an ongoing connection with another school or group of schools (including across sectors) to share expertise, learn from each other and put in place innovative practices to improve inclusive practice.

b. Establish formal collaborations with defined outcomes between the University of Tasmania, (including the Peter Underwood Centre), the DoE's Professional Learning Institute and schools to identify undergraduate and postgraduate pathways to inclusive teaching qualifications and research projects.

c. Provide access to Family Partnership Training, or similar, to assist school communities to work together more effectively.

d. Investigate and implement processes to enable Support and Specialist Schools to deliver specialist skills and knowledge to support inclusive practice in mainstream schools.

e. Support dual enrolments, i.e., students' needs met across a mainstream and support/specialist school) through clear policy and consistent practice guidelines. Include within the support teachers' role the capacity to inform and refer families of advocacy options when required.

4. ALL TASMANIAN SCHOOLS ALIGN RESOURCES TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PRACTICE

a. The Tasmanian Government further adopt the principles and funding model based on the research and recommendations of *The Review of Funding for Schooling* (Gonski Report), including:

- Develop a range of entitlements for students with disability based on the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data tool, that is, aligned to the levels of adjustment required to enable a student to participate in schooling on the same basis as students without disability – extensive adjustment; substantial adjustment; supplementary adjustment; support provided within quality differentiated teaching practice.

- Funding for supporting students with disability as a loading in the school resource package to enable flexible decision making to take account of the local school context and individual student needs.

b. The Federal and State Governments make publicly available, on an ongoing basis, full details of all funding allocated to students with disability.

c. Create an inclusive schools portal showcasing current inclusive practices and linking resources and networks and, including links to the latest academic and practical materials on inclusive practice, and plain English innovative communication tools to help teaching professionals and families understand the *Disability Standards for Education*.

5. MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

a. Amend the Tasmanian Education Act to explicitly state that all schools must comply with all relevant legislation and standards regarding the rights of the child with a disability to equal opportunity in education.

b. In consultation with schools, develop or adopt a measurement tool to enable schools to check how well they are progressing in being disability ready and responsive.

c. Ensure information is readily available to the community regarding the performance of schools against goals established in the school plan and also in relation to specific data for students with disability, including public reporting of the NCCD, data on education approach for students with disability compared to students without disability (part or full-time attendance, eSchool, home schooling), data on suspension, exclusion and expulsion of students with disability compared to students without disability.

d. Collect, collate and make public on an annual basis the total level of funding available to all schools, at State level, and how the delivery of support to students with disability is expected to occur.

6. IMPLEMENT TASKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Establish an Implementation Advisory Panel to provide practical advice on the opportunities and barriers to implementing the Taskforce recommendations. The Panel should include some members of the current Taskforce as well as representatives from Government and Non-Government schools sectors, education policy staff and the University of Tasmania.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

TASKFORCE MEMBERSHIP

Name	Organisation
Cheryl Larcombe	Chair
Robin Banks	Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner
Terry Burke	Autism Tasmania
Kylee Davie	Parent and community representative
Kristen Desmond	Tasmanian Disability Education Reform Lobby
Jenny Eddington	Tasmanian Association of State Schools Organisations
David Raw (replaced by) Malcolm Elliott (Jan 2015)	Tasmanian Principals Association
Fiona Redgrove (replaced by) Michele Foley (July 2014)	Tascare Society for Children
Jeff Garsed	Australian Education Union
Bernard Knight	Australian Association of Special Education
Nadia Ollington	Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability
Gerry Plunkett	Community representative
Marie Gavlik and Martin O'Byrne	Research and Executive Support

APPENDIX B

TASKFORCE MEETING SCHEDULE

Meeting date	Meeting location
Taskforce meeting 1 12 June 2014	Launceston
Taskforce meeting 2 28 August 2014	Campbell Town
Taskforce meeting 3 25 September 2014	Hobart
Taskforce meeting 4 30 October 2014	Campbell Town
Taskforce meeting 5 27 November 2014	Campbell Town
Taskforce meeting 6 10 February 2015	Campbell Town
Taskforce meeting 7 26 March 2015	Campbell Town
Taskforce meeting 8 12 June 2015	Campbell Town
Taskforce meeting 9 31 July 2015	Teleconference

APPENDIX C

TASKFORCE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Government has established an independent taskforce that will examine current provision and support for students with disability; review evidence based research and provide informed recommendations to improve educational support for these students and their families.

The Taskforce comprises representatives from the following organisations:

- Autism Tasmania
- Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability
- Australian Association of Special Education
- Australian Education Union
- Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner
- Tascare Society for Children
- Tasmanian Association of State Schools Organisations
- Tasmanian Disability Education Reform Lobby
- Tasmanian Principals Association

There were also two community representatives on the Taskforce.

Others may be invited to attend meetings to address specific issues, provide particular expertise/ information or data as required.

The Taskforce will be chaired by Cheryl Larcombe and will meet at least bi-monthly or more frequently if required.

Members can send a proxy when unable to attend.

The Taskforce will:

- review current guiding principles, educational practices and models of delivery at State, National and International level, particularly in relation to:
  - » parents being able to choose the right school for their child;
  - » learning strategies and the provision of education materials;
  - » how best to report on educational outcomes for students with a disability;
  - » disability awareness training for teachers;
  - » transitional planning.
  - » highlight particular strengths and what's working well within this current provision and models of delivery; and identify areas for change or improvement
- Provide a report and recommendations to the Minister based on their deliberations and findings by the end of June 2015.

APPENDIX D

LIST OF EXPERT PRESENTATIONS

Meeting	Presenter	Representing	Topic
Taskforce meeting 1 June 2014	Inaugural meeting with Minister Rockliff - no guest presenter		
Taskforce meeting 2 August 2014	Taskforce discussion - no guest presenter		
September 2014	8 Taskforce members attended a breakfast hosted by Australian Association of Special Education to hear a presentation by Professor Michael Giangreco		
Taskforce meeting 3 September 2014	Liz Banks and Lynne McDougall	Department of Education	Overview of inclusive education approach
	Andrea Brumby	Tasmanian Catholic Education Office	Overview of inclusive education approach
	Terese Phillips	Independent Schools Tasmania	Overview of inclusive education approach
Taskforce meeting 4 October 2014	Dr Chris Rayner	University of Tasmania	Inclusive education teacher training and professional development
	Bernard Knight	Australian Association of Special Education	Teacher mentoring program
	David Raw	Tasmanian Principals Association	OECD information on the incidence of special needs in population
Taskforce meeting 5 November 2014	Jane Bird	Learning Services NW	Overview of inclusive education approach in NW
Taskforce meeting 6 February 2015	Pam Steele-Wareham	National Disability Insurance Agency	NDIS and the interface with inclusive education
Taskforce meeting 7 March 2015	Taskforce discussion - no guest presenter		
Taskforce meeting 8 June 2015	Taskforce discussion - no guest presenter		

APPENDIX E

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS

Submission Number	Submitting person/agency
1	St Michael's Collegiate School
2	Vision Services
3	Ivan Webb
4	Parent 1
5	Parent 2
6	PANDA Physiotherapy
7	Parent 3
8	Parent 4
9	Square Pegs Dyslexia Support and Advocacy Inc.
10	Parent 5
11	Parent 6
12	Parent 7
13	Parent 8
14	Parent 9
15	Teacher 1
16	Dr Judith Hudson – visiting UK researcher to UTAS
17	Action for Tasmanian Autistic Children
18	Parent 10
19	Tasmanian Deaf Society (TasDeaf)
20	Australian Association of Special Education Inc.
21	Parent 11
22	Autism Spectrum Care Education Socialisation
23	Speech Pathology Australia
24	Mission Australia
25	National Disability Coordination Office
26	Sherry Edwards – former DoE Principal
27	Parent 12
28	The Association for Children with Disability (Tas) Inc.
29	Vision Australia
30	Parents 13
31	Tasmanian Disability Education Reform Lobby
32	NW Tas Autism Specific Early Learning & Care Centre
33	Down Syndrome Tasmania
34	Independent Education Union, Victoria & Tasmania

APPENDIX F

THEMES AND KEY MESSAGES ARISING FROM PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS

Theme	Key Messages
Working Together in Partnership	Collaborative practice, multidisciplinary team approach partnerships or alliances, that is: • working in partnership with parents, recognising the expertise of parents, professionals being open minded and learning from each other as well as to the parents' knowledge and understanding of their child. Also being aware the effect on siblings, e.g. lack of sleep, additional responsibilities; • the development of individual education plans (IEPs) is a process; • a coordinated approach to all support; and • DoE and UTAS working closely together.
Shared Practice	• A culture and structure for sharing practice across schools. • An expectation for continuous improvement and support for innovation from the 'ground up' verses the current 'command and control' approach. • Use complaints and mistakes as opportunities for learning, change, and improvement.
Early/Timely Assessment & Diagnosis	See other themes and key messages.
Quality Teaching & Learning	• There is a lack of teachers with special education qualifications within Tasmanian schools. • The need for these qualifications is not generally recognised or valued. • Comprehensive pre-service training – inclusive education has only recently become a compulsory unit at UTAS. • The need for ongoing quality professional learning to meet teacher's needs – 'just in time' professional learning. • Professional learning could be linked to accreditation as well as access to post graduate courses for specialist qualifications. • Offer incentives and/or scholarships to increase the number of teachers with special education qualifications. • The different roles and responsibilities of the teacher and teacher assistants need to be clear. • Teacher assistants are provided with appropriate professional learning and that a career path is explored. • The development of a whole school approach to sharing knowledge, skills and strategies about individual student needs, for example, being mindful of involving all staff (admin, attendants) in relevant professional learning.

Theme	Key Messages
Role of Specialist Schools	• Review or broaden the role of the special school? • Consider using the expertise within the special schools to support teachers in mainstream schools. Special schools should not been seen as a placement option for underperforming teachers. • Is there a policy and consistent approach for dual enrolments across the State? • The placement and enrolment criteria for e-school and home schooling for students with disabilities needs clarification and further research, for example, how do students develop social and emotional skills in these environments?
Implementation of Inclusive Practice in all Schools	• Set benchmarks within the School Improvement Plan to monitor inclusive school policies and practices. • Every school must have a team approach to support the ongoing development of inclusive practices and meeting the needs of individual students. • The team must include senior staff, support teacher, classroom teacher/s, teacher assistants, parent/s and other professional staff as appropriate.
Resourcing Models	• Every classroom in every school has students with a diverse range of learning needs. • Teachers have the most influence and make the biggest difference to learning outcomes for students with disabilities (all students in fact) therefore the majority of resources must be aligned to the provision of quality teachers. • There should be a support teacher in every school with a defined role as building the capacity of all teachers. It is imperative that this role is not diluted. • Resourcing and funding should be based on need not diagnosis. In general, funding should go to the school (not an individual student) to enable a whole school approach and flexibility to meet the needs of students.

APPENDIX G

MICHAEL GIANGRECO'S ALTERNATIVES TO OVERRELIANCE ON TEACHER ASSISTANTS

Category of alternatives	Brief description of alternatives
Resource reallocation	Resources may be reallocated by trading in teacher assistant positions to hire additional special education teachers. Typically, one early career special educator can be hired for approximately the same cost as three teacher assistants.
Co-teaching	Co-teaching involves assigning a teacher and support teacher to work together in the same classroom. To maintain a naturally occurring number of students with disability, it may be necessary to share the support teacher across three or four classes, depending on class size.
Building capacity of teachers	Building teacher capacity (e.g. expectations of teacher engagement with students with disability, differentiated instruction, universal design, response to instruction, positive behaviour supports, curriculum overlapping, assistive technology) can reduce over-reliance on teacher assistants.
Administration duties	Teacher assistants may be assigned administrative duties that free up time for support teachers to collaborate with teachers and work directly with students.
Improving working conditions for support teachers and classroom teachers	Reducing caseload size, the grade range covered, and the number of teachers with whom special educators interact can improve their working conditions. Exploring changes in class size, availability of support teachers, scheduling coordinated meeting times, and providing access to adapted materials are examples of steps that can improve working conditions for teachers.
Peer supports	Encouraging peer support strategies can provide natural ways to support students with disability that may also benefit students without disability.
Self-determination	Purposely teaching self-determination skills provides opportunities for students with disability to have a voice in determining their own supports.
Teacher assistant pools	Establishing a small pool of highly skilled teacher assistants (or one floating position for a small school) allows for their temporary assignments to address specific, short-term needs.
Fading plans	In cases where a student is receiving a substantial amount of teacher assistant support, developing a plan to fade that support as much as possible can lead to greater student independence and more natural supports.
Dual qualified teachers	Hiring teachers who are certified in both general and disability education provides enhanced staff capacity for all students.

APPENDIX H

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ROLE STATEMENTS

SUPPORT TEACHER ROLE STATEMENT

Overarching Statement

The support teacher staffing allocation is provided to schools to:

- Build capacity of school staff to maximise the educational opportunities, engagement and learning outcomes for students with the highest educational needs.

- Work with multi-disciplinary teams within schools to ensure that quality programs for students with special needs provide access to relevant curriculum and effective instruction within a positive inclusive learning environment.

Level of Responsibility / Direction and Supervision

- Support teachers receive broad direction and supervision from the Principal(s) of the school(s) in which they are working.

- Support teachers receive guidance, direction and support from Learning Service support staff.

- Support teachers implement the successful coordination of service delivery for students requiring educational adjustments to their learning programs, evidenced through Individual Education Plans.

Primary Duties

1. Work collaboratively with teachers, teacher assistants and other relevant support providers to plan for students using differentiated curriculum, personalised learning environments and assistive technologies, within the framework of the Australian Curriculum.

2. Work in regular consultation with specialist support staff, parents, school staff and other relevant service providers to develop, implement and evaluate Individual Education Plans (IEPs) within inclusive teaching and learning programs.

3. Provide "at the shoulder" support, direct assistance or demonstrate and model appropriate teaching strategies and provide advice regarding specific programs and resources (including medical action and transition plans).

4. Promote inclusive practices and assist to build the capacity of school staff through modelling of effective pedagogy; referral to, or facilitation of Professional Learning within the school.

5. Assist school staff with the co-ordination of services, assessments and the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on school students with disability.

6. Support teachers with their responsibility of maintaining appropriate records for students with special needs, in accordance with Departmental requirements and guidelines (including TRIM and Student Support System).

7. Source support, information and resources from other professionals and agencies as appropriate.

8. Assist with the preparation of teaching resources and learning aids.

Requirements, Knowledge and Skills

- Attend and participate in on-line disability specific professional learning and face- to-face induction and spaced professional learning programs through the Professional Learning Institute.

- Ensure a current knowledge of disability specific information.

- Ensure a sound working knowledge of DoE policies and guidelines.

- Maintain a knowledge and understanding of legislative requirements.

- Have the capacity to develop and support improved inclusive education practices for all school staff.

TEACHER ASSISTANT ROLE STATEMENT

The Role

Provide assistance to the teacher(s) by assisting with the supervision and learning of students. Provide support and assistance to students with high and/or additional needs including but not limited to students with physical and/or intellectual disabilities and students with behavioural issues.

Level of Responsibility/ Direction and Supervision

Responsible for the efficient completion of tasks as directed. May assist in being responsible for the physical and emotional well-being of a student or group of students. General supervision of tasks is provided. Closer direction is received on specific or new tasks as well as some guidance on how they should be carried out.

Primary Duties

1. Assist teachers and students both inside and outside the classroom.

2. Assist with the supervision of small groups or individual students on activities, as directed by the teacher both on and off campus.

3. Prepare teaching aides and other material to support teaching and learning programs including supporting the implementation of individual student education and behaviour programs.

4. Assist students with physical and mobility challenges by lifting, positioning, exercising and/or transferring from or to transportation, as specified in their individual education plan.

5. Assist with personal hygiene, toileting and feeding requirements as required by each individual student.

6. Undertake specific therapy tasks with individual students under the guidance of the teacher or nominated professional.

7. Assist students with intellectual disabilities with the use of learning aides.

8. Provide administrative assistance to students, staff and teachers, including but not limited to, covering books, laminating, photocopying and printing.

9. Maintain stores and equipment.

10. Perform other duties as envisaged by the assigned classification under the relevant industrial award or agreement and in accordance with the skills, competence and training of the occupant.

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