

Submission to the Review of Education Regulation

The recommendations below are based on the following issues that need to be addressed in this review.

The establishment of TASC "...sought to address three key underlying principles: the creation of TASC including the independence of the office, improved standards, and openness and transparency." It has failed on all three of these – the separation between the DoE and TASC was never sustained; education standards are no longer trusted because of serious breakdown in assessment and qualifications management and TASC has never attained any degree of openness and transparency. The fact that virtually all former TQA staff left TASC citing a major decline in workplace harmony and sense of value meant that significant expertise in specialist areas was lost contributing to the poor performance of TASC.

The issues relating to the Teacher Registration Board identified in the Discussion Paper warrant a detailed review and an alternative approach to governance as suggested below. There is much dissatisfaction in the teaching community as to the overly bureaucratic manner in which the TRB has operated. Regulatory over-servicing seems to be the issue. A re-consideration of the actual purpose of teacher registration needs to be undertaken.

The Registrar, Education and the Non-government Schools Registration Board appear to function effectively under current arrangements. However, the suggested governance model below should lead to increased efficiencies and more visible accountability.

Single Authority

There could/should be a single authority undertaking the existing and revised functions of the three existing entities – Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification, Tasmanian Teachers Registration Board and The Registrar, Education and the Non-government Schools Registration Board.

Given the population size of Tasmania this is realistic, achievable and workable. The regulatory functions across the three existing bodies have similarities and it should not be difficult to train and build up a flexible staff which can comfortably service these functions.

As a regulatory body it should cultivate a culture supportive of establishing and maintaining best-practice in schools in assessment and reporting, in ensuring the highest standards in teaching and a supportive role in non-government school registration. It should be responsive to, and timely in response to teacher and school needs.

Title

The authority might be called the Tasmanian Certification, Teacher and School Registration Authority

Governance Structure

It should be a completely separate, properly constituted authority with responsibility via a CEO to a Board of Management to the Minister for Education.

The Board should be appointed by the Minister selected on the basis of knowledge and skills but with consideration of representation from major stakeholders – Government, Catholic and Independent

schools with an appointed Chair with clear knowledge of the regulatory functions common to qualifications management, teacher and school registration principles and process.

The board of the Authority should include expertise in senior secondary assessment (particularly external examination) processes; TCE course accreditation; VET sector competency-based training; nationally prescribed good teaching standards and the work of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL); best-practice in school organisation and operations. At least one member of each of Government, Catholic and Independent school sectors should be included but selected based on expertise not representation.

This should not preclude the establishment of small advisory committees to provide expert advice on assessment and certification, teacher and school registration matters.

Appointment of a CEO

Appointment of a CEO at SES-level with high-level understanding of, and experience in delivering the kinds of services envisaged, including a strong understanding of the data and statistical management processes for senior secondary assessment and certification.

Budget and Finance

To ensure that the Authority is clearly at arm's length from the Department of Education support services including budget and HR should be managed by another agency – DPAC or Treasury. This is important to non-government schools to ensure the Authority does not become subservient to DoE policy and culture (something which has characterized TASCs operations on the ground to date.)

A single structure should generate efficiencies in both service delivery and office management functions including cost-saving resulting from a reduction in the duplication of services.

It should be provided with a realistic budget to ensure the provision of all services , but with the capacity to generate income based on service provision (teacher registration dues; school registration fees; qualifications and certification services). The CEO and Board to assume responsibility for working within an agreed budgetary framework but with built-in provision to negotiate with the designated support agency on extraordinary circumstances.

Performance

Legislation establishing and governing the Authority should clearly specify the objectives and the principles by which the authority will operate.

Policy expectations should be established by the Minister and reviewed regularly.

Performance targets should be established and monitored with approval by the Minister

An annual report to the Minister which reports against agreed performance indicators on both outputs and outcomes.

Closely associated with the establishment of a new Authority should be consideration of current practices and procedures in the light of clearly established outputs (awarding and delivery of senior secondary certificates on an annual/ongoing basis on time and fit-for-purpose) and outcomes (improvements in TCE attainment across all sectors; growth in VET qualifications achievement;)

Staffing

Staffing of the Authority should ensure skills adaptable across the Authority – education accreditation, assessment and certification skills should be adaptable to roles undertaken under registration and auditing activities. For example, a skilled auditing service could just as easily operate for senior secondary quality assurance as for school registration audits.

Risk Management

A far more developed risk-management and mitigation approach to service delivery to avoid the kinds of regular problems TASC has encountered across its short but troubled life.

Board approval for the development of a risk management strategy and regular reporting on risk management effectiveness.

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