

**Submission**  
**Review of Education Regulation**

**Tasmanian Association for the Gifted Inc.**

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## **General Information about TAG**

Tasmanian Association for the Gifted Inc (TAG) is the statewide association whose primary objective is to provide support to parents and teachers of gifted children. TAG receives no funding from any other organisation or Government, nor is it formally associated with any education sector. TAG makes no recommendations to members regarding individual school choices. TAG is also affiliated with the Australian Association for the Education of Gifted and Talented (AAEGT) and a TAG member holds the position of Tasmanian Representative on the AAEGT Board.

## **Functions and Objectives of TAG**

TAG provides support to children, parents and teachers from diverse backgrounds. The children range in age from preschoolers to secondary students. TAG supports teachers and schools by providing information, resources and professional development opportunities by way of conferences and information sessions. TAG also provides children's activities to meet needs that are not met in schools. Members share information and resources and are supportive of fellow parents of gifted children. Membership of the association is open to all interested groups and individuals.

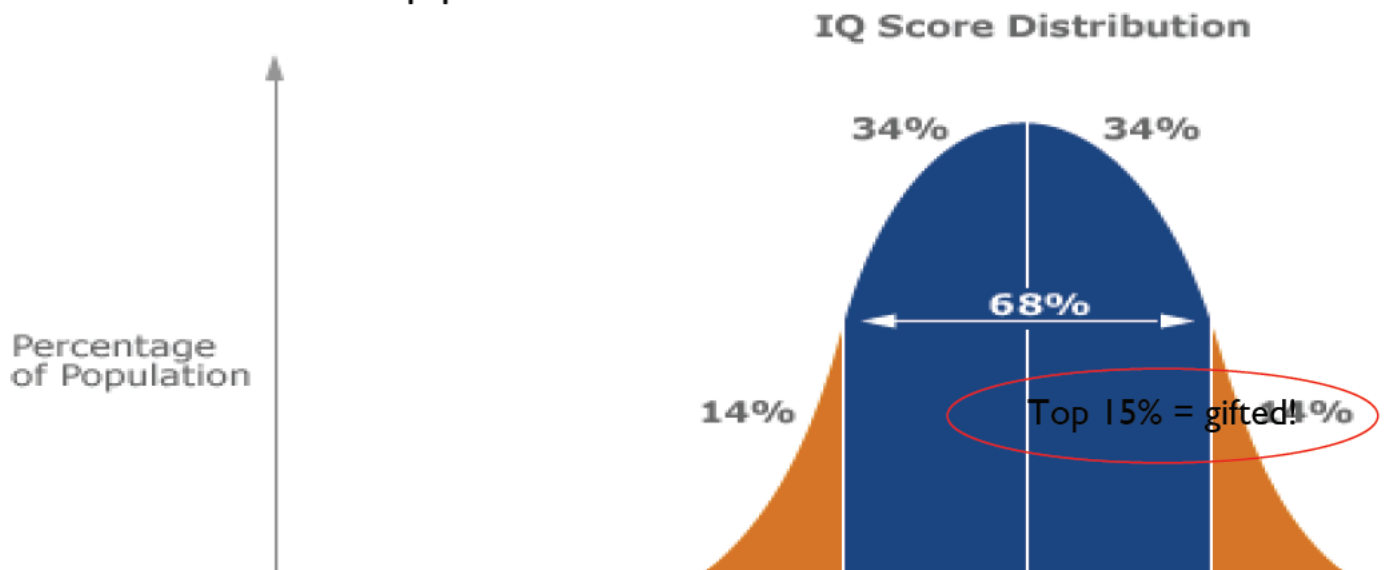
### **Specific objectives include:**

- Support and conduct of activities that provide maximum opportunity for the development of students with gifts and talents.
- Using web presence, social media, meetings, media and conferences to promote:-
  - parent, teacher and community awareness of the needs and potential of gifted children
  - strategies for parents, teachers and others to identify gifted children, including underachieving and other disadvantaged gifted children
- Promotion of appropriate training of all teachers in the education of gifted children by lobbying Government agencies and Universities, and especially via conferences.
- Collation and distribution of relevant information, advice and research work through direct communication with members, website and social media
- Promotion of flexibility in school programs at all levels to ensure gifted children are provided with appropriate schooling opportunities to allow for their asynchronous development at the pace and level appropriate to their capabilities and developmental stages.

- Promotion of support for the Association from industry, commerce and public bodies.
- Maintenance of a pro-active and effective working relationship with other associations and organisations that support the needs of gifted and talented children

Counselling and the provision of resources to parents who are experiencing difficulties with the various educational sectors in Tasmania forms a large part of TAG's work.

### Gifted children in the population



Professor Francois Gagné, Professor of Psychology, Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada, identifies that around 10-15% of the population is gifted. Professor Gagné's work underpins the identification estimates adopted within the Australian Curriculum.

While the majority of these children are mildly gifted, with IQ score between 115 and 130, these mildly gifted children, by year 5, are capable of functioning at least one grade level above the majority of their classroom peers.

For those with IQ score above 130 who are moderately gifted, above 145 who are highly gifted, above 160 who are exceptionally gifted and above 180 who are profoundly gifted, the gap between the majority of the class and the level at which these gifted children are capable of functioning increases rapidly.

### Gifted children and policy statements

All students, by any statement of student rights, have the right to an education, which enables them to achieve their full potential.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states *“The education of the child shall be directed to the **development of the child's** personality, talents and mental and physical **abilities to their fullest potential**”*

*Article 29 (1)*

The Senate inquiry into the Education of Gifted and Talented Children (2001) states *“There is a duty to help all children achieve their potential.”*

Tasmanian Education Department Policy states: *“Students who are gifted should be provided with an appropriate range of flexible provisions in Tasmanian Government schools, to enable and support their development.”*

*Policy Statement: Education For Students Who Are Gifted*

Gifted students are substantially under catered for the majority of time and in the majority of schools. They are not offered an education that enables them to realize their potential. Gifted students are the subject of a plethora of myths and misunderstanding by teachers who have little training in the area of the gifted education and from many uninformed adults within the community. Further, gifted students are often the target of bullying by their peers.

Policy statements which target the gifted proportion of school students are simply not being consistently implemented and these students are suffering as a consequence. Our education systems are failing them.

Unless educational programs are specifically targeted towards these students to enable an appropriate education for them, they are unlikely to reach their potential.

### **TAG's Touchpoint with Regulatory Bodies**

Gifted students are disadvantaged by lack of knowledge and awareness of their needs by the regulatory authorities and the consequent “one size fits all” application of processes and procedures by these authorities.

TAG's efforts in the past to try to advocate with the Teacher Registration Board in relation to teacher knowledge and skills in recognizing and catering for gifted students resulted only in responses that can only be described as “buck passing” of a circular manner referencing University and the Tasmanian Department of Education, which responded likewise.

### **What does this review need to keep in mind through the process?**

The Department of Education's catch-phrase “Every learner, every day” applies to EVERY learner, including gifted learners, whose needs are as far from the average learner as are the needs of students with a disability. Gifted learners require teachers with knowledge and skills in the relevant pedagogy, and they need curriculum which challenges them in their zone of proximal development, which may well be accelerated curriculum in some subjects and not others. This also has implications for how the Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and

Certification interprets and implements its processes in relation to these students. When gifted learners' needs are not met, it sometimes results in school refusal, and the role of the Registrar's and Non-Government Schools Registration Board in mediation in relation to this school refusal requires particular knowledge, skills and understanding.

### **What does "Better Practice Regulation" look like?**

From the perspective of the Tasmanian Association for the Gifted, better practice regulation would mean

(a) For the Teachers' Registration Board:

Registration to include far more stringent requirements for pre service training and ongoing professional development in understanding and catering for the needs of all students, from our perspective this particularly means gifted students. The 2001 Senate inquiry into the education of gifted and talented children recommended, in recommendation 14, that

- The Commonwealth should propose...that state and territory education authorities should require, as a condition of employment, that newly graduated teachers have at least a semester unit on the special needs of gifted children in their degrees. This should include training in identification of gifted children and the pedagogy of teaching them.

And in recommendation 15,

- The Commonwealth should specify professional development on issues to do with giftedness as a priority

We are nearly 2 decades on from the release of this Senate Inquiry and it is unconscionable that these recommendations still have not been implemented.

More recently the 2012 Victorian Inquiry into the Education of Gifted and Talented Students recommended

- Universities and TAFE colleges to provide increased opportunities for pre-service early childhood educators to learn about giftedness. (Recommendation 38) and
- Universities to provide increased opportunities for pre-service teachers to work with gifted students as part of their teaching placements. (Recommendation 40)

A 2017 media release by the Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented (AAEGt) called for teacher training to include compulsory training in gifted education. The media release was authored by Dr Catherine Wormald (University of Wollongong) and Dr Michelle Bannister-Tyrell (University of New England).

Goal 1 of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2019) states that "Australian Governments will work with the education community to:

promote personalised learning and provide support that aims to fulfil the individual capabilities and needs of learners”.

This again mandates the need to cater for gifted students.

Better practice in the Teacher Registration Board would see the implementation of processes that ensure all teachers have the knowledge and skills to cater for gifted students as recommended by the 2001 Senate Inquiry into the Education of Gifted and Talented Children, the 2012 Victorian Inquiry into the Education of Gifted and Talented Students, and the call by the AAEGT for compulsory inclusion of gifted education in preservice teacher education in order to meet goal 1 of the 2019 Mparntwe declaration.

- (b) For the Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification:  
Processes concerning evaluation of student results to be cognisant of flexible pathways for gifted students and recognize the difference between a gifted student who undertakes one or more pre-tertiary subject during their high school (grade 7-10) years and senior secondary students (grade 11-12) who fail to complete requirements and are forced to continue with a year 13 in their efforts to do so.

In the past, there have been incidences of students, who have undertaken acceleration into pretertiary subjects while in their high school years, being disadvantaged by the applications of the procedures and formulae for calculation of their ATAR score.

Similarly, the role that concurrent enrollment in senior secondary and university subjects plays in the educational plan of some gifted students must be recognized, and adequately factored in to calculations that may impact on eligibility for future course choices and career pathways. Specifically the contribution to ATAR score of a tertiary subject undertaken by a secondary or senior secondary students should be carefully assessed and in proportion to the subject difficulty.

- (c) For the Registrar and the Non-Government Schools Registration Board  
There are some gifted students for whom the education offered to them so insufficiently meets their needs that school refusal is the result and it becomes the role of this regulator to intervene.

The school refusal may be as a result of the level of education being well below the level of which the gifted student is capable and/or involve other exceptionalities, concurrent learning difficulties, which are not being recognized and accommodated in a gifted student’s education.

Best practice for students who are twice exceptional (gifted with a learning difficulty) specifies both catering to their strengths while accommodating

their weaknesses as well as building their capacity in their area of weakness. To do this effectively many teachers need additional professional learning.

In the Registrar's role as conciliator and in their capacity to issue binding recommendations, the need for individual learning plans for gifted students refusing school and for teacher professional learning to effectively collaborate with all stakeholders in developing and implementing effective individual learning plans, should be embedded into processes.

### **Clear statement of purpose (object) and principles**

The Tasmanian Association for the Gifted believes that all bodies associated with roles relating to the education of students should have clear statements of purpose and principles which are inclusive of their impact on all students and for which the bodies can be held to account.

### **Performance frameworks**

The Tasmanian Association for the Gifted believes that all bodies associated with roles relating to the education of students should be responsible, transparent, and accountable for the outcomes relating to their activity rather than simply reporting on their activity. It is not sufficient for a regulatory body (or any education related body) to only report on their activity – the existence of policies and procedures does not necessarily translate into effective implementation or to positive outcomes for students and it is those positive outcomes for students which is of utmost importance.

### **Questions not really addressed (just left here for info of TAG committee – will be deleted from submission unless someone wants to add a response)**

1. 2.

Do you think that the Teachers Registration Act 2000 should be updated to include a clearer statement of purpose (object) and principles to guide how the TRB regulates? *What do you think it should include?*

The Steering Committee will make recommendations to update the TRB framework using the elements of a modern regulatory framework as a guide. Some options that could be considered include:

- separating the responsibility for regulatory outcomes and administrative accountability
- considering whether a skills-based board, or a blended model, is more appropriate than a representative board
- assessing the complexity of regulatory functions to determine whether a single regulator could be responsible for the existing TRB regulatory functions, in place of a board.

Do you have any other ideas or views on these possible options? Is there anything else the Steering Committee should consider?

In what ways could the current funding model for the TRB be improved to promote efficiency and ensure sustainability?

Do you think introducing a performance framework for the TRB, such as that used for government businesses and TasTAFE, would deliver better outcomes for learners, teachers and the community? Why?

Do you think that the Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification Act 2003 should be updated to include a clearer statement of purpose (object) and principles to guide how TASC regulates? What do you think it should include? The Steering Committee will make recommendations to update the TASC framework using the elements of a modern regulatory framework as a guide. Some options that could be considered include:

- considering whether a skills-based board, or a blended model, is more appropriate than a single regulator, given the complexity of TASC's operations. Do you have any other ideas or views on these possible options? Is there anything else the Steering Committee should consider?
10. Do you think introducing a performance framework for TASC, such as that used for government businesses and TasTAFE, would deliver better outcomes for learners, teachers and the community? Why?

The Steering Committee will make recommendations to update the education regulation framework using the elements of a modern regulatory framework as a guide. They invite you to share your thoughts on the following questions.

How well does the existing framework provide for understanding, organising for, and ensuring success by the Registrar and the NGSRB? How could it be improved?

The Steering Committee will make recommendations to update the Registrar's and NGSRB framework using the elements of a modern regulatory framework as a guide.

Some options that could be considered include:

- separating the responsibility for regulatory outcomes and administrative accountability
- considering whether a skills-based board, or a blended model, is more appropriate than a single regulator for the Registrar's functions
- considering whether a single regulator, or skills-based board, is more appropriate than a representative board for the NGSRB's functions.

Do you have any other ideas or views on these possible options? Is there anything else the Steering Committee should consider?

In what ways could the current funding model for the Registrar and the NGSRB be improved to promote efficiency and ensure sustainability?

Do you think introducing a performance framework for the Registrar and NGSRB, such as that used for government businesses and TasTAFE, would deliver outcomes for learners, schools, and the community? Why?