

EDUCATION: TASMANIA'S FUTURE

AN UPDATE ON THE EDUCATION BILL 2016



The passage of the Education Bill through the Parliament on 15 November, 2016 is a momentous step forward in improving education in Tasmania.

We all know how important education is in helping our children reach their potential.

Key changes in our education reforms include:

- *extending the compulsory years of education and training including allowing early access to Prep*
- *more teachers and support staff in our schools*
- *upgrades to school infrastructure.*

These important reforms will improve education results in Tasmania and help close the gap where currently Tasmanian students can receive up to two years less education than their interstate counterparts.

My sincere thanks go to everyone involved through the process of developing, consulting and passing these reforms.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE REFORMS INCLUDE:

- Provision of 13 years of compulsory education and training.
- From 2021, an earlier Prep starting age allowing voluntary access to Prep from four and a half*.
- Raising the education and training requirements so that, from 2020, students must participate in education and training until they complete Year 12, attain a Certificate III, or they turn 18 years of age (whichever occurs first).
- Supporting participation and access to education by assisting schools to better support students who have conditions which mean their behaviour may pose a risk to themselves or others.

- Providing for a new compulsory conciliation conference process to help resolve reasons for children's continued unexplained non-attendance at school.
- Formalising dual enrolment for students with disability to facilitate access to both mainstream and support schools across the government and non-government schools sectors.
- Strengthening and protecting home education and allowing for children who are home educated to partially enrol at a school as part of their home education program.
- Retaining the Non-Government Schools Registration Board.

NEXT STEPS:

The Department of Education is now working on an Implementation Plan to ensure a smooth transition to the new legislative arrangements.

The Act will commence on 10 July 2017, except for changes to the voluntary school starting age and the minimum leaving requirements.

Working groups will be established as required and relevant stakeholders will be consulted as part of the implementation process. There will be regular updates on implementation.

For more information, please contact:

comments@education.tas.gov.au

* subject to an order and report on the social and economic impacts of the change on the Tasmanian early childhood education and care sector and Tasmanian children and their families being tabled in, and approved by, both Houses of Parliament later next year.

INFORMATION ABOUT STARTING AGE:

- In accordance with the Bill the Minister for Education and Training is required, no later than 1 September 2017, to make one or more orders which specify that section 8 commences on 1 January 2020 and section 9 commences on 1 January 2021. These sections relate to earlier access to Kindergarten and Prep.
- Prior to making any such order, the Minister must seek and consider a written implementation report and recommendations of the Secretary of the Department of Education in relation to the social and economic impact of commencing sections 8 and 9 on the Tasmanian early childhood education and care sector and Tasmanian children and their families.
- The order/s and report must be tabled in both Houses of Parliament and Parliament has the power to disallow the order/s.
- The Bill requires the Secretary to consult with the stakeholder reference group that was established in 2014 as part of the review of the Education Act. This group consists of a wide range of key stakeholders, including from the education and care sector. It will be expanded to include specific membership from Early Childhood Australia.
- The Secretary will also consult with a wide range of people to fulfil the requirements set by the legislation in order to report on the social and economic impact of the changes on the Tasmanian early childhood education and care services sector and Tasmanian children and their families.
- More information on the process will be available in the near future.
- The additional provision in the Bill provides a 'safety net' that will allow Parliament to satisfy itself that proper consideration has been given to the implementation of this important reform.

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS OF THE BILL

The Education Bill is underpinned by key principles and objects which include:

- The right of every child to receive an education until the completion of Year 12, the year of home education equivalent to Year 12 or of an approved learning program.
- The right of every child, during the years of education from Kindergarten to the year commonly known as Year 2, to be supported by developmentally appropriate learning frameworks.

- The State recognises that a child's parents are the first and most important educators of the child.
- The State recognises that parents have a responsibility to ensure that their child receives an education.
- The State has a responsibility to support parents in ensuring that they meet responsibilities under this Act.
- That the wider community has an important part to play in supporting a child's learning.
- That children should have the opportunity to be actively involved in decisions affecting their participation in education.
- The State has an obligation to provide universal access to education through the maintenance of a government education system. There should also be a choice for parents through non-government schools and home education.
- The provision of education at a school recognises the individual needs of children with disabilities.
- Education should provide the foundation for lifelong learning.

BACKGROUND TO THE EDUCATION BILL 2016

The preparation of the *Education Bill 2016* has involved a comprehensive process of community consultation. Following the announcement of a review of the Education Act in September 2014, a three-phase consultation process was undertaken:

Phase 1 – 2014 Discussion Paper

231 submissions were received in response to the Discussion Paper.

Phase 2 – Minister's Consultation Forums

Over 330 individuals participated.

Phase 3 – Release of Draft Bill

More than 200 people participated in public information sessions and over 300 responses were received.

Overall, more than 1,000 responses were received through the consultation process.

For more details on the phases of consultation, please see the [Fact Sheet: An Introduction to the Education Bill 2016](#) on www.education.tas.gov.au