INCLUSION WORKING GROUP

Background

As reflected in the Department of Education’s (DoE) Learners First Strategy 2014–17, equity is a value we hold highly; we all have the right to challenging and engaging learning opportunities in appropriate settings.

The DoE is committed to enabling all students to achieve quality outcomes through their participation in an inclusive, high quality education system that is responsive to their needs through appropriate access and participation in the Australian Curriculum. DoE strategies focus on building the capacity of our people and our resources to better support the diverse and unique needs of all students, including those with disability.

Formed late in 2013, The Department of Education held its first Inclusion Working Group on 11 February 2014, meeting with key stakeholders from around the state. This working group is chaired by the Department of Education’s Secretary – Colin Pettit and it will investigate better ways to support schools, students and parents in being inclusive school communities.

As part of the National reform agenda, it is timely to consider inclusion and the Tasmanian context and look into the best ways to work with schools to build understanding to meet obligations under the Disability Standards for Education (DSE) Act 2005 and comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992.

Governance

The DoE has invited established peak bodies to participate in this group.

The working group currently comprises representation from the Department of Education (DoE), Tasmanian Principals Association (TPA), Australian Education Union (AEU), Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations (TASSO), Autism Tasmania, Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Association of Special Education Inc (AASE) and Tasmanian Council of Social Service Inc (TasCOSS), Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability (ASID).

School communities who would like to provide input into the work of the Inclusion Working Group are invited to contact the relevant organisation; please see membership section below with key contact.

Work Plan

The working group will provide advice and strategic direction to school communities on how we can better build inclusive school communities. This group is committed to making our schools a better place for our students.
This work will be guided by the DoE’s Respectful Schools and Workplaces Framework. This framework has been developed to guide the work of the department, building on the work of schools to maximise learning outcomes, support student behaviour and build respectful schools.

We are building inclusive schools to support student need through key components of school education reform in Australia. The working group meetings will address the following key strategies in inclusive education. The focus areas for the working group are:

- Improved teaching quality and support
- A robust national curriculum
- A greater say for school communities and improved information for parents, schools and community
- Better support for students

Meeting Schedule

At the February meeting the working group agreed to four future meetings to address four key strategies around inclusion. The meetings are scheduled for:

- Tuesday, 11 March 2014
- Tuesday, 15 April 2014
- Tuesday, 13 May 2014
- Tuesday, 10 June 2014

The next meeting on 11 March 2014 will be centred on discussion around inclusive practices for ‘improved teaching quality and support’

Membership

Department of Education (DoE)

The DoE is responsible for providing a comprehensive and lifelong approach to learning for all people regardless of age.

The DoE is committed to enabling all students to achieve quality outcomes through their participation in an inclusive, high quality education system that is responsive to their needs.

Contact: Lynne James – 6233 7768
Tasmanian Principals Association (TPA)

TPA is a Professional Association of 180 principals who work in Tasmanian government schools. TPA is an advocate for government education provision and offers professional support for its members.

TPA believes Equity in education provision involves intentional actions that result in students fully engaging with learning. This is achieved when students with the greatest need attract differential resources and support to fully engage with learning.

Contact: David Raw – 0418 592 214

Australian Education Union (AEU)

AEU Tasmania is the state branch of the Australian Education Union – the federal union for teachers, principals, education support staff and all educators working in government schools and government-funded early childhood, TAFE and adult education.

Contact: Terry Polglase – 0409 545 109

Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations (TASSO)

TASSO is part of the working group to represent all parents, school associations and parent groups in Tasmanian public schools.

TASSO’s Vision: TASSO - A vital part of public education and catalyst for positive change.

TASSO’s Mission: To represent Tasmanian families and school organisations associated with public education and to advocate for their needs.

Contact: Jenny Eddington – 6234 9488

Autism Tasmania

Autism Tasmania Inc is a membership based not for profit registered charity operating throughout Tasmania providing information, support, education and training to people with Autism Spectrum Disorder, their families, care providers and related professionals. Promoting community awareness and understanding.

Contact: Terry Burke – 6278 9985
Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Commissioner

The Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner supports the work of the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Commissioner to fulfil her functions under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (Tas).

This includes investigating and attempting to resolve complaints of discrimination and related unlawful conduct under the Act.

Contact: Robin Banks – 6233 4841

Australian Association of Special Education Inc (AASE)

The Australian Association of Special Education (AASE) Incorporated, represented by State Chapters and is governed through the constitution by the National Council comprising of representations of each state and territory.

AASE actively advocates at government and education authority levels to ensure best practice and to promote the fundamental rights of students with disabilities in accordance with the Disability Standards for Education (2005) and promotes evidence-based practice.

Contact: Jenny Buckingham – 0417 532 594

Tasmanian Council of Social Service Inc (TasCOSS)

The Tasmanian Council of Social Service is the peak body for the community services sector in Tasmania.

TasCOSS is also committed to strengthening the community services sector in Tasmania and is actively involved in sector development activities.

Contact: Tony Reidy – 6231 0755

Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability (ASID)

ASID’s vision is an inclusive society

ASID’s mission is to improve the quality of life for people with an intellectual disability.

Contact: Ben Crothers – benedict.crothers@gmail.com
Membership currently consists of:

- Colin Pettit, Secretary, Department of Education
- Liz Banks, Deputy Secretary, Department of Education
- Lynne James, Director, Disability Programs, Department of Education
- Jenny Burgess, A/Director, Equity Services, Department of Education
- David Raw, President and Marcelle Watts, representative of Tasmanian Principals Association
- Terry Polglase, President, Australian Education Union, Tasmanian Branch and one other invited member
- Jenny Eddington, President, Tasmanian Association of State School organisations (TASSO) and one other invited member
- Michael Clark, President, and Terry Burke, CEO Autism Tasmania
- Robin Banks, Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Commissioner
- Jenny Buckingham, President, Australian Association of Special Education – Tasmanian Chapter
- Tony Reidy, CEO, Tasmanian Council of Social Service Inc (TasCOSS)
- Ben Crothers, Vice President, Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability (ASID)

A communiqué will be published to the DoE website after each meeting to keep the public updated on the progress of the Working Group.