Intake Area Review: Feedback from Round 1 Consultation
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Intake areas ensure that every Tasmanian child can access a local school in their neighbourhood. They also enable schools to plan for expected enrolments, ensuring facilities and staff are provided to support students’ learning.

- As part of its implementation of the Education Act 2016, the Department of Education (DoE) is currently reviewing all Tasmanian government primary and combined (district) school intake areas to determine what changes might be needed to better reflect the enrolment needs of Tasmanian schools and communities.

- DoE has committed to two rounds of public consultation on potential intake area changes. The first round of consultation is now complete.

- DoE sought the views of a wide range of stakeholders on a set of draft intake area maps released for public consultation. Stakeholders included: parents and future parents of young children, school principals and school associations, peak bodies, the early education and care sector, local councils and the general public.

- Nearly 900 submissions were received in response to the draft maps.

- A significant majority of the intake areas for consultation – 105 out of 165 – either received unqualified support, or did not raise concerns, from the public. The remaining 60 received either conditional support or suggested amendments.

- The Tasmanian community has offered many constructive suggestions which have helped inform proposed adjustments to intake area boundaries ahead of a second round of public consultation to commence in August 2019.

- Key concerns from the community related to equity, school infrastructure and capacity, community identity, transport, demographics, administrative matters and mapping modifications.

- In making adjustments to the initially released maps DoE sought to balance the accommodation of specific school and community concerns with school site capacity levels, local demographic trends and residential developments.

- DoE applied a set of key policy considerations to guide its incorporation of stakeholder suggestions in an updated set of proposed maps. The highest ranked policy considerations were: school capacity to absorb additional enrolment; and safeguarding of school viability. Other key considerations included keeping communities together, intake area alignment with bus routes, and facilitation of walking access to schools.

- In applying these policy considerations, DoE took a system-wide approach to support the ability of all government schools to provide optimum learning outcomes.

- DoE has incorporated feedback from the community into a set of Proposed Intake Area Maps, which will be released for a second round of public consultation in early August 2019.

- New intake areas will apply from the 2021 school year to allow time for schools and the community to make adjustments.

- Current students, and their siblings, will not be affected by the outcome of the intake area review.
BACKGROUND

1. Reasons for the review

Each Tasmanian government primary and combined (district) school has an intake area which serves as the basis for managing its enrolment. Every student living within an intake area is guaranteed enrolment at that school. Intake areas are essential for schools to plan for expected enrolments and to ensure facilities and staff are provided to support students’ learning.

Intake area boundaries are determined according to such factors as student enrolment patterns, residential developments, demographic data, public transport routes and road access. These factors change over time.

The Tasmanian Education Act 2016 introduced a requirement for the Secretary, DoE, to review and determine government school intake areas at least once every 5 years. This requirement for regular review ensures intake areas remain current as populations change and communities grow across the state.

The review is designed to ensure intake areas reflect current circumstances and that every child can continue to have easy access to a school that can support their learning and involvement in the local community near their home.

2. Scope of the review

The review will determine whether updates are needed to the intake area of any Tasmanian government primary and combined school. Any changes would come into effect in 2021. DoE has committed to a two-stage consultation process, the first of which is now complete, to seek from the Tasmanian community their views on how current intake areas might be improved. This comprehensive approach provides time for families and schools to have their say on intake areas, as well as plan for any changes that may occur in 2021.

DoE appreciates that school choice is a priority for Tasmanian parents. While enrolment at a local school is encouraged we acknowledge that there are reasons why parents may choose to enrol children outside of their intake area. The review will not affect the ability of parents to exercise this choice, subject to school capacity. Further clarification of the scope of the review is outlined in the table below.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>THE REVIEW WILL</th>
<th>THE REVIEW WILL NOT</th>
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<tr>
<td>» Allow all stakeholders to provide feedback on how current boundaries could be improved</td>
<td>» Not affect students who are already enrolled in a school before 2021</td>
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<td>» Ensure intake area boundaries are based on information that is up-to-date</td>
<td>» Not limit the choice of parents applying to out-of-area schools</td>
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<td>» Better align enrolment patterns with school capacity levels at a system level</td>
<td>» Not change how schools enrol students who live outside their intake area</td>
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<td>» Clarify which intake area new land developments belong to</td>
<td>» Not change which high school students are entitled to attend</td>
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<td>» Provide greater clarity with regards to shared intake areas.</td>
<td>» Not affect the ability of siblings to attend the same school</td>
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<td>» Not affect the Government’s longstanding policy of no forced school closures.</td>
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ROUND 1 CONSULTATION

3. Preparing for consultation

DoE prepared a set of maps for consultation as a starting point for the review. The maps were based on previous community feedback, enrolment patterns and demographic trends across the state. We liaised with the Department of State Growth to ensure, where practicable, the maps for consultation aligned with an efficient school bus transport system.

DoE also relied on the expertise of a geospatial officer, seconded from the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, to align the intake boundaries with property boundaries. This avoided single properties being split between different intake areas. In some cases the intake area boundaries were also aligned with administrative boundaries such as postcode borders, roads or natural geographic features to provide greater clarity.

DoE released the maps for consultation in a variety of formats to ensure accessibility to as many people as possible. The maps were presented as the starting point of an iterative consultation process aimed at canvassing the views of a wide range of stakeholders and finding the best balance between different views.

4. How we consulted

DoE directly engaged with a wide variety of community members and stakeholders to invite their views on a draft set of maps released for consultation. We specifically targeted current and future parents of students and young children, school principals and school associations, peak bodies, the early education and care sector, local councils and the general public.

The DoE Secretary wrote to the families of all students enrolled at a Tasmanian government primary or secondary school to invite their feedback. DoE also announced the opportunity to provide feedback on social media and the DoE website.

DoE created tailored surveys for particular stakeholder groups including the general public, school principals (in consultation with school associations) and local councils. We published public notices in three Tasmanian newspapers, distributed information in school newsletters and created posters and fact sheets for primary schools, Child and Family Centres, libraries and education and care providers. DoE also encouraged the general public to submit written submissions to an email inbox and/or post office box.

Who Got Involved
Breakdown of 876 survey responses received

- parents of current & future students: 70%
- schools (including staff & school associations): 16%
- community members: 8%
- local councils: 2%
- local business & other: 3%
WHAT WE HEARD

5. Responses from the community

DoE received nearly 900 survey and email submissions from parents, communities and school groups. The feedback provided us with valuable insight into community and school concerns, including practical suggestions for how intake areas may be improved across the state.

A large majority (86%) of the general public found the intake maps clear and most respondents (80%) found the online maps easy to use. In some cases, there was a misunderstanding about the alignment of intake area boundaries with property boundaries, especially when an intake area included large parks and reserves.

Many school associations submitted supporting documents, including map imagery, meeting minutes, census data and formal letters, to help express their perspectives.

The majority of maps for consultation – 105 out of 165 – either received unqualified support, or did not raise concerns, from the Tasmanian community. In certain instances, respondents favoured the revised intake areas and considered some maps for consultation an improvement on existing circumstances. DoE is not proposing further changes to these maps.

DoE will release a Proposed Intake Area Map for each government primary and combined school for a second round of consultation in August 2019. The maps will clearly state whether any changes have been made on the basis of feedback from the first consultation round.

DoE also received a number of suggestions regarding how the maps could be visually improved for the second round of consultation. We have used these suggestions to improve the format of maps that will be released for an additional round of consultation and feedback.

’…I am in support of this change becoming finalised as it will allow families to access public transportation for their children’s commute to school.’

- South Hobart parent

’I would like to see the area unchanged, if not made slightly bigger to accommodate new subdivisions close by.’

- Waverley primary school staff member

‘Overall the changes to intake areas and the new map area are a positive change…’

- Westbury parent

’I don’t believe there should be any intake areas at all.’

- Lauderdale parent

’I would like to see it remain as per the current intake area. Reducing the intake area as planned will put the school at risk of a dramatic decrease in numbers or overcrowding of other schools.’

- Molesworth parent

’…the proposed changes make perfect sense…We fully support these changes’

- Mount Stuart parent

‘…I would suggest an even smaller catchment area, to allow a fairer distribution…’

- East Launceston community member

’I think the suggested intake map is really good.’

- Burnie parent
6. Key areas of concern

Below is a broad summary of the key concerns from the community.

6.1 EQUITY
We received feedback that:
• it is important that children be given the opportunity to be educated locally
• effort and resources should be directed to foster equity among government schools
• school equity could be fostered by improving the socioeconomic balance in some schools
• some stakeholders fear that reducing the intake area of a school that has low enrolments would affect its viability
• there was a perception that the intake area review would limit school choice for parents
• there is a strong need for the intake areas to avoid entrenching inequality between differing schools

6.2 SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE & CAPACITY
We received feedback that:
• some schools may be unable to absorb additional students in the context of space, budget and resource limitations
• before and after school care plays a key role for parents when selecting schools for their children

6.3 COMMUNITY IDENTITY
We received feedback that:
• local schools play an important role in strengthening communities
• some respondents would like DoE to take into account communities’ strong connection and historical attendance at certain schools
• local schools act as an important support for families and provide the opportunity for families to support one another and remain connected
• intake areas should support community cohesion
• some groups advocate for an increased intake area for fear that a smaller intake area could impact on school viability

6.4 TRANSPORT
We received feedback that:
• any adjustments to intake areas should align with adequate and efficient bus routes
• consideration should be given to local cycle routes and student walkability to schools
• there was some frustration that school bus routes traversed a neighbouring school’s intake area or that a school was a pick-up/drop-off point for bus routes to another school
• parents’ place of work strongly influences their decisions when selecting a school for their children

6.5 DEMOGRAPHICS
We received feedback that:
new and future residential subdivisions will have an impact on school capacity levels

some consideration should be given to future development corridors, along with their geographic proximity to schools and those schools’ capacity levels

a perception exists that developers are influencing the intake areas, rather than demographic trends and other data, to influence house prices

6.6 ADMINISTRATION

We received feedback that:

• suggested how the second round of public consultation and online surveys could be improved

• special consideration should be given to children of separated couples

6.7 MAPPING MODIFICATIONS

We received feedback that:

• it was not clear why non-residential areas, such as parks, reserves and industrial areas, were included within mapped intake area boundaries

• it was not clear why intake area boundaries were often situated in the middle of a road

• geographical features such as creeks and ranges should be used for intake area boundaries

7. How we have responded

DoE welcomes the strong degree of school and community engagement in the consultation process and actively considered all suggestions. Of particular value to DoE was feedback related to school capacity, sense of community, practical logistical matters, efficient transport routes and ease of student mobility.

Amongst the approximate 900 feedback submissions, there were many passionate and at times diverse views on where intake areas boundaries should lie and why. In assessing how to incorporate feedback into the next set of proposed maps DoE applied a set of key policy considerations, shown in the table to the right. These policy considerations have been tested with, and found to be strongly supported by, government school Principals across the state.

The highest ranked policy consideration was the potential impact of any suggested change on school capacity. The importance of aligning enrolment levels with school capacity is discussed more fully below.

It is important to note that any decision to change a boundary in one intake area will almost always affect another area or areas. Therefore, in distilling community feedback against the policy considerations, DoE applied a network lens, looking at the impact on groups of schools, in order to align the concerns of neighbouring schools as much as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intake Area Policy Considerations</th>
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<tr>
<td>School capacity to absorb additional enrolments</td>
<td>Highest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safeguarding school viability</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoid splitting a community</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alignment with bus routes and facilitate walking to school</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid travel through other school intake area</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone students to closest government school</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent travel-to-work direction</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adopting current practice regarding enrolment patterns</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Territory needed for school identity</td>
<td>Low</td>
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Where community members expressed competing interests in neighbouring intake areas DoE has taken a regional perspective and progressed in a manner to best support the interests of all learners.

DoE appreciates the very considered, long term thinking evident in some of the feedback from community members. In light of DoE’s statutory obligation to review intake areas on a regular basis, some suggestions, even if not implemented at this stage or following the next consultation round, provide insight into what changes to intake areas might be needed in the longer term.

Not all feedback received during the first consultation round was within the scope of the intake area review. A number of suggestions related to future projects that DoE may undertake. These community recommendations have been recorded and may be used to help inform future projects.

7.1 RESPONSE TO KEY THEMES & CONCERNS

School Infrastructure

- DoE is committed to ensuring all government schools have the resources to provide a rich educational experience to every Tasmanian child. For this reason we gave strong priority to school capacity levels in developing proposed maps for the second consultation round. To ensure that schools can continue to provide learning environments that support student needs, enrolment levels need to align with the physical capacity of the school’s infrastructure.

- All suggestions to increase the intake area of any school were evaluated in terms of whether the school’s existing infrastructure could accommodate a higher student population. The nature of school sites and whether there were any building constraints was also assessed.

- DoE drew on detailed enrolment data to determine whether and to what extent a school or group of schools could absorb additional enrolments. Where a school had very high enrolment levels but there were also strong policy reasons for supporting an increase to the intake area, DoE also considered the proportion of, and reasons for, out-of-area enrolment at the school. DoE will support schools to manage out-of-area enrolments in accordance with the Education Act 2016, so that they can continue to accommodate all the students who reside within the intake area.

- The review showed that a number of new residential subdivisions and localities had been developed since the time the current intake area maps were created. These have been incorporated into the proposed maps with careful consideration of their potential impact on school capacity numbers.

- While some suggestions for increasing a school’s intake area were accompanied by calls to increase capacity at the school, DoE is committed to distributing the limited resources available for capital works of this nature in an equitable and sustainable way.

- A further key consideration for the DoE was supporting the ability of each school, especially those with low enrolment numbers, to continue to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students.

- In assessing suggestions to expand the intake area of any particular school, DoE sought to balance parental requests with support for schools experiencing low enrolments so that all schools can continue to provide optimum education outcomes. This consistent approach across the state ensures the best interests of the educational system as a whole were prioritised.

- It is important to note that the intake area review is not an assessment of school viability. DoE and the Government are committed to a policy of no forced school closures.
• To ensure the equitable operation of intake areas across the state, DoE has removed shared intake areas, clarifying the entitlement of every Tasmanian child, under the Education Act 2016, to have equal access to an intake area school.

Community Identity

• DoE recognises that local schools are an important pillar of the community. For this reason, we paid careful attention to local communities’ feedback regarding sense of community. Many intake area boundaries have been specifically refined on the basis that they will not divide communities. Whilst it is impossible to please all groups, a concerted effort has been made to ensure community connection is maintained.

• In some instances, intake areas were amended to include entire suburbs when the maps released for consultation did not reflect the status quo. In these cases, the intake area boundary was, for administrative clarity, aligned with the locality boundary.

• DoE is committed to supporting the educational opportunities of all learners in an inclusive and equitable way. Suggestions that particular suburbs or parts of suburbs should be excluded from an intake area because their residents were not part of the community were not adopted.

Transport

• DoE has placed high importance on the need for intake areas to support efficient and affordable student transport services, making every effort to align intake areas with existing bus routes.

• DoE was guided by the Department of State Growth’s student transport policy, which entitles students to free travel on rural bus services to their intake area school. DoE consulted closely with the Department of State Growth to ensure, where possible and especially in rural areas, entire bus routes operate within a single intake area.

• In many cases this alignment will result in a bus service changing from a fare paying to a free-of-charge service, making education more accessible for many students.

• DoE also tried to accommodate feedback in relation to parents’ travel-to-work direction where this aligned with school capacity levels, and to facilitate students’ ease of walking and cycling to their local school. Where we received divergent views about walking route safety and distance to a particular schools, DoE drew on the mapping skills of a geospatial specialist.

• Intake areas are designed to ensure each child has easy access to a local school. While in most cases this means that students are zoned to the closest government school, there are some cases, particularly in inner city suburbs, where this is not possible due to capacity constraints. In these cases DoE is confident that the proximity of several government schools to each other provides all students within the respective proposed intake area with relative ease of access.

Administration and Mapping

• Although most community members indicated that the maps released for the first round of consultation were clear, a number of people indicated that the PDF maps did not easily show the suggested changes. For the second consultation DoE has overlaid the latest proposed boundaries on the earlier round one maps for consultation, to clearly show how they differ.

• A large proportion of the maps released for consultation in round one have not changed. Where there is no change between the first and second round map this is clearly stated.

• Notwithstanding the improved format, DoE strongly recommends that all stakeholders who wish to see the proposed changes in more detail access the maps in electronic format. Due to the different
population densities in different parts of the state, high level detail such as street names may not be visible in the PDF version. The PDF maps are intended to serve as a high level snapshot, complemented by electronic maps that show much greater detail.

**NEXT STEPS**

8. **Round 2 consultation**

In early August 2019 DoE will commence a second round of community consultation on a refined set of Proposed Intake Area Maps. This iterative process enables DoE to test with the community the feedback received in the first consultation round.


All members of the Tasmanian community are encouraged to provide further feedback on the Proposed Maps through the intake area review survey at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6XR8935 Alternatively submissions may sent by email to intake.areas@education.tas.gov.au or by post to:

Intake Area Review  
Department of Education  
GPO Box 169 Hobart TAS 7001

The second consultation round will close on 27 September 2019.

9. **Finalising intake areas**

After the second consultation round DoE will again assess the feedback and make any further refinements to the maps by applying the key policy considerations outlined on page 7. All feedback will be considered, whether from community members who have responded previously or any community members providing feedback for the first time.

The finalised intake areas will be published in early 2020. They will not be implemented, however, until 2021. This allows appropriate time for families, communities and schools to understand the new boundaries and plan for any changes. DoE will work closely with schools to ensure they understand any intake area changes that might affect them, and to help them communicate the changes to their school communities. DoE is committed to ensuring a
smooth transitional process takes place, so that all Tasmanian government schools continue to support all learners to achieve the best possible education outcomes.