

Chapter 13

TASMANIA

Structure and context of schooling

Tasmania is characterised by a school system comprising a number of relatively small schools. Few schools are over 800 students, and these are mainly secondary colleges. Tasmania has a relatively high proportion of students of low socioeconomic status, one of the lowest proportions of students in non-government schools and a high level of rurality.

Education is provided through a range of government, Catholic and independent schools. Home education is also recognised under the *Education Act 1994*. In 1999, 527 students aged 6–16 years were being educated at home.

In 1999, the Department of Education administered 220 government schools, comprising 140 primary schools and one unlinked kindergarten, 32 high schools, 26 district high schools (including the Tasmanian Open Learning Service School), eight senior secondary colleges, nine special schools and four early special education centres. Education was provided for 66,164 students, of which 3,210 were part-time, from preparatory to year 12 and 5,776 part-time kindergarten students. A total of 39.6 per cent (29,045) of these students received Student Assistance Support to cover the costs of school books and compulsory levies. In addition, Early Special Education Services provided specialist education intervention to 368 children between birth and 5 years and their families.

In the Catholic sector, 6,997 primary and 4,300 secondary, 1,600 senior secondary and 400 kindergarten students were enrolled in 33 systemic and four non-systemic schools.

Priority objectives

Government sector

Priority objectives for government sector schools focused on the following:

- that all students in Tasmanian government schools receive quality teaching leading to effective learning
- that all students in Tasmanian government schools receive teaching that appropriately utilises information and communications technology, leading to more effective learning
- that there is a fair and just distribution of the benefits of schooling across all student groups and minimal difference between identified student groups in measurable outcomes
- that parents of students participate as partners with teachers in the schooling of their children and the community and the general public will be well informed on educational matters.

Catholic sector

Priority objectives for schools in the Catholic sector included:

- ongoing literacy and numeracy development
- ongoing curriculum development and documentation
- achievement of Registered Training Organisation (RTO) status for vocational education and training (VET) delivery for schools with senior secondary classes
- improved connectivity and technical support for information technology (IT) and the provision of professional development to improve IT literacy and fluency for staff.

There was also a range of particular priorities for individual schools.

Independent sector

There was a wide range of objectives stated by independent schools in Tasmania. The main themes were:

- developing effective life skills and a love of learning
- creating an environment that encourages spiritual understanding and development
- involving parents more in school life and assistance
- continuing the emphasis on literacy and numeracy
- continuing the emphasis on key learning areas.

Among other objectives from the range identified were making provision for the gifted and talented, improving administrative procedures, extending the schools' resources and facilities, pastoral care, and the development of co-curricula activities.

Major developments

Cross-sectoral initiatives

Schooling in Tasmania in 1999 involved increasing collaboration between the sectors, especially in the areas of monitoring standards and professional development.

A Commonwealth-funded numeracy project, Planning and Teaching for Numeracy in Years 7 to 9, was completed. Teachers from a majority of schools in all sectors participated in the professional development associated with this project. One outcome was the production of appropriate materials to suit the needs of low-achieving students in the target grades.

The Tasmanian Secondary Schools Assessment Board completed a review of the Tasmanian Certificate of Education, the result of which was to retain the criterion-based examination system in years 11 and 12.

The Catholic and government sectors collaborated to monitor students' literacy achievement in grades 3 and 5. This is managed through a memorandum of understanding and provides for consistency in standards across the sectors.

All sectors participated in a variety of activities to celebrate Literacy Week. These included school and regionally based

activities and on-line discussion. Other literacy-focused activities that were open to all sectors included Spalding and First Steps training sessions.

Initiatives by the Tasmanian Principals Institute and the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools and drug education initiatives provided other cross-sectoral opportunities, which were welcomed by all sectors.

Government sector

Literacy and numeracy

A comprehensive literacy and numeracy plan was provided that detailed all programs designed to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes.

Comprehensive trialling of two new programs—the Spalding Program (a structured literacy program in spelling, reading and writing) and the Program of Additional Support and Structure—were undertaken, with both programs showing considerable promise.

Good Practice Network

A Good Practice Network of 28 schools demonstrated leading practice in the use of information technology. The network was developed to improve student learning and assist the sharing of experiences and practices among staff from different schools. These schools, through their own initiative, all embraced information technologies and successfully incorporated the technology into the curriculum. The network provided a number of models for all schools.

Open learning and flexible delivery processes

The Discover Website, a powerful new learning tool for teachers and students, was launched. Using the delivery processes provided by this website, teachers can exchange ideas and information, conference and participate in online courses. The Discover Website also provides a vehicle for increasing online learning. Extensive online course development commenced, utilising funding from Regional Telecommunications Infrastructure Funds.

Childcare

Following the transfer of responsibility for childcare to the Department of Education in 1998, assessments against licensing guidelines were completed for more than half of all services. A statewide register of services was established

and new childcare legislation is being developed. A mentoring program was established for services experiencing difficulties.

A review of early childhood education and care was completed, based on a published research paper used for consultation.

Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Regular Schools

The Office for Educational Review undertook a comprehensive review of the Inclusion Policy, using a range of consultative strategies. The outcomes of the review will be published for comment and reaction early in 2000.

Post-Compulsory Education Project

A Post-Compulsory Education research project was completed, focusing on data collection and collation. The purpose was to gain a comprehensive understanding of participation and outcomes in secondary and senior secondary education, vocational education and training and higher education. Subsequently work commenced on a draft policy paper and an accompanying set of recommendations.

Catholic sector

Information technology was a major focus of the Catholic sector in 1999. A policy on the use of IT was developed for systemic schools, and has advisory status in the ten non-systemic schools. Considerable effort was put into developing infrastructure using State and Commonwealth funds. This included the employment of five trainees who had been long-term unemployed to provide IT support for schools in regional areas.

An innovative approach to the provision of professional development and student programs was the Computer Bus. This specially adapted bus takes IT to isolated areas in the northwest and on the west coast, visiting schools and school camps. Through the bus, students have access to the Internet and a variety of programs to enhance their computer skills and usage.

Independent sector

A major initiative for independent schools was the use of Regional Telecommunications Infrastructure Funds to develop information technology infrastructure in regional schools. This included the provision of networking and Internet facilities.

Professional development

Government sector

Principals accreditation

A total of 64 school principals and 16 senior officers were accredited using Principal Accreditation Centre methodology. This brings the total number of staff accredited to 235, over 90 per cent of those eligible.

Tasmanian Principals Institute

The Tasmanian Principals Institute, a joint project of the University of Tasmania and the Department of Education, had its first full year of operation. It provided a varied program of professional development for principals and school-based senior staff, including a Leading Learners program with invited overseas speakers. Initial statistics show that senior school staff at all levels of schooling attended the sessions. Approximately 12 per cent of all participants came from the non-government sectors.

Teacher education

A number of successful on-line discussions were held via the Discover website. These were open to all sectors and covered a range of topics. Some discussions were ongoing, others covered specific topics for a limited time. This is a growing form of professional development.

In science, a joint action research project with Curtin University continued. The program focuses on the participation, attitudes, expectations and achievement of year 11 science students. The program was funded by the Commonwealth Strategic Partnership with Industry Research and Training Scheme.

Accredited professional development

A variety of accredited professional development opportunities for teachers were facilitated by the Department of Education, ranging from the provision of HECS scholarships for pre-service teachers in selected areas to support for Masters and PhD students. A new in-service teaching qualification, titled Advanced Diploma of Design and Technology, was approved and will be offered to teachers in 2000. Graduate Diplomas were approved in Education (Teaching of Literacy) and Education (School Leadership). These will be offered along with the existing Graduate Diplomas in LOTE Teaching and Computing for Teaching and Learning.

Table 13.1 Year 3 reading outcomes

<i>Level descriptor</i>	<i>%F</i>	<i>%M</i>
Level A Read competently. Made more complex inferences and identified subtle details in passages.	36.36	30.85
Level B Demonstrated sound comprehension. Made basic inferences and judgements from what was read.	32.77	30.11
Level C Effectively determined the overall meaning of comprehension passages, and identified statements that had similar meanings.	26.50	33.17
Level D Read uncomplicated sentences and predicted the meaning of unrecognised words by simple word association.	1.17	1.74
Level Z Not enough information to report.	0.98	2.02

Source: Tasmanian Department of Education

Table 13.2 Year 3 writing outcomes

<i>Level descriptor</i>	<i>%F</i>	<i>%M</i>
Level A Wrote fluent, extended texts. Presented accurate and appropriate details. Sequenced ideas and events appropriately.	2.25	0.37
Level B Wrote texts that showed clear evidence of organisation, and detailed some of the ideas and/or events. Showed an ability to elaborate.	27.12	15.71
Level C Wrote texts that were focused on the topic and which showed clear signs of sequencing. Connected events and ideas.	54.28	55.24
Level D Wrote texts that showed some evidence of organisation and connections between events and ideas. Showed an elementary awareness of audience and purpose.	10.90	21.00
Level E Wrote briefly on the topics, with some degree of focus. Listed ideas and events instead of explicitly connecting them.	1.96	3.70
Level F Wrote brief texts that presented only one or two events or ideas.	0.23	0.79
Level Z Not enough information to report.	0.69	0.76

Source: Tasmanian Department of Education

Literacy and numeracy

The Office for Educational Review cooperated with the National Benchmarking Taskforce's procedures to measure the reading performance of year 3 students across Australia.

Monitoring processes in 1999 focused on year 3 and 5 students' achievements in literacy, and involved the government and Catholic sectors. Year 3 students' performance in reading has been reported through the National Benchmarking Taskforce's procedures. Additional information presented here describes literacy achievement for combined government and Catholic sector students.

Results are presented here for combined government and Catholic schools as a distribution, rather than against the benchmark.

The results suggest that girls are generally achieving at higher levels in both reading and writing.

Indigenous students

One program that appears to hold promise for improving outcomes for Indigenous students is INISSS (Improving Numeracy for Indigenous Students in Secondary Schools). Teachers and Aboriginal Education Workers in 19 government schools have participated in a professional development program aimed at improving cultural awareness and mathematics pedagogy. The program was evaluated using specially designed performance assessment tasks, given at the start and end of the year. Initial findings are shown in Table 13.3.

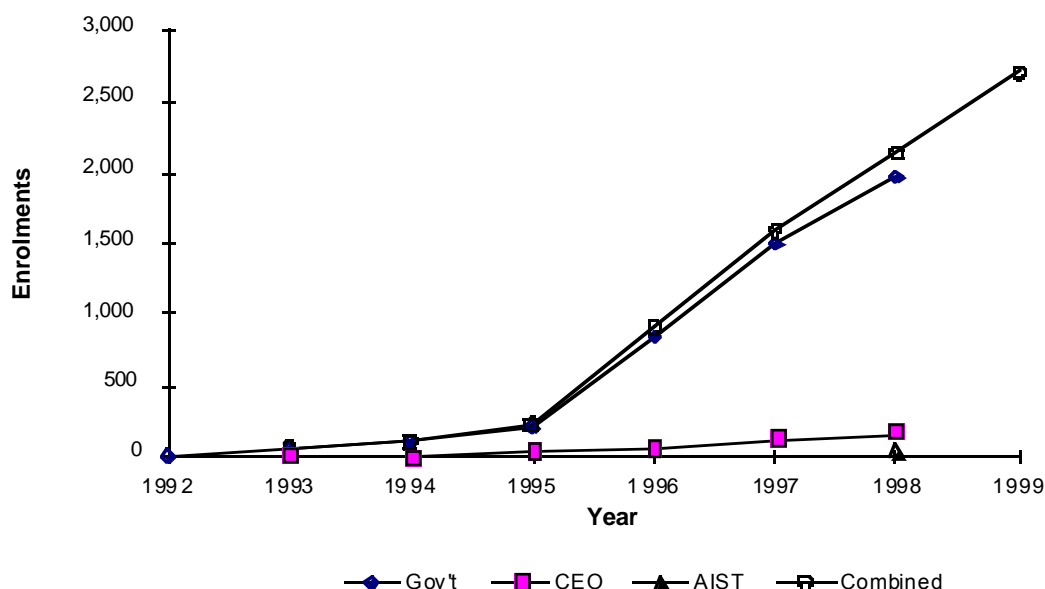
There was a 20 per cent improvement overall, but Indigenous students appear to have gained more from the program than non-Indigenous students. Further analysis is being done to establish which factors influenced this outcome.

Table 13.3 Findings from INISSS evaluation (per cent)

	<i>Aboriginal no. = 110</i>	<i>Non-Aboriginal no. = 1,830</i>	<i>Overall no. = 1,940</i>
Female	36.58	18.33	19.51
Male	39.73	19.40	20.78
Overall	38.19	18.86	20.14

Source: Tasmanian Department of Education

Figure 13.1 VET in Schools enrolments, all schools, Tasmania, 1992–99



Source: Tasmanian Department of Education

A strong program of cross-cultural awareness has improved teachers' understanding of Indigenous culture in Tasmania. Most schools are now teaching Aboriginal Studies in some integrated form, and a growing number are teaching it as a separate unit of work.

Changing Places, a program targeting teachers of students in grades 3–6, commenced in July. A novel feature of this professional development program is the involvement of parents of Aboriginal students in the professional development sessions.

Vocational education and training in schools

VET in Tasmanian schools refers to training delivered by schools to enrolled school students by an RTO, which may be the school, in accordance with the Australian Recognition Framework, or the requirements of accredited courses. The scope of VET in Schools qualifications in Tasmania currently comprises 53 Certificates, predominantly at Certificate 1 and 2. Each of the eight government senior secondary colleges attained quality-endorsed status during 1999.

A key factor is a policy of delivery of accredited VET courses in schools and a commitment to meeting training

outcomes at industry standards. Continued emphasis has been placed upon the development and expansion of structured workplace learning to support this delivery.

Participation in VET in Schools maintained rapid growth in Tasmania, as indicated in Figure 13.1. Enrolments in all Tasmanian schools and colleges increased from 2,133 in 1998 to 2,604 in 1999.

In 1998, 996 students were awarded VET Certificates and 828 students received VET Statements of Attainment. This figure rose in 1999 to 1,089 Certificates and 833 Statements of Attainment.

At the presentation of the National Assessment Awards organised by the Assessment Research Centre at the University of Melbourne, Tasmanian senior secondary colleges took the three major awards in the VET in Schools category. This demonstrates the growing expertise in competency-based assessment in Tasmanian schools.

Commonwealth-funded capital projects

Government sector

In 1999, the Commonwealth provided \$6.205 million towards capital projects in government schools in Tasmania.

Of the seven capital projects funded by the Commonwealth that were completed both physically and financially during 1999, the most common types of work undertaken were the upgrade of specialist teaching facilities, including technology and performing arts facilities. The projects also included library and classroom refurbishment and the construction of additional classrooms.

Catholic sector

In 1999, the Commonwealth provided \$1.405 million towards capital projects in Catholic schools in Tasmania.

Four capital projects funded by the Commonwealth were completed both physically and financially during 1999. These included the construction of general learning areas, science laboratories, art facilities with specialist areas,

pupils' amenities and administration facilities and refurbishment to provide technology and computer facilities in secondary schools.

Independent sector

In 1999, the Commonwealth provided \$687,679 towards capital projects in the independent sector.

Six capital projects were completed both physically and financially during 1999. They included the purchase of buildings for a primary school, refurbishment and the provision of classrooms for a secondary school, provision of networking of library facilities on three campuses of a K–12 school and the refurbishment of technology and related facilities in a K–10 school.