



5th September 2007

The Hon David Bartlett, MHA
Minister for Education
GPO Box 123
HOBART TAS 7001

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cc. Sec.

Dear Mr Bartlett

At the Annual Conference of Tasmanian State School Parents and Friends held on 18th August 2007 the following motion was carried:

That TASSP&F ask the Minister to take the focus of "Tasmania Tomorrow" from restructure to renewal and the improvement of state education.

Many past TASSP&F Conferences have called for action to be taken by the government, but never has there been a call for secondary colleges to be combined with TAFE.

The proposed structure does not seem to address any of the manifold problems we currently see in education.

Ostensibly this restructure is aimed at "retention" and the hope that a more vocational model will increase retention. Parents know, and research shows, that children become disengaged from school at grades 7 and 8 – not 11 and 12. Students leave school in years 11 and 12 because they can.

The exodus from public to private schools occurs at secondary school but many students return from private schools to the government secondary colleges. This surely is an indication that it is not Secondary Colleges that are the problem. It can also be clearly demonstrated that vocational education has worse retention than secondary colleges.

Within Australia, the ACT has the highest retention rate and has exactly the same structure as Tasmania. A recent report on the ACT system recommended it be retained.

Research from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) shows that vocational qualifications are only loosely connected to the jobs people do – i.e. most people do jobs they are not specifically trained for. This makes a mockery of "meaningful" qualifications. NCVER figures show that the growth in jobs has been greatest for degree qualifications, not narrow skills based training. This would

"...commitment to educational partnership."

therefore suggest that broader education in general is what we should aim for, not streaming at grade 10.

Past experience of restructures (e.g. CRESAP) shows that they involve an immense amount of resources and use up goodwill for little return. These resources invested into areas of greatest need in our schools may well address the problems the restructure is intending to resolve.

Contrary to your Government's research, no other country seems to combine tertiary adult students with school children in a systematic way. This alone is highly problematic. In the current education structure adults working with minors are expected to have police checks and adult TAFE students enjoy freedoms that students under the age of 18 legally cannot.

The last attempt at a similar melding of TAFE with Secondary Colleges ended in acrimony and disarray and to date no systematic report or study has been done. Tasmanian parents, through the TASSP&F Conference, therefore call on you to consult more broadly with parents and the community to guarantee that any changes ensure that we have an improved and cohesive education system serving all sectors.

Yours Sincerely



Jennifer Branch
President