



Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts

Media Advisory

Tuesday, 12 September 2023

Final Report:

Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Continuing Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Preparation for the Return to School in February 2022

The Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts (Committee) is finalising its targeted inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's continuing response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Committee tabled its first report (Report 1 of 3) in Parliament relating to the Government's planning and preparedness for reopening of the Tasmanian border. This Report focusses on the planning and preparation for the return to school in February 2022.

Committee Chair, Hon Ruth Forrest MLC stated: "The Committee notes the importance of regular attendance at school and engagement with education. This is critical to student learning outcomes and future opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic created significant disruptions to the education system and the early education and care sector. Access to school education and early education and care were vital for essential workers who could not work from home."

The Committee notes impacts on student learning and attendance, particularly for students with one or more disability, must continue to be assessed and any identification of lost learning addressed through evidence based approaches.

The Report provides evidence related to the financial and public health measures taken by Government to prepare for return to school for students and staff for the 2022 educational year and the financial, social and educational impacts associated with the measures implemented. Areas covered includes the impact on students and their educational outcomes, parents and carers, teaching and ancillary staff, and the early education and care sector.

Ms Forrest further stated: "It is vital that all key stakeholders, including all areas of education staff and those engaged in the early education and care sector are consulted and engaged in future pandemic planning and preparedness."

The Committee made 58 findings and 17 recommendations for the Government and the Department of Education Children and Young People to consider with respect to the education sector.

The recommendations reflect on areas where improvement could be made and around future planning. Whilst there were areas of inconsistency of approach, in broad terms the response was effective.

The Virtual Learning Centre as rolled out quickly and successfully and vital to the provision of continuous engagement for students who remained at home during the pandemic

The Committee acknowledges the extraordinary work undertaken by all Departmental staff to minimise disruption to student learning while keeping staff and students safe.

A copy of our Report is available on the Committee's Inquiry webpage: [Tasmanian Government's Continuing Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

The Members of the Committee are:

Legislative Council

Hon Ruth Forrest MLC (Chair)

Hon Meg Webb MLC

Hon Josh Willie MLC

House of Assembly

Ms Lara Alexander MP

Dr Shane Broad MP (Deputy Chair)

Mr Dean Young MP

Further information about the Committee is available on the [Committee website](#).

ends

Further information: Hon Ruth Forrest MLC (Chair) – 0419 879 524