

DRAFT SECOND READING SPEECH

HON. JEREMY ROCKLIFF MP

Education Bill 2016

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Madam Speaker, this legislation is about our children and Tasmania's future.

It is about our children and the ways in which we can best equip them for their future through the framework we create for their education.

It is about children who are already participating in education. And it is also about those who are not yet born. About children who will live in a world very different to our own.

Children born now in 2016 will be in education into the 2030s. Many will start families and employment in the 2030s and 40s. They will be 50 in 2066 and 70 in 2086.

We must think about them not in the context of our own education or of Tasmania now but in the context of what they will need in order to live well in the world of the future.

I have been particularly pleased at the level of public debate and involvement in the review of the *Education Act 1994* over the last two years. There has been extensive consultation over that period, and the Tasmanian community has embraced that opportunity. There have been more than 1 000 responses over three rounds of consultation from submissions to participation in workshops and information sessions. I have also met with many people over that time and there has been substantial public debate.

And this is what we have been discussing - the ways in which we can best equip our children for their future through the framework we create for their education.

It is this issue that frames the Bill.

For the Government, we believe that all children should have an education that helps to maximise their educational potential, and provides the foundation to enable them, throughout childhood and as an adult, to lead a fulfilling life and to contribute to society.

We believe that every child has a right to receive an education until the completion of Year 12.

And that parents play a critical role in the education of their child.

We believe that the wider community has an important part to play - that by working together we can support our young people to best advantage.

We believe that children themselves should have the opportunity to, and should be encouraged to be, actively involved in decisions affecting their participation in education.

We believe in the importance of the State providing universal access to education through the maintenance of a government school system. And of choice for parents through non-government schools and home education.

We believe in the importance of providing the foundation for lifelong learning.

These beliefs are reflected in the Objects and Principles that frame the Act.

Madam Speaker, education plays a vital role in improving the life choices and opportunities of individuals, and has a flow-on effect to the prosperity of the community as a whole.

It is not the end in itself, but rather the means by which we broaden the options each person has to choose the sort of life they wish to live.

Tasmania is a special place and, as the Premier outlined in his State of the State speech, it is changing for the better.

Our people, place and produce are our strengths. And while we have certainly come a long way there is still much more to do to realise our true potential.

We in Tasmania have some long-standing social and economic challenges.

For instance, we have:

- below average life expectancy,
- the highest numbers of people in Australia self-reporting their health as fair or poor,
- lower productivity than Australia as a whole, with the gap widening over the past 20 years,
- the highest levels of poverty in Australia, and
- the highest levels of disadvantage amongst preschool-aged children in Australia.

We know that improving educational outcomes is critical to addressing all of these challenges – to helping us to reach our true potential.

For instance, we know that people with higher levels of education have better health outcomes, earn more, are more likely to be employed and to participate in the life of the community. People with higher levels of education have more life chances and choices than those with less education.

And these improved chances and choices are passed on to subsequent generations. We know that parents' levels of education affect their children's educational performance as can be seen in tests such as NAPLAN, and that children of more highly educated parents are more likely to participate in higher education than the children of less educated parents.

The challenges Tasmania faces are complex and long-standing. They are intergenerational. Each young person who completes Year 12 or goes on to further education improves not only

their own opportunities but also those of their children. This is how we can address those challenges. This is how we can improve the lives of individuals and the prosperity of Tasmania now and into the future.

COMPULSORY YEARS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Madam Speaker, this is why the Government has proposed to extend the compulsory years of education and training - to have an earlier school starting age and to raise the minimum education and training leaving requirements.

In proposing a change to the starting age, the overwhelming evidence is clear: investing in a child's early years is by far the most effective way of ensuring that they lead a happy, healthy and productive life.

Further, quality early learning is particularly effective in helping children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is especially relevant to Tasmania given we have the highest levels of disadvantaged children of preschool age in Australia. Fifty-six per cent of our children are in the highest levels of disadvantage compared to 36 per cent nationally.

Currently, all Tasmanian children have universal access to quality early learning at four, when they are legally entitled to attend kindergarten for 15 hours a week.

Many are able to participate in quality early learning prior to this age through our education and care sector. But, unfortunately, many do not or cannot. In 2014 over 40 per cent of three year olds did not attend a child care benefit approved service.

The Government believes it is imperative to provide every Tasmanian child, regardless of where they live or of their family circumstances, with the opportunity to engage with quality early learning sooner than is now the case.

Tasmania has a proud history of being at the forefront of early childhood education. I want to take a moment to outline some of that history.

In 1868 Tasmania became the first colony to introduce compulsory education.

The Education Department has provided state-funded preschools, called kindergartens, linked to primary schools since 1911, along with others provided by the Kindergarten Union and parents.

In 1968, a review of education for children aged three to eight recommended the provision of kindergarten as part of the government school system, thereby introducing universal access to publicly funded pre-school for all Tasmanian children.

Importantly, the authors of the report recognised three things that continue to resonate strongly today:

- that "preschools and kindergartens should be organised as a common extension of the statutory education provisions...";
- that "education for this age-group is of particular importance, especially in the case of children from restricted backgrounds", and
- "the importance of a stimulating learning environment, the aim being to meet the all-round developing needs of the children through the provision of self-chosen play activities at the kindergarten/preschool level".

This is the underpinning philosophy for kindergartens in Tasmania – equity of access for all, recognition of the benefits of early learning, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and the importance of play in learning. It is as true now as it was then.

And research from across the world since that time has only reinforced the importance of this philosophy for early childhood education.

By 1980 the State was responsible for most kindergartens in Tasmania. Non-government schools gradually established kindergartens during the 1980s and now almost all primary schools deliver the program.

The 1994 Act enshrined the legal entitlement for all children to attend kindergarten in a government school.

And in 2003, under the Bacon Labor Government, Prep became compulsory on the basis that it was a critical year for the development of foundational literacy and numeracy skills.

Since then, kindergarten has been extended to 15 hours a week and *Launching into Learning* has been created. The Hodgman Liberal Government has built on this with the development of *Learning in Families Together*. And we continue to invest more and improve our world-leading Child and Family Centres.

The National Quality Framework has been developed to drive quality improvement in the education and care sector across Australia in recognition of the critical role it plays in early learning.

Despite this, Tasmanians are still not achieving the educational outcomes that they deserve. Saying that we have done enough in the early years is, therefore, not an option.

That is why the Government has continued to champion lowering the school starting age from five years to four years and six months. We believe that we are at a point in time where, unless we make some significant changes to education in Tasmania, we will never bring about the improvement in educational outcomes that we all desire.

There are a range of individuals and groups that have voiced their strong support for this move, recognising the once in a generation opportunity it provides.

There are also those who are opposed to the proposed change, the reasons for which are varied.

Having listened intently to these arguments and considered the wide range of views both in favour and in opposition, the Government has agreed that the age at which a child can commence Prep will be four and a half, with the compulsory starting age remaining at five.

This means children will be able to attend kindergarten from three and a half in the year before they start Prep. This will remain non-compulsory.

This still ensures that all Tasmanian children are able to participate in quality early learning sooner than is currently the case and, at the same time, provides parents with choice. It recognises the role that parents and guardians and that they know their children best.

Madam Speaker, this proposal reflects the Tasmanian context in terms of the best infrastructure to enable access by all children. The State has an obligation to ensure that every child is able to participate in education, and therefore, schools are situated so this can occur. As I have already outlined, kindergartens were attached to schools almost 50 years ago for this very reason.

The effectiveness of this mode of delivery was confirmed in 2014 in an independent review of the Universal Access to Early Childhood Education and Care National Partnership Agreement undertaken by Deloitte Access Economics. It found that "government preschool has been more effective in terms of achieving universal access outcomes, compared to other service delivery models ... in part, this reflects the fact that government preschools are more readily within the control of the state and territory governments, compared to non-government schools and, especially, preschool in long day care".

We need to work with what we have and use it to best advantage.

In recognition of the additional learning support that children of a younger age may require, the Government will commit an additional \$4.9 million per year to provide more staffing support in Prep across the government and non-government sectors. This is in addition to the \$17 million a year the Government has committed to supporting the change to the starting and leaving requirements. This includes funding to support students with disability and to provide extra professional staff such as speech therapists and school psychologists as the additional students move through the system in the implementation phase. The Government has always said it would resource the change and I want to assure you that will be the case.

Of course the learning must be developmentally appropriate and, therefore, the National Quality Standards will continue to be our guide. I have also committed that from 2020 all government kindergartens will be formally assessed against the standards. The Department has commenced working with regulatory bodies to give effect to this commitment.

The Government will continue to build on the great work being undertaken by our early childhood educators, to ensure that all Tasmanian students, from kindergarten to grade two, have access to appropriate, innovative, quality early learning. We will work with educators in schools, and with parents and carers, the education and care sector, and the community, to ensure that every Tasmanian child has access to innovative early learning in environments that foster curiosity and wonder.

The education and care sector plays an important and valued role in supporting children's development through early learning programs, as well as enabling parents to participate in the workforce. We need to work together to reach as many children as we can to make sure they have the best possible start in life.

To help support a stronger partnership, a new position, Principal Project Officer - Early Years, has been created in the Department to lead this work. One of the core purposes of this position will be to work collaboratively with educators to develop an implementation plan that will guide the reframing and strengthening of early years delivery in Tasmania.

We acknowledge that the change to the starting age will have an effect on the sector but believe that this will be significantly outweighed by the long term benefits to the Tasmanian community.

This is an opportunity to reconsider how the education and care sector and schools work together. There are many wonderful examples of collaboration but more can be done to strengthen the relationships in the best interests of our children - to share best practice and to draw on each other's strengths to lift the quality of both sectors.

There will be a range of initiatives to help build that closer relationship and lift quality by:

- supporting early childhood educators in the education and care sector to build on their skills and qualifications,
- supporting high quality decision-making and governance of early childhood education and care services, and
- supporting collaborative delivery of early childhood education and care.

First, I am pleased to announce that from 2017 the University of Tasmania will provide access to university-level qualifications for those in the education and care sector who wish to upgrade their early childhood qualifications.

Options will include a UTAS Diploma for those without an undergraduate degree, and a Professional Honours stream for those with an undergraduate degree. UTAS will provide scholarships to cover the HECS costs of this study for eligible students employed in the education and care sector. I thank the University for making this important contribution to early childhood education in Tasmania.

The Department already provides professional learning for its staff. There will be opportunities to build on the start that has been made in sharing best practice across the sectors through the creation of a learning and development strategy as part of the implementation plan. Those in the education and care sector will be supported to participate in relevant training offered by the Department, such as, family partnership training.

Second, a resource for boards on best practice governance will be available in 2017, as will a suite of modules for out-of-school-hours care providers.

The *Making Connections* publication will be updated in collaboration with the early childhood sector to strengthen the relationship between schools and the sector in regard to working together. And the good work undertaken in 2009 to clarify rental arrangements for education and care providers on school sites will also be reviewed to ensure the value of co-location and working together is recognised, and to ensure there is consistency.

Support provided to the sector through the Education and Care Unit grants program will be increased from \$600 000 to \$750 000 per annum. This program provides funding to support services to provide safe, inclusive, high-quality education and care, to encourage initiatives that aim to address skill needs of the education and care workforce and to promote initiatives that increase community understanding of the importance of high-quality education and care.

Third, if the change to the starting age passes the Parliament, there will be practical support to services to minimise the financial impact.

This will focus on understanding the specific impact of the changes on individual services and working with those services to identify opportunities in the local context. Currently, there are a range of models under which education and care services operate, and their connections to schools vary. There are, for example, many services that already operate from school sites or close to them, and there are others that work with a number of schools. Therefore, a 'one size fits all' approach to supporting the sector in light of the change to the starting age is not appropriate. Rather we need to work together to respond to local circumstances to meet local need.

Services that cater for children aged 3 and 4 years will be able to request assistance and will participate in a business analysis scoping exercise by an independent person. The consultant will work with those services to identify support options.

Services that participate and meet defined criteria will have the opportunity to receive advice from the consultant on how their business model may be adapted.

The Government will then provide up to \$2 million to provide practical support to services to make adjustments or to support improved arrangements for children in their transition from care to school.

And, Madam Speaker, there is time to plan and to work together over the next few years in the lead up to 2020.

The Bill also extends the minimum education and training leaving requirements.

The current legislative framework is a barrier to supporting completion of Year 12 because children are legally able to drop out of education or training when they turn 17. For most, this means they can leave in Year 11 and it concerns me that many of our young people choose to do so.

The minimum leaving requirements will be increased to the completion of Year 12, a certificate III or the age of 18, whichever occurs first.

There has been almost unanimous support for this change through the consultation process.

Of course, changing the leaving requirements won't be enough. Young people must have a range of interesting and relevant options. And this view was also clearly expressed through the consultation process.

Students will complete Year 10 at school and then their options will broaden, as is currently the case. The options currently available under the Guaranteeing Futures Act will continue as part of an approved learning program – school, apprenticeship or traineeship, other vocational education and training, a university course or a combination.

For those who choose to remain in a school, appropriate course offerings will be critical to engaging young people. Work is already underway to ensure this through the Years 11 and 12 curriculum framework and the commencement of a review of VET in schools, as part of a broader independent review of 9-12 education. The 9-12 review is being conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). ACER is an internationally recognised, independent research body that has contributed to educational research and development projects all around the world. Both of these will play an important role in ensuring there are appropriate pathways that meet student need and interest.

Employment will also continue to be an option. The employment requirement will rise from 25 hours to 35 hours a week – the ABS definition of full-time work. Any exemption from the education and training in Years 11 and 12 means that the young person is essentially an early school leaver without qualifications. It is, however, not reasonable to remove the option altogether because there should be some choice, although choice with a safety net that protects young people.

Given that is the case, the threshold should be set at a level that provides the young person with the best chance of earning at least a living wage. Linking the requirement to full-time employment means that the employment is more likely to be meaningful with a sense of participating in the workforce. There was almost unanimous support through the consultation process for employment to remain an option on the basis that it is full-time.

Currently, under the Guaranteeing Futures Act there is no mechanism to track participation so that a young person who has dropped out can be supported to re-engage with education and training. New measures have been included in the Bill to enable this to occur. As happens now, students in Year 10 will notify their intentions for years 11 and 12. What is different is that principals from all schools will provide this information to the Secretary, Department of Education. The Department is developing a system to manage this information. The Bill includes obligations for parents, schools, other providers and employers to advise when a young person drops out so that support can be put in place.

REGISTRAR

Madam Speaker, there are a number of functions under the Bill that require management that is independent of the Department.

Consequently, a position, Registrar – Education, has been created to manage the operational and administrative aspects of non-government school regulation, home education regulation and compulsory conciliation conferences.

This position replaces a part-time registrar position that supported the Schools Registration Board.

PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION

Madam Speaker, supporting all children's access to and participation in education is a recurring theme in this Bill.

Current informal arrangements for dual enrolment of students with disability across support schools and mainstream schools and between the government and non-government sectors has been formalised. For example, this provides a legislative basis for enrolment of students in a mainstream school and a support school such as Giant Steps. There is currently no legislative basis for this arrangement and so the Bill now provides for this.

And, for the first time, children who are home educated will be able to partially enrol in a school as part of their home education program. Parents will still be required to provide the majority of the program as the child is being home educated. However, where a parent determines it is in their child's interests to attend school part-time, this will now be possible.

There are also two new measures that have been included in the Bill to support children's participation in education.

A new compulsory conciliation conference process will help to resolve reasons for chronic, unexplained non-attendance at school.

Importantly, a conciliation conference will involve the parents, and the child if he or she wishes to participate. This is consistent with our belief that parents play a critical role in their child's education and that children should be able to participate in decisions affecting their education.

This new measure has been included for two reasons.

Firstly, research shows that any absence from school has a direct and cumulative negative effect on students' future achievement. The more education that is missed, the more difficult it is to catch up. Attendance is a prerequisite to attainment.

Secondly, once schools exhaust the options they have to resolve non-attendance, the only legislative option available is prosecution through the courts.

The court process is not effective as a way to manage non-attendance - it is complex, time-consuming and adversarial. And the only remedy open to a court is to impose a fine on the parents. This does not resolve the reason for the non-attendance.

The reasons children don't attend school can be complex. And, therefore, a process that explores those reasons in a non-adversarial way can only be of benefit.

Conferences will be available to students in the government and non-government sectors. There will be a threshold before a conference can be requested to ensure all school-based attempts to resolve non-attendance have been exhausted.

Independent conciliators will manage the conferences, which will be undertaken in a non-adversarial environment. They will involve parents, the child if he or she wishes to participate, and the school principal. Others may be invited if their participation will help to reach a solution.

Conciliators will prepare reports with recommendations. For example, this could include the parents and/or the school being directed to undertake a training course.

Where no justifiable reason for the non-attendance is found, there will be a power for a compulsory schooling order to be issued to the parents. Ultimately, parents have a legal obligation to ensure their child is enrolled in and attending school, or is registered for home education.

Where an order is not complied with, the failure to comply will result in an offence heard in the Magistrate's Court. The court will now have options other than simply fining parents by being able to issue a community service order.

The ability to hold compulsory conciliation conferences and to issue compulsory schooling orders will provide an additional and timelier mechanism to work through non-attendance issues than is currently available.

A new measure has also been included in the Bill to better support individual students who have conditions which mean their behaviour may pose a risk to themselves or others.

This measure has been included for three reasons.

Firstly, we want to ensure schools are able to develop and maintain strategies to support a child with such issues and, at the same time, to eliminate or minimise the risk of harm.

Secondly, appropriate student behaviour is critical to creating an environment that is conducive to learning and attainment for both the student concerned and other students.

And thirdly, school principals have a non-delegable duty of care for students and staff.

Again, importantly the child's parents will be actively involved in the development of the plan, as will the child if that is practicable.

Once a child is enrolled and if the principal deems there is behaviour that may pose a risk to the child or others, information may be sought from a range of sources, including the child's parents/carers, another school, and a range of other organisations. A parent may be asked to provide medical information if this is relevant but this cannot be required – parents will decide whether to provide it.

The purpose for collecting information will be to develop a risk management plan to help protect the child and others.

Madam Speaker, there was considerable feedback through the consultation process of the importance of understanding and responding appropriately to the background or context of each child, such as their experience with mental illness, trauma or abuse, or challenging behaviour arising from a disability. Sharing information and joining up support provided by different agencies in order to be able to do this was also raised.

This measure will enable school staff to do that.

STATE SCHOOLS

For State schools, the way behaviour and discipline are managed has been updated to ensure that best practice approaches such as restorative justice are tried before suspension can be used.

As I outlined earlier, appropriate student behaviour creates an environment that is conducive to learning and attainment for both the student concerned and other students.

At the same time, suspending a child without working through some sort of practice such as restorative justice process does not resolve the poor behaviour. It simply removes the child for the period of the suspension.

Approaches such as restorative justice help students, parents and teachers to build, maintain and restore relationships. They also help to build capacity in students to self-regulate behaviour.

Suspension is effectively forced disengagement from education and so must be used very carefully. The Bill includes a new requirement that where a student is suspended, alternative educational arrangements must be made for the period of the suspension.

Principals will, however, have the power to immediately remove a child who is posing a risk to other students or staff.

Madam Speaker, there are two other areas specific to State schools on which I would like to briefly touch – intake areas and school associations.

INTAKE AREAS

Under the Bill, State schools will continue to have home areas, which will be called intake areas. Intake areas ensure that all children are able to exercise their entitlement to education because they ensure that each child has an automatic place at a school.

Under the Bill, the Secretary will be required to publish intake area boundaries at least every five years.

The Secretary is responsible for the orderly management of the public school system at an operational level and management of enrolment is an essential component of that responsibility.

Parents will continue to be able to enrol their child in an out-of-intake area school where there is capacity and if the child meets the requirements of the school's out-of-intake area enrolment plan.

To ensure a transparent process, the Secretary will also be required to publish instructions for eligibility to enrol in a school outside the intake area, including instruction on how to calculate whether the school has capacity.

Schools will develop an out-of-intake area enrolment plan in consultation with their school association.

SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

As I outlined earlier, the important role parents play in their child's education is explicitly recognised in the Bill. It is not only that parents have a right to be involved but evidence shows parental involvement improves the educational outcomes of their children.

School associations are one way of involving parents and the community in the life of the school. Therefore, the requirement for all government schools to have an association has been retained.

As is currently the case:

- school association functions and powers are set out in the Act,
- associations will have a constitution approved by the Minister,
- associations will be able to open and operate a bank account, which may be audited,
- associations will be required to report annually to the principal and the school community,

- Secretary's Instructions may be developed to guide issues such as the formation and operation of associations.

The functions of school associations set out in the 1994 Act are outdated. They have been updated to reflect current practice. They still ensure associations are involved in formulating school policies, and participating in establishing the school's strategic directions and values, and evaluating performance.

Following feedback on the status of school associations through the consultation process on the draft Bill, further work has been undertaken.

Associations will now be incorporated under the Education Act rather than the *Associations Incorporation Act 1964*. Incorporation will provide legal protections as well as a platform for associations to continue to be able to apply for grants.

The Department received advice that incorporation would not protect individual members from being sued in addition to an association. A new provision has been included to provide immunity from liability of an association member where they have acted in good faith. The liability will instead rest with the Crown.

In return for the Crown providing this protection, the Crown must also manage its exposure to unnecessary risk and, therefore, protect the taxpayers of Tasmania. Associations will need the Secretary's approval to employ staff, own property, borrow money or enter into contracts over a certain amount. This will, for example, enable the Secretary to ensure that proper governance and risk management strategies are in place to protect associations and the Crown as far as is possible.

REGISTERED SCHOOLS

The review of the Act has also provided an opportunity to ensure the framework for the regulation of non-government schools is meeting the needs of students and schools.

A number of improvements have been made to the regulatory processes.

The Schools Registration Board has been retained. Following feedback from the non-government sector its title has been changed to more accurately reflect its role. It is now the Non-government Schools Registration Board.

Board membership continues to be representative of the non-government sector with some minor refinement. In addition to being representative, members will now also have expertise in areas such as education, law, governance and finance. This can only strengthen the performance of the Board.

The current Act does not distinguish between the registration processes for new schools and existing schools that are re-registering. It also does not allow systems of schools that operate under a single governance arrangement to register as a system, such as Catholic schools.

The Bill includes separate processes for each of these situations so now there are processes tailored for the registration of new schools, re-registration of existing schools, and for systems of schools to be registered.

In regard to the new category of systems of schools, the Registration Board has sufficient powers to ensure that the system and the schools operating as part of it are meeting the required standard.

The Standards will be in Regulation and will be modified to reflect the new processes for a new school, re-registration of an existing school or a system of schools.

The Board also has more flexibility in the registration process as it will now be able to register with conditions. Currently, where a school is not meeting the standards the Board's only option is to recommend cancellation of the registration. The Bill includes provisions that allow the Board to register with conditions where the outstanding issues do not put students or staff at risk and where the deficiency can be rectified within a timeframe set by the Board.

Reviews will be undertaken by registration officers with educational qualifications, with a Board member participating as an observer.

The Registrar, Education will manage the day-to-day operations and manage the operational aspects of the regulatory process. The Registrar will work to the Non-government Schools Registration Board in regard to non-government school registration.

HOME EDUCATION

The review of the Act has also provided an opportunity to consider the framework for home education.

As Minister for Education, I have a duty to ensure that every child in Tasmania receives an education that is of a standard that sets them up for the best life possible.

Let me be clear at the outset – home education is a legitimate option in Tasmania. And the Government's intention is to protect and support it by enshrining it in legislation but, importantly, in a way that means parents retain the freedom to choose the type of home education that is right for their child.

Currently home education is regulated under one section of the 1994 Act. Essentially, the way home education is managed is entirely at the discretion of the Minister of the day. And, therefore, the Minister could change it completely or impose any conditions he or she wished.

I know that some in the home education community are concerned that, through the Bill, the types of home education that could be offered would be limited – or that adherence to a particular curriculum or standardised testing would be compulsory. In fact, this could happen now as the Minister has the power to set up any system for home education he or she wishes.

I want to place on record that the intention is to retain the integrity of the current home education system and to take the current administrative processes and enshrine them in legislation as far as is possible. Let me be clear, there is no intention to impose a particular curriculum or to make participation in standardised testing compulsory.

The changes will, for the first time, establish the Tasmanian Home Education Advisory Council (THEAC) in legislation, rather than existing at the discretion of the Minister. The Bill establishes that the majority of the members of THEAC must have home education experience. This ensures a strong voice for home educators in the management of the system.

THEAC will be involved and provide advice at every key stage of the home education process, with a registrar managing the administrative workload and approving home education plans.

Parents who wish to home educate their child will apply for approval of a home education plan. They do not need to personally register to deliver home education and then seek approval for a plan. There will be a one-step approvals process so that a parent applies for home education with a proposed plan. Once the plan is approved then the parent is also approved. Registration officers will visit each family at least once a year to discuss the child's progress and the plan for the following year.

This is an improvement on the current system as it is possible for a family to not receive a visit for two years. This means a child who is home educated for all of the compulsory years of education may only be monitored six times over the current 11 years of compulsory education. Annual visits provide a safety net and a support for home educating parents.

THEAC currently has standards that it has developed over time to assess both the initial registration and education plans. Similar standards will be set out in regulation to give them legal status. THEAC has been working with home educators to refine those standards. The standards will describe the sorts of matters that must be covered in a home education program. They do not specify that a particular sort of curriculum must be used. For example, the standards will require a home education program to cover such things as the pedagogy to be used, literacy, numeracy, interpersonal skills, and a broad range of learning areas.

The Registrar, Education will approve home education programs on advice from THEAC and will also manage the day-to-day operational aspects of the regulatory processes. The Registrar will work closely with THEAC in regard to home education.

ONE ACT

Finally, this Bill creates one Act, replacing the current *Education Act 1994*, the *Youth Participation in Education and Training (Guaranteeing Futures) Act 2005* and the *Education and Training (Tasmanian Academy) Act 2008*.

The Tasmanian Academy Act establishes some colleges in the State system. The Academy was established as part of the Tasmania *Tomorrow* initiative and prior to this, colleges were created as schools under the Education Act. The Academy is the last remaining vestige of the Tasmania *Tomorrow* initiative and ceased to be a statutory authority in 2010, when it was transferred to

the Department of Education. It was not considered as part of the vocational education and training review undertaken by Virginia Simmons in 2012 as it was outside the scope of that review.

In other states, rather than a discrete Act such as the Guaranteeing Futures Act, provisions around leaving age are generally incorporated into the main piece of legislation dealing with compulsory education. Having a separate Act is also inconsistent with a K-12 approach and the Government's initiative to extend regional high schools to Years 11 and 12.

A single Education Act will promote a seamless education system through to Year 12 (or equivalent), clarify the responsibilities of parents/carers and promote the expectation that the completion of Year 12 (or equivalent) is the minimum education or training that young people need to succeed in life, learning and work.

CONCLUSION

Madam Speaker, I want to place on record my appreciation to the Tasmanian community for the feedback we've received over the last two years. The Government has listened carefully and has responded to that feedback. The Bill before the House reflects that and has been refined in many areas as a consequence.

Madam Speaker, as I outlined at the beginning of this speech, this Bill is about the ways in which we can best equip our children for their future through the framework we create for their education.

It will set the framework and the standards that we as a community expect for the education of our children now and in the future.

Madam Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.