

Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations (TASSO)

Narrative

In dealing with the Budget wages freeze proposal then the staff cuts to education, TASSO agreed that the damage to children's future education were becoming unacceptable. It seemed that the normal process of leaving it up to the unions, the bureaucracy, the government or the industrial commission was not working. Children (and parents) were becoming bargaining chips in other agendas.

Over time, discussions among TASSO "people" led to the proposal that TASSO should seek, on its own behalf, to try to negotiate a resolution. That course of action was endorsed at the last TASSO management committee meeting in Ross.

TASSO is an independent body with a responsibility to act in the best interests of children together with parents/carers in Government Schools. That is why we taking action.

Jenny Eddington then got on with the communication with the Minister's office and the DoE. Peter Kearney then got on with trying to put together a proposal that made educational sense and would achieve the outcome of being the basis for resolving the issues. This meant confidential discussions with some teachers, some principals and other stakeholders.

TASSO office and Jenny Eddington via many emails and calls are well aware of the informed opinion coming from parents, schools and indeed teachers and Principals. The debate has highlighted many equity issues and is also beginning to create an urban- rural divide.

This final proposal takes account of contacts with the AEU and the Ministers office. It is TASSO's proposal and does not have the support of either the Minister or the AEU. The proposal is one that Jenny Eddington and Peter Kearney believe should be the basis of negotiations between the AEU and the Minister. The issues we have highlighted are real. We would have liked to have a proposal that could have been accepted. However, that will have to be, and should be, the result of the negotiations between the Minister and the AEU.

In doing the consultation and drawing up the proposal, TASSO is providing the required leadership to our parents and the community. It focuses attention back on the need for negotiations to take place and for the educational needs of Government School children to be put first.

To emphasise the point, the current standoff between the AEU and the Minister is damaging children and schools in the Government sector. It is completely unacceptable for that to be happening. TASSO believes that this matter can be resolved. We have heard much blame and recrimination. We are no longer prepared to put up with the current situation. TASSO calls on both the Minister and the AEU to commence serious negotiations. Our proposal demonstrates that the parties are can reach a settlement.

Government school children first.

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Rationale for the Proposal

Schools, teachers and parents are telling Jenny Eddington and Peter Kearney that there is a growing sense of desperation. How can all this be managed? Can we cope? The resilient culture that had enabled schools and teachers to weather the CRESAP cuts and the churning of the last 12 years has gone. The staff cuts were just the last straw. The TASSO proposal reflects and takes on some of these issues.

Children need a rounded curriculum. Music, Phys Ed, Languages, Student support, Library, Band are not “extras”. As is being seen, some of these are put in place with complex support structures involving parents, the school, the community and the DoE. The suggestion that the cuts are small and would not do much damage was very wrong

The IT technicians cut was seen as just out being of touch with the current situation in schools; and what schools would need in 2015.

There is also real concern that the resources available to meet student needs are just dangerously inadequate.

So the proposal asks teachers to accept the 18 month pay freeze so that staff to schools will not be cut.

The proposal asks for reinstatement of the IT technicians and puts in place additional student support resources. It asks for 2 extra PD days, 1 specifically for MyEducation.

Significantly, it asks for a halt to the ever growing demands from DoE central. It asks for the autonomy of the Principal in relation to their accountability to be looked at urgently.

The proposal, if it were accepted, would result in a quiet year for schools. It will stop 2015 becoming a year of constant “bushfires” and conflict, involving parents and teachers around the state. It will stop the damage to children, children’s education and government schools. It will give everyone in government schools; children, parents and staff, a chance to get on unhindered with the things they should be getting on with: Learning, teaching and enjoying life at their school.

If this proposal is not acceptable to the AEU and the Minister, then you now negotiate a proposal that you will accept.