

# 2019 TASC SPECIAL PROVISIONS PROJECT

TASC and schools share responsibilities and obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and *Disability Standards for Education 2005* to make reasonable adjustments to enable students eligible on the grounds of disability, to participate in programs, and associated assessments, on the same basis as other students.

TASC is committed to ensuring a contemporary, fair and equitable process for eligible senior secondary students.

Following a Request for Quotation process, TASC appointed consultant John Firth to undertake a Special Provisions Project throughout June 2019. In October 2019, Mr Firth provided TASC with the Project Report, *Special Provisions in the Tasmanian Certificate of Education* outlining 17 Recommendations.

The Statement of Requirements for the Review were to:

- review and document current special provision arrangements in Tasmania
- review and document current special provision arrangements in other jurisdictions
- document recommendations to ensure TASC adopts best practice.

Key stakeholders of the senior secondary community were represented at group and individual consultations across the state throughout May 2019 including school representatives, school psychologists, the University of Tasmania, the Australian Education Union, the Independent Education Union, the Department of Education, Independent Schools Tasmania, Catholic Education Tasmania, the Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations, disability advocates and TASC staff.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### RECOMMENDATION 1

*The Office of TASC should develop a formal policy on the purpose, nature and scope of arrangements for examinations for students with disabilities to ensure that all students are able to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do in relation to the learning outcomes of TCE subjects.*

Recommendation 1 is **accepted**, noting that language in the policy will focus on students requiring reasonable adjustments rather than students with disabilities.

### RECOMMENDATION 2

*The Office of TASC should adopt more inclusive and positive language to describe the arrangements provided for students with disabilities to undertake TCE examinations.*

Recommendation 2 is **accepted**, noting that this recommendation builds on work already underway in liaison with other Australian jurisdictions to achieve a consistent and inclusive strengths based approach to the provision of reasonable adjustments.

### RECOMMENDATION 3

*The Office of TASC should introduce an early application process for students with ongoing disabilities and evidence of successful support for their learning. The timing should allow for provisions to be approved before the students begin their TCE course.*

Recommendation 3 is **accepted in principle**, noting that TASC is limited in its ability to require schools and colleges to undertake actions in relation to students who have not yet commenced TASC-accredited courses.

TASC will develop and introduce a process enabling early application for special provisions, recognising that its use will be at the discretion and preference of each individual school.

#### RECOMMENDATION 4

*The Office of TASC should develop a timeline for the incorporation of the entire Special Provision application and decision-making process into TRACS.*

Recommendation 4 is **noted**. The development and delivery of TRACS systems capability is planned and determined on the basis of available resources and emerging priorities, following rigorous testing processes. Full integration of Special Provisions processes into TRACS will be progressed as early as possible, using a phased approach consistent with business priorities.

#### RECOMMENDATION 5

*The Office of TASC should develop explanatory materials about the purposes, underlying principles, scope and nature of Special Provision for use by students, parents, schools and the broader community to increase the awareness and understanding of the support that is available to eligible students.*

Recommendation 5 is **accepted**.

#### RECOMMENDATION 6

*The Office of TASC should redesign the application forms for Special Provision to clearly distinguish between the grounds for the application being made and the provisions being sought.*

Recommendation 6 is **accepted**, noting that the redesign of the application form will build on work already underway to streamline the process of applying for and delivering reasonable adjustments.

#### RECOMMENDATION 7

*The current process of applicants receiving automatic upgrade under borderline consideration should be discontinued.*

Recommendation 7 is **accepted**, noting that Tasmania is currently the only jurisdiction throughout Australia and New Zealand that applies borderline consideration.

#### RECOMMENDATION 8

*TASC should develop a tailored form for medical and other professionals to provide supporting evidence which focusses on the functional impact of the student's condition.*

Recommendation 8 is **accepted**.

#### RECOMMENDATION 9

*To enhance and clarify the decision-making process, the Office of TASC should appoint a small number of expert practitioners to provide professional advice in reviewing difficult to determine cases.*

Recommendation 9 is **accepted**.

#### RECOMMENDATION 10

*The Executive Officer should ensure that responsibility for managing Special Provision applications is shared by at least two staff members and that any decision to refuse an application is confirmed by a second staff member.*

Recommendation 10 is **accepted**, noting that this recommendation affirms current practice.

#### RECOMMENDATION 11

*The Office of TASC should publish a simple, clear decision-making flow chart which includes information about review processes and the right to appeal final decisions.*

Recommendation 11 is **accepted**, noting that formal arrangements for review and right to appeal will need to be developed to maximise the benefit and availability of other existing appeal mechanisms within government.

### RECOMMENDATION 12

*The Office of TASC should collaborate with other ACACA agencies in seeking to develop more common and consistent definitions of eligibility categories and criteria to assist in the development of more effective responses.*

Recommendation 12 is **accepted**, noting that this work is already in progress as part of the national agenda.

### RECOMMENDATION 13

*As part of the redevelopment of communication materials about Special Provision, TASC should liaise with the school sector authorities, the Department of Health and Human Services and peak community organisations to provide advisory materials for students and schools about access to support services for students with mental health issues.*

Recommendation 13 is **accepted**.

### RECOMMENDATION 14

*TASC should allow for students to apply for different forms of Special Provision for individual subjects, in accordance with the nature of the examinations.*

Recommendation 14 is **accepted**, noting current intention for the redesigned application form (recommendation 6) to enable a single application form to be submitted, identifying student needs in relation to each specific course or assessment type.

### RECOMMENDATION 15

*TASC should consult with schools that are examination centres about requirements for smaller examination spaces and the accompanying supervision arrangements.*

Recommendation 15 is **noted**. Special Provision requirements in each school vary from year to year and is driven by student needs. TASC will continue to liaise with schools as required. The redesigned application form (Recommendation 6) will seek greater clarity of student needs in relation to the examination space, to enable the use of *smaller* assessment rooms rather *separate* rooms for each student, where appropriate.

### RECOMMENDATION 16

*As part of its regular review of examination implementation with Examination Supervisor Co-ordinators, TASC should consider issues arising from the increasing numbers and complexity of Special Provision, including rates of remuneration and training of Supervisors.*

Recommendation 16 is **accepted in part**. TASC sessional staff are remunerated in accordance with the *Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification (Fees) Regulations 2013*. TASC will maximise the benefit of Supervisor training days by including a particular focus on the organisational implications for provision of reasonable adjustments for students. It will further inform its continuous improvement agenda through feedback sought from Supervisors and Supervisor Coordinators.

### RECOMMENDATION 17

*TASC should develop an implementation plan to progressively introduce those recommendations from this report that it chooses to adopt. It should report progress on this plan as part of its annual reporting on Special Provisions.*

Recommendation 17 is **accepted**. Implementation of accepted recommendations will be planned and progressed by an internal project group, with progress reported through TASC's national reporting mechanism.