

PROJECT AGREEMENT FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERED SCHOOLS

FUNDED UNDER THE INDEPENDENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

An agreement between:

- the **Commonwealth of Australia**; and
- **Tasmania**.

This project will increase the autonomy of government schools in Tasmania.

Project Agreement

PRELIMINARIES

1. This Project Agreement (the Agreement) is created subject to the provisions of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations (IGA FFR) and should be read in conjunction with that Agreement and its Schedules, which provide information in relation to performance reporting and payment arrangements under the IGA FFR.
2. This Agreement will support the increased autonomy in some 1,500 government schools across Australia including through greater engagement of parents and local communities in school decision making and the provision of professional development for principals, school leaders and school communities through:
 - (a) focus on local governance;
 - (b) increased accountability to the local community;
 - (c) the use of streamlined or one-line budgets;
 - (d) local management of school facilities; and
 - (e) increased delegation over staffing for school principals.
3. This Agreement, including its Schedule, constitutes the entire agreement for this project.

PART 1 – FORMALITIES

Parties to this Agreement

4. This Agreement is between the Commonwealth of Australia (the Commonwealth) and Tasmania.

Term of the Agreement

5. This Agreement will commence as soon as the Commonwealth and Tasmania sign the Agreement and will expire on 30 June 2017 or on completion of the project, including final performance reporting and processing of final payments, unless terminated earlier or extended as agreed in writing by the Parties.

PART 2 – PROJECT OUTPUTS

6. The outputs of this Agreement are activities to assist government schools in transitioning to greater independence.
7. The specific outputs to be achieved by Tasmania are described in the Independent Public Schools Implementation Proposal at Schedule 1 of this Agreement.

PART 3 – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EACH PARTY

Role of the Commonwealth

8. The Commonwealth will be responsible for:
 - (a) monitoring and assessing the achievements of Tasmania against its Implementation Proposal in the delivery of the Independent Public Schools Initiative under this Agreement to ensure that outputs are delivered within the agreed timeframe; and
 - (b) providing a financial contribution to Tasmania to support the implementation of this Agreement.

Role of Tasmania

9. Tasmania will be responsible for:
 - (a) all aspects of delivering on the project outputs set out in this Agreement; and
 - (b) reporting on the delivery of outputs as set out in Part 4 – Performance Requirements, Reporting and Payments.

Shared roles

10. Both Parties will meet the requirements of Schedule E, Clause 26 of the IGA FFR, by ensuring that prior agreement is reached on the nature and content of any events, announcements, promotional material or publicity relating to activities under this Agreement, and that the roles of both Parties will be acknowledged and recognised appropriately.

PART 4 – PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS, REPORTING AND PAYMENTS

11. Table 1 summarises the performance requirements for the project, relevant reporting dates and expected payments to be made, subject to the annual performance report demonstrating that the milestones have been met.

Table 1: Milestones, reporting and payment summary

Outputs	Milestones	Report due	Payment
Increased autonomy in government schools in accordance with clause 7 of this Agreement	Agreement to Implementation Proposal	n/a	\$0.3m
	Achievement of scheduled progress against the agreed Project Implementation Proposal	30 April 2015 covering the 1 July 2014 to 31 March 2015 period	\$0.6m
	Achievement of scheduled progress against the agreed Project Implementation Proposal	30 April 2016 covering the 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 period	\$0.6m
	Achievement of scheduled progress against the agreed Project Implementation Proposal	30 April 2017 covering the 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 period	\$0.6m

Reporting arrangements

12. Tasmania will provide the Commonwealth with performance reports in accordance with Table 1 of this Agreement, consistent with the agreed Independent Public Schools Implementation Proposal included at Schedule 1.
13. If all scheduled progress has not been completed by 31 March 2017, then Tasmania will also provide the Commonwealth a final performance report within 90 days of the completion of the project, covering achievement of scheduled progress against the Implementation Proposal for the 1 April 2017 to 31 December 2017 period.

PART 5 – FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

14. The Commonwealth will provide a total financial contribution to Tasmania of \$2.1 million in respect of this Agreement. All payments are GST exclusive.
15. The Commonwealth's funding contribution will not be reduced were Tasmania to secure funding from other activity partners through innovative and collaborative partnerships.
16. The Commonwealth's financial contribution to the operation of this Agreement, including through National Partnership payments to Tasmania paid in accordance with *Schedule D — Payment Arrangements* of the IGA FFR, are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Estimated financial contributions

(\$ million)	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	Total
Estimated total budget	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.6	2.1
Less estimated National Partnership payments	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.6	2.1
Balance of non-Commonwealth contributions	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

17. Having regard to the agreed estimated costs of the project specified in this Agreement, Tasmania will not be required to pay a refund to the Commonwealth if the actual cost of the project is less than the agreed estimated cost of the project. Similarly, Tasmania bears all risk should the costs of the project exceed the agreed estimated costs. The Parties acknowledge that this arrangement provides the maximum incentive for Tasmania to deliver projects cost effectively and efficiently.

PART 6 – GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Enforceability of the Agreement

18. The Parties do not intend any of the provisions of this Agreement to be legally enforceable. However, that does not lessen the Parties' commitment to this Agreement.

Variation of the Agreement

19. The Agreement may be amended at any time by agreement in writing by both the Parties.
20. Either Party to the Agreement may terminate their participation in the Agreement at any time by notifying the other Party in writing.

Delegations

21. The Commonwealth Minister for Education may delegate the assessment of performance against the Project Implementation Proposal and the authorisation of related project payments to senior Commonwealth officials, having regard to the financial and policy risks associated with those payments.

Dispute resolution

22. Either Party may give notice to the other Party of a dispute under this Agreement.
23. Officials of both Parties will attempt to resolve any dispute in the first instance.
24. If a dispute cannot be resolved by officials, it may be escalated to the relevant Ministers.

The Parties have confirmed their commitment to this agreement as follows:

Signed *for and on behalf of the Commonwealth
of Australia by*

The Honourable Christopher Pyne MP

Minister for Education

Date:

Signed *for and on behalf of the
Tasmania by*

The Honourable Jeremy Rockliff MP

Deputy Premier

Minister for Education and Training

Date:

Schedule 1

1. Current level of autonomy

Empowered leadership and community partnerships are key drivers of the Tasmanian Department of Education's (DoE) Learners First Strategic Plan 2014-17. Tasmanian public schools are already progressing along a continuum towards greater autonomy, local decision making and parent empowerment with systemic support to build leadership capacity that drives school improvement based on local needs and priorities.

All public schools have the same degree of devolved decision making with the following comments applying to all schools.

Governance

A requirement for *every* school to have a School Association with parent representatives was introduced in 2003 with changes to the *Education Act 1994*. School Associations have both an advisory and decision making role in local schools. For instance School Associations have a decision making role to approve school policies and budgets while having a broad advisory role to the principal and the Secretary of DoE.

Budgets

DoE introduced a new streamlined funding model (Fairer Funding Model) for public schools from 2014, significantly reducing the complexity of the model and increasing the discretion that schools have over how they spend funding to best meet the needs and priorities of their students.

Public schools now have a three line budget in their School Resource Package:

- a fairer funding allocation (includes most of the funding schools receive and is at the complete discretion of the school)
- facility funding (to fund school running and maintenance costs, some of which is at the discretion of the school)
- discrete program funding.

Each school is funded centrally for a staffing profile that is based on a formula that reflects the school's sector, context, student enrolment and distance from key services.

Staffing

Schools are responsible for undertaking selection processes for permanent vacancies. The principal has autonomy to make a selection based on merit but does not have the delegation to approve the appointment (this delegation is held centrally).

Parents, through School Associations, must be represented on selection panels for the appointment of a principal to a permanent position in a school.

For casual or fixed term vacancies, schools have complete autonomy to select and approve appointments.

While each school has an approved classification profile, schools have flexibility to appoint staff outside the classification profile where they choose to utilise discretionary funding from their School Resource Package (e.g. they could choose to purchase the difference between an Advanced Skills Teacher and an Assistant Principal if that better met the school's needs and priorities).

Purchasing and minor works

Tasmanian schools possess significant autonomy to make purchasing decisions. For instance principals have a financial delegation to approve expenditure of up to \$100,000 without head office approval. Assistant Principals have a delegation of \$50,000 while Senior Executive Officers have a financial delegation of \$10,000. This compares with New South Wales' recent announcement that principals could now make purchases of up to \$5,000 without head office approval.

Schools are funded for routine maintenance and have discretion about how this funding can be applied, for instance, purchasing solar panels, painting internally and externally, grounds maintenance, floor coverings, minor plumbing, joinery and electrical works. The Department's Facility Services manages capital and minor works greater than \$20,000. Facility Services is also funded for the management of heating and ventilation, lifts, fire services, test and tag and security monitoring for schools.

Partnership arrangements and community use of school facilities

Schools have the autonomy to enter into funding or partnership arrangements with local business, industry or community organisations, as long as it is in accordance with the Department's policies and procedures. Schools also determine community use of their facilities, including

- school buildings and the facilities contained within them
- school grounds and recreation areas and associated structures
- car parking areas.

Accountability for performance

All principals have a performance development plan, as do teachers. Since 2012 the Department of Education has been implementing an integrated and comprehensive approach to school improvement that focuses upon building leadership capacity, developing and supporting all schools on their own improvement agenda, ensuring consistent implementation across the curriculum and using data to support and monitor performance and achievement.

Schools are supported by regional Learning Services and Principal Network Leaders (PNL), whose role is to focus on improving the performance of all schools by building the capacity of principals through mentoring to lead and manage, to improve the quality of educational programs and the performance of all students. PNLs are on the ground in schools managing the performance and development of school leaders to continually improve student outcomes. There are 11 networks of schools with a PNL assigned to a set number. PNLs are experienced principals (not administrative positions). A PNL will work with each principal as required.

The department is developing a four year annual review process for schools to support school leaders and schools. As part of their planning processes schools will conduct an annual self-assessment and report annually to their communities. Every fourth year schools will participate in an external review which will be conducted by a panel with an external chair and two substantive principals. A minimum of forty schools are expected to participate in the external review process each year. Outcomes of the reviews will be provided back to each school principal to inform school improvement and will be used by the department to identify any systemic issues that need attention.

When the default mode of devolved decision making is not improving student outcomes or school improvement goals there is the capacity to target interventions over and above the leadership, mentoring and coaching provided by PNLs. A flexible funding pool is held centrally to enable intensive interventions to be deployed when required. For instance, this may include ongoing professional learning for school leaders or a senior educator may work alongside the principal for a fixed period of time.

2. Element/s of autonomy to be targeted in this initiative and the implementation proposal

Tasmania will develop and implement Community Empowered Schools with the support of the IPS initiative. A focus on local governance and increased accountability to the local community will be the elements of autonomy targeted through this initiative. This will complement Tasmania's reforms to school accountability and streamlined funding, which together will move Tasmanian public schools further along the continuum towards greater autonomy.

A Community Empowered School will increase parental and community involvement in school governance and decision making and will empower parents to be active partners alongside schools to support their children's learning.

A Community Empowered School will reinvigorate the role of School Associations as valued and capable partners that are empowered to support student learning and school improvement and build positive relationships

with their local school community.

As part of this initiative, DoE will establish a partnership with the Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations (TASSO) – Tasmania’s peak body representing school Parents and Friends organisations and State School Associations. The focus of the partnership will be to build TASSO’s leadership and strategic capacity and ability to provide practical support to parents, community members and School Associations to engage effectively in school governance and decision making and to positively support their children’s learning and school improvement.

The key element of the partnership will be to work with TASSO through the Department’s Professional Learning Institute (PLI), to develop and implement training modules for parents and community members of School Associations.

Some indicative training modules to support parents and community members of School Associations to effectively and confidently participate in school governance and decision making and to support the engagement of the wider school community are listed below:

- **Introduction to the role of School Associations and their committees**
 - Understanding the legislative and policy framework for public education
 - Understanding the role, functions and powers of School Associations
 - School Associations and their committees (e.g. parents and friends, fundraising, uniform, canteen etc)
- **Working in partnership**
 - How to run meetings
 - Effective decision making
 - Confidently communicating in groups
 - Conflict resolution
 - Working in partnership – how to work collaboratively with school leaders, teachers, parents and the wider school community
- **School budgeting and financial management**
 - Understanding the school funding model
 - Understanding financial reports and setting school budgets
 - Financial controls
 - Building fundraising capacity
- **School priorities and policies**
 - What is a policy and when is one needed
 - School based versus departmental policies such as school based policies that support DoE policies (eg uniform policy, behaviour policy)
 - Developing and reviewing policies
 - Understanding and using data to support improved student learning outcomes
 - School improvement planning
- **Parent and community empowerment**
 - Importance of parent and community engagement for student learning
 - Potential role of School Association to facilitate processes that enable greater parent and community engagement

- Effective strategies to increase parent/community engagement to support the School Improvement Plan
- Media training for parents
- Linking parents with further education and training (including adult literacy support) to build work based skills to empower parents and community members to undertake roles within the school such as managing the canteen or uniform shop.

The PLI will also develop and implement professional learning for school principals and teachers that will strengthen their capacity to work effectively in partnership with parents and the broader school community.

At least some elements of the training would be undertaken by parents, community members and school staff together to support the development of shared aims and relationships built on trust and mutual respect.

There may also be opportunities to work in partnership with TASSO to provide training for local parents to support their parent peers to strengthen their capacity to support their children's learning and participate in the life of the school through existing evidence based training programs (e.g. Family Partnerships Training, Parents as Active Companions in Children's Learning, Circle of Security, Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities and Being a Parent Program).

The training will be delivered through a combination of online and regionally dispersed face to face delivery modes to ensure that it is accessible to all participating school communities and will be in a format suitable for parents and community members with a diverse range of skills, experience and capabilities.

There will be a range of resources developed as part of a toolkit for parents to support their engagement in school governance, decision making and their children's learning (regardless of whether they participate in formal leadership roles through School Associations).

Building the knowledge, skills and confidence of parents through this initiative will strengthen their practical ability to participate in and influence decision making within schools.

Strategies to build the capacity and influence of parents in the governance and decision making of the school and other types of parental involvement might include:

- Fostering a welcoming environment where parents are valued as partners in children's learning
- Identifying and removing barriers to parent engagement
- Support for parents to provide them with the knowledge, skills and tools they need to support student learning at home and at school
- Engaging in parent outreach and communication

School Improvement Planning and Increased Accountability

Community Empowered Schools will be required to increase parental engagement and involvement in school governance and decision making as part of their School Improvement Plan. This will be informed by the findings from the school's four yearly external review conducted by external experts and principal peers. Elements of this review will include schools undertaking a self-assessment, reviewing school data, interrogating school strategic planning documents and past annual reports.

This information will be used by each school community to reflect on their progress to date, and to establish future goals and objectives, in collaboration with their school communities. An annual report will be made available to, and discussed with, the school community.

Ensuring that parents have the skills, knowledge and tools they need to engage fully in their children's education and in the life and decision making of the school will make an important contribution towards achieving the goals of School Improvement Plans and will enhance accountability to local school community.

In addition to building the skills and capacity of parents and community members they will have a key role in identifying in what ways parents and community members can participate in school decision making, governance and children's learning to contribute to the School Improvement Plan and identify what support they may need to do this effectively. TASSO will facilitate the training and development that parents and community members

need to engage in this process more effectively.

Community Empowered Schools will also provide parents with information and choices about how they can become more involved in ways that suit them.¹

3. Changes to existing practices to increase autonomy

Community Empowered Schools

Community Empowered Schools will become more positive and welcoming places for parents, where relationships are built on trust, respect and a shared responsibility for the education of children and young people at the school.

Parents and community members will have greater confidence to become more involved in school governance and decision making and will have the skills and knowledge to exert more influence over the decisions made by School Associations and the advice they provide to principals.

School communities will make informed decisions about the extent to which they become involved in the review and development of school based policies (e.g. uniforms and codes of conduct).

Parents will better understand the ways in which they can become involved in their children's learning and in the life of their local school and receive more support to become involved.

Parental and community involvement in the life of school will increase.

Parents will more confidently and effectively support their children's learning.

Development of a more systematic relationship between school improvement planning and parental engagement and decision making in schools.

System

The role of parents will be more explicitly valued in the governance and decision making of public schools, with cultural change growing across the system as the number of Community Empowered Schools grows.

An ongoing partnership will be established with TASSO to build the capacity of parents and community members to participate in the governance of schools.

Resources will be developed and made available for parents to support their participation in school governance and the learning of their children.

Case studies of promising practice for promoting community empowerment in schools will be available to share amongst schools.

¹ There are many ways that parents can get more involved in their child's learning and in school decision making, including providing home conditions that support children as learners; supporting their parent peers; taking on a parent leadership role; volunteering; meeting teachers to discuss children's needs, progress and goals; attending assemblies, performances and sports events; reading to children and talking to children about their school day; parents trained to provide a weekly tutoring program for other parents to help struggling readers; workshops for parents to strengthen parenting skills; and parents actively involved in decision making with teachers about the educational needs of their children.

4. Number of schools targeted for participation in the initiative

<i>Cohort</i>	<i>Year of Operation</i>	<i>Number of schools (selection)</i>	<i>Number of schools (Implementation)</i>
1	2014	40	0
2	2015	40	40
3	2016	40	40
4	2017	0	40
Total		120	120

This initiative will support at least 60 per cent of Tasmanian government schools to empower their school communities and build the capacity of school communities to participate in school governance and decision making. The Tasmanian Department of Education will extend the support provided under this initiative to the remaining 40 per cent of government schools beyond the life of this Project Agreement to embed a sustainable system wide approach to empowering school communities.

5. School selection criteria

DoE proposes to align the selection of participating schools with the schools selected to commence in the first round of four-yearly external review processes in 2014 (described on page 5). The key benefit of this approach will be to ensure that parental engagement is informed by the information rich school improvement process and will align parental engagement strategies in ways that the school community considers will best meet the goals and priorities in the local school improvement plan.

A minimum of 40 schools are expected to undertake the formal external review each year commencing from 2014.

The establishment of an ongoing partnership with TASSO will embed its leadership role in building the capacity of, and providing support to, parents and community members to engage in school governance, decision making and student learning beyond the life of any particular members of a school community.

6. Implementation activities*Funding*

2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	TOTAL
\$300,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$2,100,000

<i>Reporting period</i>	<i>Implementation Activities</i>
1 July 2014 to 31 March 2015	In partnership with TASSO develop a training package for parents, community members and school principals and teachers (including content and materials) to be made available in online and regionally based face-to-face delivery modes. Develop resources and tools to support parent/community engagement in school decision making and the life of the school. Selection of first cohort of participating schools.

1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016	<p>Provide regionally based training to first cohort of 40 school communities using online and face-to-face delivery.</p> <p>Fund TASSO to raise awareness of training and to facilitate its delivery; provide support to parents and local school community members to build capacity to participate in training and to increase engagement in governance, decision making and positively supporting their children's learning and school improvement.</p> <p>Selection of second cohort of participating schools. Ongoing monitoring and review.</p>
1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017	<p>Provide regionally based training to second cohort of 40 school communities using online and face-to-face delivery.</p> <p>Fund TASSO to raise awareness of training and to facilitate its delivery; provide support to parents and local school community members to build capacity to participate in training and to increase engagement in governance, decision making and positively supporting their children's learning and school improvement.</p> <p>Selection of third cohort of participating schools. Ongoing monitoring and review.</p>
1 April 2017 to 31 December 2017	<p>Provide regionally based training to third cohort of 40 school communities using online and face-to-face delivery.</p> <p>Fund TASSO to raise awareness of training and to facilitate its delivery; provide support to parents and local school community members to build capacity to participate in training and to increase engagement in governance, decision making and positively supporting their children's learning and school improvement.</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring and review.</p>

The Commonwealth's IPS Initiative will directly fund the development of training materials and the roll out of training to parent and community members of participating schools. Attribution to the Commonwealth's IPS Initiative will be clearly displayed on all training material and all marketing and communications material association with the training program.

7. Evidence of impact

Evaluating the impact of the initiative will comprise both qualitative and quantitative measures, including:

- documenting case studies of promising practices arising from the initiative by interviewing parents and community members, TASSO and staff from selected schools, and
- recording the number of participating schools and the number of parents participating in training.


Parent, student and staff survey data may be incorporated into Tasmania's School Improvement Tool within the life of this Project Agreement. Where such survey information becomes available it will be included as part of Tasmania's report to the Commonwealth.

The Department's Professional Learning Institute will review its approach to data collection to align learning outcomes more closely with school improvement data.

An annual report will be provided to the Commonwealth that documents which schools are participating in the initiative, the range of activities that are being undertaken to increase community engagement, case studies of promising practice that can be shared across schools and school systems, and where available, data on rates of parent participation and survey data.

The Parties have confirmed their commitment to this agreement as follows:

**Signed for and on behalf of the Commonwealth
of Australia by**


The Honourable Christopher Pyne MP
Minister for Education

Date: 17/6/14

**Signed for and on behalf of the
Tasmania by**



The Honourable Jeremy Rockliff MP
Deputy Premier

Minister for Education and Training

Date: 16 June 2014