

A literate Tasmania is a win for all

When someone becomes literate, we help them access better opportunities and break the cycle of disadvantage. We will all win from achieving a Literate Tasmania, say members of the **Tasmanian 100 per cent Literacy Alliance**

Fifty-five years ago, in 1967, UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, proclaimed the need for an International Literacy Day. Literacy is the important foundation of lifelong learning and education.

International Literacy Day aims to raise awareness of literacy as a matter of dignity and human rights. It advances the literacy agenda towards a more literate and sustainable society. Yet, poor literacy still pervades our communities.

Fifty five years on, the Tasmanian 100 per cent Literacy Alliance argues the issue is now critical.

In August 2020, the Tasmania 100 per cent Literacy Alliance was formed as a collective, independent voice to advocate for improving the literacy outcomes of all Tasmanians, from all walks of life and at all stages of life.

In February 2021, the alliance presented a Road Map to a Literate Tasmania to the Tasmanian government.

This road map called for three immediate actions and provided a long-term plan of how to achieve a community-wide Literate Tasmania by 2031.

The government responded in March 2021, by announcing "an ambitious new target that by Year 7 all students will meet an expected reading standard that is above the national minimum, and by no later than 2030".

We are yet to see the action on this laudable goal. Without proactive, evidence-informed action, the Tasmanian government will not achieve its achievable target.

Having all Tasmanian

children complete primary school able to read and write above the expected level is the underpinning goal of the 2021 Road Map to a Literate Tasmania.

The 10-year time-frame proposed by the alliance was deliberate, not plucked from thin air. The time-frame allows for all the necessary factors to be put in place for a Literate Tasmania plan to be implemented, and achieved, with fidelity.

The time-frame was underpinned by the fact that it takes eight years for a student to start school in kindergarten then progress through primary school to high school (year 7).

HERE'S HOW IT MUST FLOW:

A KINDERGARTEN cohort starts schooling in 2022 with evidence-based literacy instruction (mainly oral language in kindergarten).

IT PROGRESSES, receiving evidence-based whole-class structured literacy instruction. It is **REGULARLY ASSESSED** through a variety of formative and summative means to track progress (e.g. KDC, PIP, Year 1 Phonics Check, PAT-R, NAPLAN etc). **IF IDENTIFIED** as not meeting the expected level, individual students immediately receive intervention at the evidence-based level of intensity, as is their right.

IF ALL THIS HAPPENS, that cohort of students will start Year 7 in 2030 able to read (and write) above the expected level. They will also be able to participate and engage in the wider curriculum and be more likely to go on to successfully complete Year 12.

This point about Year 12 is



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critical. Successful completion of Year 12 is correlated with prior achievement in literacy and numeracy throughout the schooling experience. This correlation is stronger than correlations with parental education or socio-economic background.

The necessary action to implement structured literacy

instruction at the scale required since the Tasmania government announced the target is not yet seen in every classroom.

It didn't start in 2022. But the Tasmanian government can still achieve its worthy goal if structured literacy teaching practices are implemented from 2023 for all

kindergarten students (and subsequent cohorts) and committed to with integrity throughout their eight years of schooling to Year 7 (with assessment and appropriate intervention).

By 2031 the Tasmanian government would then reach its target of all Year 7s starting high school able to read above

the expected level.

Students living with trauma, disability and/or disadvantage may need additional forms of support to achieve this, but it is possible, and, of course, is their right.

The efficiencies created by implementing structured literacy, will widely improve capacity to provide this

additional support.

Evidence also shows that a whole-class structured literacy instruction approach (with intervention when required) will also reduce teacher workload. This is because it significantly reduces variability in classroom levels and the need to differentiate in lesson planning.

Fast forward to 2022, two years after the Literacy Alliance was formed, it is likely that the loss of learning by Tasmanian students as a result of the Covid-19 global pandemic will be extensive and impact across a young person's lifetime, along with broader longer-term economic and social consequences.

While the Tasmanian 100 per cent Literacy Alliance argued in 2020 that investing in a plan for a Literate Tasmania was urgent, we now argue that it is critical.

When we help someone to become literate, we empower them to access better opportunities in life and break the intergenerational cycle of

disadvantage. We will all win from achieving a Literate Tasmania.

By the Tasmanian 100 per cent Literacy Alliance members **Amelia Jones, Anthea Pritchard, Becky Shelley, Lisa Denny, Michael Rowan, Rikki Mawad, Rosie Martin and Saul Eslake.**