

Other Annual Reports

Office of the Education Registrar

I am pleased to submit the 4th Annual Report of the Registrar as required under section 227 of the *Education Act 2016*.

The Office of the Education Registrar was established under the *Education Act 2016* and is an independent authority from the Department of Education.

The Registrar, Education is responsible for various functions under the Act including the:

- registration and monitoring of home education in Tasmania
- administration of the non-government schools registration process and for the operational aspects of the regulatory process
- management of the new compulsory conciliation process for non-attendance at school.

I was appointed as the Registrar, Education in April 2017. In 2020–21, the Office of the Education Registrar (OER) had 14.2 full time equivalent staff members, with offices located in Hobart and Launceston, and a satellite office in Devonport.

The Office is also supported by casual registration officers who are located across the State. There are seven registration officers who perform work associated with the registration of non-government schools. The Office is also supported by 10 registration officers who support the home education registration process.

Home education

The registration and monitoring of home education in Tasmania is managed by OER.

Parents seeking registration to home educate their child are required to provide an application and a home education summary and program addressing ten Standards as outlined in the *Education Regulations 2017*. This document known as a Home Education Summary and Program (HESP) is provided annually and explains the program from the previous year and outlines the program for the coming year.

Following a review of the program, a registration officer visits the family to assess the Program so that an appropriate advice can be made to the Registrar, Education for her to make decision on registration.

The Registrar seeks advice from the Tasmanian Home Education Advisory Council (THEAC) in relation to all new home education applications as well seeking their advice on a number of re-registrations as and when required.

Under the Education Act, an application to home educate a child may include the part-time enrolment and attendance of a child at one school. Part time enrolment can be up to the equivalent of two full days a week but may be spread out across the week in smaller blocks as agreed between the parent and the Principal.

As at 30 June 2021, 1143 children were approved for home education in Tasmania from 664 families across the State.

For the 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021 period, the following registration activities occurred:

- 352 new provisional registrations were approved
- 202 students withdrew from Home Education
- 773 renewal of Registrations were approved
- 6 registrations with conditions were approved
- 0 provisional registrations were revoked
- 0 registrations revoked by the Registrar
- 17 applications were cancelled prior to reaching provisional registration
- 74 registrations involving part-time attendance at a school were approved
 - » 19 at non-government schools
 - » 55 at government schools
- 19 Statement of Year 10 Completion Certificates were issued by the Registrar in accordance with Section 91 of the Act
- 6 Statement of Year 12 Completion Certificates were issued by the Registrar in accordance with Section 93 of the Act

OER maintains a social media and web presence in which information about home education including events and opportunities are promoted. Regular communication to the home education community also occurs via a bi-monthly newsletter.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic that occurred across Australia in early 2020, adjustments were made to the way that registration visits were carried out. Registration visits are usually conducted in the home, however OER staff quickly adapted to using video-conferencing in the first instance or tele-conferencing if there were IT limitations. Whilst sometimes challenging, we appreciate the support of the home educating community who worked with us to ensure that their registration status did not lapse.

Visits are once again being carried out in the home, with restrictions and public health protocols taken into consideration.

20 per cent of students who entered home education during the COVID-19 lockdown period in 2020 have returned to school within 12 months.

Compulsory Conciliation Conferences

The intent of Compulsory Conciliation Conferences is to improve outcomes for Tasmanian students not currently attending school by providing them with a way to participate in a process, and to voice their needs to enable and support them to return to school.

The conferences are facilitated by an independent conciliator and involve everyone necessary to support a resolution to non-attendance, including parents/guardians, the child (if the child wants to), and relevant school staff.

Referrals for compulsory conciliation conferences were received from both government and non-government schools.

Outcomes:

For the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021:

- 178 referrals for the conduct of compulsory conciliation conferences were received by the Registrar
 - » 164 were received from State government schools
 - » 14 were received from non-government schools.
- 176 conferences have been convened including 30 reconvened conferences.
- 80 of these referrals were students of high school age with a complex history of non-attendance.
- 170 sets of requirements were issued by the Registrar to parents, schools and other various third parties including support services. On some occasions where they are two or more children in a family, requirements were issued jointly.

Non-government schools

The Registrar is responsible for administering the non-government schools registration process and for the operational aspects of the regulatory process. The Registrar then reports to and advises the Non-government Schools Registration Board (NGSRB), who then makes a decision on the registration of a school.

Executive support is provided to the Board through the OER.

In 2020–21, the Registrar provided 17 reports to the Board in relation to the registration of non-government schools.

A report of the NGSRB as required under section 233 of the *Education Act 2016* is also contained as an annexure to this report.

Part-time attendance

The Registrar has been delegated by the Minister for Education to approve part-time attendance applications made under section 17 of the *Education Act 2016*. Specifically, for applications made by the Administrative Authority of a non-government school that is not the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office.

In 2020–21, the Registrar approved 33 applications for part-time attendance from eight independent non-government schools.

Early entry to School Cross-Sectoral Placement Committee

The Registrar, Education has been appointed to determine appeals from decisions made by the Committee. The Registrar determined one appeal and the Committee's decision was upheld.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

OER participated in a pilot program for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). The Department of Education decided to tender for the delivery of this service, and the Registrar determined not to compete in the open market to provide this service.

Review of Education Regulation

The Registrar, Education provided support and advice to the NGSRB and THEAC during the review period. The Registrar made a submission to the review.

The Registrar will continue to provide support to the home education community and to the NGSRB during the implementation of legislative amendments from the review of education regulation.

Katharine O'Donnell

Registrar, Education