

Legislative Council

Hansard

Tuesday 4 November 2025

The President, Mr Farrell, took the Chair at 11 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People and read Prayers.

[excerpt...]

Multi-School Organisations Trial

Ms WEBB question to MINISTER EDUCATION, Ms PALMER

[3.01 p.m.]

It's a follow-up from our last sitting week on 24 September, so I appreciate the opportunity. It is, I think, for the honourable Minister for Education - the set of questions related to the multi-school organisations (MSO) reforms and the trials that have been proposed. The question I was seeking to get an answer to, and I hopefully will today, was in terms of consultation on the multi-school organisations trial. Was there a proposal developed and described in, say, an issues paper or background paper and put out for consultation with relevant groups, many of whom were listed in answers to questions that were occurring at the time, but specifically teachers, principals, the AEU, the Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations? For example, was a multi-school organisations trial a definite model put to them? Were their thoughts gathered and considered before we arrived at the proposal that's now being taken forward under a trial? Did that form of consultation occur, or were there just meetings and briefings along the way?

ANSWER

Mr President, it's lovely to have some of our students in the Chamber with us today.

We want to support our educators to lift student outcomes. That's why we're trialling multi-school organisations, an education model based on international best practice that has transformed outcomes in disadvantaged schools. The Grattan Institute produced a report, 'Spreading success: Why Australia should trial multi-school organisations', which recommends MSO trials in every state and territory. Tasmania is leading the nation in this evidence-based approach, and I'm really proud of that.

The Independent Education Review involved extensive consultation with education stakeholders. It also found merit in trialling multi-school organisations. We've listened carefully to the experts on what works, and we are adapting the MSO model to a Tasmanian context.

Between September 2024 and June 2025, there was an extensive consultation with principals and education stakeholders on grouping schools and child and family learning centres into communities. I'm advised that there were 1935 pieces of staff and stakeholder input received through 192 meetings, presentations and drop-in sessions.

A core focus of the engagement was to constantly feed back to staff and stakeholders what we heard and how the feedback was shaping our reform work. This consultation is informing how we move forward with the MSO trial due to the similarities in approach and shared purpose - to improve learner outcomes by supporting educators and ensuring access to resources and services are maximised.

Specifically, feedback has helped inform work on:

- reducing confusion around reporting lines and introducing a single point of contact for principals
- reducing the administrative load for principals with the introduction of the operations manager role for MSO and executive leads for groupings of schools
- the importance of geography as a design element of collaboration.

An MSO steering committee was also established in May to provide oversight, guidance and support for the trial, with membership including education experts and local stakeholders such as Ms Jane Bovill, a former Tasmanian school principal, and Dr Tony Luttrell, a former Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority board member.

In relation to consultation directly on the MSO trial, let's be clear: this is a model that will evolve over time in response to feedback from educators and education stakeholders, who I consider genuine partners in our approach, which is nation leading. There is no consultation document; however, there is an ongoing consultation process, as there needs to be.

We're committed to ensuring education stakeholders and unions have an important voice in this reform. That's why they've been invited to participate in an advisory group which will provide input on the commissioning framework and on the evaluation.

This is a five-year trial. It will be gradual, and it will be considered, with an independent evaluation process that will allow us to learn, refine and scale what works best for Tasmanian learners and educators, which is our priority. Thank you for the question.

Supplementary Question

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - A supplementary question.

Mr PRESIDENT - The member for Nelson.

Ms WEBB - There was a lot of detail in that answer - not much of it toward the answer, but some of it. I want to clarify: did the consultation occur after the decision had been made to do the trial, largely not before the decision was made to do the trial, to shape the trial and to shape the concept?

Ms PALMER - Mr President, no, I don't agree with how you've framed that. We came back from the UK having seen something extraordinary, which was ticking a box and answering the feedback that was coming to me constantly as Education minister around student outcomes, first and foremost, but also around a sustainable workforce, a happy workforce, and an engaged workforce.

We came back and we started having those conversations with stakeholders, obviously with my department. From there, the more we talked and the more we had those conversations, it became an absolute reality that this was a direction the state should be going in. It was then a policy decision that we would move in that direction, slowly and carefully and consulting as we go. That consultation will continue throughout the entire five-year trial to make sure that we adapt where we need to adapt, that we hold the line where we need to hold the line, and not taking our eyes off the goal, which is to see better outcomes for our students and better outcomes for our teaching workforce.