

RESPONSE

Government Administration Committee A Inquiry into Discrimination and Bullying in Tasmanian Schools

REQUEST:

“...the Committee received responses to questions on Notice from your office dated 17 March 2025 (enclosed for reference), which included data on the ratios of support staff for students in schools and the average waiting list times for students to access available supports. This data was provided for the period of time up until March 2024. Given the period of time since this data was collected and received **the Committee requests an update on these matters with any new information available since March 2024.**”

ANSWER:

Ratio of Support Staff to Student Enrolment (as at 31 March, 2025)*

Discipline	Ratio of Students per 1.0FTE
School Psychology	1:743**
Social Work	1:659**
Speech and Language Pathology** (Kindergarten to Grade 6, excluding Support Schools)	1:682***

*Professional Support Staff ratio data is collated annually to inform Budget Estimates. This means that the most recent data available is at 31 March, 2025.

**Ratios are based on enrolment figures that include Kindergarten, Primary, Secondary, Senior Secondary and Support Schools. These ratios do not include the separate Professional Support Staff allocations to Child and Family Learning Centres (0.2 FTE for each of the three disciplines to each CFLC)

***Speech and language pathologists are allocated from Kindergarten to Year Six only, as well as to Support Schools from Kindergarten to Year 12 (a separate 2.8FTE budgeted allocation)

- The Tasmanian Government continues to invest in additional Professional Support Staff, with an increase of 104.75 FTE in funded Professional Support Staff positions as at 25 February 2026, since 2014.
- This includes \$500,000 for 10 school psychology scholarships (8 out of 10 filled; 2 to be advertised shortly) and 10 speech and language pathology scholarships (10 filled).
- There have been simultaneous improvements with promotable positions created between base grade and senior level roles and implementation of graduate recruitment pathways to attract more applicants.
- These initiatives have resulted in significant recruitment with minimal vacancies across the three disciplines as at March 2026.

Average Waiting List Times (April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025)*

Statewide Discipline	Average in Days
School Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 280 days for assessment • 176 days for intervention***
Social Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7.9 days** <p>(1825 students referred externally due to caseload capacity)</p>
Speech and Language Pathology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 156 days

*Professional Support Staff average wait list time data is collated annually to inform Budget Estimates. This means that the most recent data available is at 31 March, 2025.

**Social workers prioritise students and refer them to other services if they are unable to see students directly. The capacity to refer to other services however, has diminished since COVID-19.


- *** students are supported during this time with school-level supports. Effective triaging ensures that students with serious or complex needs access student support services in a timely manner.
- School Support and Wellbeing Teams (which include support staff) are the primary mechanism for discussing student needs and allocating the

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most appropriate resource at the most appropriate time based on different factors (e.g. attendance, student voice/perspective, parental consent to work with students).

- 1:1 support is not always the most evidence informed approach – each situation needs to be carefully considered and strategies need to be tailored to an inclusive, educational model (rather than a medical model) which may include group and/or whole class based interventions
- There are a range of supports available in relation to discrimination and bullying (e.g. classroom based programs, Respectful Relationships and Consent Education curriculum) which can be implemented whilst students are waiting for more specialised interventions.
- Students on waiting lists continue to be supported by a skilled teaching workforce who are trained in inclusive practices.
- Wait list data is impacted by different factors including level of risk/need, type of support required (e.g. assessment vs therapy), availability of other supports (e.g. teacher assistant programs), student self-referrals, timing of other professionals' assessments, departmental processes (e.g. assessment for disability funding) and frequency of visits to a school.
- Wait list times vary across regions and are reported as statewide averages.
- As part of the Tasmanian Government's Teacher Agreement Offer to the Australian Education Union (AEU), we have included a proposal to establish a Statewide School Psychological Assessment Team with an additional 7.0 FTE dedicated School Psychologists, to reduce long wait times, increase equity of access, and free school-based psychologists to focus on core early learning intervention and wellbeing activities.

APPROVED/NOT APPROVED



Hon Jo Palmer MLC
Minister for Education

Date: 16.4.26