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with over 120,000 members*

news release

12 August 2017

Three quarters of Tasmanians oppose the State Liberal Government's proposal to lower the school starting age in Tasmania

The evidence is in: Tasmanians really do Say **NO** to the lower school starting age, and many say they are less likely to vote for the Liberal party because of it.

In a move to escalate their campaign against the lower school start age as the parliamentary deadline for decision on the issue draws closer, United Voice recently commissioned independent EMRS polling, and are releasing the results of that poll today.

"The fact that **76%** of Tasmanians are opposed to a lower school starting age just goes to show how out of touch this Hodgman Liberal Government is," said United Voice Secretary Jannette Armstrong.

"The Education Minister Jeremy Rockliff has failed miserably with this aspect of the new Education Act. Lowering the school start age is contrary to best practice educational research and recommendations, it is not in the best interest of children, and it will have devastating impacts on our rural and regional communities in particular. Lowering the school start age is not a magic bullet to year twelve retention, poor literacy, or overcoming the various challenges of socio-economic disadvantage. In fact, in some cases it will only make those problems worse."

Ms Armstrong said she is also concerned about the impact this change would have on child care centres. "Existing early learning centres will close and over 500 Tasmanian jobs are at risk. Many other parents will not be able to continue in or rejoin the workforce because child care will be unavailable to them. If these were male dominated manufacturing jobs, or white collar jobs at risk, the government response would be very different."

Ms Armstrong said the community was now calling on all Legislative Councilors to heed the calls of early childhood and education experts, teachers, practitioners, and voters by voting down sections 8 and 9 of the Education Act when it comes before parliament again in coming weeks.

"Even if the Upper House sensibly blocks this aspect of the legislation, the political damage has been done for Will Hodgman and Jeremy Rockliff. This unnecessary fight has dragged on for well over a year. Throughout that time the Premier and Education Minister, in particular, have shown themselves to be ignorant of the research, and dismissive of professional and community concerns. The derision with which they've treated opponents of their policy has been insulting to say the least, and there is no doubt they will pay dearly at the ballot box," said Ms Armstrong.

*******PHOTO AND INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY*******

Jannette Armstrong will be available for interview and release of polling data today

Date:	Saturday 12 August
Time:	12.30pm
Place:	United Voice offices, 165 Davey St, Hobart
Contact:	Jannette Armstrong – 0419 384 777

More information and community comments can also be found at facebook.com/TooMuchTooSoonTas.

Tasmanian Branch Secretary: Jannette Armstrong

Twitter: [@UnitedVoiceTas](https://twitter.com/UnitedVoiceTas)

Facebook: [UnitedVoiceTasmania](https://facebook.com/UnitedVoiceTasmania)

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