

Minister for Human Services
Minister for Women

Level 8 10 Murray Street HOBART TAS 7000 Australia
GPO Box 123 HOBART TAS 7001 Australia
Ph: +61 3 6165 7770
Email: Jacquie.Petrusma@dpac.tas.gov.au



01 JUN 2015

Ms Megan Mitchell
National Children's Commissioner
kids@humanrights.gov.au

Dear Commissioner

Thank you for your invitation of 6 May 2015 to make a submission into your *Examination of Children Affected by Family and Domestic Violence*.

On behalf of the Tasmanian Government, I am pleased to make this submission on the issue of children and family and domestic violence.

As a signatory to the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022*, Tasmania is committed to the prevention of violence against women and their children in our community and across the nation.

In order to strengthen our response to violence against women and their children, the Tasmanian Government is working on a series of new strategies to reduce the incidences of family violence and support those in our community who are affected. This includes the development of a whole-of-government Family Violence Action Plan to target family violence over the short, medium and long term. As Minister for Women, I am committed to make a real and sustained reduction in the prevalence and impacts of violence against women and their children.

I look forward to reviewing the findings of the *Children's Rights Report 2015*. In the meantime, should you have any queries in relation to the information provided, the contact officer is Ms Rebecca Moles, Manager Policy Unit, Communities, Sport and Recreation Tasmania, Department of Premier and Cabinet. Ms Moles can be contacted by email at rebecca.moles@dpac.tas.gov.au or by telephone on (03) 6232 7051.

Warm regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jacquie".

Hon Jacquie Petrusma MP
Minister for Women

Attachment

Examination of Children Affected by Family and Domestic Violence

Tasmanian Government Submission

May 2015

From July 2014 to March 2015, 1 036 children were present at family violence incidents attended by Tasmania Police.¹ For the same period, Tasmania Police responded to 1 929 family violence incidents.² These numbers are unacceptable.

As a signatory to the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (the National Plan) alongside all Australian Governments, Tasmania is committed to the prevention of violence against women and their children in our community and across the nation and has recently released the *Tasmanian Implementation Plan: Moving Ahead 2013-2016* in response to the Second Action Plan of the National Plan.

A *Progress Report to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) 2010-2012* on the National Plan was provided to COAG and the general public in May 2013. This report details the progress made, key achievements and challenges faced during the first two years of implementation of the National Plan.

Realising the six outcomes of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020* is also an important goal for all Australian Governments. The Framework aims to improve the safety and wellbeing of Australia's children to ensure that there is a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect in Australia over time.

The Second Three Year Action Plan 2012-2015 outlines a number of achievements in the *First Action Plan 2009-2012* to ensure Australian children are safe and well.

The Tasmanian Government is eager to take a leadership role in reducing violence against women. On 17 April 2015, Tasmania as part of COAG agreed to progressing national initiatives to make a sustained reduction in the prevalence of violence against women and their children.

For Tasmania this includes actively working with all Australian Governments to develop national standards to ensure perpetrators of violence against women are held to account at the same standard across Australia and taking a lead role in work to implement a national domestic violence order (DVO) scheme by the end of 2015.

On 25 May 2015, the Tasmanian Premier, the Hon Will Hodgman MP, announced that the Government will take a leading role in the prevention of violence against women in Tasmania through a comprehensive Family Violence Action Plan to target family violence over the short, medium and long term. This Plan will be released in August 2015.

¹ Department of Police and Emergency Management 2015, *Corporate Performance Report Tasmania Police – March 2015*, p 32.

² *Ibid*, p 11.

The Action Plan will aim to change behaviours and attitudes in our community, improve services for those affected by family violence and strengthen the legal framework to deal with perpetrators. The Action Plan will see an integrated approach to tackling family violence with the Tasmania Government working across agencies, with service providers and those who are, or have, experienced family violence to identify areas to:

- increase our efforts to combat family violence;
- work smarter with the resources we have;
- increase resources as appropriate; and
- ensure collaboration with other jurisdictions.

The Tasmanian Government has recently committed to becoming a member of Our Watch, a national foundation that has been established under the *National Plan* to drive nation-wide change in the culture, behaviours and attitudes that lead to violence against women and children. Our Watch has a focus on primary prevention of violence against women and has a number of projects targeted at children and young people. Further information about Our Watch can be found at www.ourwatch.org.au

The Tasmanian Government has also invested \$100 000 over three years in Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) to improve the research base on violence against women and children. The ANROWS National Research Agenda, which sets strategic directions and priorities for research for the next few years, covers the areas of domestic, family and sexual violence for women, children and perpetrators. The research agenda can be obtained from www.anrows.org.au.

Previous Submissions on the Matter of Domestic and Family Violence

In 2014, the Tasmanian Government provided a submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee's *Inquiry into Domestic Violence in Australia* (submission 117). This submission addresses a number of the questions of the *Examination of Children Affected by Family and Domestic Violence*. A copy of this submission is attached.

Safe at Home

Tasmania became one of the first Australian jurisdictions to develop an integrated whole-of-government response to family violence through Safe at Home. Safe at Home is an integrated criminal justice response to family violence.

Underpinned by the *Family Violence Act 2004*, Safe at Home involves a range of services working together to protect and support people who experience family violence, while making perpetrators accountable for their behaviour.

Safe at Home is operated in partnership by the Departments of Police and Emergency Management; Justice; Health and Human Services; Education; and Premier and Cabinet and aims to:

- a. improve the safety and security for adult and child victims of family violence in the short and long-term;
- b. ensure that offenders are held accountable for family violence as a public crime [and change their offending behaviour];



- c. reduce the incidence and severity of family violence in the longer term; and
- d. minimise the negative impacts of contact with the criminal justice system on adult and child victims.

Safe at Home is founded on the principle of the 'primacy of the safety of the victim' and uses a pro-arrest, pro-prosecution strategy to realise this principle.

Safe at Home has undergone a number of internal and external reviews since its inception in 2004. A copy of the external reviews and further information about Safe at Home is available from www.safeathome.tas.gov.au.

Family Violence Counselling and Support Services

As part of the Safe at Home Program, Family Violence Counselling and Support Services (FVCSS) follows up on all Police Incident Reports of family violence incidents and family arguments, through other agencies, or by self-referral.

Operated by the Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services, the FVCSS offers free professional and specialised services to assist children, young people and adults affected by family violence.

FVCSS is based in Hobart, Launceston, and Burnie, with capacity to provide outreach service within each respective region.

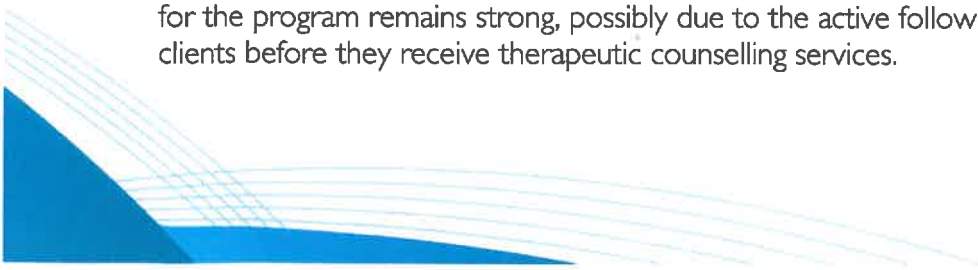
FVCSS comprises two programs, the Children and Young Persons' Program (CHYPP) and the Adult Program. These programs provide victims of family violence with services including:

- information on family violence and its impact on adults, children, and young people;
- individual support and counselling for individuals affected by family violence, including a therapeutic counselling service to address complex trauma, and a counselling service for children with a focus on trauma resolution;
- a priority focus on risk and safety for all adult victims and their children, including active participation with specialised family violence knowledge in the statewide Three and Under Panels within Children and Youth Services;
- community education; and
- a statewide Extended Hours Service from 4.00 pm until midnight, which operates 365 days of the year, for all weekdays, weekends, and public holidays.

CHYPP provides a range of services to children and young people for the amelioration and resolution of trauma as a result of family violence, including:

- face to face counselling and support, with therapeutic sessions for a parent and child under five years old, and one-to-one counselling for children aged five to 17; and
- consultation and professional advice to other service providers.

CHYPP is a lead agency and driver in the statewide Children's Therapeutic Network. Up-take for the program remains strong, possibly due to the active follow up and engagement with clients before they receive therapeutic counselling services.



Data for the CHYPP indicates that a number of Tasmanian children are affected by family violence. A breakdown of data is provided below:

CHYPP Activity Data 2010-2014 (by number)

Indicator/Year	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Referrals received by CHYPP	250	232	244	255
New clients of CHYPP	95	105	81	49
Active clients of CHYPP	157	183	162	146
Daily average clients of CHYPP	65.1	67.9	74.9	76.2

