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PREMIER OF TASMANIA

21 JUN 2017

Ms Megan Mitchell
National Children's Commissioner
Australian Human Rights Commission
GPO Box 5218
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Ms Mitchell. *Megan*

Thank you for your request to the Premier to provide information on the Tasmanian Government's education, health and welfare policies and programs related to young parents and their children. On behalf of the Tasmanian Government, I am pleased to provide you with the following information.

The Tasmanian Government is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of young parents and their children in Tasmania. We have prioritised a number of activities which aim to improve educational, health, justice and social outcomes, including:

- improving educational outcomes through the new *Education Act 2016* (Tas), including improving attendance, retention and attainment, and connecting young people to opportunities for employment;
- supporting young people to make better choices about their health under the *Healthy Tasmania Five Year Strategic Plan*;
- redesigning Tasmania's Child Protection system through *Strong Families, Safe Kids*;
- developing a Youth at Risk Strategy to provide a whole-of-government strategic direction for responding to the safety and rehabilitative needs of young people;
- improving support services for young people impacted by family violence as part of *Safe Homes, Safe Families: Tasmania's Family Violence Action Plan 2015-2020*;
- increasing support for homeless young people under *Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025*; and
- implementing employment initiatives, such as the Jobs Action Package, to support young people to complete qualifications and training, and to find work.

A summary of the key Tasmanian Government initiatives and actions, both general services and those specific to young parents and their children, is provided as an attachment to this letter.

Should you require any further information about the Tasmanian Government's response in these areas, please contact Mr David Nicholson, Deputy Secretary Policy, Department of Premier and Cabinet. Mr Nicholson can be contacted by telephone on [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]

I welcome any opportunities for the Tasmanian Government to collaborate on future initiatives aimed at improving the capacity of young parents, which contribute to better outcomes for parents and their children.

Yours sincerely



Jeremy Rockliff MP
Acting Premier

Attachment

TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT POLICY AND PROGRAMS RELATED TO YOUNG PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN.

EDUCATION

The Tasmanian Government is committed to providing timely and tailored interventions to support learners, and recognises the critical need to engage parents and carers to lift motivation and to achieve the best in educational outcomes for students.

The 2017 Learners First Strategic Plan (the Plan) – an update of the 2014-2017 Learners First Strategic Plan – outlines 'Early Years' as a key priority, with a commitment to strategies, services and programs to ensure our youngest learners have the best possible start in life.

The Tasmanian Government also recognises that it is the most disadvantaged families that need support to assist children to gain the best possible start to their education. The first step is engaging parents in their child's education to foster inclusion. In practice, this is being supported through the following actions:

- Implementation of Launching into Learning (LiL). LiL is a universal program offered in every government primary and district school in Tasmania for young children (birth – 5 years) and their families for improved educational outcomes. LiL aims to improve children's educational outcomes through partnerships between Kindergarten teachers and parents. Longitudinal data has shown that students from all socioeconomic backgrounds made significant gains in educational performance from regular participation in LiL, with students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds benefiting the most.

See also:

Launching into Learning Longitudinal Study 2007-2014 Progress Report - 2013

<https://www.education.tas.gov.au/documentcentre/Documents/Infosheet-EarlyYears-Launching-Into-Learning.pdf>

Launching into Learning parent brochure

http://www.education.tas.gov.au/parents_carers/early_years/Programs-and-Initiatives/Pages/Launching-into-Learning.aspx

Attachment A – Case Study – Launching into Learning

- Implementation of the *Learning in Families Together* (LIFT) initiative which aims to build parents' confidence and skills to support their child's literacy and numeracy at home. LIFT supports 80 Tasmanian schools identified as having the highest student need. It uses family engagement principles to work with families to ensure children from Kindergarten to Year 2 have the best start to develop the fundamental skills necessary for positive literacy and numeracy outcomes.
- Establishment of 12 Child and Family Centres (CFCs) across Tasmania.
 - CFCs are a place-based, collaborative service delivery model that bring together service providers from different disciplines, professions, government agencies, organisations and the community to achieve a common purpose – to engage, support and work with families to improve the education, health and wellbeing of young children and their families.

- The services offered in each CFC are based on local needs, and may include antenatal services, early learning, child and family health, oral health, health, immunisation, nutrition, playgroups and children's therapies. Each CFC has the Child Health and Parenting Service as a collaborative service partner.
- CFCs are located in low socioeconomic communities and work with families and the community to identify issues that are most important to them. CFCs facilitate referral pathways for parents and families in need of additional support, such as family violence referrals, counselling, legal and financial support services.
- Recent evaluation showed that parents using CFCs were more likely to use government services for children, have improved parenting confidence and skills, they are more confident in preparing their children for school, and they engage with their local school and other parents.
- Supporting CFCs to provide students who stand to benefit most with access to early education and transition to Kindergarten support also aligns with current Government initiatives such as lowering the school starting age and creation of the Early Years B4 Coalition.
- See also:
 - Telethon Kids Institute CFC Evaluation Report (August 2015)
<https://www.telethonkids.org.au/our-research/brain-and-behaviour/mental-health-and-youth/human-capability/engaging-supporting-and-working/cfc-report>
 - Tasmanian Government CFC submission (March 2017)
<http://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/ctee/Council/Submissions/CFC/21%20Tasmanian%20Government.pdf>
 - B4 Early Years Coalition
<http://b4.tas.school/>

The Tasmanian Government is also committed to including and supporting young parents to continue their education and ensuring the health and wellbeing of both young parents and children. To this effect the Government is committed to:

- Enforcing the *Retaining and Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Students* policy in schools. The policy recognises that pregnant or parenting students are at risk of leaving education and are among the most vulnerable students in relation to retention. The policy outlines a range of ways that a school can support a pregnant or parenting student, including developing links with other government and community agencies to ensure that the health, welfare, financial, social and childcare needs of pregnant and parenting students are met in ways which increase the chances of them completing their education.
- Supporting the Claremont College *Young Mums Program* for young mothers and young expectant mothers aged 20 years or younger. The Program helps young mums to keep in touch with education, have contact with others, and make friends for their children and themselves. The Program is free of charge, and offers a co-designed course to meet the needs and interests of the young mother. Those who participate in the program get help with arts and crafts, budgeting, food and nutrition, home handy person skills and gardening. Students also have an opportunity to talk to guest speakers on issues such as driver education, childbirth, child safety, effective parenting, careers and the environment.

Other actions that provide indirect support for young parents and their children include:

- The *My Education* initiative which supports a coordinated, whole-school approach to career and life planning for all primary and secondary school students.
 - With support through the curriculum, *My Education* assists students to identify their personal interests, values, strengths and aspirations, and teaches them how to use this knowledge to connect them with where they want to go.
 - Career development embedded in the curriculum ensures that Tasmania's students, together with their parents, carers and other influential adults in their lives, are involved in decision-making about their future options and pathways from the beginning of their education.
 - Through strengthened community partnerships, students are exposed to a variety of disciplines which align with their interests and strengths, including non-traditional disciplines.
- The *Community Empowered Schools* initiative which supports Tasmanian Government schools to increase the involvement of parents and the community in decision making processes.
 - Tasmania has committed to develop and implement training modules for parents and community members of school associations to support them to effectively and confidently participate in school governance and decision making, and to support the engagement of the wider school community, together with teachers and school leaders. We know that engaging parents and carers as partners in children's education can have a positive impact on their learning.
- Extending certain Tasmanian high schools to include Years 11 and 12 in a bid to increase retention and attainment within schools. This is in recognition of the importance of providing young Tasmanians with every opportunity to continue their education to complete Year 12.
- Implementing the *Tasmanian Carers Action Plan 2013-2018*. The Plan acknowledges that young people can have carer responsibilities, and involves developing and distributing information on support for student carers, as well as activities to raise awareness of the issue in the community.
- Developing a resource to support schools with delivering sexuality and sexual health education, in line with the *Australian Curriculum* and other materials. Schools will also be encouraged to work with other service providers who have primary prevention programs to enhance existing sexual health education within schools. These groups and organisations include Family Planning Tasmania and the Sexual Assault Support Service.
- Developing the *Respectful Relationships Education Package* as an action under *Safe Homes, Safe Families: Tasmania's Family Violence Action Plan 2015-2020*. The Respectful Relationships program is designed for students of all ages and specifically focuses on relationships and preventative behaviours. Implementation of this program will begin in 2017, with full implementation in place by 2018. Respectful Relationships professional learning will also be delivered to teachers and support staff.

HEALTH

The Tasmanian Government has taken significant action to improve the health and wellbeing of young parents and their children.

In relation to preventative health, the Healthy Tasmania Five Year Strategic Plan released in July 2016 outlines key actions to support Tasmanians to improve their health outcomes and make healthy lifestyle changes.

The Strategic Plan supports young parents and their children through:

- the Student Health Initiative (Action 8), which provides an additional \$2 million over four years to increase student health and wellbeing by encouraging partnerships between schools and communities;
- developing the Healthy Kids Toolkit (Action 9) aimed at providing resources to support parents, carers and educational settings to make healthy choices;
- the Healthy Tasmania Portal (Action 17) which will be a one stop shop for preventive health information;
- strengthening the role of the Child Health and Parenting Services in providing child health information and support (Action 21);
- developing a multi-strategy approach to educate and support pregnant women to quit smoking (Action 2);
- additional investment in highly targeted quit campaigns (Action 1); and
- increasing the Tobacco Sellers's Licence Fee and undertaking additional compliance and control activity.

See also:

Healthy Tasmania Five Year Strategic Plan

https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/about_the_department/our_plans_and_strategies/a_healthy_tasmania

The Tasmanian Government further supports young parents and their children during pregnancy and early years through:

- Investing in the Healthy Smiles for Two project, which gives priority to eligible pregnant women who live in North-West Tasmania to attend dental appointments at an Oral Health Services Tasmania clinic. This project was implemented due to strong evidence suggesting that if a mother has poor oral health, this impacts on her child's oral health in the formative years. Furthermore, as part of the program, dental health check-ups for babies are provided at 12 and 18 months along with preventative advice to minimise oral health risks for the child. If successful, the Tasmanian Health Service will consider extending the project to other areas of the state.
- Providing classes at the Royal Hobart Hospital for young expectant mothers, to educate and support them in health issues including body image, smoking dental health, nutrition, labour and feeding.
- Developing the Child Health and Parenting Service (ChaPS) Universal Program, which offers health and development assessments for children at key developmental ages, support and health advice, and practical parenting information for families across Tasmania. Under the Program, child health assessments are scheduled every two weeks from birth to eight weeks (first at two weeks), and then at six months, one year, two years and four years of age.
- Developing the cu@home Program, which is a sustained nurse home-visiting Program offered by CHaPS for young, first time parents between 15–19 years of age. The Program runs for two years, with engagement commencing in the antenatal period and continuing until the child's second birthday. The Program provides CHaPS with an opportunity to work intensively with young families, recognising that they are a vulnerable community group.

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Eliminating family violence is a top priority for the Tasmanian Government. In August 2015, the Premier, the Hon Will Hodgman MP, launched Safe Homes, Safe Families: Tasmania's Family Violence Action Plan 2015-2020 (Safe Homes, Safe Families).

Safe Homes, Safe Families allocates \$26 million to new and direct actions across three priority areas:

- changing the attitudes and behavior that lead to family violence;
- supporting families affected by family violence; and
- strengthening our legal response.

Safe Homes, Safe Families builds on and complements the Tasmanian Government's implementation of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022*.

The approach to, and implementation of, Safe Homes, Safe Families continues to be flexible, respond to emerging priorities, and take account of work being done across Australia to address family violence. This includes the National Children's Commissioner's *Children's Rights Report 2015*; the Tasmanian Commissioner for Children and Young People's *Children and Young People's Unique Experience of Family Violence Report (2016)*; and the *Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence Report (2016)*.

Safe Homes, Safe Families recognises that some groups are at a greater risk of experiencing family violence and/or may face particular challenges accessing support:

- Young women aged 18 to 24 years experience higher rates of physical and sexual violence than women in older groups.
- Women are at least three times more likely than men to experience violence from an intimate partner.
- Of those women who experience violence, more than half have children in their care.
- Women are at an increased risk of experiencing violence from an intimate partner during pregnancy.
- If family violence already exists, it is likely to increase in severity during pregnancy.

In response, a number of Safe Homes, Safe Families actions provide targeted support and services for children, young people and parents:

- Safe Choices, a new statewide family violence service, delivered by CatholicCare, is providing non-crisis support, including providing practical information, advice and referral, to people experiencing family violence, and to those who want to leave violent relationships (Action 1a).
- A Respectful Relationships Education Package for delivery in all Tasmanian Government schools (Action 3).
- Additional professional support staff – three psychologists and three social workers - to support children impacted by family violence in Tasmanian Government schools and CFCs (Action 6).
- Support for students affected by family violence in non-government schools by ensuring that schools have arrangements in place to identify students at risk of, or experiencing, family violence and to refer them to appropriate support services (Action 7).
- Additional counselling for children and young people affected by family violence, delivered by the Australian Childhood Foundation (Action 8).

- Additional counselling for adults affected by family violence, delivered by Support, Help, Empowerment (Action 9).
- An additional investment in crisis accommodation for women and women and their children (Action 10).
- Additional supported housing options, through the Rapid Rehousing initiative which is establishing a pool of 50 houses to help people affected by family violence to quickly access safe and affordable rental homes (Action 11).
- Security upgrades for women and children experiencing family violence, so that they can remain safely in their own home, or a home of their choice (Action 20).
- Culturally appropriate support to Aboriginal women and children affected by family violence under the Aboriginal Family Safety Initiative (Action 22).
- See also:
Safe Homes, Safe Families
<http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/safehomessafefamilies>

HOUSING

The Tasmanian Government is committed to investing in affordable housing solutions to ensure vulnerable Tasmanians have access to more homes that are safe, affordable and appropriate.

Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025 (the Strategy) and accompanying *Action Plan 2015-2019* articulate the Government's commitment to deliver affordable housing over the first four years of the Strategy. Actions with a particular impact on young parents and their children include:

- A trial of demountable backyard units to accommodate young people so they can stay in the family home, aimed at reducing the intensity of family stress and growing independence that may lead to young people exiting the family home into homelessness.
- A new, purpose built facility to provide supported accommodation for fathers and their children. The facility will provide wrap around services and support to fathers and their children in accommodation, access and social skills.
- A head lease program with the aim to rapidly rehouse vulnerable or homeless youth in furnished properties. This program directly targets a cohort who finds it difficult to access affordable rental accommodation.
- A campaign to raise awareness and encourage early referrals for housing support, involving key agencies such as gateway services, child and youth services, hospitals and community health centres, and CFCs.

See also:

Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025

https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/housing/key_projects_for_2014-15/tasmanian_affordable_housing_strategy

JOINED UP HUMAN SERVICES

The Tasmanian Government is working to improve Tasmania's human services system in partnership with the community sector, clients and the broader community.

The Joined Up Human Services Project, or Joined Up, is working to see how services can work together to better meet community needs and put people first. In particular the Joined Up project aims to test a joined up service and support model for vulnerable individuals and families, including young parents.

The Joined Up project comprises five elements:

- 1 A placed-based initiative which seeks to improve service collaboration, focusing on the Huon Valley;
- 2 A person-based initiative which involves testing a model for a lead support coordination service (LSCS);
- 3 A service improvement initiative which aims to include families that come to the attention of Child Protection Services in the LSCS;
- 4 A system improvement initiative, which aims to test the benefit of an electronic platform for coordinating LSCS client services and support; and
- 5 A privacy and information sharing initiative, which seeks to reduce barriers to information sharing in case coordination.

See also:

Joined Up Human Services Project

<https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/about-the-department/our-plans-and-strategies/joinedup>

CHILD PROTECTION

In the 2016-17 Tasmania Budget, the Government committed \$20.6 million over 2016-2020 to deliver a whole-of-government redesigned child protection system (*Strong Families, Safe Kids*) that can respond innovatively and effectively to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and their families.

The implementation of the redesign will fundamentally change the way in which government and non-government agencies work collaboratively together to deliver better services to improve the wellbeing of all Tasmanian children.

The Tasmanian Government is committed to a number of actions under five key strategies:

1. Placing the wellbeing of children at the centre of services;
2. Building a common, integrated risk assessment and planning system;
3. Creating a single front door;
4. Providing better support for children and their families; and
5. Redesigning the Child Protection Service with additional support

In the 2017-18 Tasmanian Budget, the Government allocated an additional \$27.5 million over four years to support the needs of children in out of home care, a component of which will be used to address the recommendations Commissioner for Children and Young People's *Children and Young People in Out of Home Care in Tasmania* Report

See also:

Strong Families, Safe Kids

<http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/children/strongfamilies-safekids>

YOUTH AT RISK STRATEGY

In April 2016, the Tasmanian Government announced the development of a Youth at Risk Strategy to provide a whole-of-government strategic direction for responding to the safety and rehabilitative needs of young people.

See also:

Youth at Risk Strategy

http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/youth/youth_justice/youth_at_risk

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

The 2017-18 Tasmanian Budget provides \$25 million toward an employment strategy aimed at improving the labour force participation in Tasmania, with an emphasis on supporting young people find work. Commitments under the strategy that will have outcomes for young people include:

- \$4.1 million to partner with TasCOSS and the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry on a Jobs Action Package to remove barriers which limit job opportunities, including helping young people complete qualifications for locally-identified jobs.
- \$600,000 for Whitelion's Work Ready program to target high risk youth aged 16 to 24.
- \$1.1 million for the Workforce for Now and the Future initiative, including the Driving for Jobs trial, an initiative to help young people get a driver's licence by blending driver training with education and vocational training.

See also:

Jobs Action Package

http://www.premier.tas.gov.au/budget_2017/budget_releases/jobs_bus_to_drive_regional_jobs_growth
Employment Strategy (Tasmanian Budget 2017-18 media release)

http://www.premier.tas.gov.au/budget_2017/budget_releases/supporting_7,600_new_jobs_for_tasmania

ATTACHMENTS

- A Case Study - Launching into Learning
- B Case Study - Child and Family Centres

Case Study 2 - Quality practice and service delivery in supporting young parents in Launching into Learning, May 2017

https://www.education.tas.gov.au/About_us/publications/school-brochures/Pages/Launching-Into-Learning.aspx

- Romaine Park School in Burnie, Tasmania offers a range of opportunities for parents and children as part of the school's Launching into Learning program. These include two 'Discover It' sessions where parents explore and play alongside their children in an exciting play inspired environment, a 'Chatter Matters' story time session, and a 'Great Start' program for families who prefer a small group atmosphere.
- The 'Great Start' program has been offered in response to young parents who have identified anxiety as being a barrier to participating in other Launching into Learning opportunities where large numbers of families attend.
- 'Great Start' provides a small group play opportunity. Young parents are encouraged to come with a friend, and are supported by two teachers from the school whose role is to work in partnership with the parents, building relationships, and supporting them in their parenting role.
- The 'Great Start' program provides opportunities to link with other services such as early Childhood Intervention, Communities for Children, Child Health and Parenting Service, the local Child and Family Centre, and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation.
- The program aims to build parent capacity with the focus on reducing anxiety and building confidence. The long term goal is to support the young families to access other opportunities and ensure a smooth transition for their children to school.
- Since the inception of the 'Great Start' Launching into Learning program, families are attending regularly and changes have been observed by the teachers in both the children and parents' emotional wellbeing. Notable change has been seen in the way the young parents interact with their children and communicate with other adults in the program.

Case Study - Child and Family Centres

Unpublished, prepared March 2017 for contribution to the Annual Report to COAG 2014-15 and 2015-16: Protecting Children is Everyone's Business - National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020.

- Aruna (pseudonym) attends the Child and Family Centre (CFC) twice a week with her three children five, three and six months. Aruna's husband works away from home during the week, travelling home on weekends, and she has no extended family living in Tasmania.
- Each Tuesday, Aruna drops her eldest child at school and walks 30 minutes to the CFC where she meets her Adult Literacy tutor who visits her from the co-located LINC Tasmania. Aruna's tutor is assisting her with her English, reading and writing skills with the aim of getting her driver's licence.
- On Wednesdays, CFC volunteers transport Aruna and her children to the CFC to attend playgroup facilitated by two Mission Australia family support workers. Occasionally they participate in the Family Fun cooking class. Aruna uses the food redistribution program, taking home bread, fruit and vegetables from Second Bite and Foodbank to supplement her weekly grocery purchases. Aruna has told staff at the CFC her husband does not allow her any access to money and she can only purchase groceries on the weekend when he is home.
- While visiting the CFC, Aruna attends her Child Health Nurse appointment for her baby's six month Nurse Health Assessment. Aruna discloses to the nurse there has been a recent Family Violence incident and her five year old son is finding it difficult to separate from her when she drops him off at school, and will not leave her side while at the CFC. The nurse gains Aruna's permission to share the information with CFC staff, the visiting Baptcare Intake worker and the school social worker. CFC staff consult with Aruna to determine what level of support she requires for her and her family. CFC staff coordinate a time to transport Aruna to the Family Violence Counselling Service and an appointment is made with the counsellor and Baptcare Gateway Intake worker during her next visit to the CFC. The social worker at the school is also contacted so that support can be provided to her son during his time at school.
- The principles and skills of working in partnership are fundamental to the way CFCs connect and respond to families. CFCs ensure families have access to coordinated delivery of services in their local communities. This provides the tools, resources and support for families to provide safe and supportive environments for their children.