“What’s that?”
“Me”
“Oh? And what are you doing?”
“Playing with my friends.”
“You like playing with your friends?”
“Yeah, I’ve got 3. See”

Sammy, aged 3
“All I want is everybody working together for [my child] and myself to make me a better person, and a better parent, and to give [my child] the best of the best for their life”.

Parent, participant
Message from the Minister

All children deserve a great start in life.

The Working Together (WT) initiative truly shows the significant innovation that Tasmania is demonstrating in Early Years education, providing opportunities for all children to get the support they need early in life in order to learn, grow and thrive.

Our commitment to children stands out in our leadership, policy, investment and on-the ground practice. Through WT, Tasmania is leading the way in providing targeted early learning with additional support to help our children in a more holistic way.

The WT initiative also supports the vision of Tasmania’s Strategy for Children – Pregnancy to Eight Years 2018-2021, by promoting Quality, Equity and Partnerships – three key elements identified to significantly improve opportunities for our children.

While all children benefit from high quality early learning, research shows that children experiencing higher levels of disadvantage benefit the most.1

Having sat alongside participating children in a range of early learning spaces, I have seen the joy they experience when discovering new ways of understanding, communicating, playing and learning together with their peers; it’s very special to see these children making new friends and building a strong sense of identity.

WT takes action to bring about these positive outcomes for all children, regardless of their background or circumstances. More and more children are now beginning to benefit from participating in quality early learning, which is directly helping them to have their best start in life.

Jeremy Rockliff MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Education and Training

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1. Duncan & Sojourner, 2013; Yazejian, Bryant, Freel, & Burchinal, 2015
What is ‘Working Together’?

Working Together (WT) is a Tasmanian Government initiative which is opening up opportunities for eligible children to participate in free, quality early learning in the year before they start kindergarten. This is done by:

- Funding places in quality early learning centres (up to 400 hours per year for each child);
- Working in partnership with families, early childhood educators and community services to support the child’s strengths and needs;
- Investing in professional learning for the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector so they can best assist children and their families; and
- Enabling capacity building to achieve our shared purpose.

WT is addressing barriers to participation and creating opportunities for children to learn, make friends and build confidence to set them up for a great start in life. It also fosters supportive connections to help parents and carers through the transition from home into early childhood education and care and then into kindergarten.

To be eligible to participate in WT, children must be three or four years old and in their year before kindergarten and:

- Be of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent and/or
- Receive support or interventions from the Child Safety Service and/or
- Have parents/primary carers who hold a Health Care Card and/or
- Meet two or more criteria under Parental Evaluation of Development Status (PEDs).

“Our shared purpose is to develop confident and creative children, who thrive in strong, connected communities.”
"I didn’t have much hope for my child before. I thought he would be straight in the too hard basket. But after this and all the help, I’ve got so much hope for him. I’ve never been so excited for his future!"

Carer, participant
The WT Model

The WT model incorporates four inter-connected elements to embed the foundations of success in the initiative and deliver the desired outcomes:

1. **Opening up access to opportunity**
   - Free early learning places

2. **Addressing Barriers**
   - Holistic support for the child and family

3. **Investing in the ECEC Sector**
   - Capability development

4. **Enabling supports**
   - Capacity building resources to address barriers to participation
How was WT created?

WT was produced through the Working Together for 3 year Olds (WT3) pilot which took place between February and July 2019. The model was co-designed with families, Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) service partners, community members, relevant services and the project team, who worked collaboratively to develop approaches, tools and resources to refine the initiative.

The pilot’s objective was to create a shared, innovative, effective and scalable approach that would address barriers to participation experienced by eligible children so they can engage in quality early learning.

Fifty-one three year olds were enrolled in the WT3 pilot at 10 early-learning centres in Devonport, East Devonport, Newnham, Glenorchy, Moonah, Claremont, New Norfolk, Kingston and Blackmans Bay.

The pilot participation profile

- 10 Long day centres and 2 Child and Family Centres participating
- 9 Suburbs involved
- 51 children enrolled 93% of 55 places filled
- 92% health care card holders
- 22% engaged with Child Safety
- 31% Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 62% vulnerable on 2 or more PEDs criteria
During the pilot 1,742 instances of support were provided to the 51 children and their families (average 34 per child) including social connection, child development screening, referrals to services, transport, food and clothing, parenting skills and regular check-ins.

An early learning consultant, engagement workers and a senior social worker were funded to support ECEC service partners and assist in capacity building. Professional learning was also facilitated, developing ECEC educators’ practice and support networks. Families accessed greater holistic support as children transitioned from home into centre-based care. The coming months will also see these children supported to transition into school.

“It excites me to see that people are willing to do what they need to do to help my child. It makes you go, ‘they do care’. They’re not just faking it, you know what I mean?”

Parent, participant
What were the results of the WT3 pilot?

The WT3 pilot was independently evaluated by Clear Horizon. The effectiveness of the WT3 model was measured and assessed, which has informed adaptation and the implementation plan. The evaluation period ran from March to July 2019, and included all pilot locations and service partners involved.

The Findings were:

“Overall, the pilot achieved sound and positive results at this relatively early stage of its delivery. There is evidence that WT3 has contributed to changes and early instances of impact for 3 year olds and their families, in line with WT3 focus areas. Despite some challenges, WT3 is considered to have achieved a strong effectiveness rating. For the evaluation period, WT3 has been effective in meeting its delivery targets and pilot goals in terms of the breadth of the outcomes it influences across community and service partner cohorts, and extent of change evidenced for individuals and small cohorts of families.”

Real-time data was collected from service partners, families and key stakeholders to ensure accurate information was available to evolve and improve the model. This co-design approach was a key enabler to the success of the pilot, with findings to be integrated over 2020-21.

The pilot also identified the need for a name change from WT3 to WT. This followed consultation with families, who indicated that some were confused about whether they would need to withdraw their children from WT3 when they turned four. The name change reflects that the opportunity is for children in the year before they begin kindergarten. The tagline ‘supporting early learning’ also seeks to address misunderstandings arising from the term ‘pre-school’.
“This pilot has strengthened the capacity of our staff to network with other service partners and also services in our community that can help support families. The confidence of the children in the WT3 program is growing every day, which makes it really rewarding.”

Service partner
What worked well?

Families, service partners and stakeholders were asked what they thought worked well throughout the pilot. The diagram below illustrates six main areas identified as strong and positive aspects of WT3:

- **Data informer practice; knowledge and data sharing; participation**
- **Integrated learning culture**
- **Existing connection with families for enrolment**
- **Working together, new partnerships and relationships**
- **Engagement, dedication and skills of staff; resourcing; access to tools, data and support**
- **Support and wraparounds for children and families**
- **Capability building, skill and dedication of service partners/engagement workers**
- **Support enrolling; support at the Centres; support when issues come up**
- **Changes and benefits for children and families**
- **Collaboration and joining up of the network**
What was challenging?

Some challenges were identified throughout the pilot, which are illustrated below. Many issues were addressed as they arose, with others being worked through or will be considered in the future.

- Late introduction of engagement roles; online learning circles; elements of organisation
- Identifying and enrolling target children
- Some aspects of pilot delivery and training
- Staff ratios; consistency of skill levels; covering educators off floor
- Participation and other challenges for parents/carers
- Access and transport for families
- Staffing, resourcing and time challenges for service partners
- Challenge of building connections
- Service partners with families and families with community; takes time and energy
- Separation issues, connection with community and other services
Thank you to our pilot partners

**Families**

| **Lead agency** | The Department of Education (DoE) Tasmania  
Project team – Early Years Partnerships and Projects, Strategy and Performance  
Child and Family Centres – East Devonport and New Norfolk  
Early Childhood Intervention Service (ECIS) |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Co-design facilitation</strong></td>
<td>The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI)</td>
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<td><strong>Families consultations</strong></td>
<td>The Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS)</td>
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<td><strong>Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Clear Horizon</td>
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<td><strong>Local Enabling Groups (LEGs)</strong></td>
<td>In each of the five pilot local government areas, people come together to inform the co-design and delivery with involvement of families, community service professionals and volunteers, ECEC service partners, school educators</td>
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<td>Early Childhood Education and Care Services</td>
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<td><strong>Goodstart Early Learning</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Derwent Valley Council</strong></td>
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<td>The Valley Children’s Centre + ptunarra Child and Family Centre</td>
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<td>Lady Gowrie Alanvale</td>
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<td><strong>Devonport Child Care Centres</strong></td>
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<td>Malangenna Children’s Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drew St (East Devonport Child and Family Centre + Devonport Child Care Centres + East Devonport Primary School)</td>
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<td>1912 Child Care and Education Centre</td>
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What are the next steps for WT?

Following the success of the pilot, a streamlined co-design and ‘learn and adapt as we go’ evaluation approach will continue to be integrated over 2020-21 to further refine a high-quality, scalable WT model.

The growth of WT will be staged, to embed the foundations for success and balance supply and demand.

WT will open up 120 places per year in Year One (2020) and Year Two (2021). That’s 240 children who will access free, quality early learning. These places will be available across approximately 20 ECEC sites. The opportunity will initially be offered in locations with higher numbers of eligible 0-4 year olds of no less than 100 in population.

In addition to the existing nine pilot suburbs, a further 17 locations will be involved in 2020-21:

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<tr>
<th>Devonport</th>
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<td>East Devonport</td>
<td>Mowbray</td>
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<td>Blackmans Bay</td>
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An expression of interest (EOI) process open in October 2019 will determine up to 20 specific ECEC sites in these locations to deliver opportunities through WT.

Every two years thereafter, more places will be opened up in a targeted way. Updated data will be sourced in 2021 to guide selection of recommended suburbs for Years Three and Four.
“I have noticed a big change in my son’s social skills and how he is interacting with other children. He loves coming to ‘his school’ and he can’t wait to play with his friends! The educators at the centre are fantastic – as soon as we walk through the door they welcome you and say everything is going to be OK.”

Parent, participant
“Through our involvement in WT3, our staff have gained a deeper understanding of how to support children with a broad range of needs. The journey for our WT3 families has also been amazing – children have developed socialising skills and are getting used to routines.”

Service partner
What will be the benefits of WT?

WT opens up many benefits for both families and the ECEC sector.

Benefits for families

- Having access to holistic support. This means that early learning services work with families to understand what extra support the child needs in order to thrive. This might include regular check-ins, referrals to other services or assistance with food, clothing or transport. The earlier a child gets this help, the greater impact it will have on the child’s life.
- Being able to connect with other families, share stories and make friends.
- Experiencing an environment that is safe and free of judgment, where all children are made feel that they belong.
- Providing children with the opportunity to make friends and build confidence, setting them up to enjoy learning and being at school.
- Families will still receive any other payments they are currently entitled to.

Benefits for the ECEC sector

- Gives service partners a chance to work in partnership with families they may not have been able to in the past.
- Provides access to professional learning for ECEC educators, connecting them to practice growth opportunities and peer supports.
- Recognises service partners’ inclusiveness and contribution to communities.
- Access to a collaborative project team committed to working together to create a great experience for 3 – 4 year olds.
Working Together
Supporting early learning

Early Years Partnerships and Projects
Strategy and Performance
Department of Education

Please reach out!
WT@education.tas.gov.au
www.education.tas.gov.au