

## **NEXT STEPS**

Action Plan 2021-2023

## **Final Progress Report**







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# Acknowledgement of Tasmanian Aboriginal People

The Tasmanian Government acknowledges and pays respect to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional and original owners and continuing custodians of lutruwita/Tasmania. We acknowledge elders, past and present.

## Seeking Help

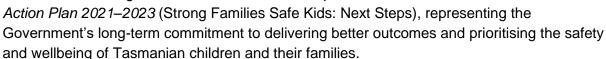
If you have concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child, call the Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line on **1800 000 123.** 

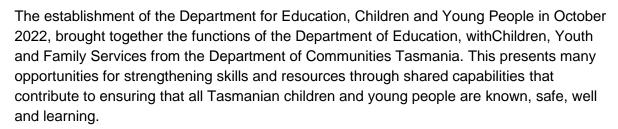
If a child is at immediate risk and Police or medical assistance is required, call 000.

### Minister's Message

Ensuring the safety, wellbeing and resilience of Tasmanian children, young people and families is our shared responsibility.

On 25 March 2021, the Tasmanian Government launched the *Strong Families Safe Kids: Next Steps* 





The Strong Families Safe Kids: Next Steps Final Progress Report (Final Progress Report) delivers on our commitment to publicly report on implementation of and outcomes achieved through Strong Families Safe Kids: Next Steps, and acknowledges the investment, effort and achievements of the Tasmanian Government. The Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Governments' Responses into Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings (Commission of Inquiry) is a key driver of our next steps in continuing to strengthen our system of child safety and out of home care, and we are currently working through how we will build on our reforms to date in implementing the Commission of Inquiry recommendations.

The Final Progress Report builds on key achievements across the life of *Strong Families Safe Kids: Next Steps*, which in the first year (2021-22), included:

- launch of the Government's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy 'It Takes a Tasmanian Village'
- establishing the Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line as the single contact point for all children, including unaccompanied children under 16 years old who are at risk



of or experiencing homelessness

- Tasmania becoming a participant in the National Connect for Safety initiative
- recruitment of an additional Child Advocate for the North and Northwest Regions.

Building on our first year of achievements, more recent achievements include:

- the launch of the Strong Families Safe Kids website following its re-design
- the launch of the Government's Tasmanian Out of Home Care Standards
- release of *Practice Guidelines for Specialist Homelessness Services* to support the *Under* 16 Youth Homelessness Policy Framework
- implementation of new training modules on Care Teams and Care Planning for Child Safety and Advice and Referral Line (ARL) practitioners
- the operationalisation of a specialist statewide Child and Adolescent Mental Health service (CAMHS) supported by a Statewide CAMHS Leadership and Management Structure
- improved service access through the establishment of a dedicated statewide CAMH triage service
- Expanded community-based access in more communities through visiting and outreach services, and opening of new service sites, including Devonport (delivered) and Brighton (progressing)
- completed establishment of the CAMHS Multisystemic Therapy (MST) program in the three regions. MST provides intensive evidence-based intervention for youth aged 12 – 16 years who are experiencing severe and complex (externalising) mental health behaviours.

Beyond the achievements of Strong Families Safe Kids: Next Steps, we have also:

- trialled a regional Youth and Family Preservation Program, established within the Targeted Youth Support Service, boosting capacity for additional clients
- established a pilot therapeutic residential service for young people under 16, who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness in the South, known as Kingston House
- progressed a Service Level Agreement between Homes Tasmania and the Department for Education, Children and Young People to improve capacity, respond to and address the housing support needs of vulnerable young people, particularly those with complex needs
- released the Child Safety Practice Approach <u>Feel Safe</u>, Are <u>Safe</u>, which guides and defines the work of Child Safety Services and reflects that positive outcomes depend upon developing genuine relationships.

We have made great progress over the years of implementing *Strong Families Safe Kids: Next Steps* and will move forward with a strong focus on continuous improvement and embedding the critical core components of our reformed child safety system.

The recommendations that relate to Education, Youth Justice, Child Safety and Out of Home Care in the Final Report from the Commission of Inquiry, build on the strong foundations established through Strong Families Safe Kids: Next Steps, and are guiding our future

strategy and planning to embed and build on our reform efforts to date. This includes, for example, recommendations 9.4 and 9.17 that relate to funding and restructuring the Stong Families, Safe Kids ARL and recommendations 9.20, 9.15 and 21.9 which relate to the establishment of a Tasmanian Carers Register, full implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, and amending the *Children, Young Persons' and Their Families Act 1997*.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the implementation of *Strong Families Safe Kids: Next Steps*. We look forward to continuing our dedication to deliver better outcomes and improved safety and wellbeing for Tasmanian children, young people and their families, and working with children and young people, families, carers and our service partners to build on our reforms through the lens of the Commission of Inquiry in the coming years.

Roger Jaensch MP

Minister for Education, Children and Youth

# Strong Families Safe Kids: Next Steps Action Plan 2021-2023

Strong Families Safe Kids: Next Steps outlines 34 actions to deliver better outcomes and improved safety and wellbeing for Tasmanian children and their families.

## Key Priority 1 – Child Safety and Wellbeing is Everyone's Business

- 1. Develop a Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy
- 2. Undertake a comprehensive review of the *Children, Young Persons and their Families*Act 1997
- Develop a whole-of-Government children and young people under 16 who are alone and at risk of or experiencing homelessness Policy Framework with supporting Practice Guidelines
- 4. Implement a revised governance framework for Strong Families Safe Kids
- 5. Develop a Strong Families Safe Kids website
- 6. Contributing to the Successor Plan to the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*

# Key Priority 2 – Building a Common Understanding of Safety and Wellbeing

- 7. Embed the Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework across key children, youth and families support sectors
- 8. Develop and deliver professional learning, education and training regarding the Child and Youth Wellbeing Assessment Tool
- 9. Work with the eSafety Commissioner to deliver education and training to carers in response to technology-facilitated abuse
- 10. Continue to build collaborative cross-agency working relationships to facilitate improved outcomes for children, young people and their families

#### Key Priority 3 – Managing the front door

- 11. Establish the Advice and Referral Line as the single assessment, referral and triage point for children and young people Under 16 who are alone and at risk of or experiencing homelessness
- 12. Establish a Youth Wellbeing Liaison Officer in the Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line
- 13. Establish the Care Team practice approach to improve coordination of young people under 16 who are alone and at risk of or experiencing homelessness
- 14. Develop and publish an Advice and Referral Line Terminology Guide
- 15. Implement a revised Child Wellbeing Online Contact Form

## Key Priority 4 – Providing better support to children and their families

- 16. Continue to deliver the Intensive Family Engagement Service
- 17. Further develop prevention and early intervention capability for vulnerable families and their children
- 18. Establishing a non-legal advocacy support for parents
- 19. Review available supports and pilot an Informal Kinship Care Liaison and Support Service
- 20. Evaluate and further develop the Integrated Family Support Service and relevant Parenting Programs
- 21. Continue to progress and embed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle across the Child Safety Service system

# Key Priority 5 – Redesigning the Child Safety Service and Out of Home Care supports

- 22. Improve the clinical supports services available to children and young people in care
- 23. Implement a permanency and stability framework which defines and prioritises permanent and stable outcomes and timely decision making for children and young people engaged with the statutory Child Safety Service
- 24. Commence implementation of Standards for children and young people in care and a carer register
- 25. Participate in the national child protection information sharing initiative Connect for Safety
- 26. Review the functions and structures of clinical decision making processes within the Child Safety Service
- 27. Support the transition of the Child Safety Service to a practice framework which is orientated on collaborative decision making to resolve concerns
- 28. Develop and implement an Out of Home Care Therapeutic Practice Framework
- 29. Develop, implement and publish an Out of Home Care Service Directory
- 30. Undertake a feasibility study for a whole-of-government child and youth rapid response initiative
- 31. Support the Youth Change Makers to inform the development of policy, procedures and practice standards in the Child Safety Service



- 32. Implement a child participation model and tool for children and young people in Out of Home Care
- 33. Appoint an additional Child Advocate for the Northern and Northwest regions of Tasmania
- 34. Improve data collection and reporting



### **Key Achievements**

## Key Priority 1 – Child Safety and Wellbeing is Everyone's Business

- 'It Takes a Tasmanian Village', Tasmania's first ever whole-of-government Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy for 0–25-year-olds was launched in August 2021. The Strategy has funding of over \$100 million for initiatives that support the wellbeing of 0-25 year olds, with a particular focus on the first 1,000 days (from pregnancy to age two), where there is clear evidence that a good start in life is vitally important to a child's future wellbeing (Action 1 completed).
- A review of the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997 commenced in late 2021 to ensure the Act is contemporary and aligned with our new approach to child safety under Strong Families, Safe Kids. On advice from the Advisory Group, the public release of the Review Discussion Paper and launch of public consultation period was paused until the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings Report Recommendations could be incorporated. This approach ensures consultation maximises the learnings from the Commission of Inquiry and reduces the need for multiple consultation periods. Consultation will occur throughout 2024 (Action 2 commenced).
- The Under 16 Youth Homelessness Policy Framework and supporting Practice Guidelines have been released. The Policy Framework aims to improve the service system response for young people under 16 who are alone and at risk of homelessness. This is supported by a commitment of \$10 million over four years for the Under 16 Lighthouse Project. This includes a three-year pilot therapeutic residential model of care with a focus on family restoration (Action 3 – completed).
- The Governance arrangements for Strong Families Safe Kids have been revised as recommended in the Strong Families Safe Kids Summary Evaluation Report. The Government has consolidated its governance frameworks into a single – Children, Young People and Families Safety and Wellbeing Governance Framework (Action 4 completed).
- A dedicated webpage has been established for the Strong Families Safe Kids reform
  initiative to provide information on progress on implementing our new direction.
  The website has been re-designed and launched following the establishment of the new
  Department for Education, Children and Young People, including a range of resources,
  online contact form and 'quick exit' feature (Action 5 –completed).
- Tasmania was actively involved in the development of *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031.* The Framework was released in December 2021, with the subsequent Safe and Supported first two Action Plans released in January 2023. The Department continues to be actively involved in the delivery of both, the *First Action Plan 2023 2026* and the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023 2026* (Action 6 completed).

# Key Priority 2 – Building a Common Understanding of Safety and Wellbeing

- As noted above, 'It Takes a Tasmanian Village', Tasmania's first ever whole-of-government Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy for 0–25 year olds was launched in August 2021. The Strategy is supported by over \$100 million to fund initiatives that support the wellbeing of 0-25 year olds. Implementation of these initiatives is monitored through the Children, Young People and Families Safety and Wellbeing Governance Framework (Action 7 completed).
- Professional learning, education and training regarding the Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework and Assessment Tool is embedded across all training modules for Child Safety and ARL practitioners. This includes the Beginning Practice, Child Safety and ARL modules, with ongoing training and education modules specific to the Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework (Action 8 – completed).
- The Department for Education, Children and Young People worked with the eSafety
  Commissioner to develop education and training for carers in response to technologyfacilitated abuse. Following publicly advertising of an Expression of Interest, carers
  participated in training available on the eSafety Commissioner's website (Action 9 completed).
- The Children, Young People and Families Safety and Wellbeing Governance Framework is delivering actions through co-ordinated and collaborative effort between government agencies and with our non-government partners. Along with this, specific initiatives outlined in Strong Families, Safe Kids also have a focus on strengthening and embedding new ways of working cross-agency that improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. This includes, for example, development of the *Under* 16 Youth Homelessness Policy Framework and the review of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997. The Sure Start Action Plan has been released with five key actions underway for improving the learning and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people in care through priority access to government services and supports. This includes a Learner Wellbeing Fund and Interagency Care Team Governance Model. Additionally, a Management Group and Steering Committee have been established to oversee the implementation of Arch Centres providing support for victim-survivors of sexual violence. The establishment of the Department for Education, Children and Young People has further enhanced collaborative working relationships between schools and child safety services in relation to vulnerable students (Action 10 completed).

#### Key Priority 3 – Managing the front door

- The Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line has been established as the single contact point for all children and young people in Tasmania, and this includes receiving contact about unaccompanied under 16 year olds who are at risk of, or who are experiencing homelessness. Staff have been working alongside Non-Government Organisations to assess and refer children and young people to relevant services (Action 11 - completed).
- A Child Safety and Wellbeing Liaison Officer (Youth Specialist) has been established in the Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line, to improve support for young

people under 16 who are at risk of, or who are experiencing homelessness. The Youth Specialist has been working closely with Non-Government Organisations, services, and the Youth and Family Preversation Program, to improve responses and implement the Care Team Approach for young people at risk of or expereincing homelessness (Action 12 - completed).

- A Care Team approach was implemented and a referral pathway, via the ARL, was
  established to a Child and Youth Wellbeing team (renamed to the Youth and Family
  Preservation Progam in 2022, to better reflect the role of the team) established within
  the Targeted Youth Support Service to improve coordination of responses to under 16
  youth who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness. To date, the trial has boosted
  capacity for additional clients (Action 13 completed).
- An Advice and Terminology Referral Guide has been developed and is currently being used by ARL and the Child Safety Service (Action 14 - completed).
- A revised Child Wellbeing Online Contact Form has been implemented and is included on the newly re-designed <u>Strong Families Safe Kids - Call 1800 000 123</u> website. The Online Contact Form includes supports and online resources for persons making a notification through the website (Action 15 - completed).

## Key Priority 4 – Providing better support to children and their families

- The Intensive Family Engagement Service (IFES) continues to be delivered across the state, working intensively with families to reduce the need for statutory intervention and placement of children in Out of Home Care. In 2021-22 the Government extended the capacity of the program to support an additional 18 families and comitted funding for a further two years, in recognition of the high success rate of IFES. In 2022-23, the Government increased funding allocated to IFES, and ongoing consideration will be given to the demand for the services delivered (Action 16 completed and continuing).
- The Bringing Baby Home initiative was expanded in the north, with both residential and
  in-home referrals being completed in the region. This initiative aims to support families in
  crisis by improving capability and family functioning, while keeping children safe. It is an
  example of the ongoing work to further develop prevention and early intervention
  capability for vulnerable families and their children (Action 17 completed).
- The department continues to consider the legal and non-legal support and advocacy required for children, young people and their families to better understandany service gaps and opportunities to improve outcomes for children and young people (Action 18 ongoing).
- Since early 2022, the informal kinship care liaison and support service in the northwest has been operating, delivered by Mission Australia. The liaison provides a key contact point for informal kinship carers to help them navigate the service system and access the supports they need. Statewide, Baptcare and Mission Australia are delivering specialised family support through the Community Kinship Program. Following consultation with families, the name changed from 'informal' to 'kinship carers' to be more inclusive and inviting. The program now includes increased brokerage to fund a range of personalised activities that support children's wellbeing, flexible respite funding to support carers, and peer and group support options for children and carers (Action 19 completed).

- A review of the Integrated Family Support Service and relevant Parenting Programs has been completed. Outcomes of the review are being considered alongside the recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry, to inform the further development of these services and programs (Action 20 - completed).
- The Child Safety Service has trialled the delivery of a number of individualised service packages for Aboriginal children in the south of the state as a precursor to a case management model, delivered by Aboriginal Community Organisations. A palawa Child Safe and Supported Policy Partnership Working Group led by Coalition of Peaks member, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, has been formed, with government and Community working in genuine partnership to reduce the rate of overrepresentation of Aboriginal children and young people in the child safety and out-of-home care systems. This work is long term (Action 21 ongoing).

## Key Priority 5 – Redesigning the Child Safety Service and Out of Home Care supports

- The Tasmanian Government's implementation of the recommendations of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Review 2020 is delivering improved statewide access to timely and appropriate community-based services for children, young people, and their families. Building on the initial \$41.2M over four years for Reform, the Tasmanian Government has demonstrated its long-term commitment through now recurrent funding to sustain the reform outcomes. Expanding into a statewide Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, with a growing workforce and extended reach into regional areas, CAMHS is better positioned to deliver specialist mental health care tailored to complex needs. This includes:
  - planning for the establishment of Head to Health Kids programs, a joint initiative of the Tasmanian and Commonwealth Governments to deliver integrated secondary level mental health services for infants and children up to 12 years of age. Three sites have been announced in the Burnie, Tamar and Bridgewater regions, and establishment of the multidisciplinary teams is progressing.
  - the final stage of development of the CAMHS Youth Mental Health Program for young people aged 16 to 24 years experiencing complex and severe mental health challenges. Testing of the service elements has commenced in collaboration with key service partners in the CAMHS South region. Establishment of the YMH positions in the North and North West has commenced (Action 22 – ongoing).
- Work will be ongoing throughout 2024 to support permanent and stable outcomes for children and young people, including developing clear policy and practice advice as well as supporting initatives (Action 23 – implementation underway).
- The Tasmanian Out of Home Care Standards were released in August 2022 and are currently utilised as a guide for service providers, until such a time that the Accreditation Framework is in place to formally monitor the Standards. This has involved significant stakeholder consultation and participation in relevant forums. Additionally, work focussed on establishing an Accreditation Framework and a Carers Register has commenced, the Commission of Inquiry has reinforced the need for this to be implemented in Tasmania (recommendation 9.20). This work will be developed with stakeholders and will continue to strengthen safeguards for children and young people in out of home care (Action 24 completed).

- In November 2021, Tasmania became a participant in the Connect for Safety information initiative to help improve the sharing of important child safety information between States and Territories (Action 25 completed).
- Child Safety Services clinical decision making processes were reviewed as part of continuous quality improvement and practice development, focussing on where significant decision making processes should be undertaken in a consultative and collaborative manner. The establishment of a new leadership structure including a dedicated practice development stream has also provided greater clinical support and guidance for teams. This includes the establishment of a Decision Making Forum to enhance child safety and legal decision making to be more inclusive of the voices of children, young people and their families, and to reflect our responsibilities for inclusion of Aboriginal people in decision making about Aboriginal children and young people (Action 26 completed).
- The new leadership structure includes a dedicated practice development stream in the Child Safety Service and the release of the new Child Safety Practice Approach 'Feel Safe, Are Safe', which guides and defines the work of Child Safey Services. A Care Team approach has been developed to facilitate collaborative decision making to resolve concerns (Action 27 – completed).
- A Therapeutic Practice Framework for Out of Home Care will be further developed following Commission of Inquiry recommendations (Action 28 commenced).
- An Out of Home Care Service Directory is included within the Children, Youth and
  Families Capability Directory. This is an internal document that summarises the current
  service delivery capability comprised of government delivered and commissioned Out of
  Home Care services. This directory guides service development and commissioned and
  can be used by child safety staff to determine the appropriate care and support for
  children and young people (Action 29 completed).
- The Sure Start whole of government initiative provides \$2 million to enable children and young people in out of home care to have priority access to government services, supports and concessions. The initiative commenced in late 2021 and has established the Learning and Wellbeing Fund for students who are in out of home care. It includes UTAS scholarships with the first recipients receiving their scholarships in early 2022,



and further students receiving scholarships in early 2023. Additional learning supports and tutoring for primary school students is being delivered and laptop devices for high school students in Out of Home Care have been provided. Under fixed term funding to implement recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, Regional Complex Care coordinator positions have been established in each region to support the introduction of the Interagency Care Team Governance Model under the Sure Start Action Plan (Action 30 – completed).

- Youth Change Maker forums were established to inform the development of policy, procedures and practice standards in the Child Safety Service increasing the voices of all children placed with all OOHC providers.
  - The Child Advocate Liaison north and northwest regions has increased capacity to further progress youth consultation work (Action 31 completed).
- The Youth Voice Survey is being trialled for young people aged 12 to 17 in out of home care, from April to October 2024. The survey is a tool for young people to feed their views into care planning and decisions that affect them. The survey questions have been developed for young people, by young people with care experiences. The learnings gained from the trial Youth Voice Survey will be incorporated into a permanent Youth Voice Survey and a Child Voice Survey (for children aged 5 to 11), that have greater functionality and application (Action 32 implementation underway).
- An additional Child Advocate Liaison has been appointed for the north and northwest regions in early 2022. In early 2024, an additional Child Advocate Liaison was appointed for the southern region. Additionally, in early 2024, a Principal Policy and Project Officer was also appointed to help the Child Advocate drive systemic advocacy work, such as the survey (Action 33 - completed).
- The Integrated Client Information Project initiated in 2021, within the now Services for Children and Families. The project is working closely with Services for Children and Families to improve specialist case management systems. Opportunities to support better data collection and reporting are being considered, in addition to other IT enhancement projects. Multiple sub-projects are progressing and will have on-the-ground benefits, and support improved decision-making and further embedding the Care Team approach (Action 34 commenced and ongoing).

### Consultation

When Strong Families Safe Kids: Next Steps was released, a commitment to ongoing engagement with stakeholders and the community was made. There was, and remains, a recognition of the value of reporting back and sharing learnings to inform a collective approach to delivering better outcomes and improved safety and wellbeing for Tasmanian children and their families.

The Tasmanian Government continues to listen to and work with the Child and Youth Wellbeing Community Consultative Group. Comprising of representatives from key community service organisations and stakeholders, as well as stakeholders representing key cohorts including: stakeholders with a particular focus on child wellbeing in the first 1,000 days, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and youth wellbeing, child safety and peak bodies representing universal services for children and young people 0 to 25 years of age, with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender non-binary and gender diverse, intersex, queer, asexual and questioning (LGBTIQA+).

### Governance

The governance arrangements for *Strong Families Safe Kids* were revised as recommended in the *Strong Families Safe Kids Summary Evaluation Report*.

The Tasmanian Government has consolidated its governance frameworks into one Children, Young People and Families Safety and Wellbeing Governance Framework, reporting to the Children, Young People and Families Safety and Wellbeing Cabinet Committee.

The revised governance structure has delivered actions through co-ordinated and collaborative effort between government agencies, with our non-government partners and recognises the interrelationships that exist between family violence and child and youth safety and wellbeing. This governance structure will continue to be revised and strengthened as we implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry.

# Continuous Improvement and Ongoing Monitoring

The release of *Strong Families Safe Kids: Next Steps* represented the Government's long-term commitment to prioritising the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in Tasmania.

As this report brings *Strong Families Safe Kids: Next Steps* to a close, we reflect on the achievementsoutlined in this report and affirm our committment to continually prioritising child safety and wellbeing.

The establishment of the Department for Education, Children and Young People, has strengthened our focus on continuous improvement and ongoing monitoring, and is embedding strong leadership to ensure every child and young person is known, safe, well and learning.

Future strategy and planning that is underway in relation to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is building on *Strong Families Safe Kids: Next* Steps and is being informed by the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. The majority of the *Strong Families, Safe Kids: Next Steps* actions are now complete, but to the extent that some remain ongoing, these will now be incorporated into the Governement's response to the Commission of Inquiry.

#### Department for Education, Children and Young People

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Visit: Strong Families Safe Kids - Call 1800 000 123

www.decyp.tas.gov.au

