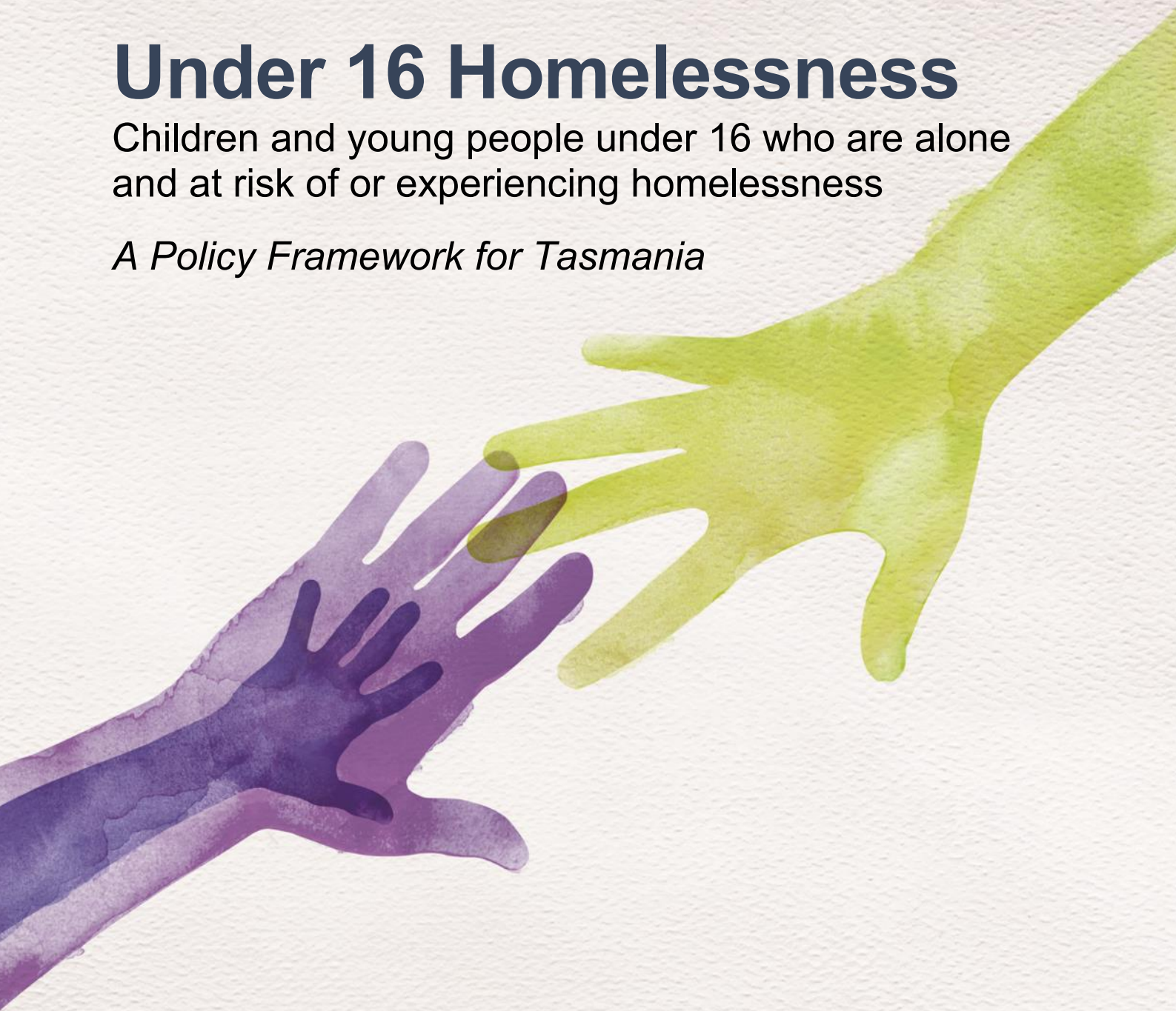


# Under 16 Homelessness

Children and young people under 16 who are alone  
and at risk of or experiencing homelessness

*A Policy Framework for Tasmania*



## *Acknowledgements:*

The Tasmanian Government would like to acknowledge and thank members of the Under 16 Homelessness Working Group for their input into the development of this document.

### **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 this land. 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.



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# Introduction

*The wellbeing of children and young people under the age of 16 who are alone and face homelessness is our shared responsibility.*

Government, families, community services and the broader community have a shared responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

Foundational to this Policy Framework, the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework provides a contemporary definition of wellbeing as: the state where a child or young person feels loved, safe and valued; has their physical, mental and emotional health needs met; is learning and participating; has a positive sense of culture and identity and has access to material basics, including a safe and stable place to live.



## Our Vision

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*We seek a community where it is rare for an unaccompanied child under the age of 16 to experience homelessness, and where they do, the right supports are available at the right time to foster wellbeing and ensure the period of homelessness is brief, safe and non-recurring.*

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## Purpose

Designed in partnership with the people and organisations who work with children and young people, this Policy Framework provides a policy setting to guide our response to children and young people under the age of 16 who are alone and have nowhere safe and stable to live.

**The Policy Framework's purpose is to:**

- improve collaboration and integration so that services and communities work together towards improved outcomes and shared goals for children, young people and families
- outline the key policy principles for a shared response
- articulate commitments that place the safety and wellbeing of our children and young people at the very centre of the Tasmanian service response.



### **So that our service system:**

- is agile and provides a range of appropriate support and accommodation options, to respond to the individual needs of the child and their family;
- shares responsibility for, and works together to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people through a central point of advice and referral;
- prioritises prevention and early intervention so a young person can remain in, or return to the care of parents or other family where safe and possible to do so;
- has improved data collection, analysis and monitoring capability to support evidence-based practice.

The Policy Framework will be supported by a set of Practice Guidelines.

Practice Guidelines will provide information to support evidence-based practice and clarify roles and responsibilities across relevant parts of the service system including: Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS); Department of Education; Children Youth and Family Services; Department of Health; Department of Justice and Tasmanian Police.

Practice Guidelines will be developed in partnership with relevant Departments' and services.

## **Background**

In June 2019, the Minister for Human Services announced the establishment of an *Under 16 Homelessness Taskforce* to develop a greater understanding of the issues associated with under 16 homelessness in Tasmania. In its final report<sup>1</sup> delivered in December 2019, the Taskforce recommended a range of immediate and longer-term initiatives for phased implementation.

A cross-sectoral *Under 16 Homelessness Working Group* was established in June 2020 to oversee implementation of the immediate initiatives and provide advice on the Taskforce's longer-term recommendations.

The recommendations reinforce the need for an integrated response that provides:

- a central point of contact
- clear processes and strong accountabilities to ensure actions or decisions taken are in the best interest of the child
- a range of effective supports including early intervention and medium to longer term accommodation and support options to keep children safe and well.

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<sup>1</sup> [Ministerial-Advice-Background-Document-Final-24122019-Redacted-1.0.pdf \(communities.tas.gov.au\)](#)





# Understanding the Context

## What the Data Tells Us

Census estimates show across Australia, around 27,700 young people aged 12 to 24 were experiencing homelessness on Census night in 2016, making up 24 per cent of the total homeless population (AIHW<sup>2</sup>).

Data collected by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW<sup>3</sup>) gives us a picture of unaccompanied young people who present to Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) throughout Australia. As this data only captures those who present to SHS, and not those who are couch-surfing, staying with friends or family or rough sleeping, the prevalence of youth homelessness, including under 16 homelessness is likely to be higher than the data suggests.

During 2020-21, 41,700 Australians aged 15 to 24 presented alone to SHS, representing around 15 per cent of all SHS clients. Of these: around 25 per cent were aged 15 to 17; almost half (48 per cent) reported a current mental health issue and around one third (30 per cent) identified as Indigenous.

### In Tasmania during 2020-21:

- 1,467 children and young people aged between 15 and 24 presented alone to SHS
- 124 children and young people under 16 presented alone, of these, 20 had a care and protection order in place

The Tasmanian Government acknowledges the personal, economic and social costs over the lifetime of a child under the age of 16 who experiences homelessness alone are profound.

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*“these costs compound over their life, exposing this cohort to a life of intergenerational disadvantage”*

*Under 16 Homelessness Taskforce Report 2019*

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<sup>2</sup> [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2017–18, Young people presenting alone - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2020–21, Summary - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](#)  
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Confidentialised Unit Record File 2020-21



## Risk Factors

The circumstances that lead children and young people under the age of 16 to experience homelessness are often complex and always unique to them as individuals.

Known drivers of youth homelessness include drug and mental health issues, gender and LGBTIQ+ issues and difficult family situations, including parental drug and alcohol abuse. Family and domestic violence was the most reported reason for seeking assistance among young people presenting alone in 2020-21.

Evidence also shows that Indigenous children and children leaving institutional care (including youth detention and/or out of home care) are disproportionately represented in homelessness statistics and are at increased risk of homelessness. We also know that some young people with disability who are unable to live in the family home because of complex disability support needs can face significant challenges finding safe, stable accommodation appropriate to their needs.

Findings from the *Under 16 Taskforce Report* reinforce that long-standing family issues of poverty, abuse, neglect, trauma and family violence are often present in vulnerable children's lives, causing relationships to break down resulting in homelessness.

## Gaps

Where a child under the age of 16 is unable to live in or return to the family home and/or is leaving institutional care, there are few support and accommodation options available to them.

A range of youth and family services provide intensive support for young people at risk of homelessness in Tasmania including the: Targeted Youth Support Service (for those aged 10 to 18); Intensive Family Engagement Services and the Commonwealth's Reconnect program. None of these, however, provide accommodation.

While remaining or returning to the care of parents or other family is the preferred response, for many, this is not an achievable goal. Yet living independently and unsupported is out of reach due to age; developmental age (i.e. limited capacity and maturity to live independently) and lack of material and financial resources.

Support through Housing Connect, Tasmania's one-stop shop for housing and support is available for those aged 16 and over, with the exception of referral to youth crisis accommodation.

Youth2independence (Y2I) facilities (Trinity Hill, Hobart: Thyne House, Launceston and Eveline House, Devonport) provide longer-term housing with on-site support to access education, training and employment but only for young people aged 16 to 24.

This primarily leaves couch surfing and youth SHS as the few remaining options for children and young people under 16 with nowhere safe and stable to live.

In Australia, couch surfing is broadly defined as temporary stays with friends or relatives<sup>4</sup>. In 2019-20, half of all young people aged 15 to 24 presenting alone to SHS were more likely to be a 'couch

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<sup>4</sup> [Couch surfers: a profile of Specialist Homelessness Services clients \(Full publication: \[28Nov2018\] edition\) \(AIHW\)](#)

surfer' with no tenure (29 per cent) compared with the overall SHS population<sup>5</sup>. Anecdotally, couch surfing for those under the age of 16, is not always safe and rarely fosters wellbeing or provides stability for the young person in the long term.

Youth SHS<sup>6</sup> (also known as youth shelters) provide short to medium term accommodation and support for young people aged 13 to 20 across the state. They focus on the immediate needs of the young person with the goal of exiting them into safe, stable accommodation, as soon as possible.

Two Youth at Risk Centres, Colville Place in Hobart and one planned for Launceston as part of Tasmania's Affordable Housing Action Plan 2019-2023 provide temporary accommodation and care for unaccompanied children and young people aged between 12 and 15. The service model is tailored to the specific needs of this younger cohort and provides a place of safety, security and stability until the next steps in their journey become clear.

Although youth shelters are a vital 'safety net' and are preferable to sleeping rough or couch surfing, they are not the preferred response for children and young people under 16 due to their broad age range and short-term crisis focus. Despite this, youth shelters can find themselves the 'lead' service, particularly for young people who are not under the care of the state, as no one part of the service system has responsibility for these children over the longer-term.

When ready to move from crisis and other forms of temporary accommodation, or leaving institutional care, the gaps in the existing service response become evident. Young people, and the services that support them advise there are few appropriate medium to longer-term supported accommodation options available for under 16's across the state. This often leads to young people staying in unsafe situations, continued couch-surfing and extended stays in youth shelters simply because there is nowhere else to go.

## Decision Making Authority

The term 'in loco parentis' (in place of parent) refers to the legal responsibility of a person or organisation to take on some of the functions and responsibilities of a parent. In the case of unaccompanied under 16's experiencing or at risk of homelessness who are not under the care of the State, establishing who has decision making authority and to what extent, has been a longstanding issue for services in Tasmania, particularly SHS.

In Tasmania, the *Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997 (the Act)* provides for the care and protection of children in a manner that: maximises a child's best interests; recognises that a child's family is the preferred environment for care and upbringing and that responsibility for the protection of a child rest primarily with the child's parents and family. However, where a child has no effective guardian (i.e. the parents are unwilling or unable to provide care) it can be unclear where decision making authority lies. A review of the Act is currently underway with broad sector and stakeholder consultation planned for 2022. The review will consider all stakeholder feedback,

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<sup>5</sup> [Specialist homelessness services annual report, Young people presenting alone - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> For a complete list of SHS visit [Communities - The Housing Connect System](#)





including any that relates to this issue, and provide recommendations based on feedback received and a comprehensive review of evidence-based and best practice.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child <sup>7</sup>(UNCRC) supports the right of the child to express their views in decision making processes that affect them, and that these be given ‘due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.’ That said, decision making authority generally remains with the legal guardian until a child becomes an adult, which in Australia is 18 years.

The right of children to make decisions autonomously prior to the age of 18 has long been the subject of legal debate. The Gillick judgement<sup>8</sup> adopted by the High Court of Australia in a case known as Marion’s case, affirmed a minor’s right to autonomy increases with their maturity and competence (sometimes termed ‘Gillick competence’) and that parental rights diminish as a young person becomes able to assume responsibility for their own life. It is broadly used in the Health context.

For unaccompanied homeless young people under the age of 16 and the services that support them, issues relating to autonomy are especially relevant.

## Developmentally Appropriate Responses

The *Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework* acknowledges the recent expansion in child development research, particularly the impact of trauma on the developing brain. It considers the characteristics of children and young people and the focus of the service response across different development stages in young people’s lives.

Research shows that age does not define maturity and that physical, cognitive and psychological capacity is as individual as the young person themselves. We know that during adolescence, changes in the brain affect cognitive, emotional and social development with implications for the onset of risk-taking behaviours. Where the young person has also experienced neglect, abuse or other forms of trauma, these impacts are more profound and can significantly affect the way young people think, behave and interact with other people, services and their communities. Recognising this helps us better understand and tailor our service response towards young people.

The *Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework* suggests that children under the age of 12 who are in the early stages of developing independence, typically receive a service response focused on the caregiver and the child as a family unit. From 13 onwards, it shifts towards supporting the young person to manage risk behaviours, build trusting relationships and make positive choices as they transition to early adulthood.

This work continues to guide and informs our response to children and young people under 16 facing homelessness in Tasmania.

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<sup>7</sup> [Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#)

<sup>8</sup> House of Lords (1986) *Gillick v West Norfolk and Wisbeach Area Health Authority and another*. <http://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKHL/1985/7.html>

## Why it is Important to Act

Evidence tells us that youth homelessness can lead to poorer health, wellbeing and education outcomes, which in turn leads to further disadvantage, perpetuating the cycle of homelessness in adulthood.

If children and young people do not receive appropriate support at the right time, they can go on to face substantial challenges engaging with education and employment, maintaining stable, healthy relationships, avoiding the youth justice system and keeping well and healthy.

# Our Shared Responsibility

## Principles underpinning the Framework

### ***Prevention and Early Intervention***

We identify risk factors and respond to issues as early as possible and make timely decisions based on the individual needs of the child or young person.

### ***Developmentally Appropriate Responses***

We consider the developmental age of children and young people when responding to their needs.

### ***Family Restoration***

We support the safety and wellbeing of the child and strengthen family connections, with the goal of remaining in, or returning to, the care of parents and family wherever possible and safe to do so.

### ***A Coordinated Service System Response with Strong Governance and Accountability***

We will connect and integrate services through a shared vision and collaborative practice where roles and responsibilities are clear and effective, and appropriate support and accommodation responses are in place to achieve the best outcomes for the child or young person.

### ***A Child Centred Response***

We respect and recognise children and young people as valued members of our society where their rights and best interests are the paramount consideration in our service system response.

We create opportunities for children and young people to participate in decisions affecting them, so they are an active participant in their own life; including being able to have a say and have their opinion heard and valued.

### ***Culturally Responsive***

We provide culturally appropriate services that recognise, respect and value diversity of Tasmanian Aboriginal children and young people, other cultures, community identity, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation and difference of thought, ideas and interests.

### ***Promoting a Quality and Skilled Workforce***

Our workforce is skilled and provides quality child safe services for children and young people.



### ***Legislative and rights-based principles***

- Australia, as signatory to the *United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)* and the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)* has a responsibility to protect and uphold the rights of its children and young people including the right to a safe place to live;
- the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997* which sets out the responsibilities of Government and principles to be observed in protecting and upholding the rights of children and young people including the need for stability in living arrangements (currently under review).
- the *Youth Justice Act 1997* which sets out provisions for the administration of youth justice in Tasmania including the treatment and sanctioning of young people who have committed offences.
- The *Residential Tenancy Act 1997* which regulates tenancies of residential properties in Tasmania.

## Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework

The primary aim of the *Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework* is to ensure there is a strong, common understanding of child and youth wellbeing. Tasmania's definition of wellbeing is based on the following six domains:

	<p><b>Being Loved, Safe and Valued</b></p> <p>This means children and young people:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have a safe, stable and supportive home environment</li> <li>• feel safe, secure and protected at home, in the community and online</li> <li>• feel valued and respected by teachers and other adults in their life and know they are important to others</li> <li>• have positive, trusted relationships with other people</li> <li>• have a voice and the ability to raise concerns and have these concerns addressed</li> <li>• feel safe about their future, the environment and climate.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Having Material Basics</b></p> <p>This means children and young people:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have access to suitable, secure, stable housing with adequate heating and cooling</li> <li>• have access to nutritious food and clean water</li> <li>• have access to education and training materials</li> <li>• have access to appropriate clothing and footwear</li> <li>• have access to transport, required local services and materials to support participation in activities</li> <li>• have access to the outdoors and green space.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Being Healthy</b></p> <p>This means children and young people:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are mentally and physically healthy</li> <li>• are emotionally well, happy and supported</li> <li>• are as physically active as they can be</li> <li>• are health literate and have access to appropriate health and care services</li> <li>• are immunised</li> <li>• are supported to engage in regular outdoor activities and nature-based play.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Learning</b></p> <p>This means children and young people:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are attending and engaging in education, training or employment</li> <li>• are participating in early childhood education</li> <li>• are developing literacy and numeracy skills appropriate to age</li> <li>• are supported to learn by their caregiver and education providers</li> <li>• have their individual learning needs addressed to allow them to realise their learning potential</li> <li>• are supported to learn about their world through connection to nature and the outdoors.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Participating</b></p> <p>This means children and young people:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are engaging with peers and community groups</li> <li>• are taking part in organised activities, including sport</li> <li>• are an active participant in their own life; including being able to have a say and have their opinion heard and valued</li> <li>• have access to and use technology and social media</li> <li>• can share experiences in nature and express their environmental views.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Having a Positive Sense of Culture</b></p> <p>This means children and young people:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• can find out about family and personal history and are supported to connect positively with their culture</li> <li>• feel like they belong</li> <li>• have a positive sense of self-identity and self-esteem</li> <li>• are in touch with cultural or spiritual practices and having these practices valued and respected</li> <li>• can connect to nature and are supported to identify their core values about the environment as part of culture and identity.</li> </ul>



# Our Commitment for a Better Response



## Prevention and Early Intervention

A public health approach to child safety and wellbeing recognises prevention and early intervention strategies can divert children and young people away from the tertiary end of Child Safety Services, youth homelessness and the youth justice system.

**Tasmanian Government agencies and non-government organisations will work together to:**

- provide services that strengthen family connections and help families fulfil their care responsibilities, so the child can remain in the care of parents or other family wherever possible and safe to do so.
- review existing services to better respond to and prevent youth homelessness; starting with a comprehensive review of youth services in Tasmania
- recognise key points of interaction across service systems and identify children and young people under the age of 16 at risk of homelessness, including those who;
  - are disengaging or disengaged from their education
  - have come to the attention of Tasmania Police and/or the youth justice system
  - have previously experienced homelessness alone or with their family (including presentation to SHS, SafeSpace and/or Housing Connect)
  - have been identified by child, youth and family services as being at risk of homelessness
  - are in out of home care, family-based care or other care arrangements (including self-selecting to stay in a non-approved placement) and their placement is at risk of breaking down.
  - present with adolescent health and mental health needs.
- connect the child or young person and/or their families to appropriate services and supports.





## Developmentally Appropriate Responses

**Tasmanian Government agencies and non-government organisations agree:**

- to consider the developmental age of children and young people when responding to their needs and making decisions about services, supports and accommodation options.
- that a developmentally appropriate service response is broadly guided by the following:
  - children aged 12 and under cannot live independently - if residing with a safe adult is not an option, a child aged 12 or under experiencing homelessness alone is best placed in a family-based care living arrangement
  - for children and young people aged 12 to 15 there may be some situations where the young person may be able to reside away from their parents/guardians in a place of safety with support
  - for children and young people aged 16 or 17, the young person may be able to reside independently with support.



## Family Restoration

Recognising the care, upbringing and development of a child sits primarily with the child's parents and family, **Tasmanian Government agencies and non-government organisations will work together to:**

- strengthen family relationships to support families in fulfilling their care responsibilities, including the option for the child to return to the care of parents or other family wherever possible and safe.
- support the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person with the goal of remaining or returning to the care of parents and family wherever possible and safe.
- where returning to the care of parents or other family is not safe or possible, build capacity of the child or young person to transition to an alternative safe and stable place to live.
- undertake a three-year therapeutic residential model of care (pilot) that provides accommodation and support for young people not under the care of the state but who are unable to live at home, with a focus on therapeutic care and family restoration.
- review existing youth and family support services to ensure they can respond effectively to this cohort.



## A Coordinated Service System Response with Strong Governance and Accountability

**Tasmanian government agencies and non-government organisations will:**

- establish a single point of contact and advice within the Department of Communities Tasmania, to strengthen oversight and accountability for the care and wellbeing of a child or young person, to include:
  - a single point of contact for advice, assessment and referral through the *Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line* (ARL)
  - trialling a dedicated Child Safety and Wellbeing Liaison position in the ARL to develop insight and build expertise to improve our response to U16 homelessness
  - trialling a 'Care Team' approach to improve support for this cohort.
- trial three new regional Youth and Wellbeing positions to support the Under 16 response and provide case management as part of the Care Team approach
- develop a set of Practice Guidelines to support evidence-based practice and clarify roles and responsibilities across relevant parts of the service system
- review the Housing Connect service system (which includes Specialist Homelessness Services) so it better responds to housing crisis and homelessness and promotes shared responsibility across service systems for this vulnerable cohort
- contact the designated point of contact (ARL) where they become aware of a child or young person under 16 experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- work collaboratively with the designated point of contact to achieve shared goals and outcomes in the best interests of the child or young person
- participate in Care Teams or other support/actions as required
- share information to improve data and strengthen evidence-based practice.



## A Child Centred Response

**Tasmanian government agencies and non-government organisations will work together to:**

- provide for the care and protection of children in a manner that: maximises a child's best interests;
- include children and young people in decisions that affect them by implementing collaborative and supportive decision-making practice and processes;
- provide a service response where the child or young person's voice, needs, safety and wellbeing are at the centre of the response.



## Culturally Responsive

**Tasmanian government agencies and non-government organisations will work together to:**

- establish and/or engage culturally appropriate and inclusive support services for children and young people who are Tasmanian Aboriginal, living with disability and who identify as LGBTIQ+.
- recognise the importance of connection to family, community, culture and country in child and family welfare policy and practice and assert that self-determining communities are central to supporting and maintaining those connections (*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle*<sup>9</sup>).

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<sup>9</sup> [\*The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: A guide to support implementation - SNAICC\*](#)



## Promoting a Quality and Skilled Workforce

**Tasmanian government agencies and non-government organisations will:**

- provide services and supports focussed on child and youth wellbeing, within a trauma informed- evidence-based practice framework;
- adopt the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations so that they consciously and systematically:
  - create an environment where children's safety and wellbeing is at the centre of thought, values and actions
  - place emphasis on genuine engagement with and valuing of children and young people
  - create conditions that reduce the likelihood of harm to children and young people
  - create conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying any harm
  - respond to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm.



# Using the Framework

The Framework and its supporting Practice Guidelines will be used as a foundational document for reviewing and designing programs responding to children and young people under the age of 16 who are alone and experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

It also provides the basis for an ongoing discussion about child and youth homelessness in Tasmania and is expected to evolve to reflect our maturing collective understanding of this important issue.

## Summary of Actions

### **The Tasmanian Government will:**

- Establish a single point of contact and advice within the Department of Communities Tasmania, to strengthen oversight and accountability for the care and wellbeing of a child or young person, to include:
  - a single front door for advice, assessment and referral through the *Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line* (ARL)
  - trialling a dedicated Child Safety and Wellbeing Liaison position in the ARL to develop insight and build expertise to improve our response to U16 homelessness
  - trialling a 'Care Team' approach to improve support for this cohort.
- Trial three new regional Youth and Wellbeing positions to support the Under 16 response and provide case management as part of the Care Team approach.
- Develop a set of Practice Guidelines to support evidence-based practice and clarify roles and responsibilities across relevant parts of the service system.
- Undertake a comprehensive review of youth services in Tasmania.
- Undertake a three-year therapeutic residential model of care (pilot) that provides accommodation and support for young people who are unable to live at home, with a focus on therapeutic care and family restoration.





# Attachment 1

## Policy and legislative context

Unaccompanied children and young people under the age of 16, who experience, or who are at risk of homelessness, have access to a broad range of universal and targeted services and supports including: education, health, mental health, youth justice, homelessness services; child safety services and youth support services.

Together, these services form part of a broader service system and each operates within its own legislative and strategic context. Some of the relevant key policy and legislative settings are summarised below.

### Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031

*Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031* is Australia's framework to reduce child abuse and neglect and its intergenerational impacts. It builds on the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020*, which laid the critical foundation for national collaboration on protecting Australia's children. It will drive change through collective effort across governments and sectors that impact the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

### Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework

Building on the initial approach outlined in the Child Safe Organisations Bill 2020, the Tasmanian Government is committed to progressing a comprehensive legislated Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework that will establish the Child Safe Standards and a Reportable Conduct Scheme in Tasmania. The Framework will be overseen by an independent oversight and regulation body and will complement and integrate with the existing systemic response to child sexual abuse in Tasmania.

### Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997

The *Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997* (the Act) establishes the legislative framework governing child wellbeing, child safety and out of home care in Tasmania. The objective of the Act is to provide for the care and protection of children in a manner that: maximises a child's best interests; recognises that a child's family is the preferred environment for care and upbringing; and recognises that the responsibility for the protection of a child rest primarily with the child's parents and family. The Act is currently under review with broad stakeholder consultation planned for 2022.

## **Tasmania's Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework and *It takes a Tasmanian Village*, Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy**

Recognising that the wellbeing of children and young people is a shared responsibility, the *Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework* released in June 2018, provides a contemporary definition of child and youth wellbeing. The Framework's common definition of wellbeing is based on six 'wellbeing domains' inspired by The Nest, a national, evidence-based initiative on child and youth wellbeing developed by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY).

Building on the Framework, *It Takes a Tasmanian Village*, launched in August 2021 is the Tasmanian Government's first comprehensive and whole of Government Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy for 0-25 year olds. With a focus on the first 1000 days of life, it includes a four-year action plan with actions and focus areas across the six domains of wellbeing.

## **Redesign of Child Protection Services Tasmania: Strong Families Safe Kids**

The *Strong Families, Safe Kids* Next Steps Action Plan 2021-2023 sets out the Tasmanian Government commitments to support families and communities to safeguard the wellbeing of children and young people. The five key priority areas include: child safety and wellbeing is everyone's business; Building a common understanding of safety and wellbeing; managing the front door; providing better support for children and families, and redesigning the Child Safety Service system.

## **Safe Homes, Families, Communities: Tasmania's Action Plan for family and sexual violence 2019-2022**

Safe Homes, Families, Communities is the Tasmanian Government's coordinated whole of government action plan to respond to family and sexual violence. It represents the next stage of the Government's long term commitment to preventing and responding to family violence, and the new response to sexual violence.

## **Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025**

*Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025* provides a clear framework for action and investment to improve affordable housing in Tasmania and help those most in need into safe and secure accommodation, including young people. Specific actions and initiatives are set out in the *Affordable Housing Action Plan 2019-2023* (Action Plan 2) which recognised the need to establish an independent Taskforce to identify and prioritise care for children who are under 16 years old, experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

In 2021, the Tasmanian Government announced development of a new comprehensive Tasmanian Housing Strategy. The Strategy, due for release by October 2022, will drive practical actions to deliver a more sustainable housing market for all Tasmanians.



## **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Review**

The review of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) was progressed as part of the broader Tasmanian Mental Health Reform Program. The objective of the review is to 'enable an integrated pathway for children and adolescents and their families and carers to navigate the mental health system.' The final report was delivered in November 2020.

As part of this review the Government has committed to actions that change the service response to complex and challenging mental health presentations, including individuals with trauma related mental health diagnoses and those who lack parental or familial supports.

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