



Children, Young People and Families

Budget Initiative and Priority for 2016-17

Strong Families – Safe Kids: Redesign of Child Protection Services in Tasmania

As a Government we have been delivering on our long-term plan to grow the economy and create jobs. We have got the budget back on track; therefore, we can now invest the dividends of that hard work into core services, like education, health, skills development and Tasmania's vulnerable children and families.

The redesign of Tasmania's child protection system provides the framework to fundamentally improve the lives of vulnerable children, young people and their families. This Government wants all Tasmanian children to grow up in a safe, supportive and loving environment.

A different approach to child protection, safety and well-being is imperative. In order to better protect children, we must better support families. Intervening early, even before birth, and providing families with the necessary support and assistance before matters reach a crisis point represents a far better way to ensure the wellbeing of children and young people.

Our understanding of the developmental needs of children, particularly in their early years, has advanced significantly over the last few decades. Core elements of child wellbeing, including critical developmental milestones will be considered in the redesign and delivery of services and support systems. We also need to ensure that all parts of the service system share and understand this growing body of knowledge, and can apply it to their part of the service system.

This is why the Government has committed \$20 million in cross-agency investment over the next four years that will deliver on key areas as outlined in Strong Families – Safe Kids, including:

- Acting earlier and improving the timely access of advice and action – through a state-wide, early advice and referral network, that will work to support children and families from day one and not just provide a pathway to the child protection service;
- Refocusing our child protection service and strengthening the capability of our child protection workers, with better structures and supports for our workforce; and
- Growing the capacity of families and communities through the delivery of a continuum of services ranging from advice and support, through to intensive and, at times, assertive in-home support for families

approaching the point of crisis.

By helping families with earlier and immediate support before they fall into crisis, we can prevent child abuse and neglect from happening in the first place, as well as reduce the longer term detrimental impacts and lifelong consequences of child neglect such as future drug and alcohol abuse; mental illness; poor health; homelessness; juvenile offending; criminality; and incarceration.

A total of \$20.6 million will be invested over 2016-2020 to support initiatives under the *Strong Families - Safe Kids Implementation Plan* (to be released shortly) including:

- \$3.6 million to refocus the child protection intake service into a state-wide comprehensive Advice and Referral Service. This service will have a broadened focus to provide advice on other services and responses that will support the wellbeing of the child. This Service will contribute significantly towards refocusing the system away from statutory interventions of last resort, to a system that is more focused on providing earlier access and integrated support to vulnerable children and their families.
- \$7.5 million as part of our whole of government commitment to provide services to children at risk, including \$5 million in the Department of Education to provide services and support for children in government schools and child and family centres. Additional intensive family support services will also be available for the families of children on the brink of entering the statutory care system.
- \$550 000 to improve information technology to support frontline child safety staff. This will include further expansion of the current KIDZ data warehouse to support professional decision making and improvements to the current Child Protection Information System (CPIS).
- \$8.6 million to build a contemporary, innovative child protection system through the establishment of child safety teams, focused on one of three areas: court tasks; short term (reunification) case management; or long term (permanency) case management. This will allow staff to focus on their area of expertise, provide timely access to resources and tools and ultimately allow them to make more timely decisions as they undertake their difficult work in supporting families and keeping children safe.

The extra funding will see the recruitment over the next two years of 31 additional staff in CYS alone. They will include senior practice consultants, psychologists, administrative unit coordinators, support workers, and Aboriginal and hospital liaison officers, who will assist our child protection workers by providing better structures, improved personal and professional support, and more training and workforce development. This will allow child protection workers to focus on what they do best – keeping vulnerable children safe and supporting their families.

In order to progress a public health approach it is critical that the statutory Child Protection Service is supported by appropriate universal and secondary support services, from both the government and community sectors. Ideally, these services should range along a continuum, from advice and support services through to assertive engagement services which provide intensive in-home support to children and families who are on the cusp of the out-of-home care system.

Strong Families – Safe Kids is also the umbrella under which the services and change programs across CYS – including the Youth at Risk Strategy, CHAP's, ongoing implementation of Signs of Safety, and reform of the Out of Home Care system are linked, joined up and progressed in a more strategic and systematic reform agenda, alongside the imperative redesign of Tasmania's Child Protection Service.

