

SUBMISSION

Anglicare Tasmania State Budget Submission 2020-21



December 2019

About Anglicare Tasmania

Anglicare Tasmania is a large community service organisation in Tasmania with offices in Hobart, Glenorchy, Launceston, St Helens, Devonport, Burnie, Sorell and Zeehan and a range of programs in rural areas. Anglicare Tasmania's services include crisis, short-term and long-term accommodation support; NDIS disability and mental health support services; support services following a motor vehicle accident; aged and home care services; alcohol and other drug services; financial and gambling counselling; and family support. In addition, Anglicare Tasmania's Social Action and Research Centre conducts research, policy and advocacy work with a focus on issues affecting Tasmanians on low incomes.

Anglicare Tasmania is committed to achieving social justice for all Tasmanians. It is our mission to speak out against poverty and injustice and offer decision-makers alternative solutions to help build a more just society. We provide opportunities for people in need to reach their full potential through our services, research and advocacy.

Anglicare's work is guided by the values of compassion, hope, respect and justice.

Anglicare believes:

- *that each person is valuable and deserves to be treated with respect and dignity;*
- *that each person has the capacity to make and to bear the responsibility for choices and decisions about their life;*
- *that support should be available to all who need it; and*
- *that every person can live life abundantly.*

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Introduction

Anglicare Tasmania welcomes the opportunity to participate in the community consultation process for the 2020-21 State Budget. Anglicare encourages the State Government to invest in resources, systems and services that will enable all Tasmanians to participate fully in shaping their own futures.

Anglicare Tasmania's budget priorities have come from recent research and consultations with disadvantaged and vulnerable Tasmanians and the Anglicare staff who work with them to deliver positive futures.

We believe the State Government can make sound investments in the Tasmanian people and strengthen Tasmanian communities by prioritising:

- Systems and services that support and provide care for children, young people and families to assist them to overcome barriers in their lives and participate in developing their own positive futures;
- Affordable and appropriate housing that provides a secure and stable base for Tasmanian families to flourish; and
- Improvements to alcohol and other drug services.

Anglicare has expertise in each of these areas, as outlined below.

Children, young people and families

Anglicare delivers a number of services focused on supporting children, young people and families. These include a school readiness program, various parenting support programs, parent and adolescent mediation and counselling, reunification support for children in out-of-home care, relationship education and youth support programs. Our services for women, men and children experiencing family violence are complemented by early intervention therapeutic services that support positive family functioning and child development. Anglicare is the lead agency for the Communities for Children collective impact project in Launceston and the Tamar Valley.

Further, Anglicare's Social Action and Research Centre (SARC) has recently completed research into:

- The need for a suite of age-appropriate non-statutory care services for unaccompanied homeless children (Robinson 2017a, 2017b);
- The need to better support families to prevent recurrent child removal and to expedite family reunification (Hinton 2018; Fidler 2018); and
- The need for a parent voice in systemic and individual advocacy in the Child Safety Service (Anglicare Tasmania 2018a).



Working for a just Tasmania

Given the current redesign of the Child Safety Service, it is timely to ensure specific cohorts involved with Child Safety are considered for the next budget. It is also timely to ensure there are services for children who are experiencing significant disadvantage and should be cared for, but who find themselves alone and without support from Child Safety.

Housing

Anglicare delivers a range of housing services including Housing Connect (assistance with crisis accommodation, bond and rent for private rentals and applications for public or community housing); long-term communal or independent housing for people on a low income including some options for age-specific cohorts; and crisis accommodation for males aged 13 to 20. Every year we analyse the rental market across Tasmania (for example, see Law, Claxton & Thurstans 2019) and we have also conducted in-depth research into youth homelessness (Pryor 2014) and the particular accommodation challenges for people with mental ill health (Pryor 2011).

While acknowledging that the Affordable Housing Strategy and its Action Plans form a good guide for Government interventions in housing, Anglicare believes the Government needs to urgently increase its delivery of affordable housing through both more builds and expanded services. This can, in part, be funded through the waiving of the historic Commonwealth housing debt but should not be limited by this.

It is clear the community wants greater action on housing given their responses to the 2018 Housing Summit and short-stay accommodation legislation as well as the Parliamentary Inquiry into Housing Affordability in 2019. With the widely accepted links between housing, education, employment and wellbeing, greater investments in housing in this budget can make a substantial difference for the thousands of Tasmanians who are homeless or suffering housing stress.

Alcohol and other drugs

Anglicare supports people whose lives are impacted by alcohol and other drugs through a treatment service, needle and syringe program, care coordination, Hepatitis prevention program and counselling support. We also support family and carers of people impacted by alcohol and other drugs.

We have contributed to reviews of alcohol, tobacco and other drug services in Tasmania and conducted primary research into the impacts and challenges for community service organisations of working with clients with alcohol and other drug issues who are seeking help for other issues (Hinton 2008). This work led us to recommend in 2008 the development of a consumer advocacy model. We followed this work up with research into international approaches to alcohol and other drugs consumer engagement, which showed

the value of consumer engagement at a service level as well as a consumer body (Hinton 2010).

Anglicare's recommendations

Anglicare has chosen these three areas of focus for this year's budget consultation because investments in each of them now is essential to creating a Tasmania based on equity and social justice.

Anglicare's recommendations for the budget 2020-21 are as follows.

Recommendation 1: Commencing in the next financial year, State Government should prioritise statewide ongoing investment in the care, education, mental health and housing needs of unaccompanied homeless children. These should be based on the Ministerial advice delivered by the Department of Communities Under 16s Homelessness Taskforce.

Recommendation 2: The Tasmanian Department of Education and Communities Tasmania should acknowledge and resource responses to the specific re-engagement and learning needs of unaccompanied homeless children. This should include a commitment by the Department of Education to prioritise engagement support and learning assessment for this cohort and a commitment by Communities Tasmania to address service gaps and design issues, including staffing ratios, within homelessness and outreach services accessed by children. Specific areas for additional investment include:

- Developing a centralised school engagement coordination services.
- Embedding re-engagement programs in schools.
- Strengthening the presence of social workers in schools.
- Resourcing the systemic implementation of trauma- and poverty-informed service provision in schools.

Recommendation 3: To further promote children's safety and stability, tackle intergenerational involvement in Child Safety Services and increase timely decision making on children's future care, the Department of Communities Tasmania should work with other relevant Federal and State Government departments to explore a suite of programs and services that recognise and address the therapeutic, practical and material parenting support needs at critical points in family preservation and restoration.

- **Intensive therapeutic and practical family support services during pregnancy** to proactively engage women in preventing child removal by addressing safety concerns where a baby alert is flagged by Child Safety Services.
- **Intensive therapeutic and practical pre- and post- child removal family support services** for parents involved with Child Safety Services to ensure that timely decisions can be made on children's short and longer term care needs.
- **Funding to recognise birth parents' parenting costs post child removal** and the significant costs involved in preparing for and undertaking family reunification.
- **Parents being flagged as a priority cohort for crisis, transitional and longer-term housing and tenancy support**, in a similar way to families experiencing domestic violence. A suite of options to support families whose children are removed by Child

Safety Services to maintain stable accommodation, where accommodation has been identified as either a risk to child safety or as a barrier to family reunification.

Recommendation 4: The State Government should provide funding to establish a model for a Family Inclusion Network in Tasmania to facilitate systemic and individual advocacy for parents involved in the Child Safety system.

Recommendation 5. The State Government should build on the strategic thinking that has developed the Affordable Housing Strategy by urgently and substantially increasing the level of investment in initiatives that will quickly stimulate development of more affordable housing for rent and purchase.

Recommendation 6. Current reforms to the Tasmanian Planning Scheme should incorporate inclusionary zoning to set targets for a percentage of affordable housing required in all new developments and redevelopments, as well as incentives that encourage short-term accommodation properties to be freed up for long-term rental.

Recommendation 7. The State Government should urgently increase funding to Housing Connect front door and support services so the services are able to meet current demand.

Recommendation 8. The State Government should fund the establishment of a stand-alone alcohol, tobacco and other drugs consumer organisation.

Recommendation 9. The State Government should contribute funds to improving the collection, sharing and analysis of data about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs use with the goal of greater collaboration leading to improved services.

1. Supporting and caring for all children, young people and families

Care and education for unaccompanied homeless children

Why Anglicare thinks this is a priority issue

Tasmanian Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) are neither designed nor appropriately funded to work with unaccompanied children. Yet unaccompanied child homelessness does not meet the threshold for a statutory care response within Child Safety Services. Statutory responses are less likely to be provided to older children (who are more likely to experience homelessness unaccompanied) for a range of reasons that include limited options for them to access out-of-home care (OOHC).

Research undertaken by Anglicare has highlighted that the scale of this cohort is unknown as SHS data is only collected for those who present to services and family status is not recorded for Census data collection. SHS in Tasmania accept those aged over 13 years, however evidence suggests that for many children who experience unaccompanied homelessness, homelessness begins before they are old enough to access services (Robinson 2017 b).

Further Anglicare research highlights that the pathways into education for many unaccompanied homeless children are denied, due to a misrecognition or lack of appreciation of the breadth and intensity of their needs and a shortage of appropriate resources to address their needs holistically (Robinson 2018).

A suite of age-appropriate non-statutory care and learning services is required for this cohort of children who are unable to live at home and who remain without access to care, income, housing and education. These are children whose lives are wholly dependent on the actions of adults in their communities – both negative and positive. This vulnerable cohort requires a specifically tailored suite of policy, program and service responses. The principles that should shape this suite are outlined in Anglicare’s research (Robinson 2017 a, 2017b, 2018):

- *Responding to the care needs of dependent children is a multi-agency responsibility; needed is a ‘care first’ model which recognises children’s urgent need for developmentally appropriate care in response to unaccompanied homelessness.*
- *Whilst supported housing (within the SHS sector) may be appropriate for young people transitioning to independence, dependent children will require multi-modal care for an*

extended time until they are able to return to their family or become developmentally independent.

- Evidence strongly indicates that successful services for this cohort must be relationship-based and trauma-informed.
- Family reunification, physical, cognitive and mental health assessment and intensive education engagement and support are key.
- Delivery of wrap-around care services for dependent children has significant implications for workforce development and capacity, as well as for the client-staff ratios in services.

Two key elements are needed. Firstly, there needs to be a policy framework which should:

- Include cross-departmental acknowledgement of responsibility for unaccompanied homeless children;
- Outline the legal basis for care provision by services; and
- Clarify responsibility and accountability for lead care coordination.

Secondly, there needs to be statewide program and service design encompassing a continuum of services:

- **Early intervention outreach:** The valuable work undertaken by the Reconnect service aims to reduce youth homelessness by working with young people aged 12 to 18 to develop the kind of relationships they want to achieve with family, explore education and employment opportunities and engage with their community. Such work needs to be complemented by a resourced school-based early-intervention service with outreach capacity in each region.
- **Short-term responses** (under 6 months) focused on family reunification or exits to OOHC. Currently, such care work is only offered by Colville Place (ages 12-15), in the south of the State. All other services across the State operate as crisis SHS with a one-worker model across significant age and needs range.
- **Medium to longer-term care and accommodation:** There are currently no services providing longer-term care to dependent under 16s in Tasmania. There are limited transitional supported housing services: Mara House and Launch in the south and Youth, Family and Community Connections in the north-west and west coast. These services operate for youth, usually aged 16+, and offer transitional housing and support for anywhere between 3-12+ months. These services have exits to independence as their aim and outcome. To provide continuity of care and stability for children across all at-home and out-of-home care environments (Tasmanian Government 2018; DoC 2018b, 2019b), we need to offer long-term support options that enable a focus on stable, therapeutic care for children unable to exit to family or OOHC.
- **Therapeutic outreach** is required to support children exiting services and for children with high and complex needs in preparation for their entry into services. Therapeutic outreach is also required to support children's transition home from early intervention

care. The Targeted Youth Support Services (TYSS) is currently the only therapeutic, relationship-based outreach service in Tasmania for older children.

- **Education engagement support, learning assessments and learning support service gaps**, including staffing ratios within schools and homelessness and outreach services accessed by unaccompanied homeless children. Anglicare's research points to specific areas for resourcing, including (Robinson 2018):
 - *Centralised school engagement coordination services: Learning Services should develop responsive, publicly visible engagement coordination services to lead advocacy and action on schooling needs and, where needed, facilitate involvement in care planning with allied government and community sector family, child and youth services.*
 - *Embedding re-engagement programs in schools: Primary schools, high schools and secondary high schools/colleges should offer embedded, specialist re-engagement programs to support children's re-entry to school following suspension, expulsion and prolonged absence, and offer temporary schooling for children experiencing geographic dislocation.*
 - *Strengthening the presence of social workers in schools: There should be a significant increase in social work capacity in schools in order to provide continuous, relationship-based care for children; to liaise and collaborate with allied government and community sector supports; and to implement care and safety plans in the school environment.*
 - *Systemic implementation of trauma- and poverty-informed service provision in schools: The Tasmanian Department of Education should review how whole school environments can be systemically shaped as sites deeply sensitive to experiences of trauma and poverty. This should include professional development for all teaching and non-teaching school staff; teacher's aide resourcing to support the implementation of responses to the specific learning needs of children impacted by trauma; and trauma-informed and poverty-informed revision of approaches to student behaviour and discipline, in particular suspensions.*

Anglicare welcomes the State Government's public commitment within the Affordable Housing Action Plan 2019 to 2023 to exploring an appropriate care model for unaccompanied children (DoC 2019c) which includes integrated support for their accommodation, learning and mental health needs. We encourage the Government to prioritise ongoing, statewide investment in approved models of care, accommodation and learning, as recommended by the Under 16s Homelessness Taskforce, from the next State Budget.

What investments can State Government make?

Key State Government departments: Department of Communities Tasmania; Department of Education.



Working for a just Tasmania

Recommendation 1: Commencing in the next financial year, State Government should prioritise statewide ongoing investment in the care, education, mental health and housing needs of unaccompanied homeless children. These should be based on the Ministerial advice delivered by the Department of Communities Under 16s Homelessness Taskforce.

Estimated costs: Uncosted.

Recommendation 2: The Tasmanian Department of Education and Communities Tasmania should acknowledge and resource responses to the specific re-engagement and learning needs of unaccompanied homeless children. This should include a commitment by the Department of Education to prioritise engagement support and learning assessment for this cohort and a commitment by Communities Tasmania to address service gaps and design issues, including staffing ratios, within homelessness and outreach services accessed by children. Specific areas for additional investment include:

- Developing a centralised school engagement coordination services.
- Embedding re-engagement programs in schools.
- Strengthening the presence of social workers in schools.
- *Resourcing the systemic implementation of trauma- and poverty-informed service provision in schools.*

Estimated costs: Uncosted.

Intergenerational safety and stability for children and families involved with Child Safety Services

Why Anglicare thinks this is a priority issue

Anglicare Tasmania fully supports the State Government's wellbeing outcomes for all children and young people (Tasmanian Government 2018) and those specifically designed for vulnerable children and young people involved within out-of-home care (DoC 2018b). We are encouraged to see these frameworks at the centre of the Government's discussion paper on developing a Permanency Framework for children and young people (DoC 2019b). Anglicare supports creating a continuum of care for vulnerable children and young people from that experienced within birth families through to that experienced within short and long term out-of-home care options. This continuum of care should be shaped around the Permanency Framework's outcomes of safe and stable care, timely decision making on permanency that takes into account the views of the child, and establishing lifelong relationships and a sense of belonging, identity and connection to culture and community (DoC 2019b).

However, in order to achieve these outcomes, there are a number of pernicious challenges that require focussed Government attention and investment. These challenges have been recognised by State Government through the review of Child Safety – Strong Families, Safe Kids (DHHS 2016) and have been explored through Anglicare's recent research (Fidler 2018; Hinton 2018). We have briefly outlined these here before highlighting ways to address them.

- **Families are churning through the early intervention family support system with their needs escalating:** *Vulnerable families are churning through the Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS) system a number of times. This system is only able to offer early intervention and low level support if families' needs escalate. Many families' needs are not being met, so they return to IFSS with escalating and more complex needs, until they meet / repeatedly meet the threshold for attention from Child Safety Services (CSS). Many vulnerable families are also being referred by the Strong Families, Safe Kids' Advice and Referral Line and others via CSS back into the IFSS early intervention system, often with a number of safety concerns that CSS have identified. Again, IFSS struggles to provide adequate support for families presenting with complex needs (DHHS 2016).*
- **There is an increasing number of children on care and protection orders and entering out of home care particularly through 'emotional abuse' and 'neglect':** *Between 2013/14 and 2017/18, there was a rise from 10 to 12 children per 1000 on Child Protection Orders in Tasmania (compared to a rise of 9 to 10 nationally); a rise from 9 to 11 children per 1000 in Tasmania in OOHC (whereas the national figure remained at 8 per 1000) (AIWH 2018).*
- **There is significant intergenerational involvement of families with CSS:** *Recurrent child removal affects 1 in 5 mothers involved in the Tasmanian Child Safety system. But there are no programs designed to support mothers when a baby alert is issued, nor when children are removed from their care (Hinton 2018). Many mothers*

experiencing recurrent removals were themselves within OOHC as children (Hinton 2018).

- **Tasmanian family support programs struggle to meet the complexity of many parents' needs, or are not available at critical points for vulnerable families:** Those family support programs that are available are mainly not commissioned to address the collateral consequences of child removal in a sufficient or sustained manner (Hinton 2018; Fidler 2018). Anglicare's recent research has highlighted that in Tasmania when children are removed, their birth parents experience a whole range of collateral consequences that are likely to compound parents' existing complex trauma. These consequences can include removal processes which are traumatic for both parents and children, overwhelming grief and loss, spiraling poor mental health, drug and alcohol use, domestic violence, isolation and dramatic and sudden reductions in income which can lead to housing instability and homelessness (many families already vulnerable to poverty lose between half and two thirds of their household income when they become ineligible for parenting payments) (Hinton 2018; Fidler 2018; Broadhurst & Mason 2017). At the same time, parents are required to deal with legal processes, maintain positive access to their children, work constructively with child safety services and meet any conditions imposed by court orders to address safety concerns. Yet there are no programs in Tasmania designed to work with families at critical points of vulnerability for families; for example, when baby alerts are issued by Child Safety Services to pregnant mothers due to concern about the potential safety of a pending new born; and at the point of child removal until families are assessed as reunification ready (Hinton 2018; Fidler 2018).
- **Tasmanian children are on family reunification care plans for extended periods, with low levels of successful reunification** (Hinton 2018; Fidler 2018). This leaves all parties involved – children, birth families and carers – in limbo and without clear plans to ensure safety, stability and belonging. There may be a number of elements feeding into this, including:
 - There are consistent reports that Child Safety Services do not prioritise family reunification, due to the pressure of caseloads, leading to prolonged periods for children not knowing whether they are likely to return to their birth family or live with a carer long term (Fidler 2018; Hinton 2018).
 - Carers and birth families are not currently enabled to work with each other around the long term wellbeing of children and are often pitched against each other for the interests of the child. This can lead to children's, carers' and families' needs being left unresolved and difficulties for those trying to form a stable, safe care circle that promotes a sense of belonging across households that are important for the child and challenges around decisions made with children's best interests (The Australian Centre for Social Innovation 2016a, b).
 - The 'culture' of CSS practice is often reported to be one of blaming parents, not enabling them to change (Hinton 2018; Fidler 2018). This culture is counter to what research and good practice in engaging parents tells us is needed (PRC 2017). And, as previously described, there is a lack of appropriate Tasmanian support services to actively work with families to address CSS' safety concerns. This can lead to families taking prolonged periods to become reunification ready, if at all.

Anglicare welcomes the important reforms and investment happening within the Tasmanian Child Safety Services that will contribute to delivering stability, continuity and timely decision making, such as the:

- *redesign of CSS' structure;*
- *Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People in OOHC;*
- *OOHC Quality and Accountability Framework;*
- *Case and Care Planning Project;*
- *Review of the Integrated Services Alliance for early intervention family support;*
- *Ongoing evaluation of the Intensive Family Engagement Service (IFES);*
- *Family Based Care review;*
- *Department of Education's trauma-informed framework and wellbeing work;*
- *Ongoing discussions around child and youth mental health services;*
- *Review of the Department of Communities Joined Up Services project; and*
- *Review of Legal Aid (DoC 2018a and b; 2019a; DoE 2016 and 2018; Doherty et al 2019; Frey, Hyslop & Doherty 2019; Tasmanian Government 2018).*

It is clear from international and national evidence on the impacts of inadequate resourcing for child protection responses and good practice in sustaining permanency arrangements, and from evaluations of current permanency developments in other Australian jurisdictions such as Victoria's Permanent Orders, that there needs to be purposeful investment to deliver the legislative and policy intent of stability, security, a sense of belonging and connection (Broadhurst & Mason 2017; Conley Wright & Cashmore 2017; Conley Wright & Kaltner 2019; Font & Warren 2013; Fidler 2018; Hinton 2018; IOAS 2019, Mackieson et al. 2019; McLean 2016a & b; Neil 2017; TASCI 2016a and b).

However, the current CSS reform agenda does not include a comprehensive review of family support to address intergenerational involvement of families within CSS, even though it was identified as a challenge within the Strong Families, Safe Kids report. To deliver the Government's desired outcomes, the Child Safety Service reforms will need to develop a coherent network of legal, policy, program and practice settings across the permanency continuum. And these will need to tackle families' intergenerational involvement with Child Safety Services to ensure that we keep children safe, stable and, where feasible, out of out-of-home care now and into the future.

Whilst conversations about longer term changes to the Permanency Framework are happening, there is a need to bolster our current family support system where we know it is needed so that we do not let down another generation of children and young people within a broken 'system' which is suffering from poor investment. Key areas that need immediate investment have already been identified as part of the Government's Strong Families Safe Kids review and through Anglicare's research program (DHHS 2016; Hinton 2018; Fidler 2018; Anglicare Tasmania 2018a).

There is a scarcity of Tasmanian support services that have the capacity to work with parents who are subject to recurrent removals at the point when safety concerns are raised during a pregnancy (when a 'baby alert' is raised by CSS).

There is also a paucity of Tasmanian family support services able to work with families of origin immediately after a child is removed to support them to cope with the collateral

consequences of the removal itself and to address the safety concerns Child Safety has raised. Currently few services can provide the long-term intensive therapy that parents need and there is a significant gap in the therapeutic response for those with a past history in the Child Safety System and exposure to trauma who are experiencing child removal.

Compounding the inadequacy of the current service landscape, current Tasmanian services do not offer adequate income and housing options to support parents to address their challenges. There is no statutory recognition of their parenting costs until they are well into the reunification process. The few discretionary Family Support and Emergency Relief funds available do not meet their needs. Reunifying parents are not identified as a priority for public or social housing. Nor are they flagged as a vulnerable cohort for crisis and transitional accommodation. The lack of stable housing compounds parental stress and parents' abilities to address the safety concerns identified by CSS and family reunification is invariably prolonged or halted, prolonging the trauma for children (Fidler 2018).

In summary, the current policy and program responses with family support are not designed or resourced in a way that effectively enables family preservation or reunification.

If State Government is to achieve its goal of preventing children from entering care and expediting family reunification, we need to reimagine the policy, programs and practice landscape relevant to Child Safety, family support, income support and housing. Anglicare recommends a suite of integrated responses covering policy, practice, programs and services, shaped by the following principles (Hinton 2018; Fidler 2018):

- **Coherence in care** across care and service settings to address trauma, create stability and routine and develop protective factors for children and young people to heal and flourish (Bromfield et al 2010; McLean 2016a, b).
- **Timely decision-making.** The Permanency Framework discussion paper highlights the importance of timely decision making (DoC 2019b); a principle Anglicare fully supports. However timeliness, in our opinion, does not necessarily mean 'quick'. Anglicare would argue that making timely decisions is important, but making appropriate decisions, based on the merits of a particular case, is imperative (Anglicare Tasmania 2019). So for Anglicare, 'timely' should mean appropriate to the individual circumstances of the children, young people and families involved.
- **Support for children to maintain relationships in their lives that matter to them now and into their future,** so that they are able to develop healthy attachments and relationships that enhance their sense of belonging and a positive sense of self (Barnardos 2003; FISH 2018; McLean 2016a, b; Neil 2017; Tregagle et al. 2005, 2014).
- **Therapeutic trauma- and poverty-informed programs available at the critical points families need it.** Pregnancy is a window of opportunity and a powerful motivator of change. The current Tasmanian family support architecture should be strengthened to include specialist services available prenatally with the capacity to proactively engage with women and prevent further removal. This should include an automatic referral to specialist support services when an unborn baby alert is received. Services need to be resourced to a level that can offer access to therapeutic support to address attachment issues and unresolved childhood trauma during pregnancy and after child removal. This can require intensive adult and infant/child

psychotherapy to begin to address ingrained patterns of behaviour, mother/child interactions and loss. Healy et al. (2016) note that affordable, secure housing linked with appropriate services is showing positive outcomes across programs in the US, Europe and England. Again, US research has established that it is the **combination** of focused case management, support services and a housing subsidy that supports housing stability and family wellbeing outcomes (White 2016, cited in Healey et al. 2016 cited in Fidler 2018). Economic modelling by US National Centre for Housing and Child Welfare has suggested that supported housing options for families are 70% cheaper than keeping children in foster care (Healey et al 2016 in Fidler 2018), which offers the Tasmanian Government the potential to save considerable funds by investing in supported housing options for families involved in the Child Safety system.

What investments can State Government make?

State Government Departments: Department of Communities Tasmania (Children and Youth Services, Housing Tasmania); Department of Health.

Recommendation 3: To further promote children's safety and stability, tackle intergenerational involvement in Child Safety Services and increase timely decision making on children's future care, the Department of Communities Tasmania should work with other relevant Federal and State Government departments to explore a suite of programs and services that recognise and address the therapeutic, practical and material parenting support needs at critical points in family preservation and restoration.

- **Intensive therapeutic and practical family support services during pregnancy** to proactively engage women in preventing child removal by addressing safety concerns where a baby alert is flagged by Child Safety Services.
- **Intensive therapeutic and practical pre- and post- child removal family support services** for parents involved with Child Safety Services to ensure that timely decisions can be made on children's short and longer term care needs.
- **Funding to recognise birth parents' parenting costs post child removal** and the significant costs involved in preparing for and undertaking family reunification.
- **Parents being flagged as a priority cohort for crisis, transitional and longer-term housing and tenancy support**, in a similar way to families experiencing domestic violence. A suite of options to support families whose children are removed by Child Safety Services to maintain stable accommodation, where accommodation has been identified as either a risk to child safety or as a barrier to family reunification.

Estimated costs: Uncosted

Parents' voice in systemic and individual advocacy within Tasmania's Child Safety System

Why Anglicare thinks this is a priority issue

The Tasmanian Government hopes that the redesign of Child Safety Services will reduce the numbers of children and young people entering the out-of-home care system, improve outcomes and the rate of reunification when children are removed and provide more support to families so they can offer safe environments to care for their children and minimise intergenerational involvement (DHHS 2016).

While Anglicare welcomes the Government's commitment to a full implementation of the redesign, known as Strong Families Safe Kids, Anglicare is concerned there is no representative parent voice involved in the redesign or planned for the new system.

Parents and families have a central and essential role to play in Child Safety policy and processes when children are at risk of removal or have been removed. Insights from the lived experience of parents and families can inform the design and delivery of more effective policy and services and contribute towards collaborative, family-inclusive, co-designed services that produce better outcomes for both children and families. This requires more effective partnering between parents and CSS, both at an individual level to enable parents to better navigate and engage with CSS and at a systemic level to encourage effective policy and service design.

Anglicare's recent research documents the difficulties that Tasmania is experiencing in enacting the intent of the legislation to keep children and young people safe whilst supporting the ability of families to provide safe environments and parent effectively (Fidler 2018; Hinton 2018). This research builds on Australia-wide and international research that identifies the struggles parents in contact with child safety services experience (Harries 2008; Hinton 2013; Ivec 2013; Broadhurst & Mason 2017; Cocks 2018).

The voice of the service user and their lived experience should form a vital component in decision-making and design of policy and service delivery (Tasmanian Government 2013). This has been recognised in Tasmania recently with the funding for systemic advocacy to consumers in the mental health sector provided by Flourish, the establishment of Health Consumers Tasmania and, more recently, Disability Voices Tasmania.

And yet Tasmania currently has no mechanism for parent representation to routinely hear the voices of parents and families involved with Child Safety Services so that they can contribute to the development and design of policy and services. At a time of major reform to CSS this is a significant gap.

Anglicare's recent research and consultations with service providers and service users about this issue looked at Tasmania's advocacy environment, experiences of advocacy in other

Australian states and the international environment, as well as experiences in other sectors (Anglicare Tasmania 2018a). We believe an advocacy system for parents and families involved in CSS based on the core elements of the advocacy model of the Family Inclusion Network (FIN) Western Australia needs to be developed and supported here in Tasmania.

This would see the primary role of advocacy and support for parents and families delivered by an incorporated organisation that is supported by recurrent funding, with a skills-based board with parent/family representation and a membership base of organisations, individuals, parents and families.

This is very different to the original FINTAS, which was a small unfunded volunteer-run organisation that operated from 2008 to 2013 and to the Parent and Family Advocacy Service (PFAS), which was established in 2013 to fill the gap when FINTAS folded.

There is no question there is a service gap for parent and family advocacy in the Child Safety Service (DHHS 2016; Hinton 2018; Fidler 2018). At a time when the system is being redesigned with the intention of securing 'the safety of children by doing the very best we can all do to support their families and communities' (DHHS undated), the voice of parents and families is critical. Anglicare argues that a properly funded and authorised body needs to be established and the best model for this would be to establish a Family Inclusion Network (FIN) Tasmania.

Anglicare Tasmania's research and discussion paper suggested the core elements of a FIN Tasmania should be (Anglicare Tasmania 2018a):

- *a statewide approach and delivery;*
- *recurrent, not project, funding;*
- *mechanisms which facilitate systemic advocacy including:*
 - *the right to be consulted about issues affecting parents and families – a place at the table;*
 - *established consultation and collaboration mechanisms with parents/families, government and service providers;*
 - *input into education and training for Child Safety staff, students and other practitioners about the lived experience to promote understanding and cultural change; and*
 - *building capacity for peer support and parent leadership.*
- *provision of information and advice to parents, families, professionals and practitioners involved with CSS;*
- *individual advocacy and casework delivered on a professional basis and accessible to all who need or want it; and*
- *the involvement of Government from the beginning as a collaborator, partner and supporter.*

Further, establishing a FIN Tasmania would allow links to be made with the national FIN network, resulting in national recognition, support and mentoring.

What investments can State Government make?

Key State Government department: Department of Communities.

Recommendation 4: The State Government should provide funding to establish a model for a Family Inclusion Network in Tasmania to facilitate systemic and individual advocacy for parents involved in the Child Safety system.

Estimated costs:

Annual total \$524,000 (+ 10% GST). Includes in-kind support from an auspicing organisation and all overheads:

- \$140,000 for Statewide Coordinator (level 8, includes office, computer, car) plus \$3,000 for travel and accommodation (6 trips across the State annually). Total \$143,000 (+ 10% GST).
- \$125,000 per Advocate (level 6, one in each region) plus \$2,000 resourcing per Advocate. Total \$381,000 (+ 10% GST).

2. Affordable and appropriate housing for all Tasmanians

Why Anglicare thinks this is a priority issue

Affordable and secure housing provides an essential foundation for a decent life through better outcomes in health, education, employment and early childhood development (Productivity Commission 2016). In 2018, the Federal House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport and Cities recognised that ‘adequate affordable housing with good amenity is fundamental to the sustainability of Australian communities’ but that the combination of rapid population growth, insufficient and slow land release, slow or expensive planning processes and taxation policies that support housing as an investment asset rather than as a place to live contribute to poor housing affordability (Commonwealth of Australia 2018).

For a sustained period now, Tasmanians have been facing both increasing house sale prices and increasing private rental prices at the same time as a shortfall in the availability of public and social housing. Critical life events and housing market factors are leading people to seek assistance to obtain or maintain housing; with the lack of affordable housing these households are at risk of experiencing housing stress or homelessness which can impact their health, education and employment (AIHW 2019).

While Anglicare is supportive of the Tasmanian Government’s Affordable Housing Strategy and action plans, Anglicare is concerned that the Strategy will not meet the community’s housing needs. Despite the actions undertaken in the first four years of the Strategy, there remains insufficient affordable housing in Tasmania.

It is clear that the targets in the Strategy fall well short of the number of households needing assistance. In evidence to the House of Assembly Select Committee on Housing Affordability, Dr Kathleen Flanagan explained that the targets in the Government’s Strategy were developed by rationing a limited budget rather than trying to meet the community’s needs (Hansard 4 September 2019, Kathleen Flanagan, p. 2). Dr Flanagan said that analysis of census data shows ‘a current need of 11,000-plus dwellings, and the affordable housing strategy has targets in hundreds, [so] there’s a fairly significant shortfall in terms of the capacity of that strategy to address the depth of need currently in the community’ (Hansard 4 September 2019, Kathleen Flanagan, p. 2). Dr Flanagan argues for a rapid increase in the number of new builds and the reprioritisation of housing as essential social infrastructure.

The shortfall of the Strategy is evident in the experience of people seeking help for housing: the number of applications on the Housing Register and waiting time for priority applicants are going up, not down. In June 2019, there were 3,330 applications waiting on the Housing Register, an increase of 114 on the same time the previous year, which was 254 more households than June 2017 (DHHS 2019). Priority applicants were waiting an average of 67 weeks as of June 2019, almost two months longer than the same time the previous year (60 weeks), which was an increase from the 2017 waiting time of 49 weeks (DHHS 2019).

The Strategy's impact on the private rental market has also fallen short. Each year, Anglicare analyses the availability and affordability of private properties that are advertised for long-term rent (for example, Law, Claxton & Thurstons 2019). Our Rental Affordability Snapshot (RAS) has found that over the past seven years the number of private rentals listed dropped 60%, from almost 3,000 properties in 2013 to just 1,000 properties in 2019. The decrease in property listings has been most pronounced in the South, where properties listed have dropped from 1,304 in 2013 to just 434 in 2019 (67%), while listings in the North fell 56% (from 809 in 2013 to 354 in 2019) and in the Northwest 53% (from 563 in 2013 to 252 in 2019). These findings are similar to surveys and analysis conducted by National Shelter, CoreLogic, Tenants Union Tasmania and the Tasmanian Treasury.

The large decrease in listings is seriously limiting opportunities for people to find and secure affordable private rental properties. In 2019, the Snapshot found no properties anywhere in Tasmania affordable for a person on Youth Allowance, just 8 properties for a single parent on Newstart, 30 for someone on the Disability Support Pension and 122 for someone on the Age pension. Many of the affordable properties for these cohorts were located in small rural towns without public transport and limited employment opportunities.

The decrease in private rental listings is also reflected in Anglicare's experience in delivering housing services through Housing Connect. Anglicare coordinates Housing Connect Front Door in the North West and North of the state and provides support workers for Housing Connect in the South. Over the past three years, we have found the number of applications for Private Rental Assistance (PRA) in the North and North West has decreased, from 1,790 applications in the year ending 30 June 2017 to just 1,295 applications in the most recent financial year (28% decrease). Of these applications, just half have proceeded to payout, meaning the applicant was successfully housed in a private rental property. There was a similar result for people seeking help in the South. These decreases reflect the reduced opportunities for people to find an affordable private rental, even if actively supported through Housing Connect. Over the same time period, the number of homelessness assessments we conducted in the North and North West increased from 1,841 households (year ending 30 June 2017) to 2,092 (year ending 30 June 2019), an increase of 14%.

It is therefore not surprising that Anglicare clients tell us they are competing against 40 or more other prospective tenants each time they apply for a private rental property, leaving more vulnerable households at a competitive disadvantage. As a client with a disability told

us in March this year, 'We were told we were in the group of 40 shortlisted for the property out of 120 applications. But we haven't got an offer of a lease. Even if we cut back on other things so we can pay higher rent [and be in rental stress], it seems nothing is available for us' (Law, Claxton & Thurstans 2019).

The expansion of short-stay accommodation has had a negative impact on the availability and affordability of long-term rentals in Tasmania (Institute for the Study of Social Change 2018a). Anglicare is pleased the State Government has acknowledged this impact and is incorporating some measures relating to short stay into the planning scheme; however, as we noted in our submission on the matter, much more can and must be done (Anglicare Tasmania 2018b). Further, with the release of Airbnb data this year showing the extent of the spread of Airbnb (5,500 active Tasmanian listings, 1,300 of which were in Hobart) (Wilson 2019), Anglicare urges the Government to review the effectiveness of its approach to short-stay accommodation to ensure Government policies stimulate housing for homes rather than housing for profits.

The lack of public and social housing along with the tight private rental market has resulted in 1,600 Tasmanians being homeless on any one night, a fifth of whom are children, and a further 940 Tasmanians living in other marginal settings such as caravan parks and improvised or crowded dwellings (ABS 2016).

In 2017-18, Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) assisted 6,508 people (AIHW 2019). Despite this being a reduction in presentations to SHS from the previous year, the number of requests that went unmet each day had increased from 25 to 28. Further, the median length of SHS support provided to a homeless Tasmanian is well above the national average, standing at 69 days (an increase from the previous year's 62 days) as opposed to the national average of 29 days (AIHW 2019).

Tasmania is over-represented in young people aged 15 to 24 presenting alone to SHS (26.1 clients per 10,000 compared to the national figure of 17.6) as well as people with mental ill-health (56.0 per 10,000 compared to the national figure of 32.9) or alcohol/drug use (16.3 per 10,000 compared to national average of 11.0) (AIHW 2019). These are areas the Government must focus on, to ensure sufficient care and support is provided.

Two specific cohorts of Tasmanians who are especially vulnerable to homelessness have been the focus of recent Anglicare research: parents who have their children removed from their care by the Child Safety system (Fidler 2018) and children under 16 who have fallen between child protection and housing and homelessness services (Robinson 2017b). These cohorts are discussed in depth in Section 1, including recommendations regarding their housing needs.

Housing stress¹ is an additional problem for Tasmanians, with ten per cent of households experiencing housing stress (ABS 2016) and low income Tasmanians at risk of extreme housing stress, which restricts their ability to heat their home, access health care and provide opportunities for their children. The November 2019 Rental Affordability Index found that an average income household would be in rental stress if paying the current median rent (SGS Economics and Planning 2019).

Tasmania's strong economy is not reaching widely enough. The 'real action to do more about [the cost of living]' that the Premier spoke of in 2017 (Hodgman 2017) needs to put housing first. We urgently need more homes built and significant increases to the housing support services budget. The waiving of the historic Commonwealth housing debt will boost our opportunities to assist people into housing but even greater commitments by the State Government is needed if we genuinely intend to ensure all Tasmanians have a home.

What investments can State Government make?

Key State Government departments: Department of Communities Tasmania; Department of Justice

Recommendation 5. The State Government should build on the strategic thinking that has developed the Affordable Housing Strategy by urgently and substantially increasing the level of investment in initiatives that will quickly stimulate development of more affordable housing for rent and purchase.

Estimated costs: Not costed.

Recommendation 6. Current reforms to the Tasmanian Planning Scheme should incorporate inclusionary zoning to set targets for a percentage of affordable housing required in all new developments and redevelopments, as well as incentives that encourage short-term accommodation properties to be freed up for long-term rental.

Estimated costs: Not costed.

Recommendation 7. The State Government should urgently increase funding to Housing Connect front door and support services so the services are able to meet current demand.

Estimated costs: Not costed.

¹ Housing stress describes a household in the lowest 40% of Australia's household income that spends more than 30% of its income on rent or mortgage payments. 'Extreme rental stress' is defined as spending at least 50% of a household's income on rent.

3. Improving alcohol and other drugs services

Why Anglicare thinks this is a priority issue

Harms caused by problematic alcohol and other drugs use in Tasmania is significant: ill-health, family disruption, crimes and road traffic injuries are some of the major impacts.

Through our research work and service provision as well as our membership of the Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council of Tasmania (ATDC), Anglicare has contributed to State Government reviews of alcohol, tobacco and other drug services. Since 2008, we have been calling for the development of a consumer engagement or advocacy model to be funded.

This year, we join ATDC in calling for an independent consumer representative organisation supported by a Board of Governance, Executive Officer and project and operational staff. We believe such an approach would see people with lived experience leading innovation in service delivery.

Anglicare also agrees with ATDC that improved data collection and analysis as well as collaboration across the private, public and not-for-profit sectors is needed. This would help show the impact of services and identify need as well as giving directions for how to help more people.

What investments can State Government make?

Key State Government departments: Department of Health

Recommendation 8. The State Government should fund the establishment of a stand-alone alcohol, tobacco and other drugs consumer organisation. For more details, please see the budget priorities submission by the Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council of Tasmania.

Estimated costs: The cost to establish and support the first year of operation is \$463,000. An investment of \$380,000 per annum is then required to sustain the organisation.

Recommendation 9. The State Government should contribute funds to improving the collection, sharing and analysis of data about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs use with the goal of greater collaboration leading to improved services. For more details, please see the budget priorities submission by the Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council of Tasmania.

Estimated costs: \$50,000 (+GST).

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