



MEDIA RELEASE

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HUMAN SERVICES BREAKING NEW GROUND

The Children's Commissioner Mr Paul Mason today welcomed the expansion of the child health nursing service CHAPS (Child and Parent Service) for children 0-4. The Department has announced increasing the level of nursing contact for babies from as few as 3 times in their formative pre-school years to 10 times.

"This is an essential part of the Department's new Child Protection system," said Mr Mason. "It fits perfectly with Government spending on improving the early years for Tasmanian kids, and has been a recommendation coming out of child death reviews in recent years.

Until now most new parents had contact with the child health nurse between one and three times until about 18 months old and many then "disappeared" from contact with universal services until they arrived at the door of Kindy. Many kids at that stage had already missed out on some essential milestones like good dental care (for healthy growing) and eye and ear care (for learning how to communicate and create). Many parents had limited access to parenting help when they needed it most through the "Terrible Twos"; many had little idea how to connect up their children with other children which is where they learn how to deal with other people and with set-backs; and many parents didn't know where to start looking for help with their own problems.

International and Australian research shows how these gaps can impact on society's levels of youth crime, unwanted teen pregnancy, illiteracy, drug and alcohol use and family violence. Research also shows how kids do so much better with more professional nursing contact, especially those with young mums.

"Only today I heard of a mother on the Eastern Shore of Hobart connecting with Bellerive Primary's "B4" Launch Into Learning Program through a referral from the CHAPS nurse. I am confident this is going to be money well-spent," said Mr Mason "The Government is to be congratulated".

For further information, contact the Children's Commissioner on mobile 0438 555 473.