

## **Commissioner releases updated Data Report on the Health and Wellbeing of Tasmania's children**

**4 September 2017**

The Commissioner for Children and Young People Mark Morrissey has today released an updated Report on factors relevant to the health and wellbeing of children and young people in Tasmania: *Health and Wellbeing of Tasmania's Children, Young People and their Families*.

"A major focus of my role as Commissioner for Children and Young People is to promote, monitor and review the wellbeing of Tasmanian children and young people," said Mr Morrissey.

Today's Report updates data from the two prior releases which focused on the demographics of Tasmania's children and young people, and key indicators related to early childhood, middle childhood and adolescence. This updated Report now also includes the third and final part on parents, families and communities.

"This Report fills an important information gap in the provision of such information, as currently there is nothing similar produced. It has been very well received by individuals and organisations across Tasmania and I hope its production can be continued.

It provides a comprehensive snapshot of key indicators relevant to the health and wellbeing of Tasmania's children and young people, sourced from a wide range of publicly available data. Having this data available in one document which is freely available and accessible, means that priorities and gaps can be more readily identified," said Mr Morrissey.

"My Report has been produced so that it can be used by anyone who has an interest in how Tasmania's children and young people are faring, and to gain a deeper understanding of how individuals and services may be able to work together to improve their lives. Freely available data is essential to ensuring that Tasmania's children and young people have a bright and healthy future," Mr Morrissey said.



“While this Report highlights that the majority of Tasmania’s children and young people are doing well, it also draws attention to those areas in need of improvement, particularly where children and young people are struggling and may need additional support.

Many of Tasmania’s children get a good start to life, with Tasmania having high rates of breastfeeding at birth, levels of childhood immunisations comparable to national averages, and high rates of attendance at antenatal visits before 14 weeks. Risk factors such as women smoking and drinking alcohol during pregnancy have also declined since 2010. Dental health has also improved with the mean number of decayed, missing or filled teeth in children and young people declining in recent years.

However my Report identifies a number of areas of concern for the health of children and young people in Tasmania compared to national averages including higher levels of drug and alcohol use and smoking amongst teenagers, a higher teenage birth rate, and a higher rate of youth suicide. We as a community need a stronger focus on addressing these issues.” Mr Morrissey said.

“In addition we are seeing more children and young people taken into the care of the State, and some concerning trends in relation to child protection. This data reflects the need to continue to prioritise and fully implement and resource the entirety of the *Redesign of Child Protection Services Tasmania; Strong Families – Safe Kids*.

Regarding education, children and young people in Tasmania are meeting the national minimum standards at a similar level to their national counterparts and are well prepared for entering school. However, only 56 per cent of young people are attaining a Tasmanian Certificate of Education compared to 75 per cent of young people attaining a Year 12 Certificate nationally. I commend the current efforts by Government to bring our education attainment levels into line with national averages,” Mr Morrissey said.

Mr Morrissey has welcomed efforts by the Tasmanian Government to address educational issues, and the continuing reforms of the child protection and out of home care system.

A full copy of the Report is available from [childcomm.tas.gov.au](http://childcomm.tas.gov.au)

**Mark Morrissey**  
**Commissioner for Children and Young People (Tas)**



## Key Findings

### Early Childhood and the Transition to School

- Overall socioeconomic disadvantage is higher in Tasmania than nationally, with 48% of mothers in Tasmania from the lowest socioeconomic deciles, compared to 21% nationally.
- Breastfeeding rates at birth in Tasmania are 90% (which is comparable to the national rate) however breastfeeding rates at maternal discharge from hospital have been declining since 2009.
- Smoking during pregnancy has declined in Tasmania since 2010.
- Alcohol consumption during pregnancy has declined in Tasmania since 2010.
- Over 90% of children between the ages of 12 months and 5 years are fully immunised in Tasmania.
- Tasmanian children have equivalent mean numbers of decayed, missing or filled teeth compared to nationally.
- Tasmanian mothers are more likely to have their first antenatal visit before 14 weeks than any other state or territory.
- Three-quarters of children in Government schools are achieving all development markers in Kindergarten.

### Middle Childhood and Adolescence

- Approximately 30 per cent of Tasmanian children aged between 12 and 15 are overweight, and nearly 10 per cent are obese.
- Estimate type 1 diabetes rates are higher in Tasmania for children aged between 0 and 14 than nationally.
- Deaths of children and young people due to intentional self-harm are higher in Tasmania than nationally.
- Tasmania's teenage pregnancy rate was 16.1 per 1,000 women aged 19 and under, which is substantially higher than the national average.
- NAPLAN results have shown that Tasmanian students are at a comparable standard for reading and writing to their national counterparts, however they are significantly below national measures in numeracy, spelling and grammar/punctuation in some year levels.
- Just under five per cent of students were suspended from Government schools in 2015.
- Around 60 per cent of school leavers are fully participating in education, training and/or employment.
- The proportion of students attaining a Year 12 Certificate is the second lowest of all of the states and territories.
- The number of youth offenders and young people in detention is declining in Tasmania.



## Parents, Families and Communities

- The rate of children in child protection notifications in Tasmania is the third highest of all of the states and territories, with 70.4 children per 1,000 in notifications.
- Thirteen per cent of child protection notifications are investigated in Tasmania.
- The proportion of child protection investigations completed in 28 days or less has decreased since 2010-11, with only 19.6 per cent of investigations finalised within this timeframe.
- As at March 2017, there were 1,190 children and young people in out-of-home care, a number which has been slowly increasing over the past five years.
- Only 55.4 per cent of children and young people in out-of-home care have a current documented and approved case plan.
- In 2015-16, 3,182 incidents of family violence were reported to Tasmania police, with children present at 1,757 of these incidents (55 per cent).
- Seven per cent of families in Tasmania ran out of food at some time during the last 12 months and could not afford to buy more.
- Sixteen per cent of children aged under 15 are living in poverty in Tasmania, which is higher than the national average.
- Rental affordability in Hobart is the second worst after Sydney, with households in Greater Hobart needing to spend around 27 per cent of their total income on rent.