

Mark Morrissey announces resignation as Tasmania's Commissioner for Children and Young People

3 August 2017

I have this week submitted my resignation as Commissioner for Children and Young People. I will finish in the role in September 2017.

Since my appointment as Commissioner in October 2014 it has been my privilege to promote the rights and wellbeing of Tasmania's children and young people.

Most importantly, my work has been informed by the views of the hundreds of Tasmanian children and young people I have been fortunate to meet. My discussions with them have been a significant highlight for me; we can be assured that Tasmania has many remarkable young people who are well equipped to be our future leaders.

My annual reports provide an overview of the work that I have undertaken in relation to the wide range of issues that affect children and young people in Tasmania. Areas of work that I would particularly like to highlight include:

- The commencement of new legislation in 2016 giving the Commissioner the power to initiate own motion inquiries. This legislation also establishes a set of principles to be observed by the Commissioner in his or her work: the paramount importance of the wellbeing and best interests of children and young people, and the need to observe their rights under the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*.
- The *Strengthening Child Safe Organisations in Tasmania* report released in September 2015 and associated work on improving approaches to keeping children safe in organisational settings.
- My statutory role as advocate for young people in youth justice detention and my 2015 recommendation to the Tasmanian Government that it adopt a therapeutic and rehabilitative model for youth justice detention.
- The *Children and Young People's Unique Experiences of Family Violence* report released in September 2016.
- Reporting on the health and wellbeing of Tasmania's children, young people and their families.
- A number of arts-based projects through which my office has engaged with children and young people to hear their stories, explore their views and foster their creativity.
- My January 2017 report on ways to make the out of home care system in Tasmania more transparent and accountable.



Reflecting on my time as Commissioner, my lasting impression will always be of the many passionate and skilled people who work in government, community and private sectors who every day strive to make a positive difference to the lives of our children and young people.

I wish the Tasmanian Government and all agencies and organisations involved in providing policy leadership, services and support to Tasmanian children and young people all the very best as they work together to improve outcomes. Progress can only be made by working together.

After a long career spent working in leadership roles in children's policy development and service delivery, I am very clear that the greatest challenge lies not just in developing policy, but in its implementation. Implementation is never easy. It must be done in a way which allows continual review, reflection and improvement with a clear focus on the long term outcomes and benefits intended to be achieved. Quite simply, it takes time and commitment to implement complex reform properly.

The commitment by the Tasmanian Government and Minister Petrusma to reform the child protection and out of home care systems is to be commended. The reforms recommended in the Child Protection Redesign authored by Professor Maria Harries, if fully implemented, provide a clear way forward. I would encourage all sides of politics to stay the course with the current set of reforms to the child protection and out of home care systems in Tasmania, and implement a system of independent expert oversight of the reform process, as recommended in my 2017 report.

Finally, I would like to emphasise the critical importance of promoting meaningful opportunities for children and young people to express their views and to influence decision making. Children are experts in their own lives; decision making and service delivery are vastly improved when informed by their views. I applaud organisations such as the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery for establishing a children's reference group, the Department of Education for consulting with students on its five year strategic plan and Child and Youth Services for actively seeking out the views of kids with lived experiences of out-of-home care to inform its reform.

I wish the future Commissioner for Children and Young People, the very best in undertaking this important job on behalf of Tasmania's children and young people.

After more than three decades in senior leadership roles I have made the decision to transition to part time work. I will continue to focus on the health and wellbeing of children and young people.

Mark Morrissey
Commissioner for Children and Young People