

Your Ref:  
Our Ref: 719

9 August 2018

Ginna Webster  
Secretary  
Communities Tasmania  
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Dear Secretary

**Re: Invitation to provide comment on the *Draft Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Outcomes Framework***

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *Draft Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Outcomes Framework* (the Outcomes Framework). Monitoring and reporting progress against key wellbeing indicators is, in my opinion, crucial to improving the health and wellbeing outcomes of Tasmania's children and young people.

I support the aim of the *Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework* which is to ensure that everyone, in all parts of Tasmania's service and support system, as well as in the broader community, has a strong, common understanding of child and youth wellbeing.<sup>1</sup> Building on this, the Outcomes Framework is intended to be "used by government agencies to set goals, monitor and report on their progress toward improving wellbeing, identify areas where they can improve, and inform the design and delivery of services."<sup>2</sup> It has also been stated that the Outcomes Framework will be "used as a mechanism to hold government agencies accountable for delivering improved wellbeing for children and young people."<sup>3</sup> In my opinion, the development of an Outcomes Framework which is capable of delivering on these aims has the potential to make a significant and positive contribution to improving the health and wellbeing outcomes of Tasmania's children and young people.

<sup>1</sup> Tasmanian Government, 2018, *Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework*, p2.

<sup>2</sup> Child and Youth Wellbeing Outcomes Framework - Fact Sheet, p1; see also *Draft Child and Youth Wellbeing Outcomes Framework v0.9*, June 2018, p5.

<sup>3</sup> Child and Youth Wellbeing Outcomes Framework - Fact Sheet, p1.



I acknowledge the challenges inherent in developing the Outcomes Framework and implementing a process to monitor and report against it. Other Australian jurisdictions are developing or progressing similar wellbeing monitoring frameworks. I am aware that they are encountering significant methodological and technical challenges. Therefore I commend the work being undertaken by officers of your Department to progress the Tasmanian Outcomes Framework and associated indicators.

My comments below relate first to the purpose and structure of the Outcomes Framework, and secondly to matters relevant to specific outcomes and indicators.

## **Purpose and Structure**

### ***1. Identification and Development of Further Indicators***

My first comment relates to the fact that some outcomes included in the Outcomes Framework have no indicators identified for them, or only a limited number. I understand that the Outcomes Framework is intended to be a 'living document' that will continue to evolve over time. However, limited information is provided in the document regarding how this process of evolution will occur and, specifically, what the process for the development of additional indicators will be so as to provide comprehensive information on each outcome.

In my opinion, the Outcomes Framework would be enhanced by:

- a) the inclusion of a strengthened statement of commitment to the further development of indicators to address these indicator gaps;
- b) the delineation of a clear process by which these gaps will be addressed; and
- c) the identification of indicators for which data are not currently available, on the basis that further work will be undertaken to locate or develop appropriate data sets.

### ***2. Purpose***

Page 2 of the draft document states that the Outcomes Framework will provide the basis for government agencies to deliver on the Tasmanian Government's commitment to improve the circumstances of children. Page 5 states that:

[t]he outcomes framework provides the basis for Government agencies to ensure that a focus on child and youth wellbeing informs the design and delivery of government services and, in turn, for those agencies to be held accountable for actually delivering improved wellbeing for children and young people, via the measurement of progress against key indicators.



In a 2013 report of an audit to assess the comprehensiveness, quality and usefulness of the state of Victoria's children reports, the Victorian Auditor-General noted the importance of outcomes frameworks, and highlighted the importance of maintaining a focus on vulnerable children, the usefulness of trend data, and the necessity of consistent and comprehensive regular performance reporting to demonstrate how outcomes for children are being influenced by government programs.<sup>4</sup>

In my opinion, the Outcomes Framework would be strengthened by comprehensive reporting arrangements, which demonstrate the improvement in outcomes that children are experiencing as a result of government services. In this way, the outcomes and indicators already included will be embedded within a structure of benchmarks against which performance can be measured and against which accountability can be assessed.

Further, the Outcomes Framework would benefit from:

- inclusion of a full range of indicators for every outcome, even if data are not currently available, so that stakeholders have preliminary information on the contributing factors to each outcome;
- inclusion of information relating to:
  - the current level of achievement against each indicator,
  - identification of the target level of achievement or benchmark against each indicator, and
  - the proposed timeframes for improvement; and,
- inclusion of information on the agency with primary responsibility for delivering improvement against each outcome and achievement of the target for each indicator, and, the mechanism by which each agency will be held accountable for that achievement or improvement.

Inclusion of the above would assist stakeholders to conceptualise the task ahead, understand the commitment the Tasmanian Government is making, and would promote transparency and accountability.

I believe there would be value in incorporating information about the process by which agencies will develop strategies to improve performance against indicators, how these strategies will be reported publicly, and how progress will be monitored and reported. In this context, I note the Department of Education has recently released the *2018-2021 Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy*. It is not immediately clear how this strategy links with the *Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework* or the Outcomes Framework;

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<sup>4</sup> Auditor-General of Victoria, 2013, *The State of Victoria's Children: Performance Reporting*, 2012-13:30, VAGO, Melbourne, viewed 27 July 2018, <https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/report/state-victorias-children-performance-reporting>



therefore I suggest that further work with other government departments occur to clarify these reporting arrangements. This would be beneficial to Tasmanians seeking to understand the relationship between these documents and any future work undertaken by other government departments.

### **3. Sources of Data**

My third comment relates to locating and developing appropriate data sets.

I expect that there are likely additional data sets held by Tasmanian Government agencies that could provide additional indicators for the Outcomes Framework. While it may be outside the scope of your project, I suggest that a comprehensive review of the data sets held by Tasmanian Government agencies could provide access to additional data and indicators that could be included in the Outcomes Framework.

I do note though that administrative data sets (which represent the source of the majority of indicators included in the current draft of the Outcomes Framework) are, in isolation, unlikely to provide a comprehensive picture of the wellbeing of children and young people. Gathering data relevant to describing subjective wellbeing is acknowledged to be particularly challenging.

However, progressive work has been undertaken internationally in this field by, for example, the OECD and UNICEF. I note also that some Australian jurisdictions are moving away from service delivery output indicators as measures of children's wellbeing, and are partnering with organisations with specific expertise to create and implement programs to gather outcomes data. For example, the Victorian Government has contracted the Social Research Centre (ANU) to conduct the Victorian Child Health and Wellbeing Survey. Likewise, the Western Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People is partnering with the Telethon Kids Institute to establish a new framework for monitoring and reporting on the wellbeing of Western Australia's children and young people, with a focus on gathering data against outcomes measures.

If baseline data that are truly representative of health and wellbeing outcomes of Tasmania's children and young people are to be established, then I recommend that the Government explore the feasibility of commissioning, from an organisation with demonstrated social research expertise, a periodic population-level study. This survey should include the gathering of data on children and young people's subjective views and understanding of their wellbeing.



As a first step, I suggest that the Tasmanian Government commission an independent feasibility study, taking into account the examples provided by the Victorian Government and WA Commissioner for Children and Young People. There may also be benefit in liaising with the Department of Education in relation to its student wellbeing surveys, which I understand are to be trialled in the near future.

I suggest also that, while it is important to develop a picture of what is happening at a population level, this may not fully encompass the complexity or challenges experienced by some families or children within different communities. The feasibility study may benefit from the inclusion of information regarding the potential for gathering more placed-based data, as has been suggested by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services in its *Stronger Outcomes for Families Discussion Paper*.<sup>5</sup>

On a related matter, I note the Tasmanian Government is currently progressing a data sharing project to explore the value of sharing Tasmanian and Australian Government Data through the Australian Government's Data Exchange (DEX). While the initiative appears to have the capacity to provide a streamlined platform for sharing, storing and reporting on data, I am keen to further understand the link between DEX and how proposed data sets will interact and align with the domains and indicators outlined in the Framework; particularly given the Outcomes Framework is intended to focus on outcomes as opposed to providing service level indicators. I would appreciate being kept up to date on the progress of determining the links between these two projects.

### **Specific Issues**

The above comments represent my views on the broad matters associated with the Outcomes Framework as it is currently formulated. I include below some further comments, which are not intended to be exhaustive, on specific elements of the Outcomes Framework.

*Outcome 3.3: Tasmanian children and young people are mentally, emotionally and spiritually healthy*

- I note that only one indicator has been included for *Outcome 3.3* (i.e. 3.3.1: Deaths of 5-17 year olds due to intentional self-harm).

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<sup>5</sup> Department of Social Services, 2018, *Stronger Outcomes for Families: Discussion Paper June 2018*, Australian Government, Canberra, viewed 2 August 2018, <https://engage.dss.gov.au/stronger-outcomes-for-families/stronger-outcomes-for-families-discussion-paper-june-2018/>, p10.



- While I acknowledge the importance of including this indicator in the Outcomes Framework, its standalone inclusion under *Outcome 3.3* has the potential to imply that this outcome can only be understood by a negative measure. Perhaps this indicator could be included elsewhere (for example, under *Outcome 1.2: Tasmanian children and young people are safe at home, at school and in the community*).
- More suitable indicators for *Outcome 3.3* would include both objective and subjective indicators – and most importantly, include multiple *positive* measures, rather than relying on a single *negative* measure of death due to intentional self-harm.
- As noted previously, it may be appropriate to include indicators for which data are not currently available, with a commitment to their development and the delineation of a process by which this will occur.

*Outcome 5.1: Tasmanian children and young people are able to engage with their peers and the community and participate in recreational activities, according to their capabilities*

- Indicators relating to rates of young people under youth justice supervision have been included under *Outcome 5.1* (i.e. *5.1.4a: Rate of young people in youth detention* and *5.1.4b: Rate of young people in community based supervision*).
- I do not believe that these indicators are appropriate measures of children and young people's participation within the meaning of *Outcome 5.1*. I recommend consideration be given to including these indicators under an alternative outcome, for example, *Outcome 1.2: Tasmanian children and young people are safe at home, at school and in the community*, noting that children and young people in conflict with the law are often highly vulnerable.

*Outcome 1.1: Tasmanian children and young have positive, stable and supportive relationships and all outcomes under Domain 6 – Having a Positive Sense of Culture and Identity*

- No indicators have been identified for *Outcome 1.1* or for *Domain 6*, and the Outcomes Framework provides no indication of how indicators will be identified and developed.
- While I note the statement at page 5 of the Outcomes Framework to the effect that there will be further investigation of the development of indicators for these outcomes, as noted above, I recommend the Outcomes Framework provides more detail around the process by which this will occur, and, again, I suggest that it may be appropriate to include indicators for which data are not currently available.



*Page 7: Role of the Commissioner for Children and Young People*

- I note the comment on page 7: '...the Tasmanian Commissioner for Children and Young People will continued to publish the annual *Health and Wellbeing of Tasmania's Children, Young People and their Families* Report, which will provide more in-depth commentary on progress against many of the indicators in this framework'.
- I request that you delete this statement on the basis that further discussions are required regarding the relationship between *The Health and Wellbeing of Tasmania's Children and Young People Report* and the Outcomes Framework.

I am available to discuss my comments, which I hope will assist to progress this important work. I also express my appreciation for the opportunity to submit my comments post the due date (6 August 2018).

Further stakeholder engagement by way of a public forum during which interested parties are able to share their views and engage in informed discussion prior to the finalisation of the Outcomes Framework would, in my view, be desirable.

Yours sincerely

**David Clements**

Interim Commissioner for Children and Young People

*cc Hon Roger Jaensch MP, Minister for Human Services*