

## **Commission of Inquiry** **23 November 2020**

The Commissioner for Children and Young People Leanne McLean today welcomed the Premier's announcement of a Commission of Inquiry to examine responses to child sexual abuse allegations by State institutions.

"A Commission of Inquiry is, in my view, the most transparent and appropriately robust way to investigate the systems and practices within our Government departments that may have contributed to harm being done to children," Ms McLean said.

"The safety and wellbeing of our children should be at the centre of everything that we do.

"The investigations already announced are a good start. However, they simply don't have the legal clout that is required under these circumstances or the level of transparency.

"A Commission of Inquiry will be able to lift the lid on these matters, afford a voice to survivors and ensure that we do better in future – acknowledging that nothing will erase the wrongs of the past for survivors of abuse."

Ms McLean said the Premier's announcement sends a clear and important message to the Tasmanian community, including children and young people.

"We want to find out what went wrong so we can do better. This is a very important message for our children and young people to hear – that we want to keep them safer."

Ms McLean said that while a Commission of Inquiry will strengthen and provide important Tasmanian context as to what has occurred here and how we can do better, we already know, to some extent, how the systems and processes of organisations, including government agencies, can influence the safety of children.

"We know this because we've had the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and the Commission's Recommendations told us what we were lacking.

"The Tasmanian Government has accepted these recommendations. However, their implementation is staged and there are some key elements of reform that have not yet been implemented, including:

- The Commission told us that we need a child safe legislative framework and that it must include independent oversight or regulation.  
I note that the first draft of this legislation is expected soon. There is not yet, however, any indication as to what implementation will look like, and indeed how rigorous that will be, who will be charged with independent oversight and what sort of funding the Government is willing to assign to its implementation – these things are important.

- The Commission told us that we need a reportable conduct scheme to enable workplaces to report conduct that is not 'chidsafe'  
It was good to hear the Premier mention the Government's commitment to this in his opening address in Estimates this morning. The current commitment from the Government is to look at this after a chidsafe legislative framework has been put in place. This may take years and faster action/implementation is required.



- The Commission told us we need standards for out of home care – these have been recommended many times by Commissioners past and most recently by me in 2019– I sincerely hope to see some draft standards in early 2021.
- The Commission told us we need a centralised register of carers. When dovetailed with a reportable conduct scheme this could be a very powerful thing in ensuring children are safe.”

Ms McLean said the fact a Commission of Inquiry has now been established makes the need for the implementation of these recommendations even more urgent.

“We must make sure that their implementation is robust, and well-funded. We cannot have a light touch approach to these new systems. They must be robust from the outset and we can learn lessons from other jurisdictions, such as Victoria, NSW and the ACT.”

**Media Contact: A.Mark Thomas, M&M Communications, 0422 006 732**

**Media contact:**