

Your Ref:
Our Ref: 913

29 July 2022

Michael Pervan
Secretary
Department of Communities Tasmania

By email: michael.pervan@communities.tas.gov.au
ctecc@communities.tas.gov.au

Dear Secretary,

Re: Food Relief to Food Resilience Action Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to inform the development of the Food Relief to Food Resilience Action Plan (the Action Plan). I am pleased to contribute my views on how this three-year whole-of-government Action Plan may be developed to implement activity across areas identified in the Tasmanian Government's *Food Relief to Food Resilience – Tasmanian Food Security Strategy 2021–2024* (the Strategy).

My feedback focuses on matters particularly relevant to promoting and protecting the rights, wellbeing and best interests of Tasmania's children and young people and identifies five key areas for consideration in developing the Action Plan. This submission is in summary form and is not intended to be exhaustive. It draws on insight through conversations with children and young people¹ and shares content with my [submission](#) providing comment on *Tasmania's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy Discussion Paper – January 2021*.

As you are aware, my role as Tasmania's Commissioner for Children and Young People is to advocate for the rights and wellbeing of all children and young people in Tasmania. The *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2016* (CCYP Act) sets out the functions of the Commissioner which include influencing policy development in areas relating to children and young people.

The need for improved food security as a material basic is commonly raised in my conversations with children and young people. The universal right for all children and their families to have access to healthy food to eat and clean water to drink is recognised by the children and young people I speak with, irrespective of where they live, their social and cultural background, or whether they have lived experience of food insecurity or not. Children and young people understand access to healthy food is fundamental to their

¹ [Listening to Children and Young People in Tasmania 2019](#)



wellbeing, development and happiness and to that of others, with many identifying food security as a current issue for people in their community and one that needs to be addressed.

“At school some kids would come without food and the teachers would have to make them food so they didn’t go hungry. I think kids shouldn’t go without food its not fair and we should do something to fix it.” **CCYP Ambassador, 2019**

This submission focuses on priority actions to prevent and respond to children and young people experiencing food insecurity, to provide opportunities for them to safely engage in community solutions, and to provide them with access to mechanisms through which they can inform and influence decision makers.

Identifying and promoting factors of success underlying school food programs

In my submission response to the *Tasmania’s Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy Discussion Paper – January 2021* I advocated for a whole-of-school lunch program to be a priority action in a strategy to improve the wellbeing of children and young people in Tasmania. I identified the potential to build on the success and learnings of pilot school lunch programs implemented by the Tasmanian School Canteen Association in 2020.

Subsequently, I welcomed the Government’s commitment to expanding the School Food Matter’s School Lunch Pilot Program to an additional 30 schools as *Action 19 Extension of the School Lunch Pilot Program* in Tasmania’s first Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy [*It Takes a Tasmanian Village*](#). Given shared attention to providing Tasmania’s children with access to healthy and nutritious food, reiterating this commitment as *Action 1.3 School Food Pilots* in the Action Plan is a logical inclusion. The commitment to an evaluation of the pilot program ‘to better understand its impact, particularly for students in need of support’ is a commendable inclusion in the Action Plan. In my view, this action could be further strengthened by explicitly expressing an intent to embed the facilitation and recognition of children’s views in the evaluation model. It will be important for all children participating in the pilots to have an opportunity to provide feedback if the objective of identifying and promoting pilot success factors (and those less successful) is to be achieved.

Noting *Action 19* of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy links prioritisation of participating schools with lower socio-economic locations, it is my view that examining and understanding the influence of a range of demographic and environmental factors will be critical in building a comprehensive picture of what has and has not worked well by location to inform future program design. As such, program evaluation design should be informed by stakeholder consultation.

Tasmanian Food Resilience Hub – Web Based Platform

The proposed Tasmanian Food Resilience Hub – Web Based Platform, a ‘one stop shop’ for information and knowledge sharing for both Tasmanians in need and organisations involved in the food sector, presents an opportunity for best practice access to and provision of co-ordinated, targeted information and service referral. Aspirations for the Hub as outlined in the Action Plan are manifold and ambitious. While likely broader in application, my



comments below relate specifically to children and young people as direct or secondary Hub users.

The Hub is identified as a key action in response to the objective of 'identifying the challenges and opportunities for food relief and design in regional and remote communities'. Given this objective, it is my view that an exercise to assess existing web access and digital literacy is necessary to inform Hub development. Further, where web access deficits and/or digital literacy gaps are identified, strategies to ensure equity of information and service access by Tasmanian children, young people and families in need will be required. It is possible that the suggested assessment of digital disadvantage and development of targeted response may be covered by or complement current government initiatives to improve digital literacy and digital inclusion across the community, as outlined in the Tasmanian Government strategy for digital transformation [Our Digital Future](#).

It will be important for resources providing information on health and nutrition to be presented in a child-friendly format (or have child-friendly versions) if the Hub is to be an effective platform for information access and growing food literacy. Likewise, for the Hub to successfully connect children and young people in need with support services, either as direct Hub users or as users on behalf of their family, information will need to be presented in a format that is easily understood and navigated by children. It is my opinion that a child-facing iteration of the Hub, specifically targeting Tasmanians in need (excluding content designed for organisations involved in the food sector) should be developed, as informed by the views of children and young people.

In my consultations with children and young people, the understanding of food security and its impact on wellbeing is evident as is recognition of the need for improved access to support services.

"A website for young people to get food so that they can become healthy and happy." **CCYP Ambassador, 2019**

I note that in addition to providing a knowledge sharing platform for Tasmanians in need and organisations involved in the food sector, the Hub is intended to link to other 'similar Tasmanian web-based food sectors'. Through my consultations across the State, I have heard that families in some regions find that accessing food locally is not the only challenge but rather one that can be compounded by challenges in accessing information on when food deliveries will be made to local suppliers in their area. It is unclear from the draft Action Plan whether the proposed Hub will have a role in better supporting Tasmanians in regional and remote areas through improved information on food distribution and availability.

The voice of children and young people

Consistent with Article 12 of the United Nations [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), I encourage the Department to provide opportunities for children and young people to actively participate in the development and implementation of activities targeting Tasmanians in need and the journey towards food resilience more broadly as outlined in the Action Plan. *Action 2.1 Place Based Pilot Program* presents an ideal opportunity to include children and young people in the development of community-led place-based solutions to build food resilience. Further, the approach to strengthening food systems through *Action 2.5 Public*



campaign could be scoped to ensure the views of children and young people are considered in developing a campaign that will resonate with current and future generations of Tasmania's children and young people.

Children and young people are 'experts in their own lives and feedback'² and as such are best placed to advise and inform the design of targeted education programs, public campaigns and support services, providing key insights as to what is important to them, what information and services would be helpful to them, their families and communities, and how these can be delivered for optimum impact. It is also my view that children and young people's feedback is a vital component in the evaluation of programs targeting improvements to food relief and the progression to food resilience.

Opportunities for safe participation in proposed approach to capacity building

Capacity building to support place-based community food resilience solutions is proposed in the Action Plan through two defined objectives: 1) ensuring a sustainable volunteer workforce and, 2) developing hospitality-based employment and training opportunities through food relief social enterprises. These initiatives represent the potential for local community participation experiences and development of labour force capital, opportunities that are both in-demand and valued by many young people throughout Tasmania and as such, I welcome their inclusion in the Action Plan.

However, for a successful and sustainable roll-out of the proposed capacity building initiatives there will need to be investment in supporting volunteering organisations and social enterprises to foster and embed a commitment to child safety into all aspects of their operation. All organisations, particularly those engaging with or providing services to children and young people, have a responsibility for keeping children and young people safe.

I strongly encourage the Department to support volunteering organisations and social enterprises to develop systems that ensure their participation in proposed initiatives (and their activities more broadly) are conducted in a manner that is consistent with the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) and complies with the [Tasmanian Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework](#) once legislated. A commitment to assisting volunteering organisations and social enterprises in this way could be expressed in a dedicated action linked to current *Objectives 3 and 4* under the Action Plan's *Capacity Building* focus area, *Priority 2*.

Monitoring – measures, targets, outcomes

I welcome the inclusion of *Priority 3, Objective 3 Support the collection and dissemination of information on the lived experience of Tasmanians seeking food relief, to inform service design, delivery and evaluation that will lead to food resilience*. It is my opinion that the action currently proposed to achieve this objective, *Action 3.4 Food insecurity research* could be strengthened by articulating how the participation of those with lived experience, including children and young people, will be facilitated. Alternately, this could be addressed in a stand-alone complementary action.

² Australian Childhood Trauma Group, 'Why have an approach to children's participation?' (2021). Available at [Why have an approach to children's participation? – The ACT Group](#)



The Action Plan specifies progress against initiatives will be monitored and reported through the Food Relief to Food Resilience Committee. However, there is no reference as to how progress will be measured. At the very least, the Action Plan should include a commitment to establish a clear monitoring framework with agreed targets against which progress can be measured. It is likely some targets may be shared with or draw from the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, possibly incorporating data available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), such as dietary behaviour data, and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), such as nutrition data. In line with the Action Plan's whole-of-government approach, there may be an opportunity to develop a tool(s) to measure progress against agreed outcomes in tandem with those of related strategies such as the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.

Once again, I would draw attention to the experience and views of children and young people as providing valuable insights in the process of evaluating and measuring wellbeing outcomes. In addition, self-reported perceptions of wellbeing and nutrition, such as those collected through the Tasmanian Department of Education's annual Student Wellbeing and Engagement Survey, hold potential to inform monitoring of changes to perceived wellbeing over time by school and geographic location.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comment to inform the Food Relief to Food Resilience Action Plan. I would be pleased to discuss my contribution in further detail should this be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Leanne McLean

Commissioner for Children and Young People

cc *The Hon Nic Street, Minister for Community Services and Development
The Hon Roger Jaensch, Minister for Education, Children and Youth
Katie Kelly, Policy and Programs, Communities Sport and Recreation*