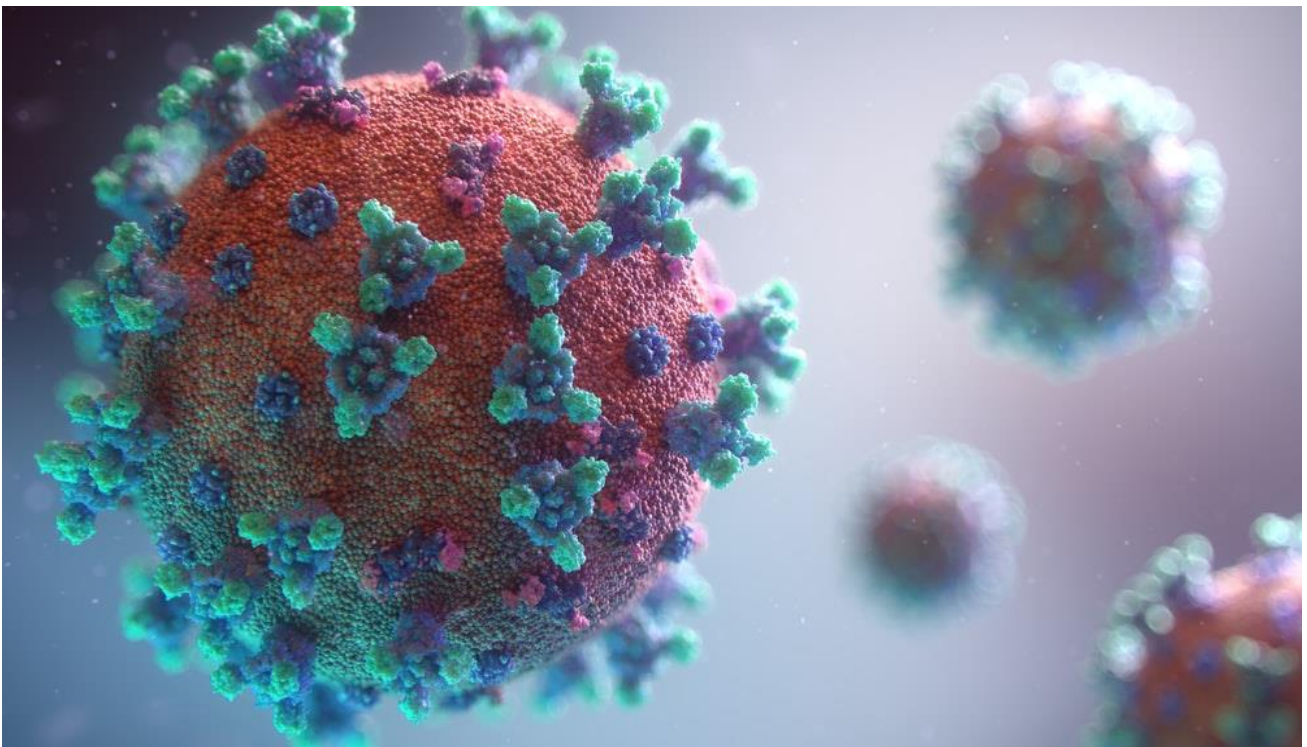


COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
MONITORING AND ADVOCACY
DURING COVID-19



Commissioner's Message

We are experiencing unprecedented times in Tasmania, Australia and around the world, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect our daily lives. Now, more than ever, we must work together in a collaborative and supportive way to promote and protect the rights and wellbeing of children and young people in Tasmania. Our focus must be particularly on those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable.

Public health emergency responses to the pandemic have already brought about many changes to the lives of young Tasmanians and they will continue to do so for some time.

During this time, I remain firmly committed to monitoring and advocating for the rights and wellbeing of all children and young people in Tasmania. In acknowledgment of the extraordinary challenges we currently face, I will be closely monitoring the short, medium and long-term effects of the pandemic on children and young people in Tasmania, with a focus on the needs of those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged for any reason.

Children and young people require ongoing support, guidance and developmentally appropriate information throughout this period. When they feel well informed and included, children and young people can actively participate in, and contribute to, effective responses to the pandemic. I will continue to advocate to ensure that the views and ideas of children and young people are sought, heard, and taken into account when determining pandemic responses.

This document sets out, at a high level, the focus and scope of my work during the response phase of the pandemic in Tasmania. I am well aware that once we have come through the response phase, we will need to turn our attention to recovery, both socially and economically. The rights and wellbeing of children and young people during that time will be as important as they are now – and I remain committed to my role during that next, critical phase.

Leanne McLean
Commissioner for Children and Young People (Tasmania)
April 2020

The role of the Commissioner for Children and Young People (CCYP)

During the COVID-19 pandemic (the pandemic), the Commissioner is continuing to monitor and advocate for the wellbeing of all children and young people in Tasmania, in accordance with the Commissioner's general functions outlined in [section 8](#) of the *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2016*.

The Commissioner is required to carry out these statutory functions according to the principle that the wellbeing and best interests of children and young people are paramount and must observe any relevant provisions of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC). Other principles that govern the Commissioner's work include:

- Children are entitled to live in a caring and nurturing environment and to be protected from harm and exploitation;
- The interests and needs of children and young people who are disadvantaged for any reason or vulnerable should be given special regard and serious consideration;
- The contributions made by children to the community should be recognised for their value and merit;
- The views of children on all matters affecting them should be given serious consideration and taken into account; and
- Parents, families and communities have the primary role in safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of

children and should be supported in carrying out their role.

CCYP's monitoring and advocacy during the COVID-19 pandemic

During the pandemic, the Commissioner's advocacy and monitoring activities will have a particular focus on the short, medium and long-term effects of the pandemic on the rights and wellbeing of Tasmanian children and young people, especially those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged for any reason.¹

During this time, the Commissioner is:

- ensuring that public messaging includes messages of particular relevance to children and young people and also contributing to that messaging as appropriate;
- actively engaging with and listening to any concerns raised by children and young people, service providers, advocacy organisations, family and carers and other community members about the provision of services and supports to children and young people generally;
- bringing stakeholders together so we can learn from each other and engage in shared advocacy on issues of concern, thereby reducing fragmentation of effort;
- monitoring data and other information relevant to the impact of the pandemic on Tasmanian children and young people including through specific data

¹ The CCYP Act defines wellbeing, in relation to children and young people, as including the care, development and education, and the physical, emotional and psychological health and safety, of children and young people. In the [Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework](#), wellbeing is defined as: "The state where a child or young person feels loved and safe; has access to material basics; has their physical, mental and emotional health needs met;

is learning and participating; and has a positive sense of culture and identity." This definition is based on six domains: • Being Loved and Safe • Having Material Basics • Being Healthy • Learning • Participating • Having a Positive Sense of Culture and Identity.

requests of government agencies, service providers, advocacy organisations and other key stakeholders;

- advocating for improved responses to the pandemic, including by providing advice to key government and non-government decision-makers about issues affecting the rights and wellbeing of Tasmanian children and young people in the context of the pandemic.

The Commissioner remains responsive and flexible and will continue to be informed through consultation with established CCYP expert panels and other key stakeholders, including children and young people. During this period, the Commissioner's monitoring and advocacy activities will generate a variety of short, medium and long-term actions or projects depending on the type of issue/s raised and the advocacy approach required in the circumstances. Some issues affecting children and young people may require a rapid advocacy approach, while others may require more detailed work within longer timeframes.



CCYP's communication and engagement activities during the COVID-19 pandemic

While physical distancing requirements are in place, all face-to-face engagement activities of the Commissioner are suspended. However, the following activities are being implemented or ramped up:

- engaging in an ongoing way with government and non-government stakeholders using a variety of online platforms, teleconferencing and email;
- fast-tracking the development of a secure online community and a series of online creative projects for engagement with CCYP Ambassadors in conjunction with the arts and social change organisation, Big hART;
- conducting online "visits" to Ashley Youth Detention Centre every three weeks with ongoing communication with residents by phone or mail as required;
- regularly participating in COVID-19 Q&As for Tasmanian children and young people on ABC Radio Hobart's Drive program and taking part in other child-focused Q&A sessions in collaboration with government

agencies and/or non-government organisations including the CREATE Foundation (Tas), utilising a variety of online platforms;

- developing a new [coronavirus webpage](#) on the CCYP website targeting children and young people, including up-to-date information about COVID-19, responses to FAQs received from children and young people, and links to useful resources for children, young people, parents, carers, teachers and others;
- delivering a variety of social media campaigns, including an [Instagram project](#) for children and young people to share their innovative ways of keeping in touch and engaged in purposeful activities:

@child_comm_tas #safelysocial
#CCYPTAS.



Contacting the Commissioner during COVID-19

If you have any issues or concerns relating to the rights and wellbeing of children and young people in Tasmania generally and/or issues specifically related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commissioner would like to hear from you.

The Commissioner cannot investigate individual complaints or provide advocacy for individual children and young people (except where they are detained under the *Youth Justice Act 1997*). However, information about issues affecting individual children and young people help to inform the Commissioner's systemic advocacy for children and young people generally. The Commissioner can also help to identify referral options for the child or young person and their family or carers.

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