

## Anti-Poverty Week

Take moment to think about the fact that one in six Australian children lives in income poverty. In Anti-Poverty Week, that means that around 19,000 of our 114,000 young Tasmanians are living in income poverty.

In Tasmania, we have a Strategy to improve the wellbeing of our children and young people. This is a powerful thing and a terrific step forward for all of us, especially our children.

However, our efforts to improve wellbeing for children, is hampered by the fact 19,000 children do not have access to the material basics needed for a good life.

Children living in poverty experience its effects directly - through a lack of access to food, clothing, housing and healthcare.

Poverty impacts children in so many other ways, and the work of Prof Sharon Bessell and her team at the Australian National University helps us to understand this better.

Poverty not only results in material deprivation – food, clothes, housing – but also in opportunity deprivation and relational deprivation.

Opportunity deprivation:

- Is not going to the doctor when you need to, because the cost of getting there is too much, or there might be no car, or no bus because the transport services where you live are thin on the ground.
- It's not going to school on the day of the school excursion because there's no money to pay. It's not going to school for a week, because there's no food for school lunches. Opportunity deprivation is all the barriers to quality services and activities that contribute to a good life.

Relational deprivation:

- Poverty-related stress can be particularly detrimental to relationships with family members and other important adults.
- For a child, this feels like not talking to your parent about the troubles you're having because you don't want to add to their stress.

Media Contact: [Name, phone number]



- Or a parent being distracted because they are desperately seeking accommodation for their family or working out how to buy food. It can also look like a child not asking for help at school because they don't think they deserve it.

The frustrating thing about poverty in a wealthy country like Australia is that we know what the answers are to at least the material components of poverty. We've even trialled them during the pandemic. We raised income payments.

Work done by the Australia Institute suggests that the Coronavirus Supplement brought 4.1 per cent of Tasmanian children aged 14 and under out of poverty. That's almost 4000 children!

Again, from the perspective of a child, that means more, and healthier food in your tummy, and a less stressed household. Then, sadly, at the stroke of a pen, we took the extra money away.

Anti-Poverty Week is just so important. It's a time to consider the realities of our society and to rally support for doing things differently, to support our entire society to thrive.

Why not start with targets for children? Because after all, the real measure of our success is how well we look after the next generation.

It's also about ensuring child rights impact assessments for all policies that affect children including housing and homelessness, employment, education and care, and government benefits.

Ultimately, it's about building a community that truly places the rights and wellbeing of our children at its centre.

**Leanne McLean, Commissioner for Children and Young People**