

# We call it happy...

CCYP Wellbeing Consultations with  
0 to 18 Year Old Tasmanians



## Acknowledgement of traditional owners

I acknowledge and pay my respects to the palawa people of lutruwita as the original and ongoing custodians of this land and for the more than 40,000 years they have cared for their country and their children.

Commissioner for Children and Young People (Tas) 2021, Hobart

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Any questions regarding this report or the work of Tasmania's Commissioner for Children and Young People more generally may be directed to the Commissioner via email at [childcomm@childcomm.tas.gov.au](mailto:childcomm@childcomm.tas.gov.au) or by telephoning +61 3 6166 1366.

For more information, visit: [www.childcomm.tas.gov.au](http://www.childcomm.tas.gov.au)

Direct quotes of participants recorded during the consultations have been used throughout this report and are provided anonymously to protect the identity of individuals. Participants have been quoted verbatim to accurately reflect individuals' voices. However, on the advice of children and young people, some editing to correct spelling and grammar has been done, to assist with visual processing and the use of reading-assist technology.

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# Message from the Commissioner

In late 2020, the Tasmanian Government asked me to conduct a series of targeted consultations. They requested that I ascertain the views of Tasmanian children and young people aged less than 18 years of age on what they need for good or improved wellbeing, aligning with the six domains of the Tasmanian Government's *Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework*. These consultations were part of a larger consultation process announced in January 2021 to inform the development of a Tasmanian Government child and youth wellbeing strategy for 0 to 25-year olds. In this report, I describe the outcomes of my consultations, which included some discussions with parents, carers, and others who support children and young people in their communities.

I learned so much as I travelled the state speaking to children and young people and I'm so thankful for those learnings. In particular, I learned that many Tasmanian children and young people are clearly very proud to call Tasmania home. They expressed a strong appreciation of all the benefits that Tasmania's natural environment has to offer: an opportunity to connect with nature; the environment as a source of identity and pride — for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Tasmanians alike; a place for recreation and, through that, good mental and physical health; an opportunity for future employment through clean energy and tourism; and the pleasure experienced in the beauty of nature itself.

Participants also valued having good mental and physical health, understood the importance of getting an education and of treating everyone in the community with respect and kindness. You will also find as you read the report, that many challenges were also identified and consultation participants clearly identified what they need to improve wellbeing.

An important part of my role as Commissioner is to promote the importance of decision-makers to listen to and take account of the views and opinions of children and young people on matters that affect them. Ascertaining the views of Tasmanian children and young people on how we can improve their wellbeing is crucial to the development of a child and youth wellbeing strategy. I am therefore grateful that children and young people's input has been sought as part of the broader consultations to inform the development of a child and youth wellbeing strategy. Most of all, though, I am grateful to the fabulous children, young people and adults, who have helped to bring this report to life. I hope you enjoy reading it.

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

# Background to these wellbeing consultations

In early 2020, after considerable consultation across the Tasmanian community, including with Tasmanian children and young people, I published a report, *Investing in the Wellbeing of Tasmania's Children and Young People*.

The report recommended that the Tasmanian Government develop and implement a whole-of-government strategy to improve the wellbeing of Tasmanian children and young people across the six domains of wellbeing described in the existing *Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework*. In March 2020, the Tasmanian Government accepted this recommendation and the Premier, the Hon Peter Gutwein, announced in his first State of the State address that the Government would progress such a strategy, including a specific focus on the first 1000 days of children's lives.

Later in 2020, the Government invited me to conduct specific consultations around Tasmania with children aged 0 to 18 to contribute to the co-design of the strategy and provided funding for those consultations. This report, together with a children's picture book (*When I wake up, I smile*), are the result of those consultations.



# What young Tasmanians have already told us about wellbeing



Since commencing in the role as Commissioner for Children and Young People in November 2018, I have had the great privilege of meeting with and hearing the views of children and young, from across Tasmania, including through the [CCYP Ambassador program](#). In my meetings with young Tasmanians around the state, we discussed a range of issues of importance to them. Through interactive discussions, activities and projects, including *Future Tasmania*, the 2020 CCYP Ambassadors' online zine, participants have helped me understand more about their everyday life experiences and what affects their wellbeing. They have told me what is working well for them, what isn't, and what can be improved and how. During these discussions, children and young people have consistently identified seven key areas needing more attention from Tasmanian decision-makers and leaders for young Tasmanians to have a better life:

**Access to necessities, services and supports**

**Bullying and mental health**

**Climate change and the environment**

**Education and opportunities**

**Equity and diversity**

**Safety**

**Participation and recognition of children and young people**

Except for climate change and the environment, these areas can all be directly mapped back to the six wellbeing domains outlined in the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework. They also broadly align with what we heard during the CCYP wellbeing consultations conducted in late 2020 and which are described in this report.

For more information about other consultations and discussions with children and young people, including CCYP Ambassadors, please refer to the following:

[Future Tasmania - CCYP Ambassador Zine](#)

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

[Listening to Children and Young People in Tasmania 2018 Report](#)

For more information about the CCYP Ambassador program, [click here](#)

Small group meetings

Online forums

Telling stories through art (drawing etc.)

# How we went about these consultations

Before beginning the broad consultations on wellbeing with children and young people, the Commissioner for Children and Young People (CCYP) held discussions with CCYP Ambassadors in September of 2020 to gain a greater understanding of the more effective and preferred means of consulting with different groups of children and young people, and obstacles that may exist with different modes of consultation. Information from these discussions was analysed and passed onto the Government to inform their wellbeing consultation process. Participants were very concerned that relying on only one method of consultation (e.g. only in-person meetings) could exclude some groups, as could the use of only one method of communication (e.g. only group discussions rather than providing other options such as artwork). As can be noted below, this information was taken into account in the development of the CCYP wellbeing consultations, with options of in-person, video conferencing, group and one-on-one chats, artistic workshops, creative activities, and online surveys made available.

The CCYP consultations to inform the development of a strategy to improve the wellbeing of Tasmania's children and young people took place between 19 November 2020 and 14 December 2020. Discussions and activities carried out during these consultations looked at wellbeing through the lens of 'what makes for a good life' for Tasmania's children and

young people, including what is needed to achieve their hopes and dreams (or, in the case of adult participants, their hopes and dreams for the children in their care).

Consultation questions and activities were based loosely around the questions posed in the Tasmanian Government's wellbeing consultation *Toolkit for Conversations with Children and Young People*, customised for participant age and comprehension, and consultation style.

The CCYP consultations engaged with approximately 498 Tasmanians from diverse cultural, social, and religious backgrounds and locations around the state, including the Furneaux Islands. This number included 408 children and young people, up to the age of 18 years, across 18 metropolitan, regional, and remote areas of Tasmania. Given the difficulty of ascertaining in-depth insights from children aged 0 to 4, discussions were also held with around 90 adults, representing parents and carers of children aged up to 4 years and other adults who support children in this age group. Consultations provided a sense of what life is like for Tasmanian children and young people and helped identify key issues that would make life better for young Tasmanians in their communities, and in Tasmania more generally.

The CCYP consultations were conducted in the following ways:

“My dream for the future is to get work and a kind girl.”

(4–8 years)

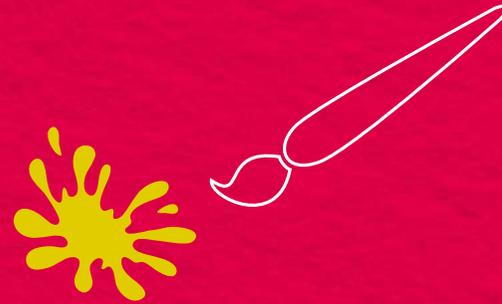
“To have a good life, I need to be better at math, read and write better.”

(4–8 years)



## Children aged 0 to 4 years

The Commissioner held informal chats over a “cuppa and cake” at selected Child and Family Centres, Early Learning Centres and Launching into Learning sites across the state with parents and carers of children aged 0 to 4 years. Some staff from the service providers also gave assistance and insights during the group discussions, often to provide clarification on certain points. These discussions provided valuable insights into the hopes and dreams parents and carers have for their children, and the barriers they encounter when trying to provide a good life for them. The consultation sessions also elicited information from preschool children through a variety of art and play-based activities about what is important to them in their lives. An estimated 87 preschool children aged 0-4 years, and 90 parents and carers were reached through these consultations. It should be noted that the adults interviewed at these centres were not necessarily related to or caring for the children and young people who took part in these consultations.



## Children and young people aged 4 to 8 years

Tasmanian arts-based organisation, All That We Are, helped the CCYP coordinate and run arts workshops in seven selected Tasmanian primary schools to seek the views of approximately 156 children between the ages of four and eight years on wellbeing. Each school was allocated one of the six domains of wellbeing outlined in the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework. Because of the difficulty younger children have with understanding the domains, and wellbeing more generally, the domains were explained in simpler terms – for example, the ‘Participation’ domain was explained as ‘Doing things together’. Under the guidance of artists, children explored their allocated domain in a fun and creative way. In addition to being included in this report, the views expressed by these children have been incorporated into a separate children’s book showcasing their voices on wellbeing. The views in the children’s book will also be conveyed to the Tasmanian Government as part of the wider consultative process on wellbeing.



## Children and young people aged 9 to 18 years

Consultations with children and young people in this age group were conducted in-person and online, with 165 children and young people participating in these group sessions. Three in-person workshops were held in each of the largest cities of Tasmania's South, North and North-West (i.e., one each in Hobart, Launceston, and Devonport), as well as three online discussions. These particular consultations were conducted with CCYP Ambassadors aged 9–18. The Commissioner also convened two in-person workshops at schools on Cape Barren Island (participants included some CCYP Ambassadors) and Flinders Island. Interactive discussions and creative activities structured around the six domains of the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework were used to ascertain the participants' hopes for the future, the barriers they experience or believe exist to realising these aspirations, and their views on each of the six wellbeing domains. CCYP Ambassadors were also offered the opportunity to directly contribute their written thoughts via their private CCYP Ambassador portal (utilising a free-form survey based on the Tasmanian Government's 'Consultation Questions', available in the [Government's consultation toolkit](#)). Participants were also encouraged to contribute to the Tasmanian Government's larger consultation processes available through the [Tasmanian Government's dedicated wellbeing consultation website](#).

## How we went about these consultations

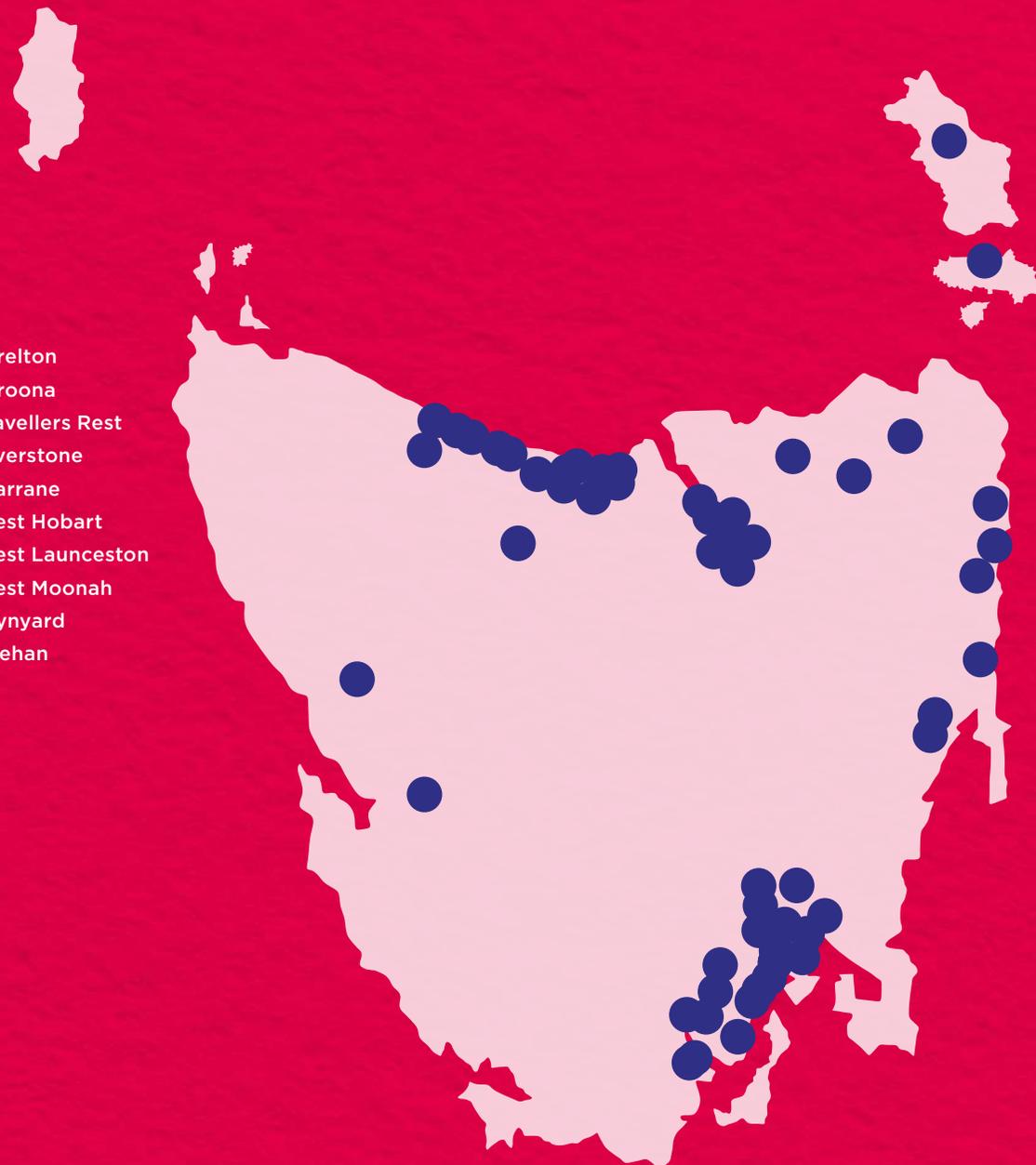
All consultations were conducted in accordance with CCYP policies governing consent, participation, and ethical consultation. For more information on each of these policies and procedures, please see: [www.childcomm.tas.gov.au/about/](http://www.childcomm.tas.gov.au/about/).

For all the above consultations, where written and verbal consent was provided by participants, audio recordings were made of interviews and transcribed. Photographs were taken of creative outputs, including any written contributions of participants. All data was anonymised, with only the consultation location and age range of the participant recorded and entered into a database. The data was then analysed to identify key themes, issues and trends.

# Location of participants

Participants in the CCYP consultations lived at or near the following Tasmanian locations, as indicated in the map

- |                        |                    |                      |                     |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Acton Park          | 28. Glen Dhu       | 55. Newstead         | 82. Tarelton        |
| 2. Beaconsfield        | 29. Glendevie      | 56. Oakdowns         | 83. Tarooma         |
| 3. Bellerive           | 30. Glenorchy      | 57. Old Beach        | 84. Travellers Rest |
| 4. Bicheno             | 31. Hobart         | 58. Oldina           | 85. Ulverstone      |
| 5. Blackmans Bay       | 32. Howrah         | 59. Penguin          | 86. Warrane         |
| 6. Blumont             | 33. Huntingfield   | 60. Pioneer          | 87. West Hobart     |
| 7. Bridgewater         | 34. Huonville      | 61. Pontville        | 88. West Launceston |
| 8. Brighton            | 35. Kingston Beach | 62. Port Huon        | 89. West Moonah     |
| 9. Brooks Bay          | 36. Latrobe        | 63. Port Sorell      | 90. Wynyard         |
| 10. Burnie             | 37. Launceston     | 64. Prospect Vale    | 91. Zeehan          |
| 11. Cambridge          | 38. Legana         | 65. Queenstown       |                     |
| 12. Campania           | 39. Legerwood      | 66. Risdon Vale      |                     |
| 13. Cape Barren Island | 40. Lenah Valley   | 67. Riverside        |                     |
| 14. Chigwell           | 41. Lilydale       | 68. Rosetta          |                     |
| 15. Claremont          | 42. Lindisfarne    | 69. Scamander        |                     |
| 16. Crabtree           | 43. Lower Snug     | 70. Scottsdale       |                     |
| 17. Cygnet             | 44. Lymwood        | 71. Shearwater       |                     |
| 18. Devonport          | 45. Margate        | 72. Somerset         |                     |
| 19. Dolphin Sands      | 46. Miandetta      | 73. Sorell           |                     |
| 20. Dynnyrne           | 47. Midway Point   | 74. South Hobart     |                     |
| 21. East Devonport     | 48. Moonah         | 75. South Launceston |                     |
| 22. East Launceston    | 49. Mornington     | 76. St Helens        |                     |
| 23. Erriba             | 50. Mount Nelson   | 77. St Leonards      |                     |
| 24. Flinders Island    | 51. Mount Stuart   | 78. St Mary's        |                     |
| 25. Franklin           | 52. New Norfolk    | 79. Sulphur Creek    |                     |
| 26. Gardners Bay       | 53. New Town       | 80. Swan Bay         |                     |
| 27. Geeveston          | 54. Newnham        | 81. Swansea          |                     |



# What we learnt during these consultations

## What wellbeing means to children and young people

During the consultations, children and young people were asked, in age appropriate ways, to discuss their understanding of wellbeing. Their insights provided a strong foundation to then introduce and discuss the six domains of wellbeing, as defined in the [Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework](#).

Overall, wellbeing was interpreted by children and young people in a variety of different ways based on their age, developmental maturity, and experiences. Most often, wellbeing was described by participants in terms of physical and mental wellbeing, which was not surprising given the generally accepted use of the word 'wellbeing' in everyday life.

*"If you are healthy, or if when you get home would you rather be staying at school because your parents are fighting or abusive. I feel like wellbeing covers how you feel about yourself and how it impacts you."*

*(9–18 years)*

Because of the difficulty younger children had understanding wellbeing more generally, the concept had to be explored with the 0-4 and 4-8 cohorts through specific questions, for example, “What makes you feel happy?” or “When do you feel like you belong?”. As a result, younger participants, as well as thinking of wellbeing in terms of ‘health’, also tended to equate wellbeing with a sense of belonging, feeling safe, loved, and/or happy – usually expressed as being with loved ones such as family members or friends.

Prompting was often required to elicit responses outside the concept of ‘health’. One notable exception was the cross-cutting issues of climate change and the environment. These closely related issues were frequently raised by young Tasmanians, irrespective of age or location, who felt that a healthy environment was intrinsic to their wellbeing.

“Wellbeing is when you are mentally healthy and physically healthy.”

(9–18 years)

“My mum and dad live separately so we take it in turns to go to their houses, but I belong in both of them because my parents are there. They make me feel safe.”

(4–8 years)

# What is needed to improve wellbeing?

Seven key themes emerged when participants were asked what areas require more work if the wellbeing of Tasmania's children and young people is to be improved:

**1. More things to do and places to do them**

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**2. A more responsive education system**

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**3. Better access to health services**

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**4. More support for families**

**5. Acceptance, belonging and feeling safe**

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**6. Having the things that we need**

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**7. Protecting the environment and tackling climate change**

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The following sections explore each of these key themes. In each section, a summary of the key issues raised by participants in relation to a particular theme, is provided. Representative quotes from children, young people and adults are provided to highlight key thoughts, suggestions, and concerns. 'Stories from the road' are case studies taken from discussions held during the consultation. They are used to provide greater depth and context. To ensure anonymity, the stories are composites based on the personal stories and quotes of several participants, with towns and names removed or changed.

The views expressed by participants illustrate the real-life experiences and challenges to achieving good wellbeing being faced by communities and identify many of the things they—children, young people, and adults with caring or support roles—believe need to change to improve wellbeing outcomes for children and young people in Tasmania.

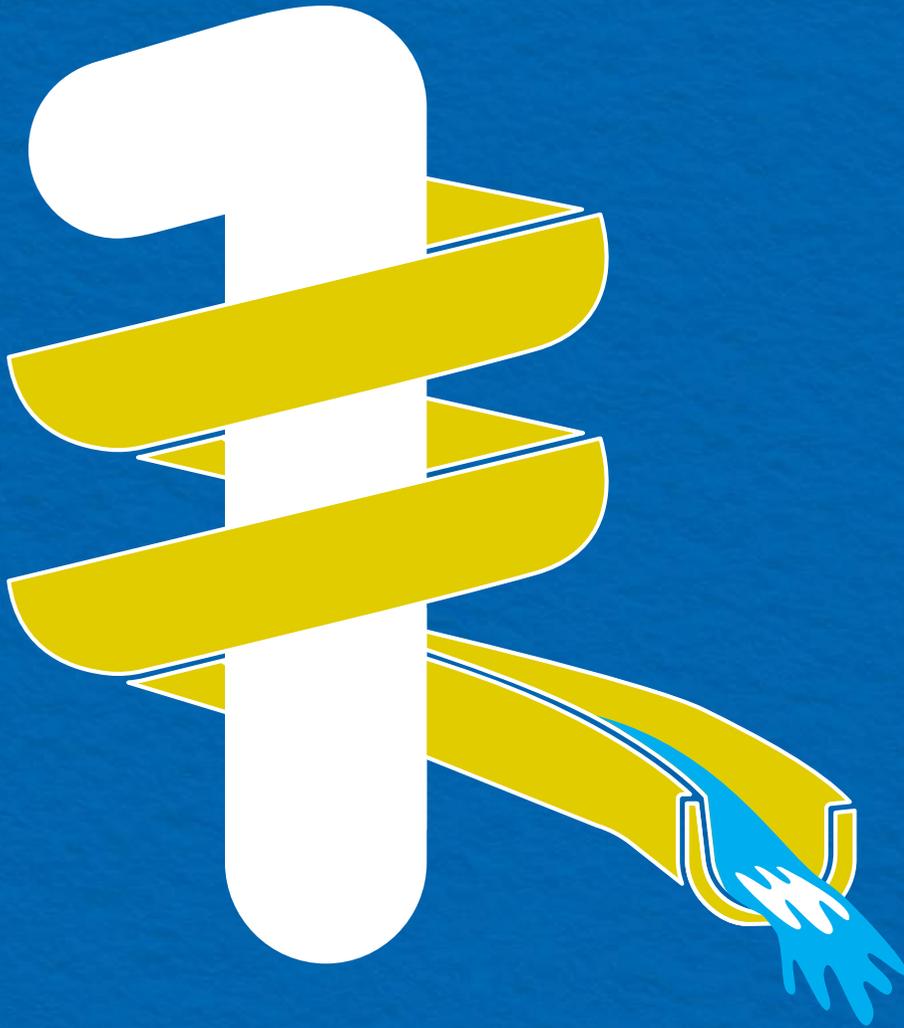
“We would die if we kill all the animals.”

(4–8 years)

“If you don't have air you will faint. We have clean air in [my town]. That's why I live here. The ozone layer is the thing that protects the world because without it the sun gets through.”

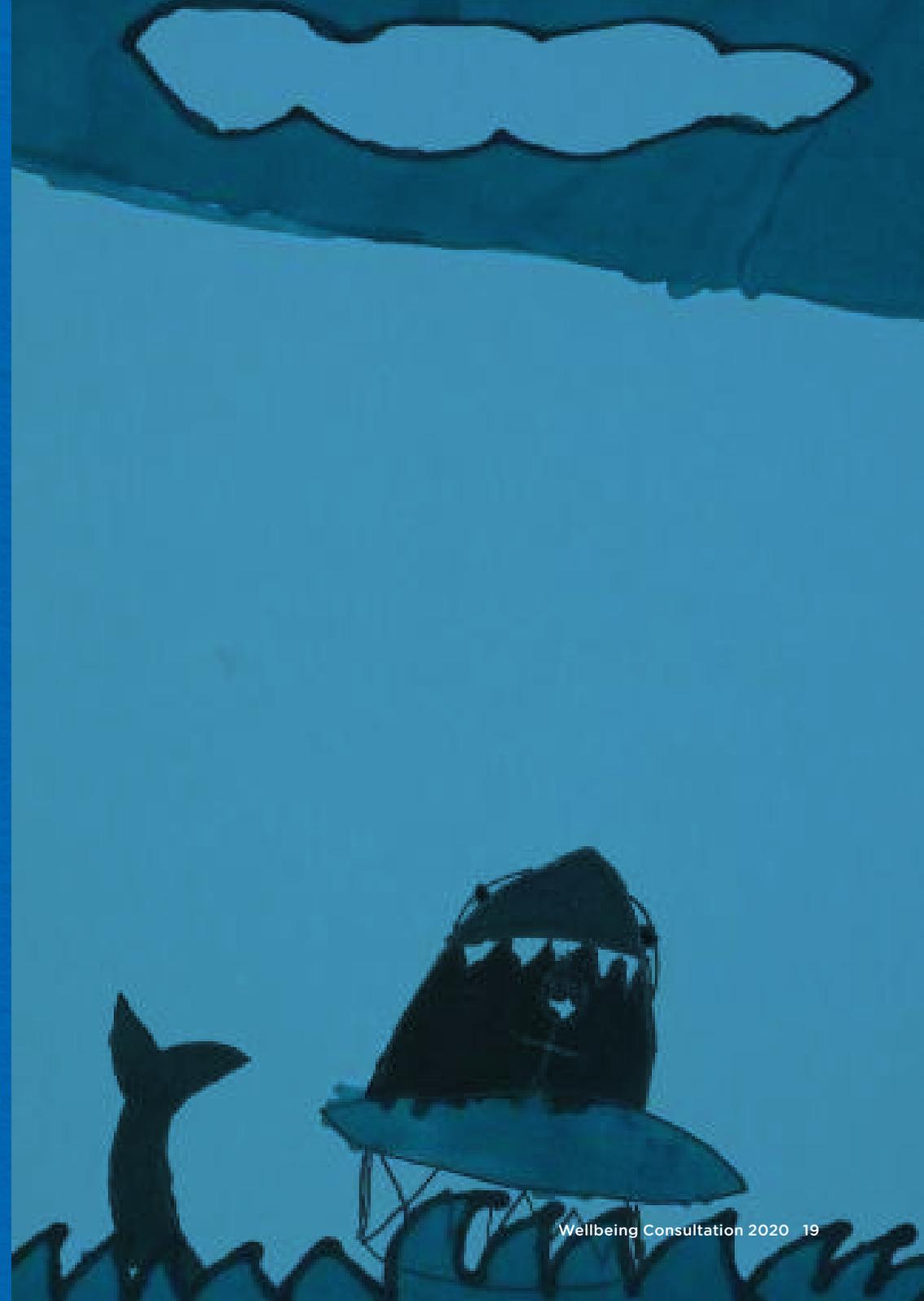
(4–8 years)

# More things to do and places to do them



Across the state, the children, young people, and adults interviewed expressed a need for more things for children and young people to do in their communities – and more places or more appropriately designed places to do them. Participants highlighted the benefits of recreational and sporting activities, including community connectedness, the alleviation and prevention of boredom, and improved health outcomes. Adults interviewed in early learning services also noted the importance of these activities for allowing parents and carers to build support networks, particularly in communities where the lack of childcare and early childhood services might make adults (and possibly also children) feel more isolated and vulnerable. Common issues highlighted by participants across the state were the need for more school holiday programs, greater access to affordable sporting and creative activities, round-the-year access to pools and affordable learn-to-swim programs, and appropriately designed playgrounds and recreational parks (including skateparks, basketball courts, bike tracks, ovals, etc.).

Of particular note was the frequency with which participants mentioned the expense of participating in recreational and sporting activities, both individually and as a family, the limited (or lack of) activities in their community and the limited (or absence of) transport options to enable access to these activities. In locations where the weather plays a big role in determining accessibility to activities, participants identified the need for all-season, child-friendly infrastructure that is available and accessible, regardless of weather conditions. Several participants across all age groups also identified negative impacts on participation rates in their or their children's activities due to family commitments, childcare commitments, work, or the effect of chronic illness in the family. In communities with large portions of shift workers, adults' ability to support the running of local activities for children and young people was also impacted.



"I didn't ride until we got trails here. Having the mountain bike trails nearby makes it easier to get into mountain biking and so does having new equipment. But getting equipment can be expensive."

(4-8 years)

"I'd like to go to a circus, but we need more time and we need more money." (4-8 years)

"There's definitely a problem in my [rural] area because there's really not much to do."

(9-18 years)

"We've got a park, but the main road and intersection run through the middle of it. The barbeque is on one corner, the toilets on the other and play equipment on another. The entire family has to pack up if one kid wants to go to the loo. A well-planned park would be great."

(0-4 years, adult)

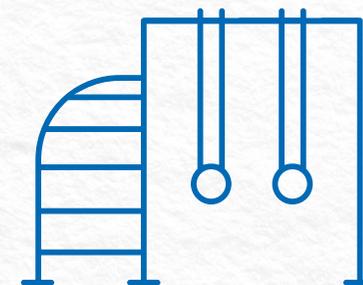
"One of the things that's a bit of a problem is a majority of the afterschool sports you have to pay money. It's not just a little bit of money, it's quite a lot. Most of the kids that do it have siblings. So, they're not just paying for one child, they're paying for three to four. So, quite a few children can't do it or feel they just don't want to even ask, because they know that it might not be able to happen because of the cost or because they don't want to put their parents in that position where they have to say no, we can't afford it."

(9-18 years)

## What we want

- More free and/or low-cost activities outside school
- More all season, child-friendly sports, and leisure infrastructure (e.g. playgrounds, swimming pools, skate parks, basketball courts, bike paths)
- Accessible, low-cost learn-to-swim classes
- Improved transport options to access activities

## Stories from the road



Jaz\* stands out amongst the children in the playground. ‘Stands’ perhaps isn’t quite the right word. She’s hanging upside down on a rock-climbing wall, two metres off the ground, one foot and hand anchoring her to the wall while madly waving with her other two limbs for her photo to be taken. Satisfied that the desired snap has been taken to the appropriate standard, she throws herself upwards to the next set of holds and scampers upwards like a gecko.

Her mother, Carla, looks on calmly. “The only way she’s going to learn is if she does it herself,” she responds when asked if she’s worried about her falling. “She’s always been adventurous, and we’ve always been nurturing, but if she wants to try something new, we’ll be encouraging.”

Jaz is into everything on offer at the playgroup. Rock-climbing, trampolining, running, playing with the other children. Asked if there’s anything Jaz hasn’t tried, Carla answers immediately.

“The thing that is lacking is a pool and swimming lessons,” says Carla with exasperation. “I do want to get her into lessons for safety reasons, if nothing else – there are dams and rivers, not to mention the beach when we go to the coast.”

“I’ve looked into it just because she needs it, but it is out of the way and it costs a lot... and then there’s the travelling. It’s probably about an hour from where I live,” Carla explains. “They’re building a new pool at Scottsdale, which is about 40 minutes away, but that won’t be available for a long time.”

The lack of local swimming pools, or their limited opening times and high cost of entry, as well as the absence of or high cost of swimming lessons, were two issues raised in almost every consultation.

A particularly distressed mother of a child with disability who needs daily swimming as part of her rehab was recently advised her local pool wouldn’t be opening year-round anymore. When she went to speak with the operator, “They told me to take my child to the river to swim,” she reported. The family is now faced with having to move to the city, with all the financial and social implications still being weighed up.

Young Tasmanians also feel the pressure of not being able to participate as freely in activities as they’d like, with all the downsides that this brings. “Sports and other activities are important to stay healthy and for spending time with friends,” says Chloe, “but, yeah, it’s expensive, especially once you try to do more than one activity, or if you have siblings. Mum and Dad sometimes say to us, ‘Each choose one thing to do this season.’”

Chloe pauses and stresses she isn’t complaining. “There are just things you have to consider. We also have to check we can actually get to the [activities] too. Last year, Mum couldn’t get me to one side of town and my brother to the other to do our favourite sports and the bus timetables didn’t work so I chose a sport where one of the other mums could give me a lift,” Chloe explained, pragmatically. “It kind of sucked because I don’t like netball as much and I missed my friends but at least I got to do something.”

\*All names have been changed to protect identities

# A more responsive education system



Participants consistently expressed a desire for an education system that is more responsive to the needs of children and young people. They indicated a need for more intensive supports for students who require additional assistance, as well as extension programs to enable students to progress at pace with their abilities. Many children and young people felt strongly that the curriculum needs to be more flexible, relevant, and reflective of the interests and aspirations of students. There was considerable discussion across the 9-18 aged consultation cohort about perceived constant repetition of components in the curriculum. Whether this was a result of teaching strategies and planning or the curriculum itself was not clear. Participants were all of a mind that, regardless of one's age, background or geographical location, everyone should have equal access to education. Suggestions made by participants to facilitate this goal included financial assistance, the free provision of school materials, including digital access, improved transport options, and better supports to meet the individual needs of students. Students in very remote areas, particularly the Furneaux Islands, felt their education was being hampered by lack of access to off-island learning experiences and institutions.

More frequent flights and/or subsidised education flights were suggested as possible solutions to enable them to pursue their education.

Schools' responses to bullying were often identified as absent, inappropriate or insufficient. Many students also felt that systems and/or policies for dealing with bullying needed not only to be implemented, but continuously enforced, monitored, and reviewed for their effectiveness, and integrated with external support services. Students, as well as parents of young people, also indicated concerns with the limited availability in schools of appropriately trained staff, including counsellors and school psychologists, to deal with mental health and psychosocial issues. As a result, students are creating their own support networks but don't feel suitably equipped and feel let down that they must shoulder the burden. While more appropriately trained staff in schools was identified as the best solution, other options, for example, making Royal Flying Doctors' online counsellors available on a regular basis to students, were also suggested as stop gaps.



"In high school, I know a lot of the times when you report it [bullying or concerns about someone's mental health, etc.] nothing really happens, or if it does happen it's not ongoing. We've [had] to make our own support system."

(9-18 years)

"Cheaper school-based accommodation and make it affordable to leave the island and learn." (9-18 years)

"I learn better when I can move my body."

(4-8 years)

"The waitlist for the school counsellor extends into next year. There's no real school support."

(0-4 years, adult)

"Some kids use school as a place to get away from their problems. So, maybe there should be a support system there. Not necessarily Headspace, just someone that you can talk to about anything. Some kids at my school, they use school to get away from whatever is going on at home."

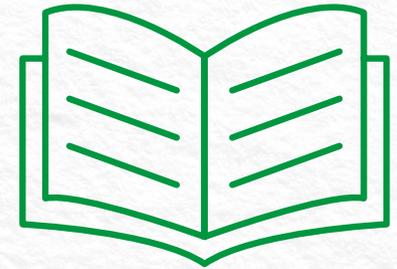
(9-18 years)

## What we want

- Financial and other supports to ensure equality of access to education
- Flexible and relevant subject choice that is responsive to student and community needs
- Extension programs and/or self-paced learning support
- More in-class support for students experiencing learning challenges
- Improved and more available school-based support services (mental health, social work, counsellors)

## What we want (cont.)

- Improved responses to bullying in schools
- Improved transport options, especially in remote areas, for students to participate in learning opportunities



## Stories from the road

“Everyone deserves the best education, no matter how rich or smart they are or where they live,” says Claire\*, a lanky, articulate high school student from northern Tasmania. To a round of ‘thumbs up’ and head nodding from other participants, she sums up the general feeling of primary and secondary students across the state.

Aisha agrees but doesn’t think equity will be achieved readily. “Like, have you seen [that private school’s] science labs? They’re like something from a sci-fi movie. Ours is like...” She pulls a face. “And they still get money from the Government. It’s not really fair.”

Capri, a bubbly primary school student from northern Tasmania, agrees that equity is a concern and worries about everyone having access to education. Her main grievance about school, though, is with how she’s being taught.

“We learn something. Then we recap. Then we spend first semester of next year recapping it again. It’s boring and a waste of time,” she complains with an eye roll.

It’s a common criticism, echoed by other primary and high school students across the state, whether they’re in the public or private systems.

The result, says Oscar, a student from a southern high school, is that students “sit around for the majority of the day, trying to find ways to entertain ourselves.”

“I’m not sure whether the problem is with the curriculum or with teachers who can’t be bothered with preparing,” says Capri.

But the problem isn’t just with what’s being taught or how it’s being taught. Saoirse, who goes to school on the east coast, says there isn’t enough support for students struggling with the curriculum.

“The teacher has to spend all their time with the [struggling students] because there are no or not enough support [teachers] and the rest of us miss out. It’s not fair for any of us. There need to be more teachers and resources.”

Bailey, a primary schooler in Hobart adds that having parents or grandparents in to help struggling students, which many schools do with reading and writing, is not a solution. “They aren’t qualified to help. Just because they can read or write, doesn’t mean they know how to teach someone who has difficulty learning those things.”

Oscar believes the Department of Education needs to address the problems: “It shouldn’t just be ‘left up to the teacher’ but put in the hands of the Education Department, which has the resources and ability to teach students [of all needs].”

\*All names have been changed to protect identities



## Access to health services

Children, young people, and adults consistently stressed that having access to the health services they need to maintain and/or improve their (or their children's) health and wellbeing is extremely important. However, as participants identified, these services were not always readily available or accessible. Participants' interpretation of 'health services' was particularly broad and included services to support mental health, and to respond to drug and alcohol-related issues being experienced by children and young people in their community. Although issues with access to and availability of health services were raised in central metropolitan areas, these concerns were further heightened in regional communities where the availability of general and specialised health services was low or non-existent. If services were in communities, participants mentioned that they were often fully booked, with long waiting lists. Common concerns expressed by children, young people and adults included the limited transport options in regional and outer suburban areas, and the lack of outreach health services. The cost of medical and dental care, and the limited availability of bulk-billing, were also noted by children and young people as a significant barrier to accessing the health services that were available. Participants also indicated a strong desire for a healthcare system that is more affordable and responsive to the needs of each community.

"There's no continuity with GPs. If you're struggling already you don't want to spill your guts to a dozen different doctors just to pick up a prescription".

(0-4 years, adult)

"We can't access child health nurses as much as we would like."

(0-4 years, adult)

"Psychologists are very expensive even with a mental health plan."

(9-18 years)

"Some of the kids from my school go [to the GP clinic further down the coast]. So, they have to actually pay, I'm pretty sure, for the whole private [consultation]. That's a bit unfair because having a whole private health system just affects the ability to just whip down because people feel this is going to cost a bomb. 'How am I going to do this?' 'How am I going to pay?' They feel... not underprivileged, but they feel like they can't or don't have the option to go."

(9-18 years)

"We're a two-hour drive from Hobart so we can't just whizz down. During the holidays, the (Hobart) dentist is always booked up so we can never really go. Then the dentists here, they're kind of on and off and they're quite pricey."

(9-18 years)

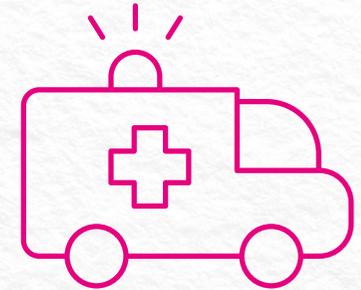
"There's a psychologist that visits the doctor's clinic every third Tuesday of every month and she's booked out till March (5 months away)."

(0-4 years, adult)

## What we want

- More child health services, especially in regional communities
- More frequent public transport options to attend appointments
- More counsellors, psychologists, and acute mental health support for children and young people
- More paediatric specialists
- Drug and alcohol services for young people and their families

# Stories from the road



Aneke\*, a tall gentle-faced teenager, stands out from the crowd of boisterous younger students rushing noisily around the room. “They’re fun,” she says indulgently, as one of the loudest children ricochets off a chair and another child lunges for a colouring pen.

When the activities begin, the children gravitate towards Aneke, seeking her help with writing as she patiently acts as scribe, encouraging their efforts and prompting the shyer ones with smiles and jokes. A spread of food is offered at the back of the room for the hungry hoard to plunder between tasks. “No, I’m fine, thanks,” she smiles, politely declining the offer of cakes, while helping one of the smallest children with dolloping cream onto a scone. “I’ll have some fruit later once they’re done.” She explains later that she’s careful with what she eats – she has “some health issues”.

Sorting out her medical problems isn’t as easy as eating the right food. Aneke lives in Tasmania’s north and while she lives within reach of Launceston’s general hospital, the lack of specialists is an issue. “We lack paediatric doctors in the north who specialise in, for example, gastroenterology,” she explains.

As Aneke experienced recently, there is no regular full-time paediatrician in the north or north west. “I’ve had to have consultations by video. Even organising that took ages and then, well...” She pauses, searching for the right words. “It didn’t go well. He had a poor bedside – or online – manner. If he’d read my file, he’d have known I also have some mental health issues as well and his approach didn’t help my emotional state.”

Another teenager in the north-west is clearly agitated when the issue of mental health services is raised. “My older sister is already able to see a psychiatrist. The counsellor wants me to see someone too, but Mum has called everywhere, and I won’t be able to get in till sometime next year. It’s stressing me out.”

The lack of paediatric mental health services is acute across the state. “In my experience, child psychiatry is perhaps the biggest health service issue in Tasmania,” states the mother of a teenager with severe anxiety. “There’s a five-month waiting list to see a psychologist here and for more severe mental illness... forget it.”

\*All names have been changed to protect identities

# More support for families



Greater support for families emerged as a very strong theme in these consultations. Adult participants noted that timely access to relevant family support services, particularly in the first 1000 days of a child's life, is a critical issue in Tasmania, and more so for those living in both remote and under-served (for example, peri-urban) communities. Of particular note, lack of access to cheap and reliable childcare was one of the concerns most frequently raised by adults. They commented that the inability to access such services could adversely affect the wellbeing of every family member, either through stress from being on caring duties 24/7 or the inability to increase the household income by taking on work. Younger participants on occasion also alluded to the impact pressures on the family could have upon their wellbeing when inadequate support was available. Areas where participants felt greater support was required for families included early childhood health services, the provision of parenting information, family relationship support, reproductive health information for children and young people, and network supports to avoid isolation, particularly for new parents and carers. When Child and Family Centres were available in towns, adult participants were very positive about the services and support provided, the benefits for children, as well as the links they provided to the greater community.

"My big sister is 16 but she isn't at school because my little sister can't look after herself. Mum's at work and Dad's at work so [my big sister] is not at school because she's looking after my sick little sister."

(4-8 years)

"I didn't realise I had to read to my child. I didn't realise it was such an important thing. I didn't really know or have the support to read to my child."

(0-4 years, adult)

"For parenting skills, we've got YouTube and that's about it."

(0-4 years, adult)

"I lost my mum before having kids, and then I lost my grandmother and then my older sister doesn't have kids, so I actually had no one who could have shared that information [on parenting and being pregnant]..."

(0-4 years, adult)

For rural towns, not having to drive to Launceston to access activities and services would be great. The CFC [in our town] has made it easier."

(0-4 years, adult)

"The response from police [to family violence complaints] is not always the greatest. It's terrible."

(0-4 years, adult)

## What we want

- More accessible and affordable childcare
- Better access to information and services to support children and families
- More ante-natal and post-natal services for families
- Universally available free parenting courses
- Better family intervention and relationship support
- Outreach services in regional communities
- Greater promotion of and information about the importance of the first 1000 days

## Stories from the road

Sharon\* stands apart from the other mothers at the childcare centre. She admits she's tired. "I'm a single mum. This morning is my one break during the week," she says as she watches her child digging with the other kids in the sandpit.

"I grew up here and when I had my child, I thought it would be good to move back here to have the support of my family. It's a great little country town – but it's not perfect."

Asked to explain, Sharon doesn't hesitate: "Childcare is the biggest issue here. The Government says they want more women back in full-time work. I'd like to work full time," she explains, "but I can't because of the lack of childcare."

"I start work at 8am. There is childcare eight minutes down the road – but I'm just outside its zone." She sighs. "So, the nearest area where I can get childcare is in Launceston, about half an hour away. It opens too late for me to drop off my child and be back at work on time. I would also have to leave work early to be able to do pick up. I can only work on the days I can get family to mind her, but they also have to work. Private childcare – if you can get it in a country town – is also expensive so you can end up in the negative."

Daryl, a father at another childcare centre that is only open once a week, agrees. "By the time I've finished my roster of shift work, I don't want the kids around me for the first couple of days. And [my partner]'s over it – she needs a rest. So, I've got to have the kids and she has her rest." A touch of guilt enters Daryl's voice but, overwhelmingly, concern. "There's nothing to support the mums – or the parents – around town, there's no break. We're highly strung because we don't have an outlet. We don't have any time for ourselves, and the kids need a break too."

\*All names have been changed to protect identities



# Acceptance, belonging and feeling safe



Primary, secondary, and college-aged participants stressed that a sense of belonging, of feeling safe and of being accepted in their communities was of great importance to them. It was also important that others enjoyed these feelings. Participants clearly wished to live in a community that is free of racism and other forms of discrimination and in one where diversity is recognised, respected and celebrated. Some participants also expressed frustration at the significant gaps in services and supports available to some groups, including, but not limited to, the Tasmanian LGBTIQ+ and migrant communities.

Participants (including adults) frequently raised concerns about the negative attitudes and stereotypes adults often hold towards children and young people. Children and young people expressed a strong desire for adults to have greater respect for them as people and for their views. They identified the need for more genuine and meaningful engagement with children and young people, for adults to genuinely listen to what they have to say and to respond in ways that demonstrate respect for those views.

"My hopes and dreams are to be listened to, be heard and understood. Even though I am young, I have seen a lot of life and I know right from wrong and I know things need to change, especially when the things concern my life."

(9–18 years)

"Children and young people in the future need support more than anything else. There is a form of anti-young people in the older generations and that only discourages the young from doing what they truly want to do."

(9–18 years)

"My family is Aboriginal... So, when we went to the Gorge a couple of days ago, it was really special to me because Aboriginals used to live there 6,000 years ago. I felt happy and peaceful, which is how I feel when I belong."

(4–8 years)

"The older generation can be a problem with restricting children. We had an incident last week. She was playing on the trampoline and squealing with pleasure like little children do. The neighbour came over and told us to make her be quiet."

(0–4 years, adult)

"The fact that most leaders are straight white able-bodied men – they need to consider this. Our leaders need to reflect equality. If they truly believe in everything they are saying, then they need to be willing to actively fight for equality and give things up to make equality possible."

(9–18 years)

## What we want

- Better leadership on equality, non-discrimination, and respect for diversity
- More services and supports for children and young people with specific needs (e.g. housing and health support for LGBTIQ+ community and migrant communities)
- Meaningful engagement with children and young people
- Awareness of the rights of children and young people



## Stories from the road

Alex\*, a dark-haired teenager, is one moment shy and awkward, the next poised and confident. Today, we're chatting, just the two of us, and Alex is relaxed and eloquent. They live in a rural town in southern Tasmania ("Not much goes on here") and identify as queer ("Life can be interesting sometimes.") Curious, I ask Alex to expand a bit more about life as a queer teenager in Tasmania.

"It's pretty good if you find yourself the right community," says Alex. "You just have to look out for the wrong spots and the wrong people. I can name several people who have threatened, fetishized or harmed my queer friends around Hobart. Some people I could name have beaten up my friends before. It's pretty common but knowing where my community is makes it safe for me. We've learnt to cope with the harassment at this point."

Alex describes their small country town as "a conservative farming village" but notes, wryly, that, "I'm not visibly queer - not to non-queer people anyway - so in my small town I get more discrimination for being female."

Despite preferring to head to the city's safe places with friends, Alex's own home, if not Alex's hometown, provides a refuge from discrimination.

"There's nowhere for young LGBTIQ+ people," Alex explains. "My mum's queer so she lets my LGBTIQ+ friends stay at our house if they hit problems with their family for some love and support."

The only queer people I know who haven't been homeless have queer family - that's not great."

Life for many of Alex's teenage queer friends has not been easy. Asked for examples, they explain, "There's exclusion from housing, there's exclusion from jobs, there's the fact that homeless housing is really discriminatory, especially to trans people. For example, they could deny letting you in if you're visibly queer or they could actively discriminate against you to the point that you just want to leave - if they can't outright deny you, they'll be transphobic or homophobic till you leave by your own choice. The solution is to have more queer-run homeless shelters."

Alex has - by comparison to their friends, at least - been more fortunate: "I get less like active resentment - you're only going to be called a [expletive deleted] once in a blue moon - but you'll still get muttering under the breath or dirty looks so you feel unsafe... I've been lucky to have followed in the footsteps of other queer people before me to not have to deal with homophobia so much - so I can get referrals from friends to queer-friendly therapists and doctors." There are also other, albeit limited services available, at least in the city.

## Stories from the road (cont.)

“The Link is massively useful – the youth centre linked to Head Space – it has a safe centre and provides support.”

Despite this, Alex thinks Tasmania still has a long way to go before all its citizens feel safe and valued members of society.

“Since the 1990s, Tasmania has improved its anti-discrimination policies so much it has overtaken the mainland for inclusivity and protection. But being the best in Australia isn’t much of an achievement when where we’re at now is still pitiful.”

Alex pauses a moment, then concludes. “We need to improve all services to make Tasmania a safer place for everyone. Otherwise, we’ve achieved nothing.”

-Alex identifies as queer and transgender and uses the pronoun they.

\*All names have been changed to protect identities

# Having the things we need



Although it was clear from the consultations that many children and young people aspire to more than ‘just getting by’, some children and young people in Tasmania still simply hope to have access to the bare basics needed to survive. Money was frequently raised as a barrier to the fulfillment of a great life in Tasmania for many children, young people and their families. Discussions identified common links between financial hardship and the ability to access basic needs including food, clothing, affordable and available housing, learning materials, and technology. A link between financial wellbeing and the emotional and physical wellbeing of children, young people and their families was also discernible. Overwhelmingly, improved transport options were highlighted as a key issue hampering the ability of children, young people and their caregivers to access basic services, and to participate in and connect with their communities. Naturally, remoteness from regional centres posed significant issues for isolated communities. Yet transport issues also created considerable barriers for children and young people in peri-urban and urban areas wishing to access a range of amenities.

"A real issue at the moment is a lack of rental properties. When parents are concerned about having a roof over their head, are they going to be living in someone's shed or a tent or a caravan or in their car, things like feeding their children or physical activity goes so far at the back of their minds because they are thinking, 'Where are we going to sleep tonight?', 'Where are my kids going to go?'"

(0-4 years, adult)

"There's no government housing here and the waiting list is 18 months to two years. We have a child with ADHD and another with autism and we are long-term unemployed." (0-4 years, adult)

"Creating technology access as a bare necessity."

(9-18 years)

"It would be good if the supermarket was open on a Sunday."

(4-8 years)

"There aren't many buses, so I don't go out with my friends much because my parents have to drive me." (9-18 years)

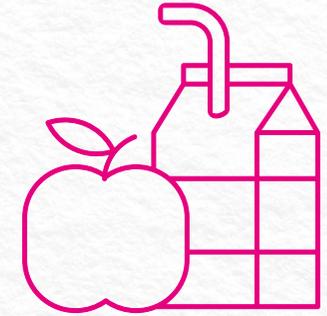
"My favorite place is my house because that's where the WIFI is. I also love my dad because he has a credit card."

(4-8 years)

## What we want

- Improved access to financial resources, support, and assistance
- Easier access to food
- More available and affordable housing
- Better access to technology
- Access to a greater variety of shops
- Improved and cheaper transport options

## Stories from the road



Seven-year-old Annie\* is bouncing on the balls of her feet in front of her drawing, chattering away to herself. Textas clutched in both her hands, she momentarily pauses – for all of a nanosecond – before she swoops down on the paper, the next swathe of colour slashing across the butcher paper.

“What do you think? What do you think?” she demands, as she stabs at a pink figure she’s drawn suspended in the air. “That’s Santa’s elf. That’s the sun,” she points in staccato fashion at each drawing. “That’s the oval. This is me. That’s my friends. We’re running. I like running on the oval with my friends. I don’t do Little Aths because my mum doesn’t like it because it’s expensive,” she blurts out innocently.

Annie still hasn’t paused to draw breath and continues her monologue, all the while drawing and pointing furiously. “This is a bowl. This is a rainbow. This is the... I don’t know what this is. Did I put a hole in the paper?”

As she takes a breath to peer closer at the paper, I point to a rash of yellow blobs she’s inflicted across the sky. “What are they?”, I ask.

“Silly! That’s popcorn!”

She rolls her eyes and hastily grabs for a green pen and writes,

‘pop’

‘corn’

in a speak bubble emanating from the Christmas elf’s mouth, just in case there are any more foolish adults lurking in the vicinity.

Realising she may need to provide more clarity on the topic she takes a deep breath. “There’s a little problem. The popcorn is dropping out of the sky.”

She looks at me. Pauses. Takes a breath as if it’s part of a calming routine she’s been told to perform many times before by adults and tries to talk less animatedly. “And that’s Joe, Harry, Jade, Ollie,” she says, pointing at figures standing under the shower of falling yellow morsels. “They keep eating my popcorn because the elves keep dropping it.”

The mention of her friends taking what she clearly sees as her popcorn has sparked off something deep inside her. Her momentary calm breaks and she is off again, racing excitedly to explain.

## Stories from the road (cont.)

“Popcorn doesn’t normally drop from the sky, but I’d like it to. I’d like more food. I’m hungry all the time. I have a really big stomach,” she says, pointing to her belly, her scrawny limbs and pinched face underscoring her words. “Mum doesn’t pack enough food. Mum packs me cherries, yoghurt, oranges, sandwiches, chips or LCMs [a snack bar]. We grow cherries in the garden.”

She points back to her picture with a smiling sun and benevolent elf. “This is what I want for a good life: The sun is shining. And I want popcorn to fall from the sky.”

\*All names have been changed to protect identities

# Protecting the environment and tackling climate change

Children and young people of all ages identified very strong connections to Tasmania's nature and demonstrated an understanding and appreciation of the links between the health of the environment, their own wellbeing and that of future generations. Protecting Tasmania's unique environment, flora and fauna were seen as critical to their own physical and mental health as well as that of future Tasmanians. They were emphatic in their desire for government and community leaders to take real and effective steps to protect the environment, noting a deep dissatisfaction with the political elite's failure to lead on environmental issues. They particularly expressed a very real frustration at the failure of leaders to take action on climate change, which they believe impacts their very existence, and expressed a strong desire for genuine leadership, including youth representation, in the local and global response to climate change. Solutions that children and young people hoped to see implemented immediately at state and community levels included much stronger environmental protection measures, including the cessation of old-growth logging and mining, greater emphasis on sustainability, and the broad adoption of green technology throughout Tasmania.

"I dream of a Tasmania running on renewable energy, no longer reliant on burning fossil fuels to power the state, no longer emitting greenhouse gases. I want to see solar panels and wind turbines across the island."

(9-18 years)

"I hope sustainability isn't something a school leader has to put forward but something our government takes up... You're called leaders for a reason."

(9-18 years)

"I feel worried about the future. There are so many problems and issues that our society is currently facing that it stresses me out that one day me and my fellow generation will have to take care of this mess that the older generations made."

(9-18 years)

"I dream of a wild wilderness not clogged with people, not logged to make a rich person richer. I love Tasmania's picturesque wilderness and I want it to stay as beautiful as ever." (9-18 years)

"I love the earth because that's where my house is."

(4-8 years)

"When the Tasmanian Government - of all people! - puts out statements like, 'We will be fine because we produce clean energy... climate change ain't coming to Tassie.' Well, with all Australia's coal mines and all the stuff we import, well, we're not fine. The denial is terrible."

(9-18 years)

## What we want

- Protection of the environment
- Real action on climate change
- Greater focus on sustainability
- Use of green technology
- Awareness of the link between a healthy environment and wellbeing
- Understanding that current decisions impact future generations
- Genuine leadership
- Youth representation



## Stories from the road

“There are these people who say, ‘Don’t talk about global warming – you’ll scare the kids.’ But that’s not what scares us. What scares us are those privileged rich white men in parliament and the media owners who won’t talk about solutions to climate change. They just want to make money. And us kids? We’re going to be left fixing their unavoidable mess. That’s what scares us.”

James\* pauses for breath. He’s a tall, athletic teenager. Tousled, sun-bleached hair from years spent in the surf, he exudes a sense of serenity that comes from floating out on the ocean swell on his board, waiting for the perfect break. But raise the topic of the environment and humans’ impact on it and a quiet passion rises, like an upwelling from the ocean depths.

Like most Tasmanians, the fifteen-year-old lives close to nature. “I’m lucky to live where I do – next to a beach, forest behind me, nature all around – because I can appreciate it so much. When I’m surfing, I feel connected on a very pure level, not as an observer of the environment, but as someone who interacts with it physically.”

It’s the close connection to Tasmania’s nature that James thinks fills young Tasmanians with a sense of urgency to protect it.

“The environment is our wellbeing,” James says emphatically. “Natural beauty benefits a whole lot of your mental, physical and spiritual health and the rate at which we are destroying natural beauty is ridiculously unprecedented. If it isn’t stopped it will halt our ability to survive.”

“My biggest hope for the future is for Tasmania to have mutually beneficial relationships with its environment and fellow animals and humans. For young people to have a good future we need a future that digresses from entrenched trends like coal mining and logging.”

Like many young Tasmanians, James feels let down by the current generation of politicians.

“Politicians need to be taking positive and decisive action, like shutting down all the logging, coal and mining operations, enforcing the use of sustainable energy and resources. Eliminating the production of single use plastics. No more dancing around really serious issues in the name of jobs. I mean, will the economy really be that important when Australia starts burning from bushfires again? They need to be caring about the future – our future.”

It’s only three years until he will be eligible to vote, something the civically engaged youth is looking forward to. James knows exactly the characteristics he will be seeking when he gets to cast a vote for his elected representatives.

“Leadership to me has always been setting examples that others will feel inspired to follow. If only Australia would do that on the environment.”

\*All names have been changed to protect identities

# What happens next?

An important part of my role as Commissioner is to promote and empower the participation of children and young people in the making of decisions on matters that may affect their lives. Another key role, which goes hand in glove with this, is to encourage organisations – including the Government – to create appropriate mechanisms for children and young people to express their views and opinions on issues that are important to them. These consultations are one example of how children and young people have been supported to have a say on a topic which directly affects them: their wellbeing. In providing their feedback, it is very interesting to note that the participants also took the opportunity to state very strongly how difficult and frustrating they often find it in day-to-day life to have a say in decisions that affect them, for their views to be respected and for feedback to be provided on how their views have been acted (or not acted) upon, and why.

As Commissioner, my next step will be to present this report to the Tasmanian Government so that the views and opinions described in it can inform the development of a strategy to improve the wellbeing of Tasmania's children and young people.

I will also release this report publicly and monitor the development of any strategies to improve the wellbeing of Tasmania's children and young people. In particular, I will also monitor whether the actions of any strategy align with the views and opinions of Tasmania's children and young people.

Children and young people have a right, consistent with Article 12 of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, to know how their views have been considered and to receive feedback as to how they have influenced decisions, and if not, why not.

Finally, I will continue to consult with Tasmania's children and young people on how we can support them to have good wellbeing and realise their dreams. As experts in their own lives, Tasmania's children and young people are best placed to tell us when things are working for them, and when they are not.

The Tasmanian Government's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy will be available later in 2021. More information, including updates on the progress of the strategy development, can be found at: [wellbeing.tas.gov.au](http://wellbeing.tas.gov.au)

# Thank you



Thank you to all the Tasmanian children, young people, and adults who participated in the consultations described in this report. Your generosity in sharing your views is greatly appreciated. Your openness, enthusiasm, joy and, at times, bravery in sharing your personal stories and thoughts are an inspiration to me and my team.

I would also like to thank everyone who helped to make these consultations happen especially the children, young people, parents, carers, teachers, artists, and others from:

- CCYP Ambassadors, 2020
- Beaconsfield Child and Family Centre
- Cape Barren Island School
- Flinders Island District School
- Glen Dhu Primary School
- Goodstart Early Learning, Claremont
- Lilydale District School - Launching into Learning (LiL)
- Lindisfarne Primary School
- New Town Primary School

- Nixon Street Primary School
- Mountain Heights School, Queenstown
- St Helens Primary School
- St James Catholic College
- tagari lia Child & Family Centre, Bridgewater
- wayraparattee Child and Family Centre, Geeveston
- Zeehan Primary School - Launching into Learning (LiL)
- All That We Are
- Department of Education
- Department of Communities Tasmania

Finally, thank you to the dedicated staff of the Commissioner for Children and Young People, whose unwavering commitment to promoting the voices of the children and young people of Tasmania is exceptional.