

To The Secretary  
 Legislative Select Committee – Tasmanian Child and Family Centres  
 Legislative Council  
 Parliament House  
 HOBART 7000  
 cfc@parliament.tas.gov.au

### **Submission to the Inquiry**

In response to terms of reference, the following is submitted:

1. The challenges to and benefits of the provision of integrated collaborative health and wellbeing and early education and care service delivery model

The experience in George Town of families engaging with the Child and Family Centre (CFC) is that the wellbeing of the whole family has improved. Some identified benefits of collaborative service provision include:

- Level of efficiency of service delivery which can't be replicated where services are clustered but not collaboratively delivered
- Services are provided to families, in a 'no fault' environment, rather than to the child or to the parent
- Because health issues impact learning and vice versa, capacity to integrate service delivery results in reinforcement of benefit and simultaneous improvement.
- Breadth of health services and programs available through the CFC go beyond what can be offered in the traditional early learning only environment and can have multifaceted target outcomes including parenting skills, underlying health problems, learning difficulties, socialisation capacity and family general wellbeing including mental health.
- Trusted partnerships developed through the 'one stop shop', supportive environment and trained team of service providers create a pathway for more effective and timely interventions.

2. The role of Child and Family Centres in providing early learning to children

In George Town, the role of the CFC has been critical in providing early learning to children in a collaborative way, making the early learning experience comprehensive, accessible, inclusive and diverse.

- Service providers in the early learning space have been brought together into a service integration model, despite the challenge of individual service provider KPI targets and funding imposts resulting from these measures.
- The biggest challenge to this work is the staff training desirable, if not necessary, to support those working in an integrated service model

- The CFC is able to undertake the function of whole of community messaging clearly, coherently and consistently on behalf of all service providers in the early learning sector, resulting in increased uptake from families particularly when this hasn't historically been the family's experience
- The CFC has been able to undertake an advocacy role for the needs of children in the under 5 age cohort
- Access to data has enabled program tailoring to emerging localised learning issues
- Families have gained both a greater understanding and confidence to participate in play based learning, where again this has not necessarily been the experience of the parent, grandparent etc.

3. The role of Child and Family Centres in providing education and support to families and carers in their parenting role and participation in early learning programs

Many families living in George Town, where education beyond Year 10 is traditionally not supported, have had the opportunity to engage in 'education' through the 'soft entry' environment of the CFC

- The CFC staff work with 'parents as the experts' in their own lives
- This then is developing a cohort of parents who gain parenting skills, which intergenerational will surely be beneficial in raising the education levels of Tasmanians into young adult life
- Community capacity is more broadly enriched as relationship skills are developed
- Families are demonstrating that as they begin to 'believe' in their own right and capacity to be their best expert, they are able to deal with more complex issues, and if not deal with them, seek assistance earlier.
- Barriers to participation generally are being broken down with the work of the Community Inclusion workers specifically tasked to achieve this with individual families. Families are encouraged and supported to bridge the gap between receiving support in their own home, to moving to a third 'safe' space without jeopardising trust.

4. The outcomes and broader impacts of Child and Family Centres to the communities in which they are located

Whilst the outcomes are not measurable yet, there is a noticeable increase in awareness of education opportunities, the importance of early years education, the early identification of learning and health issues in young children and the value of 'learning' parenting skills

- Anecdotally, children who have engagement with the CFC in programs, service etc are developmentally more advanced at entry to formal pre kinder programs
- In George Town oral language has been identified as a 'gap' and children whose families have engaged with the CFC are better skilled in oral language
- As parents participate in parenting skills development programs and other informal learning opportunities, learning pathways have opened up for parents, parents have become more engaged in their children's transition to school and understand more

fully the importance of supporting their children through this and on to higher education

5. The level of government funding provided to Child and Family Centres and whether there is a need for more Child and Family Centres in particular communities or locations
  - In George Town the CFC needs the flexibility to respond to emerging needs specific to the community which they serve. A level of discretionary would provide for this. The capacity to buy in skills and/or programs on a short term targeted basis, and to adjust these to meet current needs would increase effectiveness over a shorter timeframe. The discretionary funding amount could be determined as a percentage of the overall funding model because across Tasmania no one plan fits all communities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Martin', with a large loop at the start and a wavy line extending to the right.

John Martin  
General Manager