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ATT: CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Submission re Child and Family Centres in Tasmania.

Addressing the terms of reference:

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

Child and Family Centres are a community one stop shops for parents and carers with children 0 to 5. They provide expertise in a wide variety of services which would otherwise be spread throughout the community or region (or not at all) creating NGO and Government silos that would not necessarily work together or present their own challenges and barriers to access whether that be real or perceived to distance, environmental, capacity or limitations in physical space which then presents as entrenched barrier for parents and carers who have transport issues or don't wish to visit certain services because of their pre perceived ideas of what a service can provide to them and that relationship to their circumstances and needs without the professional knowledge, advice cohesion, value and evaluation of an integrated view to a service delivery model which can holistically evaluate and deliver more focused intentional programs and services which meet their needs in a central low impact, friendly non-invasive and caring atmosphere with professional advice and networks to even services which are not centrally located such as Doctors, specialists and Hospitals.

This also creates good social networks, community capacity building and could save considerable Government coffers to rationalise and centralise community services that are not housed separately (rent/lease) and require individual and separate resources (duplication of resources).

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

Key is free access for anyone in the community, educating parents and children, direct ties to unique specific community data - what's its telling us and tailoring programs and services to the dips. Helping parents along the journey, targeting the children that need early childhood experience the most and ensuring those most likely not to engage are the target.

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.

CFC's are a unique opportunity to almost side by side coach parents and practice this with their family and those that normally would not engage in a parenting programs. CFC's have people employed to break down the barriers to participation for parents and carers whose children need to engage. CFC's help and promote the health and wellbeing, education and care of Tasmania's very young children by supporting parents, strengthening communities and enhancing accessibility of services in the local community by providing a wide range of integrated early year's services in a central location, build on existing strengths of families and communities in assisting their educational needs. CFC's also increase participation in early years programs such as "LIL" Launching into learning and build capacity by developing partnerships with parents, carers and the community in responding to child and family needs in a holistic manner.

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

CFC's are not after, but are seeing short term wins. Children who are receiving intentional focus on developmental delay (As the data indicates) are seeing great improvements such as school readiness, being confident and parents being more involved in their child's school journey. Broader impact and greater social connections for parents, more connections for their families, parents more confident, parents taking up more educational opportunities, CFC's are in a position to ask parents with children entering school "next year what are you doing for you?" Connections with integrated services within CFC's allow for pathway building through their networks and connections. CFC's are a soft entry into education, CFC's allow parents to practice being in a course. A remarkable Stat from the George Town Child and Family Centre shows that every parent that has a child engaged at the CFC has participated in a higher education course with TasTAFE, an outstanding achievement singularly highlighting the incredible importance and value of CFC's in our community. CFC's are also advocates for all parents and children to have a voice in the community.

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 of locations*

Funding needs to increase, discretionary funding would be a preferred model as not to stifle the ability to change midstream the services and programs which may change direction as information from data becomes clearer "What is it telling us" in identifying gaps and needs for improvements in specific areas such as educational opportunities so that they can move in that direction and not be stuck in just an operational budget cycle with predetermined programs.

The original intent of COAG/State Government in 2008 was to build and establish 30 child and family centres in Tasmania over 4 years. There are currently only 12 child and family centres in Tasmania. I strongly believe and it has been overwhelmingly supported by every measure of data available that every LGA should have at least one child and family centre to support families and young children in reaching optimal health, well-being and early education and care. Circumstances and the socio economic outlook for the other 18 Communities without Child and Family Centres has not changed again shown by data via the AEDC (Australian Early Development Census)

It has been demonstrated and proven by statistical data beyond any doubt that children who participate in programs at CFC's are moving ahead in leaps and bounds and are more school ready than any other measureable time in the past.

6. *Any other matters incidental thereto.*

I would like to suggest to the Select Committee Inquiry into Child & Family Centres that members visit Child and Family Centres around the State and in particular the one at George Town which is run as an integrated service model along with LINC Tasmania and Service Tasmania to see firsthand how the model works, the good working being done and meet with some of the families to talk about their journey and the importance to a community to have a CFC in their LGA.

Every community needs a CFC, we need to break historical cycles, and we need to invest in our future in a practical way. The data is clearly showing that the change has begun in the existing CFC's, we just need more!

Yours Sincerely

Cr Peter Gary Parkes