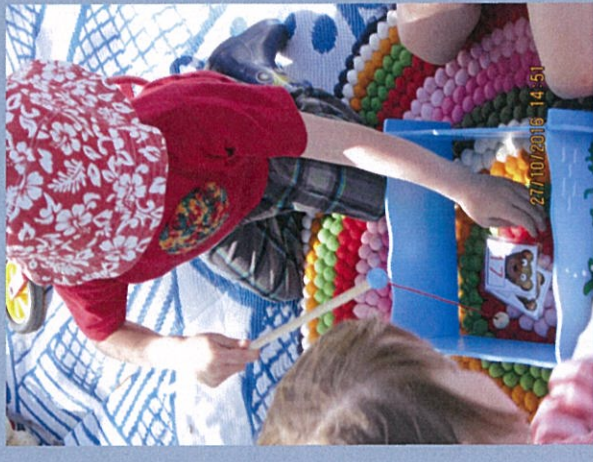


Proposal for a Fingal Valley Early Learning and Care Centre:

*Looking forward to better outcomes for our
community*



This report has been prepared by and after
consultation with, members of the
St Marys –Fingal Early Years
Reference Group

Introduction

It has long been recognised that service integration in the early years is the approach most likely to achieve the best possible health, learning and wellbeing outcomes for children and families, with a universal program linked to specialist support for those who may require it.

In our community there are many early years educators, service providers and dedicated supporters who are passionate about improving the circumstances for our children. For too long young children and their families in the St Marys and surrounding communities have had poor facilities, limited supports and lowered expectations for their achievements and life outcomes.

We believe that our efforts to encourage positive social change should be matched by physical change in the spaces and environments for children and their families, in order that sustainable, effective improvements be achieved.

This report details some of the challenges we have to face on a daily basis to provide the learning and care that children need and asks for support to overcome those challenges.

Our strategy has been developed to create a supportive environment where enriching programs for children and families can be created, making for a focus for vibrant community renewal.

This proposal asks for a dedicated Early Learning and Care facility to be established at St Marys District School. This space would be a collaborative space where kindergarten, long day care and a community space for early learning could be offered.

It is an approach that has been successfully trialled in South Australia and is similar to the Child and Family Centres (CFC) already established in Tasmania, where it was recognised that: “In order to reach families who have previously found services hard to access, local services need to work alongside parents and community members, to co-design and co-deliver locally effective and responsive programs.” We are proposing that local solutions should be implemented to local issues, but that the framework used in the CFC model will be a guiding principal.



Discussion Paper: Early Years Education and Care for the Fingal Valley

item	Discussion point	Comments or actions
context	The need for new early childhood spaces for education, care and community has been identified as urgent by educators, families, service providers and community members. This has primarily arisen due to the following issues: • Poor quality indoor learning environment for children and staff in current St Marys District School Kindergarten space—This is an aging demountable building that has been identified as being structurally unstable (cracks in walls) with mould evident in storage spaces. It lacks private meeting spaces for parent: teacher: child conversations or for support staff to work with children away from the main group eg speech or occupational therapy. There is a significant lack of storage space for equipment and resource—limiting program capabilities. The internal space is also small and cramped and does not meet the guidelines established by the National Quality Framework for early years spaces. • Lack of long day care facilities: The current long day care facility (St Marys Child Care Centre) has been operated by the Northern Children's Network since 2005, and is based in the grounds of St Marys Health Centre in a repurposed house. It is restricted to 10 children per day under a family grouping model with a limit of 2 children under 2 years per day. The centre requires a permanent waiver for a failure to provide private space to meet with families and has extremely basic staff facilities and no dedicated office area. It does not have a separate kitchen area to prepare meals or to cook with children. St Marys Child Care operates an Out of School Hours Service on St Marys District School grounds, out of a classroom and would like to increase the partnerships with school programs and opportunities available to the community, for all children in care. • No dedicated space for community based 0-5 outreach programs: Launching into Learning in St Marys lacks any dedicated space for programs and currently uses the Kindergarten room. This gives rise to a number of issues such as; developmentally inappropriate resources needing to be continually moved prior to program start—time consuming and potential issues around damaging resources, lack of change facilities for 0-3 years, families with kindergarten aged children reluctant to attend with younger siblings as children are already in the room 3 days per week, lack of privacy for discussions with families, limited choice of days as kindergarten is 3 days per week. There are limited spaces on school grounds eg halls and other spaces used for classes and the cost of off school facilities is high—eg \$40 per session for the town hall.	The location of the Kindergarten is a positive within the school context as it allows for engagement with the outdoor learning program to a high degree & its relative separation from the main school campus is seen as a positive by educators and families in supporting an age and developmentally appropriate transition to school. The proposed changes for school starting age to 3 1/2 years will see an increased need to cater for 0-2 years for centre viability—a service that is only offered in a very limited capacity in the current facility Letters of support from families are available

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context	The need for new early childhood spaces for education, care and community has been identified as urgent by educators, families, service providers and community members. This has primarily arisen due to the following issues: • Current Services failing to connect with vulnerable families: There is a lack of engagement and connection with the Break O'Day Child and Family Centre, which is strategically focused on servicing the St Helens community and does not provide outreach or programs to the Fingal Valley. Child Health and Parenting Support have a small room at St Marys Community Health Centre which lacks privacy and is not suitable to support many families — who then require home visiting services to be extended. St Giles and other services are unable to work with children and families in the classroom or on programs due to the limited space and lack of privacy and confidentiality. • Child protection — It is acknowledged that our community has high rates of disadvantage and there are families who require ongoing intensive support. In the current environment there is only a very limited service and supports to assist and work with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged families in our community in an appropriate context. • Proposed changes to school starting age— Our community has no space to accommodate any lowering of school ages, in a developmentally appropriate approach that would support the needs of this younger cohort. The current school redevelopment involves the creation of a master plan—which has not consulted formally in relation to the early years facility needs. • Early Years Educator burn out and stress—In an effort to achieve high quality programs for children, educators are forced to work long hours and face physical demands in constantly changing and rearranging shared spaces to ensure the needs of the different groups can be appropriately and safely met. This creates Work Health and Safety issues and challenges in storing equipment such that it is not damaged, which can be a further cost impost on already limited budgets. Staff from different services are also meeting to address community needs and to plan common programs, in their own un-paid time, as there is no common space or convenient meeting place at alternative times. • Secondary and Post Compulsory Training—There is a lack of opportunities for young people, in our secondary school, to engage in early childhood learning and care training due to the distance between services and lack of public transport. This limits career opportunities and the potential to facilitate programs that would enhance understanding of child development and wellbeing in the community more broadly. Opportunities for work placements and student connections would be enhanced through the locality of an Early Learning and Care Centre.	BaptCare are our current Gateway Service providers but do not participate in any Early Years programs. Changes to school starting age could potentially commence in 2020

“The early years of
childhood are the most
important for a person’s
and their community’s
growth and prosperity.”

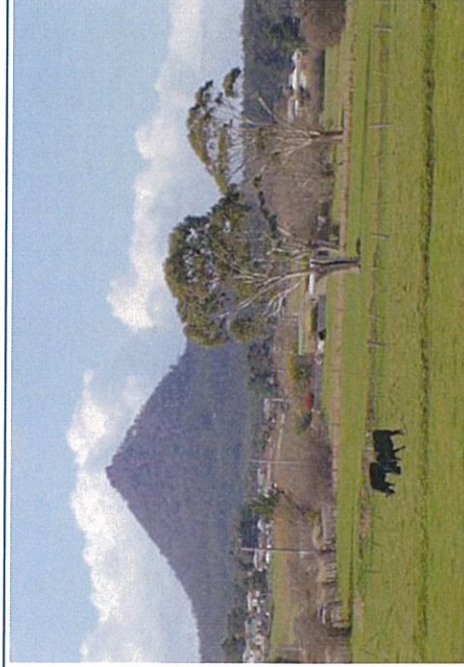


Discussion Paper: Early Years Education and Care for the Fingal Valley

item	Discussion point	Comments or actions
proposal	The St Marys –Fingal Early Years Group would like to propose that a new purpose built Early Learning Education and Care facility be developed for the Fingal Valley on St Marys District School. This facility would provided for 4 key aspects of children's early learning and development: 1. A long day care facility with space for up to 20 children per day—(potentially) including OSHC programs—0-12 years, which could then offer more flexible care needs ensuring that families are able to undertake work & training commitments in a wider range of circumstances eg as casual or on call and could meet the care needs of the 0-2 age group. 2. A kindergarten facility that meets National Quality Framework Standards and provides for the full implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework with a focus on play based learning. 3. A multipurpose community space where programs such as; Launching into Learning, Baby programs, the Child Health and Parenting Service, playgroups, intensive support such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, parenting programs or counselling and community based information sessions could be held. 4. Developmentally appropriate Outdoor spaces for learning which can be shared but also used by individual programs as needed. It is envisioned that the facility would achieve outcomes based on bringing together care, education, health, developmental and family services for families and their young children. It would be targeted as a universal setting that would also support vulnerable and disadvantaged families. A leaderships team drawn from the relevant services, school staff and community would provide strategic planning, development and implementation support.	Designs would Link to NQF standards OHSC inclusion to be considered in consultation with NCN & SMDS Organisational structure would be developed in consultation with all stakeholders The Centre would potentially be similar to a  formation with a common entrance for all families and then separate but linked facilities as part of the flow of the overall design.



	Community Background	
ABS 2011	St Marys is situated in the Local Government Area of Break O'Day, approx. 1 1/2 hours from Launceston and 10km from the coast. The main service community for Break O'Day is St Helens (approx. 35km away via St Marys Pass). St Marys is a service centre for the communities of the Fingal Valley and also provides education and care for families in the coastal area of Scamander/Falmouth/Four Mile Creek/Beaumaris. Some children from the Bicheno and Coles Bay area attend for primary schooling with the majority attending for secondary schooling In the 2011 census the local populations for the community were estimated at: St Marys—800, Fingal 366, Gray –141, Scamander-719, Beaumaris—282, Falmouth—195 Mathinna—287—total population of Break O'Day is 6,194 (Australian Bureau of Statistics. "2011 Census QuickStats". Retrieved 20/11/2016) The Fingal Valley has traditionally been based around industries such as coal mining, forestry and agriculture. As the economic conditions have changed the local focus has turned to tourism, hospitality and agriculture. Measures of disadvantage: • Median weekly income for families was \$775, as compared to Tasmania \$1203 or the national average \$1481 • Single parent families higher at 19.3% compared to Tasmania 17% and nationally 15.9% • Less than \$600 gross income 48.5% compared to Tasmania 30.7% and nationally 23.7% • 8.8% had no vehicle compared to Tasmania 7.9% and nationally 8.6%	Improved child care options and facilities would support reengagement with the work force via training and employment options. This is a significant factor in improving community wellbeing and family and child outcomes. The lack of a vehicle and poor public transport reduces access to services such as the Child and Family Centre at St Helens.



Source	data					analysis
AEDC 2015	Region	Developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains %			Developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains %	
		2009	2012	2015	2009	2012
	Australia	23.6	22	22	11.8	10.8
	TAS	21.8	21.5	21.0	10.8	10.1
	Break O'Day	34.5	31.7	23.1	16.7	14.3
		Developmentally at risk Physical health and wellbeing %			Developmentally vulnerable physical health and wellbeing %	
		2009	2012	2015	2009	2012
	Australia	13.0	13.4	13.0	9.3	9.3
	TAS	13.5	12.3	11.9	10.0	9.0
	Break O'Day	16.7	7.9	13.8	23.8	6.3
The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) reveals the changes that have occurred for children in the Break O'Day community across a range of measures. There are a large number of developmentally vulnerable children in our community, who would benefit from improved community services and supports. We have concerns in regards to the falling rates of physical health and wellbeing of children in our community—as seen in recent AEDC measures. Limited access to physical activity, poor health literacy in families, low socio-economic status and low engagement with service providers are all contributing factors that we could address through the proposed model.						

It is recognised that our community has a long term concern around the rates of teenage and young (under 21 years) parents although exact numbers are difficult to ascertain.

(AIHW 2016) Live births to teenage mothers aged 15-19 years (per 1,000 females) – 2013

Social determinants of health	Break O'Day	Tasmania
Unemployment rate (sept 2015)	9.3%	6.6%
Obese BMI	30.2%	23.6%
Persons 18+ yrs age with 4 or more chronic health conditions	23.2%	19.2%
Children fully immunised at 5 yrs age	86%	90.8%

Primary Health Tasmania Break O'Day LGA Health Services (2016)

Child Protection Tasmania

From: Child Protection Australia 2012-2013

Nationally, nearly 10 children in 1,000 were in out-of-home care, but in Tasmania that rate was 11 children per 1,000.

There are 10 children in 1,000 on care and protection orders nationally, compared to 13 per 1,000 in Tasmania.

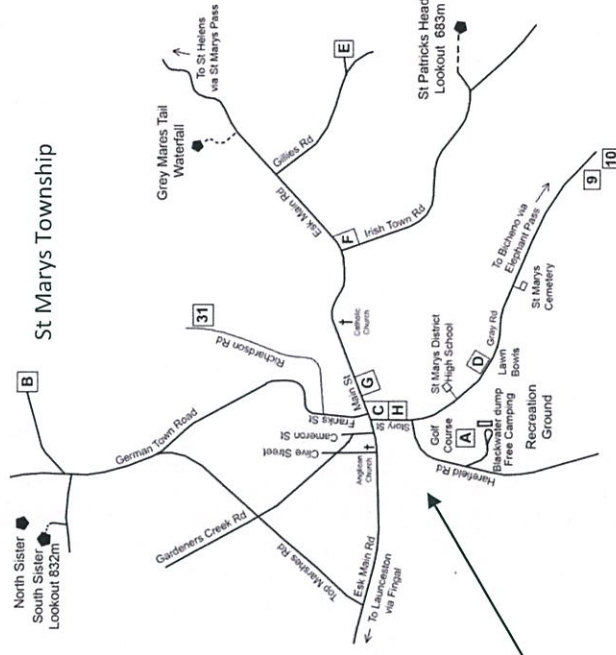
More than 50 per cent of substantiated cases in the state involved emotional abuse, and around 30 per cent were for neglect.

Fewer than 10 per cent of substantiated cases involved sexual abuse.

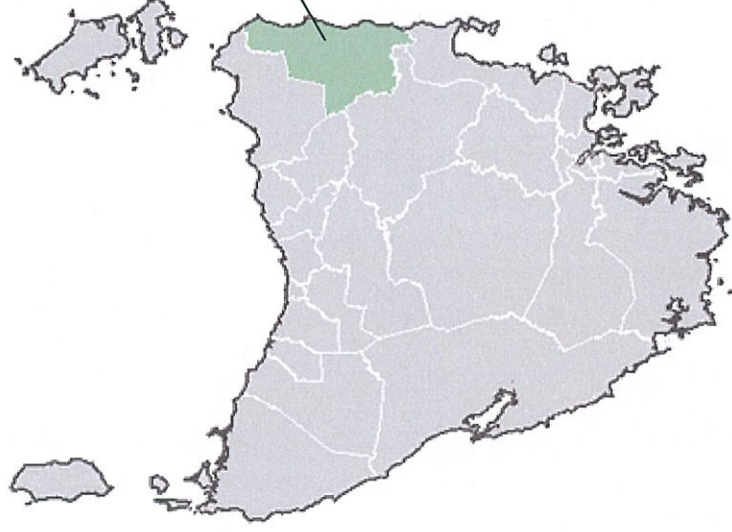
About half the Tasmanian children admitted to care and protection orders were aged under four years, the report said.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129548164>

Tasmania : 20.1%	Australia 14.2%
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(AIHW 2016)	Tasmania 2013	Australia 2013
Smoking rates in first 20 week pregnancy women aged <20 years	40.5%	33.6%
Low birth weight < 2500 gms	7%	6.4%
children aged 5-14 years whose Body Mass Index (BMI) score is above the international cut-off points for 'overweight' and 'obese' for their age and sex (%) – 2011-12	14.2%	3.7%



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item	Discussion point	Comments or actions
Strengths	The current kindergarten space has a number of strengths in terms of its position in the school setting that families and educators have indicated they would like to retain: • Outdoor setting—an established outdoor environment for learning, which includes sandpit, established gardens, bike paths and close proximity to the school farm. The engaging outdoor environment has often been cited as a key factor in families choosing St Marys District School for their children. • Ease of access in front of school area with large areas of land ready for any new building works. • Distance from other school programs where children can develop appropriate behaviours and support networks in their peer group before moving into full time schooling—this helps to improve children’s resilience and is also helpful in supporting a play based curriculum. Where early years programs are situated close to other primary classes there is potentially an issue with modelling of inappropriate behaviour by older students and disruption to other classes as early years groups move freely in and out of indoor and outdoor play spaces.	Where the new Early Learning and Care facility is situated in the school grounds is ultimately related to the overall planning and funding for the program. We would like to see the current site (or adjacent area) as the best outcome for any new development.
Evidence basis	https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/education-skills-and-learning/early-childhood-education-and-care/playcentres-playgroups-and-parenting/children-s-centres-for-early-childhood-development-and-parenting http://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/cch/151014_Supporting-Tasmanias-Child-Family-Centres_June2015.pdf https://www.decd.sa.gov.au/sites/g/files/net691/f/childrens_centres_progress_report_2014.pdf Australian Early Years Development Census, Community Census 2015 AIHW 2016. Child protection Australia 2014–15. Child welfare series no. 63. Cat. no. CWS 57. Canberra: AIHW. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare(2016)Children’s Headline Indicators http://www.aihw.gov.au/chi/ Primary Health Tasmania Break O’Day Local Government Area Health Report 2016	

Comments and notes:

This proposal has the support of St Marys District School Association (Chair Gary Barnes: 0419500847)

Members of the St Marys—Fingal Early Years Reference Group

Break O'Day Child and Family Centre Staff

Building Blocks—Mobile Early Childhood Education and Parenting Support Service (Tanya Greenwood Program Manager—0400 002 116)

St Marys District School early years educators (St Marys and Fingal Campus) and AST Primary

Child Health and Parenting Support (Mary Mumford)

St Marys Child Care Centre Leader (Rebecca Barnes—6372 2187)