

Minister for Health
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Level 5, 4 Salamanca Place, HOBART TAS 7000
GPO Box 123 HOBART TAS 7001
Phone: 03 6165 7794
Email: Minister.Petrusma@dpac.tas.gov.au



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Ms Mary de Groot
Committee Secretary
House of Assembly Select Committee on Reproductive, Maternal and Paediatric
Health Services in Tasmania
rmphs@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Select Committee Members

I am writing to provide an overview of the scope and delivery of parenting support services and associated facilities in Tasmania. I would also like to provide a copy of the Royal Hobart Hospital Independent Maternity Investigation and clarification regarding the ministerial responsibilities associated with the Department of Health's submission to the Select Committee on Reproductive, Maternal and Paediatric Health Services in Tasmania.

Parenting support services support parents and caregivers and new mothers in navigating the complexities of infant care, child development, and maternal wellbeing and are very important to the health and wellbeing of Tasmanian families.

They offer comprehensive guidance and assistance on child-rearing practices, maternal health, and family wellbeing. Commonly, parenting support services are delivered by trained professionals, including but not limited to midwives, nurses, early childhood educators, and allied health. These services cover a wide range of topics and provide targeted support for families in areas such as immunisation, oral health, injury prevention, and practical parenting tips.

Key elements of parenting support services in Tasmania include:

- Universal child health checks;
- Parenting Education: Providing guidance on feeding, bathing, soothing infants, managing sleep routines, and addressing developmental milestones;
- Breastfeeding and Nutrition Support: Assisting with breastfeeding techniques, bottle feeding, weaning, introducing solids, and maintaining balanced nutrition;
- Postnatal and Maternal Health: Supporting mothers experiencing postpartum depression or anxiety and promoting physical recovery;
- Child Development Support: Offering insights into cognitive, emotional, and physical growth stages and identifying developmental delays;

- Crisis and Emergency Support: Providing immediate assistance for family stress or breakdowns, sleep deprivation, and feeding challenges; and
- Home Visiting Programs: Delivering hands-on support within families' homes.

In Tasmania, a diverse group of providers deliver these services, including Maternity Services, Child Health and Parenting Services, Tresillian, and other nonprofit organisations such as the Gidget Foundation.

Services are delivered through:

- Over 70 Child Health and Parenting Service (CHaPS) Clinics;
- Parenting Centres (intensive day programs) in Burnie, Newnham and New Town;
- Child and Family Learning Centres;
- Community Health Centres located across the State;
- Hospital maternity wards;
- Midwifery Group Practice based at Gavitt House in Glenorchy;
- The three-bed Mother Baby Unit at the Royal Hobart Hospital (with options currently being explored to transition this to a service located within the community);
- Outreach programs such as the Tresillian satellite service in Burnie and statewide telehealth services that support parental emotional and psychological wellbeing;
- Gidget House, a new perinatal mental health centre providing face-to-face and telehealth psychological support for expectant and new parents as part of a \$26.2 million Australian Government initiative; and
- A four-bed Residential and Day Parenting Centre (using the Tresillian Model) being developed for Launceston, supported by a \$9 million investment by the Tasmanian Government.

Tresillian services are being expanded across Tasmania, supported by a further \$1.3 million commitment over four years. This includes transitioning the existing CHaPS support line to the expanded Tresillian-led Tasmania Parent Support Line (1300 TAS BUB) in July 2024, which provides telehealth support from 7 am to 11 pm daily. The Tresillian Model being trialled in Launceston is an extension from our existing CHaPS day service parenting model which already exists in all three regions of the State.

The independent investigation into maternity services at the Royal Hobart Hospital (RHH) has now been released. The investigation was announced on 30 August 2024 in response to concerns raised by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation. These concerns related to the safety and quality of care, including staffing levels, timeliness of care, breastfeeding support, emergency preparedness, and overall system processes.

Amanda Singleton, an experienced nurse, midwife, and health consultant with over 35 years of experience in managing and governing maternity services, led the investigation. Ms Singleton formed a team of independent reviewers, including a consumer representative, to thoroughly examine clinical data, staffing models, and cultural aspects of care. The review involved consultations with staff, women, and

families through forums, focus groups, and individual interviews during two visits to Tasmania, totalling five days.

The panel has advised that it could not determine any association between a stillbirth or neonatal death related to a delayed induction of labour. The Final Report outlines 38 recommendations for improving systems and practices that will ensure safer and higher-quality care at the RHH maternity services. Work has already begun on the implementation of the recommendations, which are being considered through a state-wide lens of service improvement given the similar feedback received in the North and North West in recent years. A copy of the report is attached for your information.

Finally, I would like to advise the Committee that under the Administrative Arrangements for Tasmanian Enactments, both myself as the Minister for Health, and the Hon Roger Jaensch MP as the Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, are responsible for different areas that may be of interest to the Committee. For the Committee's reference and to assist with future hearings, a more detailed breakdown is provided below.

Portfolio of the Minister for Health:

- Reproductive health services, including contraception, terminations, sexually transmitted infection testing and treatment, and related preventative care.
- Maternal health services, including antenatal and maternity care, support for midwifery, and preventative health services for mothers and babies.
- Paediatric services, including state-wide paediatric care, outpatient clinics, and specialist services such as surgery and rehabilitation.
- Child health and parenting support, including programs for new parents, home visiting services, and virtual care initiatives.

Portfolio of the Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing:

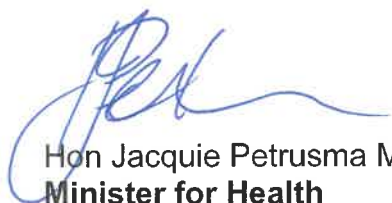
- Perinatal mental health services, including the Royal Hobart Hospital Mother and Baby Unit and related mental health screenings.
- Support for managing psychological birth trauma.
- Child and youth mental health services, including community programs with a mental health component.

Should you require further clarification or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact my Office or the Office of the Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing.

I look forward to appearing before the Committee next month. Supporting me at the Hearing will be several senior executives from the Department of Health:

- Dale Webster PSM (Secretary)
- Sally Badcock (Associate Secretary)
- Francine Douce (Chief Nurse and Midwife)
- Brendan Docherty (Deputy Secretary, Hospitals and Primary Care)
- Trudi Steedman (Child Health and Parenting Service - CHaPS)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'JP', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hon Jacquie Petrusma MP
Minister for Health

Encl: Independent Investigation of RHH Maternity Services Final Report

Copy Hon Roger Jaensch MP, Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing