



Submission to the Legislative Council Select Committee Tasmanian Child and Family Centres

The Child Health Association Tasmania (CHAT) is a statewide organisation that aims to connect, support, educate and inspire Tasmanian families. 2017 will mark the 100-year anniversary of the Child Health Association Tasmania.

As a leading Tasmanian authority on promoting the health and social needs of children and their families we operate to:

- offer proactive educational primary health programs that enhance the health and wellbeing of Tasmanian children and their families;
- advocate for responses to key primary health care issues, offer friendship, resources, strategies and support to new and existing members;
- educate and support families using the practical experience of other families;
- reach out to families in Tasmania and;
- to provide positive and inclusive opportunities for children and their families to come together.

Our pram walking, playgroups, special interest groups, information sessions, resource libraries, retailer discounts and facilities like The Haven are some of the ways that we support Tasmanian families. Our partnership with Child Health And Parenting Service (CHaPS) means we are often the first contact for families with newborns and consequently develop generational relationships aimed at promoting the health and social needs of children and their families. A key program enabling CHAT to realise its vision and mission is the Family Food Patch Program. Family Food Patch (FFP) is a statewide community program that aims to improve the health and well-being of Tasmanian children by creating a network of motivated volunteer parents, carers and community workers, known as Family Food Educators. Using peer education, the evidence based program empowers and supports families and local communities by building and mobilising skills in children's nutrition, physical activity and community action.

Tasmania's Child and Family Centres (CFC) offer a placed-based setting for connecting a wide variety of families, targeted at those with children 0-5. CFC offer a wide variety services and activities that engage families, build connections and support networks in their local community. They provide meeting and training spaces for parenting programs and services to support and educate community members. The familiarity of these venues can act as a soft entry point for many parents, who will then continue through the services and actively seek out other opportunities to engage with in a setting they feel comfortable in.

Our Family Food Patch training program has trained in eight (8) of the twelve (12) existing centres, as follows:

Break O'Day CFC, St Helens	2017
Chigwell CFC	2016
Queenstown CFC	2015



Wayarapattee CFC, Geeveston	2014
Burnie CFC	2014
Ptunarra CFC, New Norfolk	2013
Beaconsfield CFC	2012
Clarence Plains CFC, Clarendon Vale	2012

Eight (8) Community Inclusion Workers, key staff across the centres, have participated in our FFP training – Sally Johnson and Rachel Barber (St Helens), Suzanne Horton (East Devonport), Rebecca Lazenby (New Norfolk), Carolyn George (Clarendon Vale), Phillip Harris (Bridgewater), Fiona Hales (Queenstown) and Heather Green (Beaconsfield).

Our FFP program has been able to run refresher sessions for volunteer peer educators, community expo's, cooking with kids workshops and parent info sessions at many of these centres independently.

The cohesive support between staff and FFP volunteers at some centres has allowed for successful independent programming of engaging workshops and parenting sessions run by trained Family Food Educators (FFE's) post FFP training being delivered (e.g. in New Norfolk and Beaconsfield). FFE's are motivated, through the FFP training they receive, to share knowledge with their peers and make positive changes within their networks.

However, CHAT believes work needs to be done on facilitating networks with external pre-existing settings like Neighbourhood Houses, to clearly define the roles that each service setting can provide and how they can link and support one another, rather than competing for funding/participants. In addition, partnership development with other service based organisations should be a key priority for CFCs to enable them to bring in additional training and opportunities for the Families attending the Centres. This in turn supports families to access the services they need and gives organisations a chance to make a connection with a community that may have been traditionally hard to reach. CHAT has recently been in discussion with CFC management to talk about ways to integrate some of the educational services we offer into the CFCs (in addition to the FFP program). Investment needs to be made into supporting programming (health, social services and education) of the centres and allowing them to bring in outside service providers on a regular basis.

Many CFCs act as a host setting for CHaPS Child Health Nurses which helps with evolution of parenting groups and support networks that naturally progress to CHAT services. CHAT hopes to partner with the CFCs to further support this progression and enable links to wider networks to support the difficult transition times. CHAT strongly advocates for integrated services within CFCs to remove as many barriers to health care access for families as possible.

Support and acknowledgement should also be made of the key stakeholders and programs that train, support and engage community members through the centres, like Family Food Patch and Second Bite – not for profits that are empowering the health and well-being of these families through knowledge, confidence and access to food.



CHAT strongly advocates for more centres to be developed in rural and regional locations across Tasmania (Oatlands, Sorell, Triabunna, Huonville, Kingston, Scottsdale etc.). Their models and architecture design should be streamlined on the working feedback from current centres – especially around practicalities and functionalities of kitchens and communal eating areas. CHAT, through recent survey feedback, has seen a demand for additional parenting support based programs in these regional communities. Development of a facility needs to have a community development focus to build on the existing strengths of the community and have an integrated approach combining services such as the CHaPS, social workers and other health based services. Placed based settings, such as the Child and Family Centres, are proven successful and backed by evidence and research. The work of CHAT, through our Family Food Patch program, has been enhanced through access to facilities such as these and the reach they have in the community. More communities across Tasmania deserve these same opportunities.

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