



**Carers Tasmania's Feedback  
on the Change for Children  
Strategy Consultation Draft**

**September 2024**



## About Carers Tasmania

Carers Tasmania is the Peak Body representing the more than 87,000 informal carers (hereafter carers) in the state.

Carers Tasmania's vision is for an Australia that values and supports carers.

Our mission is to work to improve the health, wellbeing, resilience and financial security of carers and to ensure that caring is a shared responsibility of family, community, and government.

Our values drive everything we think, say, and do.

- **Carers first** – we listen to what carers need, commit to their desired action plan, and deliver results that matter most to carers
- **Care in all we do** – we care for our work, about each other, about Tasmania's family and friend carers, and the bigger world we all share
- **Integrity always** – we are transparent, act ethically, own when things don't go to plan and do what we say we will
- **Quality every time** – we don't accept 'good enough' because carers deserve our very best every time
- **Speed that matters** – we are agile and don't put off what can be done today.

These values represent how we engage with and serve carers, how we work with each other, and our commitment to the broader community. Carers Tasmania encourages partnership with governments and health and community sectors to enhance service provision and improve conditions for family or friend carers through policy development, research and advocacy.

We acknowledge and support people of all genders, sexualities, cultural beliefs, and abilities and understand that carers in Tasmania, whilst sharing the common theme of caring for a family member or friend, are diverse individuals with varying beliefs, experiences, and identities. We value and respect the diversity of carers, their lived and living experiences, and recognise that carers are the experts in their own lives.

Carers Tasmania has offices in Moonah, Launceston and Burnie.

Please direct any enquiries about this report to:

Dr Samantha Fox  
Chief Executive Officer  
Phone: (03) 6144 3700  
Email: [ceo@carerstasmania.org](mailto:ceo@carerstasmania.org)

## Contents

1. Background.....	4
2. Introduction .....	5
3. Feedback on the Strategy .....	6
Young carer identification, support and safety .....	6
Clarity about the word carer.....	7
Pathways for carers supporting children who have experienced abuse .....	7
Collaborating for Change priority area: Out of home care .....	7
Feedback on proposed standards .....	8
Additional feedback .....	10
4. Conclusion .....	10

## 1. Background

Carers Tasmania is the Peak Body representing the more than 87,000 informal carers within the state.

A carer is a person who provides unpaid care and support to a family member, or friend, with disability, mental ill health, a chronic or life-limiting condition, alcohol or other drug dependence, or who is frail or aged. Informal kinship carers who care for a child under the age of 18, because the parent is unable to, are also recognised as carers. Carers are predominantly family members, but may also be friends, neighbours, or colleagues. Informal carers are not to be confused with paid support workers who are often called 'carers', with the difference being that support workers are fully employed and remunerated with all the benefits of employment. On the contrary, informal carers perform their caring duties without remuneration, other than minimal carer payments and allowances from the Australian Government.

In addition to representing carers through the Peak Body activities, Carers Tasmania provides support to carers living in Tasmania through its service delivery arm, Care2Serve. The Australian Government Carer Gateway program is delivered through Care2Serve in Tasmania, as are other supports and services, such as the Tasmanian Government's Home and Community Care program.

The Carer Gateway program provides a range of services and supports for carers which are designed to build resilience, increase wellbeing, improve quality of life, and sustain carers to effectively continue their caring roles. The available supports include the provision of information, advice and referrals, holistic identification of carer strengths and needs through a carer support planning process, professional counselling, peer support, and coaching which aims to support carers in achieving specific goals.

Care2Serve, through the Carer Gateway, has capacity to fund certain instances of planned, practical support services such as in-home respite, personal care, domestic assistance, and meal preparation. Care2Serve may also fund items such as laptops to assist carers who are studying or trying to enter the workforce. Care2Serve also coordinates the provision of emergency support during instances where a carer may be unable to provide the care that they usually do, resulting from unexpected illness or injury of the carer.

### Content Warning

Carers Tasmania encourages anyone feeling distressed by any of the content within this response to access support. **In an emergency call 000**

For child safety information, or if you believe that a child is at risk, contact the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line **1800 000 123**

Statewide Sexual Assault Support Line	<b>1800 697 877</b>	24/7
Lifeline	<b>13 11 14</b>	24/7
Carer Gateway	<b>1800 422 737</b>	8am - 5pm weekdays (24/7 for emergency respite)
QLife	<b>1800 184 527</b>	3pm to midnight every day
13Yarn	<b>13 92 76</b>	24/7

## 2. Introduction

Carers Tasmania is pleased to provide feedback on the Tasmanian Government's *Change for Children: Tasmania's 10-year Strategy for upholding the rights of children by preventing, identifying and responding to child sexual abuse - Consultation Draft* (the draft Strategy).<sup>1</sup>

Carers Tasmania fully supports the aim to make Tasmania a safer place for all children and young people. We also support the priorities listed within this document and acknowledge the importance of these in keeping children and young people safe. Carers Tasmania thanks the Tasmanian Government for leading this important work and acknowledges that keeping children and young people safe from all forms of abuse and neglect requires an ongoing commitment from governments, systems, services and the broader community. Carers Tasmania is supportive of the draft Strategy, as well as the *Collaborating for Change 2024-2026* Action Plan that sits within the draft Strategy.

Carers Tasmania's response provides additional feedback and proposed areas for further consideration to ensure carers are recognised, supported, and engaged in the important work to be undertaken under the Strategy. Carers Tasmania recommends that for consistency, the word 'carer' should be used instead of caregiver. This will ensure alignment with the *Tasmanian Carer Recognition Act 2023*.<sup>2</sup> Using consistent language will reinforce to readers that when they see the word carer, it is referring to people supporting a family member or friend who has additional needs of some sort. We note that the *Tasmanian Carer Recognition Act* defines carers as:

"A person who provides unpaid care and support to a family member, or friend, who:

- (a) has disability,
- (b) has mental ill health,
- (c) has a chronic or life-limiting condition,
- (d) has alcohol or other drug dependence,
- (e) is frail or aged, or
- (f) is a child, if the person is an informal kinship carer of the child."<sup>3</sup>

In addition, Carers Tasmania requests that 'carer' be included within the definition section of any future Tasmanian Government documentation about keeping children safe, using the definition of carer that is stated within the *Tasmanian Carer Recognition Act 2023*.<sup>4</sup> This will assist in providing clarity about who carers are within the context of each document, and elevate the recognition of the significant supports carers provide to others.

---

<sup>1</sup> Tasmanian Government. (2024). Change for Children Consultation Draft. [Change for Children Strategy and Action Plan | Keeping Children Safe](#)

<sup>2</sup> Tasmanian Government. (2023). Tasmanian Carer Recognition Act (2023). Retrieved from: [lh \(legislation.tas.gov.au\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

### 3. Feedback on the Strategy

#### Young carer identification, support and safety

It is paramount that methods to identify and support young carers are strengthened through Tasmanian Government policy and processes. Results from the 2022 National Carer Survey identified that of the 92 young carer survey respondents, (which included 10 young carers from Tasmania), most young carers (65.1%) were caring for a parent, and 34.9% were caring for a sibling. Noting that people often have multiple caring roles, most respondents (80.9%) reported they were caring for at least one person with disability. Of the respondents, 46.1% reported they were caring for someone with mental ill health, and 41.6% were providing care to someone with chronic illness. The findings also showed that 4 in 5 young carer respondents reported experiencing financial stress.<sup>5</sup>

Whilst there are many positive aspects of being a young carer, research shows there can be negative implications, such as difficulties in developing and maintaining social connections,<sup>6</sup> poor wellbeing, and reduced educational and employment outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

Findings show that by Year Nine of school, boys who spent two or more hours per day in a caring role were the equivalent of 1.9 years behind their peers in NAPLAN reading, and girls who provided care for two or more hours per day were 1.6 years behind in NAPLAN reading. Both boys and girls in Year 9 who were caring for at least two hours per day were approximately fifteen months behind their peers in NAPLAN numeracy. Furthermore, young carers were less likely to have completed Year 12 or equivalent than their peers, and nationally, over 60% of primary carers between the ages of 15 and 25 were not studying.<sup>8</sup>

Young carers face lifelong impacts in terms of educational and employment outcomes, social interactions with other young people and trusted adults, and access adequate information and support. Whilst these findings don't necessarily indicate increased experience of child sexual abuse, they do highlight additional reasons why young carers may be particularly vulnerable or isolated, especially those who are caring for a parent.

The recently released *Tasmanian Youth Jobs Strategy* states that for Tasmanians aged 15-24, the percentages of those with caring responsibilities in the following groups are as follows: disengaged youth (20%), partially disengaged youth (12%), and engaged youth (8%).<sup>9</sup> Young people with caring roles may be disengaged from school and employment, and from many services, placing them in potentially vulnerable situations due to social isolation. These young people who are caring for someone else must be identified and connected to supports earlier, to keep them engaged, supported, connected, and safe. One method to help achieve this would be including a question about caring roles on school enrolment and validation forms as a standard process. This is an ongoing advocacy aim of

---

<sup>5</sup> Carers NSW. (2023). 2022 National carer Survey, Young carer fact sheet.

[https://www.carersnsw.org.au/uploads/main/Files/3.Resources/Policy-Research/CarerSurvey/2022\\_National\\_Carer\\_Survey\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_2\\_Young\\_carers.pdf](https://www.carersnsw.org.au/uploads/main/Files/3.Resources/Policy-Research/CarerSurvey/2022_National_Carer_Survey_Fact_Sheet_2_Young_carers.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Moore, T., Bourke-Taylor, H., Greenland, N., McDougall, S., Bromfield, L., Robinson, L., & Brown, T. (2019). Young carers and their engagement with education: 'No space in my brain to learn'. Adelaide, SA: University of South Australia. [https://www.carersaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Young-Carers-ReportFINAL\\_vsmall\\_compressed1.pdf](https://www.carersaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Young-Carers-ReportFINAL_vsmall_compressed1.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Becker, Saul, & Sempik, Joe. (2019). Young Adult Carers: The Impact of Caring on Health and Education. *Children & Society*, 33(4), 377–386. <https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.12310>

<sup>8</sup> Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2017). Longitudinal Study of Australian Children 2016 Annual Statistical Report Young Carers

<sup>9</sup> Tasmanian Government. (2024). Tasmanian Youth Jobs Strategy 2024-2030. [Youth Jobs Strategy](#)

Carers Tasmania, based on the belief that this will assist more young carers to access support.

### Clarity about the word carer

Page Nine of the Strategy states *“Children with disability face higher rates of sexual abuse and are often targeted due to their perceived vulnerability and dependence on caregivers.”*<sup>10</sup>

Carers Tasmania suggests that this could be re-worded as it may cause some confusion about who caregivers are and implies that carers are the main perpetrators in these scenarios. What needs to be highlighted instead, is that it's not always carers of children who may be perpetrators, but it's the extra support required by children with disability (both informal and formal), which is the additional risk factor. As an example, the language could be amended to say:

Children with disability face higher rates of sexual abuse and are often targeted due to their perceived vulnerability and dependence on additional support.

### Pathways for carers supporting children who have experienced abuse

The Strategy must consider and address how parents and carers of children who have experienced sexual, or another form of abuse can better access support, to enable them to support these children.

Page Ten states:

*“Those who have experienced child sexual abuse are at higher risk of mental ill health – twice as likely to have severe alcohol use disorder – almost twice as likely to have post-traumatic stress disorder – around 1.6 times as likely to have generalised anxiety disorder, major depressive disorder or moderate alcohol use disorder – almost 3 times as likely to report self-harming behaviour – more than twice as likely to report suicide attempts.”*<sup>11,12</sup>

Given these statistics regarding negative outcomes of experiencing childhood sexual abuse, there must be clear pathways and awareness-raising to connect the family members and carers who are supporting a child who has experienced sexual abuse in their caring role. Supporting family members and carers to access support will enhance their ability to assist the child who has experienced abuse.

### Collaborating for Change priority area: Out-of-home care

The draft Strategy aims to improve the safety of children who are living in formal out-of-home care situations in Tasmania. Unfortunately, inquiries across various child protection systems in Australia, and on an international level have repeatedly highlighted challenges with relationships, communication and poor coordination between child protection and child and family welfare services.<sup>13</sup> The Strategy presents an opportunity to make a difference, and to change this narrative in Tasmania.

---

<sup>10</sup> Tasmanian Government. (2024). Change for Children Consultation Draft. [Change for Children Strategy and Action Plan | Keeping Children Safe](#)

<sup>11</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024). Child Sexual Abuse. Accessed June 2024 from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/types-of-violence/child-sexual-abuse#mental-health>

<sup>12</sup> Tasmanian Government. (2024). Change for Children Consultation Draft. [Change for Children Strategy and Action Plan | Keeping Children Safe](#)

<sup>13</sup> Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2020). [Working together to keep children and families safe \(aifs.gov.au\)](#)

Whilst this priority area aims to improve supports and the safety of children in formal out-of-home care, we highlight that this may exclude the many children in informal kinship arrangements in Tasmania, who because they don't have a formalised order may not have access to the same types of supports as those within the formal out-of-home care system. It is estimated that there are approximately 1,600 grandparents looking after children in Tasmania (via either formal and informal kinship arrangements),<sup>14</sup> and over 1,200 children are in some form of informal kinship care arrangement. However, there is not one source of data, rather this is based on data of those who have accessed services or information.<sup>15</sup>

The types of supports needed for informal kinship carers may include information, financial support, respite, and other resources. These extra supports can help to make sure that those who are caring via informal relationships have what they need to fully support the child in their care, be it financially, through adequate access to education, through social opportunities, or by being able to support the child to deal with trauma they have experienced. Carers Tasmania requests that informal kinship carers receive adequate assistance, to ensure they feel equipped and fully supported to provide the children in their care with upbringings that are safe, happy, and fulfilled.

The draft Strategy states:

*“A caring, compassionate and child-centred out of home care system in Tasmania requires adequate funding across the continuum of care, extending from a child or young person’s first contact and assessment, through family engagement support, response and further assessment, to potential referral for temporary or permanent out of home care, supported by case management.”*<sup>16</sup>

Carers Tasmania has heard feedback that some families choose informal kinship care because it works for them, in terms of flexibility in their choices, whilst others report it's because they are scared to ask for help for fear of being judged as not being able to provide adequate care (without the additional help). However, other informal kinship carers have stated that it was Child Safety Services who suggested that there was no need to take the 'formal path' to kinship care, and that the family member would provide informal kinship care without further involvement from Child Safety Services. There are advantages and disadvantages to both forms of care in terms of support available and the differing administrative processes, but at the centre, what should matter is that children and their families, no matter the composition, are supported with the skills and resources they need.

## Feedback on proposed standards

Carers Tasmania highlights the proposed Standard 1: *Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture*, which states:

*“This priority area will inform and support all other priority areas, enabling a conscious focus in the delivery of all recommendations on the need to change not only practices and structures, but mindsets and beliefs of individuals that work within, and comprise the system.”*<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Tasmanian Government Department for Education, Children and Young People. (2024). [Grandparents caring for grandchildren - Department for Education, Children and Young People \(decyp.tas.gov.au\)](https://decyp.tas.gov.au)

<sup>15</sup> Tasmanian Government Department of Communities. (2021). Informal Kinship Care Review. [Informal-Kinship-Care-Summary-Review-Report.pdf \(education.tas.gov.au\)](https://education.tas.gov.au)

<sup>16</sup> Tasmanian Government. (2024). Change for Children Consultation Draft. [Change for Children Strategy and Action Plan | Keeping Children Safe](#)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



Carers Tasmania fully supports this priority area, reinforcing that the safety of children and young people is everyone's business and responsibility.

Standard 3: *Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.*

*"This priority area will also look beyond Government agencies, at community attitudes and how these are reflected in institutions and the wider community. A key focus of this priority area is changing the way that individuals and organisations perceive children and ensuring that children are not discriminated against and that they are listened to and their rights upheld."*<sup>18</sup>

Carers Tasmania supports this priority for all children and young people. However, Carers Tasmania highlights that particular groups of children and young people, such as young carers and children with disability and/or additional health needs, must be adequately supported within any organisation, service, or institution they liaise with. This priority area reinforces the need for the realisation of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*,<sup>19</sup> and that certain groups of children and young people may need additional support to ensure that their rights are upheld.

Carers Tasmania notes Standard 2: *Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.*<sup>20</sup> To effectively implement this important priority, alternative and non-specific consultation opportunities must be available. For example, feedback received by Carers Tasmania from some young carers is that they may not want to participate in a 'targeted young carer activities' due to perceived or actual stigma, or fear of bullying or being seen as 'different' to their peers.

As an alternative, some young carers have stated that they are more open to seeking information, asking questions, giving feedback, and talking with services at open events such as school or community expos, or if someone comes to talk to the whole class or school. It is important to have targeted groups, but also to have non-focussed opportunities to build rapport, share information, and talk through the concerns of young people in a way that is general and not always framed up as a child safety, or victim-survivor activity.

Carers Tasmania refers to Standard 10: *Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people,*<sup>21</sup> and highlights that this is an opportunity to embed further policies to ensure there is adequate documentation about how to identify young carers, refer them to appropriate support, and in doing so, help keep them safe. As previously highlighted, Carers Tasmania advocates for a process to be embedded to enable the routine identification and referral of young carers within schools. This will ensure more young carers can access the support that they need and are connected to more adults they can talk to and trust, reducing the risk of harm.

---

<sup>18</sup> Tasmanian Government. (2024). Change for Children Consultation Draft. [Change for Children Strategy and Action Plan | Keeping Children Safe](#)

<sup>19</sup> United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. (1989). [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(unicef.org.au\)](#)

<sup>20</sup> Tasmanian Government. (2024). Change for Children Consultation Draft. [Change for Children Strategy and Action Plan | Keeping Children Safe](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Ibid.](#)

## Additional feedback

The appendices section within the draft Strategy outlines how specific recommendations from the *Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings*, will be addressed through the delivery of this Strategy. The Strategy refers to Recommendation 15.10 which states

*"The Department of Health should work with relevant stakeholders to consider the needs and backgrounds of children and young people using health services, including Aboriginal children, children from culturally diverse backgrounds, children with disability, children with mental illness and children who identify as LGBTQIA+. The Department should consult with Aboriginal communities on how it can provide culturally safe spaces for Aboriginal children across its health services."*<sup>22, 23</sup>

Carers Tasmania requests that young carers are also identified and that their needs are considered through the process of addressing this recommendation. It is incredibly important that young carers are included, and that their experiences, feedback, and ideas are acknowledged and heard. Young carers, along with other children and young people, must have the opportunity to help shape future policy, programs and service delivery.

## 4. Conclusion

Carers Tasmania commends the Tasmanian Government on its commitment to help ensure that Tasmania is a safe place for all children and young people. We look forward to seeing the outcomes of this work in supporting all Tasmanian children and young people. In particular, we look forward to ensuring improved safety for young carers, families who have children with disability and/or additional health needs, and children being cared for through informal kinship care arrangements.

---

<sup>22</sup> Tasmanian Government. (2024). Change for Children Consultation Draft. [Change for Children Strategy and Action Plan | Keeping Children Safe](#)

<sup>23</sup> Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Report, August 2023). [COI Full-Report.pdf \(commissionofinquiry.tas.gov.au\)](#)