

The Voices for Tasmanian Youth

A Consultative Council established by the Commissioner for Children and Young People

June 2024

Context

Tasmania's Commissioner for Children and Young People has established a new Children and Young People Consultative Council (the Council) under section 13 of the *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2016*¹ (CCYP Act). The key purpose of this Council is to support children and young people to participate in, and have their voices heard, during the development of the Tasmanian Government's *Child Sexual Abuse Reform Strategy and Action Plan* (the Strategy and Action Plan).

This work aligns with the Commissioner's statutory functions of:

- promoting and empowering the participation of children and young people in the making of decisions, or the expressing of opinions on matters, that may affect their lives (CCYP Act s 8(1)(e)), and
- assisting in ensuring the State satisfies its national and international obligations in respect of children and young people generally (CCYP Act s 8(1)(f)).

With respect to international obligations, the Council gives life to Articles 12 and 13 of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child² (UNCRC). These articles outline the rights of children and young people to be heard, to have a say, to be taken seriously in matters that affect them, and to access and share information that is important in their lives.

Objectives

The key objectives of the Commissioner's work through this project are to:

- Provide children and young people with an opportunity to participate in and have their voices heard during the development of the Strategy and Action Plan;
- Ensure that children and young people are empowered to share their views and ideas on how to make Tasmania a safer place for children and young people, generally;
- Adopt a child-centred and child-led approach to the establishment and work of the Council by allowing children and young people to determine the Council's identity and direction;
- Provide a safe and supportive environment for children and young people to exercise their participatory rights.

¹ <https://www.legislation.tas.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-2016-002#GS13@EN>

² <https://www.unicef.org.au/united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child>

Establishment of the Council

In establishing the Council, the Commissioner adopted an ethical approach to seeking expressions of interest from children and young people. This involved inviting children and young people who either had an established participatory relationship with the Commissioner, or who were nominated by representatives from key stakeholder organisations, to participate.

In developing the engagement approach, the Commissioner consulted with subject-matter experts and partnered with organisations, Laurel House and the Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS).

Council composition and facilitation

The Council consists of 19 children and young people aged between 10 and 18-years. Council members live in communities across Tasmania and represent a diverse range of identities, backgrounds and lived experience.

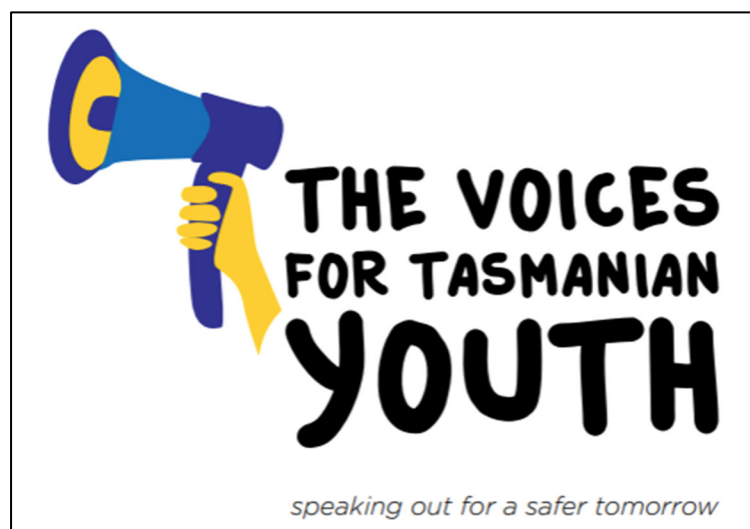
Council members determine how they wish to participate in engagement opportunities (e.g., one-on-one interviews, focus groups, creative art engagements, etc.) and the frequency of their participation.

Council facilitation has been guided by trauma-informed practice, recognising the impact of trauma while prioritising safety, empowerment, choice, collaboration, and cultural humility. Safety check-ins are conducted on a regular basis, and Council members have access to 24-hour support from SASS and Laurel House.

SASS and Laurel House have also provided education and training for Council members to learn about sexual safety, consent and how to look after themselves when speaking about sensitive content and engaging in this work.

Council identity and culture

The Council has determined and designed its own group name (*The Voices for Tasmanian Youth*), its own mission statement (*speaking out for a safer tomorrow*) and visual identity:



The Council has also drafted an internal agreement of behaviour, values and expectations titled *Being Our Best Selves* (BOBS).

Program of work

Stage 1 (concluded)

- Establishing rapport and trust between Council members
- Determining Council name and identity
- Development of a group charter (Being Our Best Selves agreement)
- Delivery of education and training programs by SASS and Laurel House
- Development of key themes and messages through a 'Drawing Change' activity

Stage 2 (in progress)

- Analysis of collated themes and messages
- Meeting with the Reform Lead, Keeping Children Safe
- Development of Council outputs, including:
 - A written report
 - A creative piece of work in partnership with creative arts organisation, Terrapin
 - A public messaging campaign, centred on social media activity

Stage 3

- Finalising and releasing Council outputs to coincide with the release of the draft Strategy and Action Plan including:
 - A roundtable discussion with Tasmanian Government stakeholders
 - Presentation of the Council's written report to Government
 - A public presentation of the creative piece of work created with Terrapin

Further information

For further information about the Consultative Council, contact the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Tas) via childcomm@childcomm.tas.gov.au or call 03 6166 1366.