

Expert Panel – Terms of Reference

Improving the safety and wellbeing of Tasmanian children and young people in care experiencing severe and/or complex psychological and behavioural support needs.



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Background information

Between 2015 and 2020, 13 young Tasmanians have participated and/or are participating in a Northern Territory based program referred to as Many Colours | Direction (MCID).

A review of the young people's file information confirms the former Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Communities have engaged with the MCID program as an option of last resort.

It is evident that prior to their placement at MCID, the young people experienced difficult childhoods. As a result of their tragic early experiences and repeated trauma the young people's behaviour can be extreme, harmful to themselves and others, and exceptionally challenging to their families, carers and the community.

The client group shares many consistent characteristics that have led to their referral and subsequent placement at MCID.

In October 2020 the Department of Communities; Children, Youth and Families, undertook an [Investigative Review](#) in response to allegations questioning the safety and wellbeing of young people participating in the MCID Therapeutic Residential Placement Program.

The Investigative Review made four recommendations. All four recommendations were accepted by the Minister for Human Services. Recommendation four states:

The Department of Communities Tasmania continues to progress the establishment of a Tasmanian program similar in design to MCID by:

- A. Completing a jurisdictional analysis to identify the full breadth of out of home care therapeutic program responses existing nationally. The jurisdictional analysis is to be completed by the end of March 2021.
- B. Establishing an Expert Panel to work with the Department to:
 - consider the learnings from the national jurisdictional analysis; and
 - scope the essential therapeutic elements identified by the assessment of the Expert Panel that underpins the outcomes achieved in the MCID program.
- C. It is recommended the Expert Panel:
 - be appointed by the Minister for Human Services by the end of January 2021;
 - includes representatives from the Tasmanian Aboriginal community; and
 - delivers advice to the Minister for Human Services by 30 June 2021, regarding the establishment of a Tasmanian based program.



The role and membership of the Expert Panel Membership

The Expert Panel is a voluntary, multi-disciplinary, fixed term advisory body, which reports to the Minister for Human Services (the Minister).

Panel members are eligible for any reasonable out of pocket expenses they may incur whilst undertaking their role as a panel member.

Each Panel member has extensive experience working with families, children and young people.

Collectively, the Panel has expertise in key areas relating to child and adolescent development, psychology research, child rights, out of home statutory service provision, education, trauma and abuse.

The Expert Panel members appointed by the Minister for Human Services are:

Professor Brett McDermott

Professor McDermott is a medical graduate of the University of Tasmania. He then specialised in psychiatry, training in the UK and Sydney, and holds clinical qualifications in child, adolescent and adult psychiatry. Professor McDermott recently authored the Tasmanian Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Review on behalf of the Department of Health. Professor McDermott has been the Chair or member of Expert Advisory Committee for Australian Clinical Practice Guidelines, for the treatment of depression in adolescents and young adults, and has published more than 100 journal articles, book chapters and books.

Professor Maria Harries AM.

Professor Harries is an Adjunct Professor at Curtin University and Senior Honorary Research Fellow at The University of Western Australia. Professor Harries has a 45-year professional career dedicated to assisting children and families, particularly in relation to mental health, trauma associated with their experiences of abuse and violence, and institutional abuse. She has played key roles in a number of formal inquiries into, among other things, the child protection system in Australia.

Ms Claire Lovell

Ms Lovell entered the Department of Children, Youth and Families in Tasmania 16 years ago and has served in operational, policy, clinical support and executive leadership positions

Ms Lovell is currently the Director of Children and Families in the Department of Communities Tasmania responsible for the leadership and direction of the Child Safety Service, State-wide Advice and Referral and Adoption and Permanency Services

Ms Raylene Foster

For the past 25 years, Ms Foster has worked for the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre in various roles building the capacity of staff, community and the organisation; providing leadership and enhanced service provision for consumers of the Aboriginal Health Service, addressing the impacts of social disadvantage and vulnerability of children and their families. She has a deep and historical understanding of the Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander health sector, at national and local levels, and extensive experience in supporting and managing health and wellbeing services for Aboriginal children, young people and families.

Mrs Foster is the Chief Operations Officer in the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and the Tasmanian Director on the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.

Ms Trudy Pearce

Ms Pearce has dedicated over 40 years to learners, with extensive and esteemed experience as a teacher and principal in both primary and secondary school settings, and as an educational leader in Tasmania. Ms Pearce was a recipient of a Hardie Fellowship which involved studying systemic leadership at Harvard University with a lens on schools and Child and Family Centres and a strong focus on aspiration and equity, Ms Pearce's steadfast focus is on ensuring positive learning and wellbeing outcomes for all learners. Ms Pearce is the Deputy Secretary Learning for the Department of Education

Ms Janise Mitchell

Ms Mitchell has extensive experience in the development of innovative therapeutic programs for traumatised children and young people and is responsible for the development and implementation of a number of national and state-wide therapeutic out-of-home care programs, child abuse prevention programs and professional education training programs. Ms Mitchell has a Masters' degree examining the policy and practice underpinning therapeutic care initiatives in Australia, is an Adjunct Associate Professor with Southern Cross University and is the Deputy CEO at the Australian Childhood Foundation and Director of the Centre for Excellence in Therapeutic Care.

Ms Dianne Baldock

Ms Baldock is a passionate advocate for children, especially children who reside in out of home care. Ms Baldock is a qualified counsellor and is also a spiritual healer. Ms Baldock is the current chairperson for the Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation and was the former Chief Executive Officer for the Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation. Ms Baldock has recently been elected as a Royal Flying Doctor Director. Ms Baldock is a member of the Tasmanian Regional Aboriginal Communities Alliance (TRACA) as well as a Director of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service.

Expert Panel members are individual appointments based on their professional experience expertise. The views expressed by an Expert Panel member do not represent the views or policies of any organisation or Department by which a panel member may be employed.



The purpose of the Expert Panel is to:

- develop a detailed understanding of the extent and nature of the significant, severe and/or complex psychological and behavioural support needs experienced by the children and young people, which have led to a placement at MCID, and
- provide advice to the Minister for Human Services regarding an improved service system's response to the highly vulnerable client group by:
 - considering the national cross-jurisdictional report of out of home care therapeutic program evidence-based responses, including 'on-country' and other cultural elements, and determining their relevance to the Tasmania context;
 - examining both the pre- and post-placement life trajectories of the Tasmanian young people who have resided, or are residing, at MCID, through de-identified case profiles which are constructed using the Child and Young Person Wellbeing Framework domains;
 - considering Tasmania's public health reform approach to child safety and wellbeing in the context of scoping the essential therapeutic elements for an improved service system response that would enhance and increased the likelihood of improved outcomes for the client cohort.

The Expert Panel is not required to make recommendations about who might be best placed to provide any service.

The Expert Panel is independently chaired. Decisions of the Expert Panel will be reached by way of consensus. Any differing views may be recorded in the meeting outcomes or any final reports if required.

The Secretary of the Department of Communities and the Deputy Secretary Children, Youth and Families will be available at any point to assist the Expert Panel in its work.

Due to the sensitivity of some information provided all Expert Panel members will be required to complete a Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Declaration.

The Role of the Independent Chairperson

The Independent Chair appointed by and reporting to the Minister for Human Services is Ms Leanne McLean. Ms McLean was appointed Tasmania's Commissioner for Children and Young People in November 2018. The Commissioner's role is to promote the rights and wellbeing of Tasmanian children and young people including ensuring that their rights are considered and promoted by adults when making decisions that may affect children.

Due to the sensitivity of some information provided to the Expert Panel members the Chair will be required to complete a Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Declaration.

The Independent Chair's role includes;

- facilitating the Expert Panel discussions, and completion of the panel of experts' Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Declarations, managing declared conflicts of interests and differences of opinion;
- ensuring appropriate records of Expert Panel meetings are maintained and distributed;
- receiving on behalf of and distributing any submissions that might be made to the Expert Panel; and
- supporting and facilitating the Expert Panel presenting its advice to the Minister for Human Services.

Where issues arise that may create a conflict of interest for the Chair it is the Chair's role to ensure the conflict is appropriately managed, in consultation with the Secretary, Department of Communities Tasmania.

Support for the Expert Panel

The Expert Panel will be supported by a Secretariat provided by the Department of Communities.

The Secretariat works under the direction and guidance of the Independent Chair to support the Expert Panel in formulating its advice.

The Secretariat will prepare meeting agendas in consultation with the Chair.

A final agenda will be distributed by the Chair to the Expert Panel at least three working days prior to each meeting.

Meetings will be recorded by the Secretariat and full copies of the minutes and other relevant correspondence will be provided to all members of the Expert Panel no later than seven working days following each meeting.

In addition, Mr Mat Rowell from Mat Rowell Consulting, engaged by the Department of Communities to undertake the cross-jurisdictional analysis, will be available to support the panel in their discussions regarding the findings, key themes, and priorities identified within the cross-jurisdictional analysis report.

Reporting

The Expert Panel will report to the Minister for Human Services by end of June 2021.

The Expert Panel's Report will identify the essential therapeutic elements required to deliver an effective service for this cohort including, but not limited to, both short term initiatives that could be implemented with a 12 month period and long term initiatives that may require significant systemic change.

The Minister for Human Services will publicly release advice provided by the Expert Panel ensuring all sensitive and confidential information is protected.



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