

# Kate Garvey

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Public Health Services

**I have worked in Public Health Services for five years now, in a variety of roles.**

I have been in my current position for about two years. When I first joined the Tasmanian State Service, I was working in the ACT when I got a phone call about a maternity leave locum. I was on maternity leave myself, but the manager said they could be really flexible. It was a temporary opportunity to manage the health equity team, and that was something that really interested me. I flew down to Tasmania and spent two hours talking to the manager, and she held my baby most of the time. I started one day a week, and then two days a week. It was a really flexible working environment. I was doing strategic planning sessions in the office with my baby in a front pack!

I'm a speech pathologist by training, and I've done a degree in anthropology and political economics as well as masters degrees in public health and health service management. The majority of my career, however, I've worked in public health, mostly in the policy space.

I really like the contact with people and being able to identify the system level barriers to giving people environments that enable good health and wellbeing and ensuring the healthcare system gives people what they need when they need it. I'm also interested in the role of local government in public health and how we support the important

actions of our partners. Even though Tasmania is a small state, we have an equal voice in national-level policy mechanisms. It's about how we leverage that voice, to enable people to do what they need to do at the ground level.

The biggest challenge in this role is that I'm really interested in everything. So if somebody says, 'Can you do this?' I will always say yes. Relationships are really important to me and following through on what you say you're going to do, but there are only so many hours in the day and I have three small children. It's kind of a question of how to fit all that together and maintain your sanity. It's about consolidating and communicating what you are doing and engaging a wide range of perspectives on an issue. One of the most important roles I have is to create work environments that help people to flourish. I work with some amazing people both within and external to my organisation and that is what sustains me. Public health is a long game but I'm in it for the long haul.

If I were to advise a young professional, I would say: demand the work conditions that you need. Everywhere I have worked, I have pushed the issue about flexibility. More than that, I've also created the conditions for other people by making it policy. If you give people flexibility, they're at their best and everyone benefits.

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