



**SAFE
HOMES
FAMILIES
COMMUNITIES**

RESPONDING AND REPORTING 2020

Achievements in the delivery of
Safe Homes, Families, Communities:
*Tasmania's action plan for family
and sexual violence 2019-2022*

November 2020

SAFE HOMES, FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES



\$26 million over three years committed to implement our ongoing response to eliminate family and sexual violence

197 high-risk family violence incidents mapped by the Safe Families Coordination Unit

4,421 at-risk children identified, and

3,015 notifications made by the Safe Families Coordination Unit to schools to support students experiencing family violence

643 clients provided with support, counselling and referral options by the Safe Choices service

Over **1,000** views of the new family and sexual violence website, Safe from Violence (launched 16 June 2020)

699 Aboriginal families (parents and children) supported by Aboriginal Family Safety Workers (minimum number based on families that have identified as Aboriginal)

64 households assisted by the Family Violence Rapid Rehousing program

238 additional children and young people received counselling services provided by the Australian Childhood Foundation**

2,019 additional hours of counselling and service provision for children and young people provided by the Australian Childhood Foundation**

1,932 additional hours of counselling services for adults provided by Engender Equality**

353 additional clients provided with legal assistance by Women's Legal Service Tasmania and Legal Aid Commission of Tasmania**

800 clients assessed and provided with information and referral through the Men's Referral Service

155 women provided with safety upgrades to support them to remain in their own home or home of choice

* All data is from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020 unless stated otherwise

** Additional clients supported by funding under Safe Homes, Families, Communities

FOREWORD

Eliminating family and sexual violence remains a top priority for my Government.

On 1 July 2019, the Tasmanian Government launched *Safe Homes, Families, Communities: Tasmania's action plan for family and sexual violence 2019- 2022* (Safe Homes, Families, Communities) which commits an additional \$26 million over three years for 40 actions to prevent and respond to family and sexual violence in Tasmania.

Safe Homes, Families, Communities outlines a vision for our State where all Tasmanians are safe, equal and respected and our homes, families and communities are free from all forms of family and sexual violence. It builds on the nation-leading *Safe Homes, Safe Families: Tasmania's Family Violence Action Plan 2015-2020* (Safe Homes, Safe Families), released in August 2015.

Responding and Reporting 2020 continues our commitment to publicly report implementation progress and outcomes.

Responding and Reporting 2020 outlines key achievements of the first year of implementation of Safe Homes, Families, Communities, including:

- increased investment in primary prevention including a national first partnership with Our Watch;
- the launch of our new family and sexual violence website, Safe from Violence (www.safefromviolence.tas.gov.au);



- releasing a public consultation paper to inform delivery of a new counselling service for children and young people that exhibit Harmful Sexual Behaviours;
- issuing mobile phone data extraction devices for Tasmania Police to respond to technology-facilitated abuse; and
- working with the eSafety Commissioner to deliver education and training in response to technology-facilitated abuse.

The first year of implementation has not been without its challenges, particularly as the impacts of COVID-19 have affected our State. I would like to thank the sector and its dedicated workforce for their strong and ongoing efforts to support Tasmanians impacted by family and sexual violence, especially during this difficult time. By continuing to work together, we can create a Tasmania free from family and sexual violence.

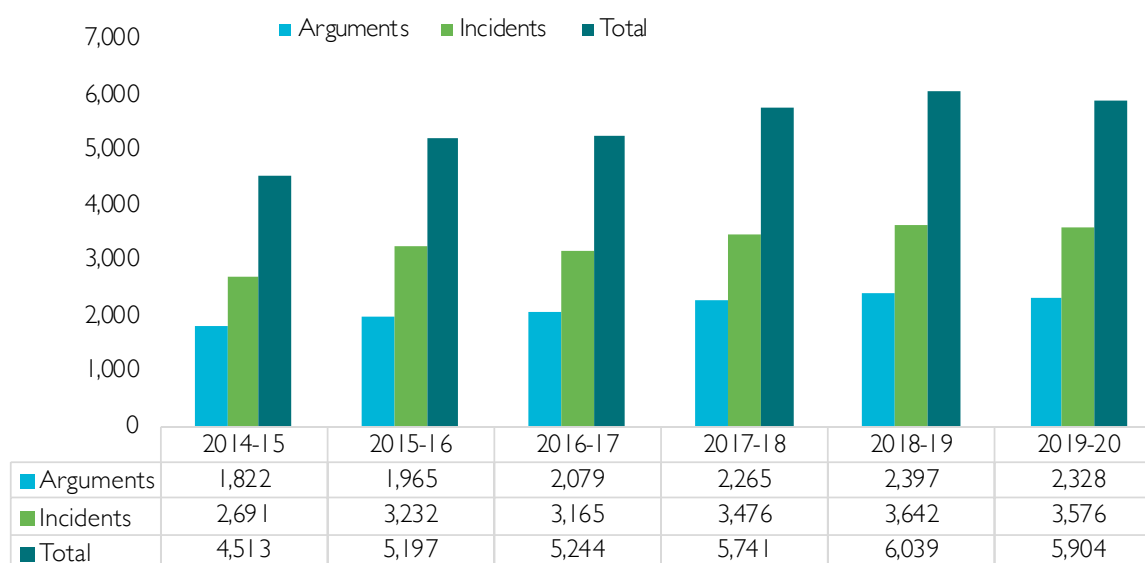
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Gutwein'.

Peter Gutwein MP
Premier and Minister for the
Prevention of Family Violence

FAMILY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN TASMANIA

In 2019-20, Tasmania Police attended 3,576 family violence incidents and 2,328 incidents¹ classified as family arguments or family information reports², a decrease from 2018-19.

The graph below shows the reported incidence of family violence over the past six financial years.



Source: Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, October 2020.

In 2019-20, there was a continued reduction in the number of family violence incidents that are assessed as high-risk; 229 in 2019-20, compared with 273 in 2018-19 and the five-year average of 323³.

Following the release of Safe Homes, Safe Families in 2015, there was an increase in the number of reported family violence matters. This sustained level of reporting suggests a reduced level of tolerance for family violence in the community and by persons affected by family

violence. It also shows an increased awareness and confidence in family violence response, intervention and support services.

As predicted, reporting levels are now stabilising in line with long-term trends.

In 2019-20, 206 sexual assaults were reported to Tasmania Police, a decrease from 240 in 2018-19 and below the five-year average of 236³. The number of sexual assaults reported to police can vary significantly from year to year due to the reporting of historical sexual assaults.

¹ 2019-20 Annual Report, Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, available at www.police.tas.gov.au/about-us/corporate-documents/annual-report/

² A family argument is a dispute where family violence as defined in the *Family Violence Act 2004* (Tas), has not been, and is not likely to be, committed. For example: A couple may engage in a loud argument that attracts the attention of a concerned neighbour who contacts Tasmania Police. On arrival, Tasmania Police make an assessment about whether a situation is a family argument or family violence.

³ Data sourced from the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, October 2020



In 2019-20, 38 per cent of reported sexual assaults were committed more than a year before they were reported, some occurring several decades ago.

Females accounted for 88 per cent of sexual assault victim-survivors.

Most sexual assaults reported occurred at residential locations (74 per cent).

The impacts of COVID-19

COVID-19 does not cause, justify or excuse violent and abusive behaviour. However, isolation, financial insecurity, stress, concern, family disruptions, changes to roles and routines resulting from COVID-19 may compound or increase the risk, severity and frequency of violence.

For these reasons, it was anticipated that the rate of family and sexual violence may have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Tasmania, the number of family violence arguments and incidents reported to Tasmania Police remains close to the three-year (2017-2019) average.

While reporting is stable, we know that historically, underreporting of family and sexual violence has been an issue across all states and territories.

In addition, specialist family and sexual violence services have reported a steady demand for services and increased complexity during the pandemic.

The Department of Communities Tasmania is regularly consulting with specialist family and sexual violence services to monitor demand.

Data monitoring and building the evidence base in Tasmania

The Tasmanian Government monitors data relating to the demand for family and sexual violence services.

Monitoring demand, outside of our criminal justice response, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, has proven challenging due to the complexity of collating data sets across community-based support services.

The need for a minimum standardised data set for family and sexual violence services is not unique to Tasmania but is experienced across states and territories, where methodological differences mean data is often not comparable across services.

Action 35 of *Safe Homes, Families, Communities* will address this issue.

Building this evidence base will continue to underpin our flexible and responsive approach and enable us to tailor programs and services to be effective and provide the best outcomes for women, men and children affected by family and sexual violence.

In addition, the Tasmanian Government remains a member of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), which continues to build the national evidence base that supports policy and practice in reducing violence against women and their children.

The Tasmanian Government also continues to contribute to and monitor national research and data collection, including by the Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing and Australian Bureau of Statistics.

SAFE HOMES, FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES



Primary prevention and early intervention

1. Membership of Our Watch
2. Establish an Our Watch Primary Prevention Officer in Tasmania
3. Embed Respectful Relationships education in Tasmanian Government schools
4. Support the successful National Campaign *Stop It At The Start*
5. Support implementation of the new National Sexual Violence Campaign
6. Continue to ensure that gender equality and respect are at the centre of all Tasmanian State Service workplaces
7. Develop a family and sexual violence website
8. Work with the eSafety Commissioner to deliver education and training in response to technology-facilitated abuse
9. Deliver a Problem Sexual Behaviours and Sexually Abusive Behaviours program for children and young people
10. Support Tasmanian Aboriginal Communities to deliver targeted primary prevention and early intervention programs and to improve service delivery for Aboriginal people affected by family and sexual violence
11. Trial the Step Up adolescent intervention program
12. Strengthen the Defendant Health Liaison Service to provide early intervention to offenders
13. Deliver the Men's Referral Service

Safe Homes, Families, Communities:

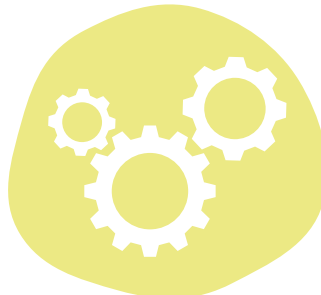
Tasmania's action plan for family and sexual violence 2019–2022

*Safe Homes, Families,
Communities* outlines
40 actions to prevent
and respond to family
and sexual violence
in Tasmania.



Response and recovery

- 14.** Deliver Safe Choices
- 15.** Support women with disability through the Local Support Coordinator role in Safe Choices
- 16.** Support children and families through the Safe Homes, Safe Families Support Team
- 17.** Support Aboriginal families through the Aboriginal Family Safety Workers in Child and Family Centres
- 18.** Provide increased counselling services for children and young people experiencing family violence
- 19.** Provide counselling services for adults experiencing family violence
- 20.** Invest in crisis accommodation through the *Affordable Housing Action Plan 2019-2023*
- 21.** Deliver the Rapid Rehousing program for people experiencing family violence
- 22.** Deliver the Keeping Women Safe In Their Homes program
- 23.** Provide legal assistance to people experiencing family violence
- 24.** Deliver perpetrator programs for low, medium and high-risk perpetrators
- 25.** Introduce the ability to require mandated behaviour change program participation as part of a Family Violence Order
- 26.** Extend forensic medical examinations for adult victim-survivors of family and sexual violence to a statewide service



Strengthening the service system

- 27.** Strengthen the Safe Families Coordination Unit
- 28.** Trial electronic monitoring of high-risk family violence offenders, with opt-in available for victim-survivors
- 29.** Strengthen specialist police prosecution services
- 30.** Implement legislative reform to strengthen legal responses to family and sexual violence
- 31.** Improve data collection and reporting
- 32.** Membership of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety
- 33.** Strengthen mechanisms for schools to respond to technology-facilitated abuse including image-based abuse
- 34.** Roll out mobile phone data extraction devices to collect evidence of technology-facilitated abuse
- 35.** Centralise management of family and sexual violence services within the Department of Communities Tasmania
- 36.** Introduce standardised risk assessment processes across government and non-government family and sexual violence services
- 37.** Develop and deliver training across identified Tasmanian Government services to respond to family and sexual violence
- 38.** Establish a Family Violence Liaison Officer in the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line
- 39.** Undertake a feasibility study for a disclosure scheme in Tasmania
- 40.** Review the regional sexual assault protocols

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2019-20

Safe Homes, Families, Communities builds on actions established under the first family violence action plan and introduced several new actions.

Implementation of new actions are at various stages of development, with some actions due to commence implementation in 2020-21.

Primary prevention and early intervention

- On 21 October 2019, the official partnership between the Tasmanian Government and Our Watch was launched by the former Premier, Will Hodgman MP, and Our Watch Chair Natasha Stott Despoja AO (Actions 1 and 2).
- In March 2020, the Our Watch Senior Adviser commenced in the nation-leading primary prevention role. Key achievements include commencing detailed project planning including stakeholder identification and mapping; meeting with key government and community sector stakeholders to scope settings for primary prevention initiatives; and liaising with the Family and Sexual Violence Consultative Group (Action 2).
- The Department of Education continues to deliver Respectful Relationships Education programs in all Tasmanian Government Schools (Action 3).
- The *Stop It At The Start* campaign advertising burst from 19 November to 22 December 2019 reached 9.95 million people across Australia (Action 4).
- In June 2020, Tasmania signed an agreement with the Australian, South Australian, Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory governments to develop new sexual violence community awareness activities (Action 5).
- On 25 November 2019, the Tasmanian Government held the Prevention of Family Violence Walk in recognition of the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. (Action 6).
- The Department of Justice (DoJ) launched the *DoJ People Strategy 2020-2025*. Priority Area 4 of the Strategy outlines ongoing work for departmental culture change and promotion of the DoJ family violence prevention and response efforts (Action 6).
- 1,365 Department of Health and Tasmanian Health Services employees participated in new face-to-face manager training and e-learning modules for staff on *Supporting colleagues experiencing family violence* (Action 6).
- 774 key staff across the Tasmanian State Service received training to support employees who are experiencing family violence and 69 applications for family violence leave were made and approved (Action 6).
- On 16 June 2020, the Tasmanian Government launched the new Safe from Violence website, Tasmania's central point of information for family and sexual violence (www.safefromviolence.tas.gov.au). As of 30 June 2020, the website had been viewed more than 1,400 times (Action 7).

- In July 2019 and March 2020, eSafety workshops were held in Hobart, Burnie and Launceston with approximately 325 participants attending across the State (Action 8).
- The *Developing a program to prevent harmful sexual behaviours of children and young people* Consultation Paper was released for public review between 19 November 2019 and 6 January 2020 (Action 9).
- In 2019-20, 64 participants were involved with the Step Up program pilot. An evaluation of Step Up has been undertaken to inform future delivery options (Action 10).
- 800 family violence perpetrators were assessed and provided with information and referral through the Men's Referral Service (Action 13).



The Hon Sarah Courtney MP, former Premier and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Will Hodgman MP, Natasha Stott Despoja AO, Chair of Our Watch and Patty Kinnersly, Chief Executive Officer of Our Watch at the launch of the partnership between the Tasmanian Government and Our Watch in October 2019



Departments of Health and Communities Tasmania staff participate in an information session about how to support colleagues experiencing family violence



Members of Parliament and the Tasmanian State Service at the Prevention of Family Violence Walk on 25 November 2019, in recognition of the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women



Head of the Tasmanian State Service, Ms Jenny Gale, giving a speech at the Prevention of Family Violence Walk on 25 November 2019

Response and recovery

- 643 clients were provided with practical support, counselling, information and referral by Safe Choices (Action 14).
- In June 2020, Safe Choices launched *No Excuse for Abuse*, an online training package to assist frontline workers who work with or support women with disabilities to recognise family violence (Action 15).
- 1,914 students affected by family violence in Tasmanian Government schools and Child and Family Centres were supported by the Safe Homes, Safe Families Support Team (Action 16).
- 699 Aboriginal parents and children supported by Aboriginal Family Safety Workers in Child and Family Centres (Action 17).
- 238 children and young people received counselling services and an additional 2,019 hours of counselling and service provision for children and young people were provided by the Australian Childhood Foundation (Action 18).
- 243 adults accessed counselling services and an additional 1,932 hours of counselling services for adults were provided through Engender Equality (Action 19).
- In 2019-20, the Government completed the delivery of 35 new units of homelessness accommodation in Hobart. The first 18 single bedroom pods were installed at Bethlehem House and a further 17 units for women and children were delivered for the Hobart Women's Shelter (Action 20).
- 56 additional houses made available for families experiencing family violence and 64 clients were assisted through the Rapid Rehousing program (Action 21).
- 155 women were assisted to stay safely in their own home, or a home of their choice, through the Keeping Women Safe in their Homes program (Action 22).

- 353 clients provided with legal assistance by Women's Legal Service Tasmania and Legal Aid Commission of Tasmania (Action 23).
- 14 forensic medical examinations were performed for victim-survivors of family violence (Action 26).

Strengthening the service system

- The Safe Families Coordination Unit mapped 197 high risk family violence incidents (Action 27).
- The Safe Families Coordination Unit made 3,015 notifications to schools and identified 4,421 children affected by family violence (Action 27).
- 161 family violence perpetrators tracked through the Electronic Monitoring Trial, with 63 victim-survivors also opting-in to the trial (Action 28).
- Preliminary results of the Electronic Monitoring Trial show a 7 per cent reduction of family violence incidents across the State and an 82 per cent decrease in high-risk family violence incidents. The Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies (TILES) is undertaking an independent review of the trial, with a final evaluation report due late 2020 (Action 28).
- 2,579 family violence matters were prosecuted by Specialist Police Prosecution Services (Action 29).
- The Safe at Home Information Management System (SIMS) continues to support the integrated criminal justice response to family violence. In November 2019, the Safe at Home program won Gold in the 2019 Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards, which recognise and reward good practice in the prevention or reduction of violence and other types of crime in Australia (Action 31).
- The Tasmanian Government continues its membership of ANROWS (Action 32).

- The Online Child Sexual Abuse Material: Response Flowchart was published on the Department of Education website in December 2019 (Action 33).
- Mobile phone data extraction devices rolled out across Tasmania Police districts to collect evidence of technology-facilitated abuse (Action 34).
- Management of family and sexual violence services has been centralised within the Department of Communities Tasmania. This will enable a move to standardised reporting and data collection (Action 35).
- In January 2020, the Family Violence Liaison Officer commenced their role in the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line (Action 38).



Ms Pauline van Adrichem accepting an award from the Hon Peter Dutton MP, Minister for Home Affairs, on behalf of the Safe at Home program which won gold in the 2019 Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards



Department of Health employees raise awareness about taking action against family violence at the 2019 Dragons Abreast Dragonboating Corporate Challenge

NEXT STEPS

Several actions are due to commence implementation in 2020-21 and 2021-22 including:

- **Action 37** – Develop and deliver training across identified Tasmanian Government services to respond to family and sexual violence;
- **Action 39** – Undertake a feasibility study for a disclosure scheme in Tasmania; and
- **Action 40** – Review the regional sexual assault protocols.

The Tasmanian Government's response to family and sexual violence continues to be flexible so that it is responsive to emerging priorities and incorporates the evidence from work being done across Australia to address family violence.

Safe Homes, Families, Communities is a living document that can be refined and updated over time to ensure it remains relevant and that actions continue to be based on current evidence and best practice.

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

On 26 March 2020, the Tasmanian Government was the first government in Australia to announce dedicated funding to respond to family and sexual violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, as part of the Tasmanian Government's Social and Economic Support Package.

\$2.7 million has been allocated across the family violence service system, including government and non-government services:

- \$1.9 million for Safe at Home, Tasmania's whole-of-government integrated criminal justice service system to family violence;
- \$260,000 to increase the Rapid Rehousing pool by providing an additional 20 properties for families and individuals leaving a violent relationship;
- \$310,000 for community-based specialist family violence support services to increase operational capacity to deliver support to those impacted by violence during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- \$100,000 to establish one-off flexible support packages of up to \$6,000 to support victim-survivors leaving abusive relationships access essential items and or emergency accommodation;

- \$100,000 for a communications project, including the development and distribution of resources promoting specialist support services available to help those impacted by family and sexual violence; and promoting key messages to the community including that COVID-19 is no excuse for violence; and
- \$5,000 for seven crisis accommodation services to purchase items for children's entertainment and education purposes during isolation.

On 29 March 2020, the Australian Government announced a \$150 million package to support Australians experiencing family and sexual violence during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On 30 April 2020, the Premier and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, the Hon Peter Gutwein MP, signed the *National Partnership COVID-19 Domestic and Family Violence Responses* (National Partnership), which provided \$130 million from the Australian Government's package to the states and territories to support immediate responses to family and sexual violence and to ensure services can continue to support those who need it most.

In 2019-20, the Tasmanian Government received funding totalling \$1.513 million. This funding has been allocated across government and non-government services, following a public call for submissions process held in May 2020.

In 2020-21, the Tasmanian Government received a further \$2.12 million. \$434,000 of this funding has been allocated across non-government specialist family and sexual violence services. The remaining funding will be allocated in late 2020/early 2021 to respond to potential unforeseeable needs and/or spikes in the rate of family and sexual violence over coming months and the Christmas and New Year period.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Communities Tasmania established the Family and Sexual Violence COVID-19 Sector Forum to promote information-sharing between the Government and the community sector and to enable the Government to be made aware of emerging issues for the sector.

On 21 July 2020, the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council (PESRAC) released its Interim Report which outlines 64 recommendations to inform the Tasmanian Government's planning for the first phase of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The following Recommendations relate to family and sexual violence:

- **Recommendation 57:** The State Government should quickly review how the additional COVID-19 government funding for mental health, family violence, and emergency food relief has been used and the outcomes delivered.
- **Recommendation 58:** Monitoring and rapid contingency planning should be undertaken to ascertain if further additional funding is needed across these important community impact areas.

The Department of Communities Tasmania is responding to these Recommendations and continues to provide support to victim-survivors of family and sexual violence, and the sector.

Tasmania's proactive response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with dedicated funding and the National Partnership, means the service system is well prepared to respond to any future or ongoing impacts of COVID-19 in Tasmania.



Email: fsvap@communities.tas.gov.au | Visit: www.safefromviolence.tas.gov.au

If you or someone you know is impacted by family violence:

Call the Safe at Home Family Violence Response and Referral Line on 1800 633 937

If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual violence:

Call the Statewide Sexual Assault Crisis Line on 1800 697 877

In an emergency, always call 000

For more information, visit www.1800respect.org.au or www.safefromviolence.tas.gov.au