

## Equity upheld and diverse needs respected

*All children and young people have rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, their sex or gender, what their culture is, whether they have disability, whether they are rich or poor. (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 2.1) [12]*

### National Principle 4 Equity is upheld, and diverse needs respected in policy and practice



- 4.1 The organisation, including staff and volunteers, understand children and young people's diverse circumstances, and provides support and responds to those who are vulnerable.
- 4.2 Children and young people have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.
- 4.3 The organisation pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.

## Diversity and inclusion

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Department recognises and acknowledges the diverse circumstances of children and young people, enabling it practice in a more child-centred way that empowers children and young people to participate more effectively.

The Department is focused on ensuring that the culture, values, and behaviours of the organisation enable children, young people, their families, and caregivers to be respected and to have equal access to opportunities and resources.

The Department aims to actively anticipate the diverse circumstances of children and young people and respond effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities through planning for inclusivity. This recognition enables the Department to foster a child-focused environment and empowers children and young people to participate and engage effectively.

Children and young people may face additional risk of harm due to a range of cultural, operational and environmental factors. Vulnerabilities may be brought about by specific contextual factors, such as through societal and organisational cultures that prioritise adult voices over those of children and young people.

Children and young people who face discrimination such as racism, ableism, gender-based violence, misogyny, homophobia, socio-economic disadvantages and exclusion are additionally vulnerable. [45] [46]

The Department is committed to building an organisational culture that acknowledges the strengths and individual characteristics of and embraces all children and young people regardless of their abilities, sex, sexuality, gender, intersex variation, or social, economic, or cultural background. This culture creates an environment that allows all children and young people to feel safe and comfortable and where services are provided in culturally safe and inclusive ways.

The Department practices cultural competence and inclusivity when working and communicating with children,

young people, their families, and caregivers, and acknowledges diverse family systems and approaches to the development of children and young people.

Workers are supported to fulfil their obligations under the following legislation:

- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998* (Tas) [47]
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* (Tas) [48]

The Department recognises that while all children are vulnerable, some children face additional risk of harm. The Department is committed to meeting the diverse needs and ensuring the cultural safety of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people who are unable to live at home
- children and young people with disability, and
- LGBTIQ+ children and young people.

The Department will build and sustain strong cross-sectoral relationships with community-led organisations and lived experience to allow the co-design and co-development of its approach to equity and inclusion.

The Department has specialist teams dedicated to improving health outcomes for individuals, families, and communities, with a focus on children, young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and other people experiencing poorer health outcomes. These teams work with all levels of government, community sector

organisations, youth services, schools, early childhood services, and other stakeholders, and provides advice, resources, and training based on the latest evidence. [49]

The Department works towards improving diversity and inclusion when providing services to all Tasmanians by:

- leading the development of a Tasmanian Implementation Plan for the Cultural Respect Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health 2016–2026 [50]
- participating in national and state discussions about health policies, programs and priorities that affect priority populations
- analysing information and providing expert advice
- supporting workforce diversity, and
- providing funding to community sector organisations and building capacity within those organisations to deliver results.

Further information regarding the Department's approach to diversity and inclusion is available on the Intranet. [51]

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people

The Department is committed to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural respect across Tasmania's healthcare system. [52] [53]

Cultural respect may be defined as the "recognition, protection and continued advancement of the inherent rights, cultures and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people." [54] It is achieved when "the health system is safe, accessible and responsive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultural values, strengths and differences are respected." [54] [55]

A range of resources are provided to support the delivery of culturally competent and responsive health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. [56]

Ongoing training and education supports workers to achieve cultural competency through e-learning modules,

face-to-face sessions, and resources such as webinars and podcasts.

Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers provide emotional, social, and cultural support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, their families, and caregivers when they visit hospital.

Further information about the Department's approach to culturally responsive healthcare is available on its website. [57]

## Children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

The Department strives to provide culturally responsive health care for children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and provides a range of resources to support this, such as e-learning modules for workers, interpreter services and health literacy resources. [58]

The Department is committed to upholding the values outlined within Tasmania's *Multicultural Policy*, requiring that every child and young person: [59]

- can freely exercise cultural, religious, and linguistic expression
- is treated with respect and dignity, free from discrimination
- has equitable access to affordable Tasmanian Government services
- has the opportunity to achieve financial security
- has an equal opportunity and responsibility to contribute to Tasmanian life, and
- is able to live safely, free from abuse, violence and fear.

## Children and young people who are unable to live at home

The Department observes the National Standards for Out-of-Home Care and works closely with the responsible Government Agency to understand that Department's application to service provision when providing care for

children and young people who are unable to live at home. [60]

## Children and young people with disability

The Department observes Article 7 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, which states:

'[The Department] shall take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children.

In all actions concerning children with disabilities, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

[The Department] shall ensure that children with disabilities have the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, on an equal basis with other children, and to be provided with disability and age-appropriate assistance to realise that right.' [61]

The Tasmanian Government's overarching disability framework seeks to remove barriers and enable people with disability to enjoy the same rights and opportunities as others. [62] The Department has committed to an action plan to implement the outcomes from the framework and will remain committed to future iterations. [54]

Resources are available to support the delivery of disability-confident health care for children and young people with disability, such as e-learning modules and health literacy resources. [63]

## LGBTIQA+ children and young people

The Department is dedicated to the provision of LGBTIQA+ inclusive healthcare and is guided by the Tasmanian Government's overarching Framework for Lesbian, Gay,

Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Tasmanians. [64] Resources are available to assist workers to deliver LGBTIQA+ inclusive healthcare, such as e-learning modules, discussion and inclusive language guides and glossaries. [65] [66] [67] [68] The Department has committed to implementing systems and processes that support respectful and inclusive data collection and management. [69]

The Department observes the guiding principles that characterise LGBTIQA+ inclusive healthcare as outlined within the *Australian Standards of Care and Treatment Guidelines for Trans and Gender Diverse Children and Adolescents*. [70]

- individualise care
- use respectful and affirming language
- avoid causing harm
- consider sociocultural factors, and
- consider legal requirements.

Whole-of-government and Department-specific LGBTIQA+ reference groups inform the organisational approach to service provision and quality improvement.

The Department sets expectations that all workers: [71]

- treat patients, clients, and colleagues with respect, regardless of their sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity
- not assume a person's sex or gender based on things such as name, voice, or appearance
- collect, manage, and communicate sex and gender information in an inclusive, non-discriminatory way
- accept a person's choice, and
- follow the State Service Code of Conduct and Principles.

## Health literacy

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Accessing, understanding, or appropriately using health information is difficult for many people. Workers have a role in making it easier for children, young people, their families, and caregivers to access, understand, and use health information and services.

This includes the way in which they communicate, provide services, and respond to people's needs, including: [72] [73]

- providing the best information to the needs of each person and checking it is understood
- providing information in a variety of formats including written and spoken information, pictures, diagrams, models, audio-video demonstrations, and group discussions
- using plain language
- providing effective instructional and directional signage
- considering the physical design and layout of services
- having excellent telephone and reception service standards
- helping people to complete forms, and

- providing orientation and ongoing training to workers. [74]

The Department's Health Literacy Action Plan sets out a range of actions to help improve health literacy for individuals, communities, and organisations. It prioritises health literacy awareness, the development of health literate organisations and workforces, and the creation of partnerships to improve health outcomes. [73] The plan builds upon existing Departmental and cross-sector initiatives, including a statewide Health Literacy Network and health literacy campaigns. [75]

The Department provides a range of resources to support the delivery of services that improve health literacy, such as e-learning modules and a workplace toolkit. [76][77][78] Further information about the Department's approach to health literacy is available on its website. [79]