

Tasmanian Government
By email: hello@wellbeing.tas.gov.au

To whom it may concern

Re Tasmania's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

I am writing to thank the Tasmanian Government for the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy*. The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) has promoted this consultation opportunity to all our Tasmanian members for direct online submission.

I would like to commend the Government for the development of the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy and Framework*, as they will help ensure all children and young people in Tasmania have the best start in life.

As the pre-eminent and national leader of the nursing profession, ACN understands the importance of comprehensive, holistic and evidence-based strategies to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people, ensuring they are given the opportunity to grow and flourish in a safe and healthy environment. ACN is particularly pleased to see the Government's co-design, collaborative approach, bringing children, families and service providers into the process as contributors and decision-makers. ACN has long advocated for the role of nurses in providing person-centred care that reflects the individual's needs, values and preferences, recognises them as experts in their own health, and empowers them to make informed decisions.¹ In 2020, ACN made the case for nurse leadership in the assessment and management of overweight and obesity in children,² while also providing a practical toolkit for primary health care nurses working with children above a healthy weight.³

ACN welcomes recognition of the importance of community nurse-led health care provision throughout the Strategy, particularly the Child Health and Parenting Service (CHaPS), Oral Health Services Tasmania (OHST) and School Health Nurses programs. Community and primary health care (C&PHC) nurses make up a significant component of Australia's health care system, providing frontline services to members of the community across the lifespan. This includes the health promotion and education for children and families, as well as the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of acute and chronic health conditions. In an upcoming White Paper, ACN advocates for comprehensive system redesign in C&PHC nursing to ensure a sustainable health care system for all Australians into the future.⁴ C&PHC nursing applies a social model of health care that addresses the health needs of individuals and communities while considering the social, economic and environmental factors impacting their health. This person-centred focus is attributed to all areas of nursing practice and provides an essential process of collaboration and partnership that takes place

¹ Australian College of Nursing 2014. Position statement: Person-centred care. <https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/position-statement-person-centred-care.pdf>

² Australian College of Nursing 2020. Position statement: The effectiveness of nurse-led interventions in the assessment and management of overweight and obese children and young people <https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/position-statement-assessment-management-overweight-obese-children-young-people.pdf>

³ Australian College of Nursing 2020. ACN Toolkit: Working with children above a healthy weight in primary health care: ACN Toolkit for nurses <https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/acn-toolkit-working-with-children-above-healthy-weight-primary-health-care.pdf>

⁴ [UPCOMING PUBLICATION] Australian College of Nursing, 'System Redesign in Community and Primary Health Care Nursing - Primary Health Care Fit for Purpose: A White Paper by ACN'. ACN, Canberra.



in the successful planning and delivery of care outside of the acute health care setting. ACN believes it is essential for any government strategy to capture evolving models of care required to ensure the C&PHC system works effectively and remains financially viable.

ACN welcomes the Government's commitment to ensuring children and young people get the best possible start in life. However, ACN believes nurses should be at the forefront of any reforms aimed at enhancing the health and wellbeing for those in this critical life stage. In an upcoming Position Statement, ACN highlights the vital role maternal, child and family health nurses (MCFHNs) play in providing high-quality, expert-informed and person-centred care across the lifespan. Numerous studies demonstrate the unique, highly specialised and complex role of MCFHNs in their communities. MCFHNs undertake health promotion, care provision for parents and their infants and children up to five years old. Additionally, they are required to have a sound understanding of breastfeeding, growth and development and perinatal mental health.⁵ A literature review found the MCFHN entailed navigating a complex set of challenges, including assessing parent-infant attachment, working with vulnerable and at-risk families, infant health surveillance and developing therapeutic, multidisciplinary relationships.⁶ For parents and their children, the period between birth and five years old is a critically important time. It requires health care professionals with a holistic, family-centred approach, and in-depth understanding of the various physical, mental, and emotional needs families face during this time of tremendous change.⁷

ACN is pleased to see the focus on children and young peoples' mental health throughout the Strategy. Strong support for children's mental health is the foundation of mental health and wellbeing in adulthood. A focus on preventing or intervening early in the progression of mental health conditions not only benefits infants and children but also creates a solid foundation for health outcomes later in life, making it a long-term investment in the future of the individual and the broader community. Therefore, ACN fully supports the Strategy to ensure children are supported to nurture their own and other's wellbeing; and have equitable access to high-quality and effective mental health services when required.

If you have further enquiries regarding this matter, please contact me, Dr Carolyn Stapleton FACN, Director of Policy, Strategy and Advocacy, at carolyn.stapleton@acn.edu.au.

Yours sincerely

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⁵ Fraser, S., Grant, J., & Mannix, T. (2016). Maternal child and family health nurses: delivering a unique nursing speciality. *Maternal and child health journal*, 20(12), 2557-2564.

⁶ Fraser, S., Grant, J., & Mannix, T. (2014). The role and experience of child and family health nurses in developed countries: A review of the literature. *Neonatal, Paediatric & Child Health Nursing*, 17(3), 2.
Rossiter, C., Schmied, V., Kemp, L., Fowler, C., Kruske, S., & Homer, C. S. (2017). Responding to families with complex needs: a national survey of child and family health nurses. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 73(2), 386-398.