

15 May 2025

Department of Health

Via email: consultation@health.tas.gov.au.

Re: Submission – DISCUSSION PAPER: Healthy, Active Tasmania; 20-Year Preventive Health Strategy 2026–2046

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the discussion paper pertaining to the 20-Year Preventive Health Strategy 2026–2046. Laurel House welcomes the chance to contribute to this important work.

Laurel House generally endorses work that prioritises practice approaches to keeping Tasmanians safe, healthy, and well. Our particular focus is on ensuring the safety, wellbeing, and healing of victim survivors of sexual assault and child sexual abuse.

Laurel House has made a joint submission to this consultation in partnership with the Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS), Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania (NHT), and Sexual Assault Support Services (SASS). This joint submission focusses on the prevention and response to child sexual abuse as a public health issue that requires a preventative health approach, linking explicitly to the implantation of the recommendations made in the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings and Keeping Children Safe strategy.

We emphasise that child sexual abuse increases the likelihood of other adverse health outcomes and places pressure on health (and other) systems. As a result, the prevention of child sexual abuse must be considered in this strategy. Preventive health policy should promote proactive investment in prevention of child sexual abuse to address structural issues for community members as well as services to break down barriers to access. The submission makes the following recommendations:

Recommendations

- a. Include the prevention of child sexual abuse as a dedicated focus area within the Strategy with clearly defined goals, measures and enablers.
- b. Embed a socio-ecological and public health model within the Strategy. Ensure prevention of child sexual abuse policy is inclusive, intersectional and culturally responsive.
- c. Identify and respond to existing barriers to preventing child sexual abuse;
- d. Invest in community-wide education, training and awareness raising focused on the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Include opportunities to improve or redesign current preventive health initiatives;



- e. Resource and expand trauma-informed, culturally safe, place-based and community-led services and supports.
- f. Provide flexible, long-term funding that enables preventative work;
- g. Enable ongoing and meaningful consultation, by;
 - a. Developing and maintaining an accessible, centralised public communications platform to share updates, consultation opportunities, evidence and work to progress preventative health goals.
 - b. Embedding co-design and lived experience leadership in policy design.
 - c. Embedding community voice, power-sharing and accountability mechanisms to support preventative health initiatives to reflect community needs.
- h. Include a focus on communities and the organisations that represent and serve them.
- i. Establish a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to accompany the Strategy.
- j. Provide clear roles for the private sector to partner with the community sector.
- k. Ensure there is whole of government policy coordination to reduce fragmentation and maximise collective impact on the rights, safety and wellbeing of children.

The purpose of this letter (coming from Laurel House as a specialist sexual assault support service and independently of the co-authors of the above-mentioned joint submission) is to make explicit that while our joint submission focuses specifically on child sexual abuse, the issues, key messages, and recommendations are also generally relevant to sexual assault more broadly.

As with child sexual abuse, the prevention and response to sexual assault as a public health issue that also requires a preventative health approach, acknowledging that experiences of sexual assault increase the likelihood of other adverse health outcomes.

We highlight that the response to support, justice, and healing for victim-survivors of sexual assault at any age should also be seen as a prevention initiative. Sustainably and well-funded specialist sexual assault support services play a critical role not only in responding to harm but also in preventing future violence. By providing trauma-informed care, our services support victim-survivors to heal, rebuild trust, and break cycles of silence and shame.

This healing creates stronger, safer communities, reduces the long-term social and economic costs of trauma, and empowers individuals to speak out and challenge harmful norms. When survivors are believed, supported, and resourced, it sends a powerful message that violence is unacceptable—making specialist services a vital part of a broader strategy for prevention.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for any future consultation processes related to reforms impacting the health and wellbeing of victim-survivors. We value the opportunity to contribute to strategies that promote prevention of harm and healing.

Kind regards,



Kathryn Fordyce
Chief Executive Officer, Laurel House

