Our Ref: BS | LR

13 January 2025

Ms Marnie Bower
Assistant Director
Department Premier and Cabinet
Keeping Children Safe Reform Unit
Via email: changeforchildren@dpac.tas.gov.au

Dear Ms Bower

Revised Change for Children Strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the *Revised Change for Children Strategy* (RCCS). This submission has been prepared by the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) on behalf of Tasmanian local government in collaboration with our members; all 29 councils.

LGAT is incorporated under the *Local Government Act 1993* and is the representative body and advocate for local government in Tasmania. Where a council has made a direct submission to this process, any omission of specific comments made by that council in this submission should not be viewed as lack of support by LGAT for that specific issue.

We thank the Reform Unit for the opportunity to be involved in the review and redraft process of the revised Change for Children Strategy (the Strategy). It is pleasing to see the updated strategy reflecting many voices and embracing a whole of community approach that will be required to achieve sustainable cultural and system change. In particular, we welcome the acknowledgement of local government as a key partner to deliver and be a leader in change.

Please contact Bec Stevenson, Senior Policy Advisor if you have any questions or would like further information, at bec.stevenson@lgat.tas.gov.au or (03) 6146 3748.

Yours sincerely,

Dion Lester
Chief Executive Officer

LGAT Submission: Revised Change for Children Strategy

Introduction

Local government plays an essential and supportive role in the implementation of *Change for Children: Tasmania's 10-Year Strategy for Upholding the Rights of Children by Preventing, Identifying, and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse*. The successful delivery of this strategy hinges on sustained collaborative cultural change, empowering individuals, communities, and organisations to take proactive steps in preventing and addressing child sexual abuse.

Over the past 18 months, we have actively engaged with the government during the development of the *Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023*, and the practical implementation of the Child Safe Standards. We have consistently advocated for the recognition that with appropriate resourcing local government is uniquely positioned to support the statewide, consistent, and community-focused implementation of the Child Safe Standards. This would further cement the sector's commitment to child safety.

In February 2024, we began contributing to the State Government's implementation of the Tasmanian Commission of Inquiry recommendation to develop a whole-of-government child sexual abuse reform strategy for preventing, identifying, and responding to child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviours. Local government's contribution to reform will be practical action through partnerships in local communities. This principle drives our Safeguarding Children Project Plan as a Change Lead organisation.

The critical acknowledgment of local government's unique role and perspectives within the communities it serves was initially absent from the draft Change for Children Strategy. This is despite the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse including this acknowledgement. It is pleasing that the State Government has incorporated our feedback and involved us in the workshops and redraft process of the RCCS. The recognition of local government as a key partner and leader in delivering change is a significant and welcomed inclusion in the revised Strategy.

As outlined in the revised Strategy, local government involvement is critical for achieving its objectives and fostering safer, more resilient communities across Tasmania.

Response to the Consultation Draft

Support for Guiding Principles

We strongly support the guiding principles outlined in the RCCS, particularly the recognition of local government within these principles. Councils and community organisations already play a pivotal role in promoting safety and wellbeing. Councils are essential partners in building and maintaining child-safe communities and are uniquely positioned to engage early with children and their families.

Role as Practical Partners

Local government serves as practical role models and partners in promoting safety. With their direct, localised engagement with communities, schools, and organisations, councils

are uniquely placed to drive initiatives that enhance safety, education, and awareness. Where there is appropriate support, councils through partnerships have the ability to implement localised, culturally sensitive solutions, to ensure that preventative measures and responses are effective and tailored to the unique needs of individual communities.

Valued and Collaborative Voices

The inclusion of local government in consultations and decision-making processes in the RCCS recognises the sector's valuable and unique voice. This, alongside LGATs ongoing participation on behalf of the sector as a Change Lead, will ensure councils' distinctive perspectives and practical insights into community dynamics are captured to support the strategy's long-term outcomes.

By leveraging this knowledge, the reforms become more relevant and impactful.

Implementing Change for Children

Through collaborative partnerships with community organisations and other stakeholders, councils can play a critical role in the successful implementation of the RCCS and Action Plans. By providing essential services, supporting awareness campaigns, and building trust and transparency in reporting mechanisms, councils exemplify the principles of partnership and community engagement.

The results of the Governments *Systems Change: Baseline Understanding on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention, Identification and Response Survey* highlighted the importance of moving away from siloed approaches towards a unified model based on trust and mutual understanding. This acknowledgment within the RCCS demonstrates the government's willingness to listen and embrace change. Local government's response rate and insights from the local government sector in the survey demonstrates its high level of interest to change.

We look forward to working with the State Government through 2025 to develop the Collaboration for Change 2025-26 Action Plan and the Change for Children Outcome and Evaluation Framework. We will also be continuing our work with individual councils to help achieve the vision of making Tasmanian communities safer for children and young people.