

Press Release: Tasmanian Government Fails Aboriginal Children

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre has joined with other organisations in regretting the early departure of the Children's Commissioner, Mark Morrissey. CEO Heather Sculthorpe said, "Mr Morrissey brought a much needed sense of optimism to the role after the previous series of disastrous appointments. The 5 year appointment was intended to ensure the independence and integrity of the role, but it now seems clear that political decisions have resulted in his early departure. Minister Petrusma's disastrous handling of the children in care agencies and her total failure to ensure adequate attention to the needs of Aboriginal children and families are clear indicators that this Tasmanian government continues to fail children and young people in the State".

Ms Sculthorpe said that although Aboriginal children are over-represented in Tasmania's child protection system and the number of Aboriginal children placed in accordance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principles is amongst the worst in the country, the State refuses to fund Aboriginal family and child safety services. "Tasmanian legislation requires the involvement of the Aboriginal community and its agencies in decisions about the care and placement of Aboriginal children, but pleas to the Minister for funding to enable this function to be performed adequately have gone unanswered. Ignoring the State's most vulnerable children and young people continues despite the many reviews and recommendations that have been made over recent years," Ms Sculthorpe said.

"We commend Commissioner Morrissey on the caring and enthusiasm he has shown during his term of office. We assume the frustration which has led to his early departure is connected to similar frustrations our organisation feels about this government's failings. Let's hope the problems which must have plagued his tenure will be revealed before a new appointment is made", Ms Sculthorpe said.

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