

Supporting Children and Families

An Alternative to a Lower School Starting Age

A Tasmanian Greens Policy Initiative

Launched by Andrea Dawkins MP

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A young boy with dark hair, wearing a blue and white striped polo shirt, is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. He is in a library or bookstore, with bookshelves filled with books in the background. To his left, the arm and shoulder of another child in a pink and white striped shirt are visible. The entire image is overlaid with a green geometric pattern of overlapping triangles.

**THE
GREENS**

> YOUR GREEN TEAM IN PARLIAMENT



> WANT MORE INFO?

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Supporting Children and Families

An Alternative to a Lower School Starting Age

The Greens will deliver 11 new Child and Family Centres across Tasmania

> THE ISSUE

- The Hodgman Government has proposed lowering the mandatory starting age for Prep to four and a half and the Kindergarten starting age to three and a half.
- All the evidence worldwide tells us that this will be detrimental for our children¹, particularly those who are developmentally vulnerable.²
- Earlier engagement in play-based learning leads to better outcomes. However, the Prep curriculum is not play based learning in the education policy sense.³
- The available evidence suggests that for Tasmania's relative socio-economic status our education performance prior to Year 10 is above the national average.⁴
- The evidence also suggests that for Tasmania's relative socio-economic status, our rate of developmental vulnerability is low.⁵
- Reforms counter to best practice evidence could jeopardize Tasmania's relatively strong pre-Year 10 performance.

> OUR PLAN

- The Greens will focus on early development through proven programs that engage families, children and communities.
- The Greens will roll out four Child and Family Centres in the first year, three in the second year, two in the third year, and two in fourth year.
- The Greens will work with smaller regions to deliver similar programs through existing infrastructure.

> PRIORITY LOCATIONS

The Greens will consult with communities to best determine the areas of highest need. It is proposed that regions with low Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) scores, high youth populations and no immediate access take priority.

The Greens have identified the following areas as high priority for new Child and Family Centres:

- Smithton
- West Ulverstone
- Wynyard
- Triabunna
- Longford
- Deloraine
- Nubeena
- Scottsdale
- Geilston Bay
- Huonville
- Youngtown



- New Child and Family Centres
- Existing Child and Family Centres

> POLICY RATIONALE

Child and Family Centres provide a range of services to families with children from birth to age five.

Centres work towards improving health and educational outcomes, build on family and community strengths, and provide pathways to successful complimentary programs like *Launch into Learning*.

Child and Family Centres have been praised as highly successful. A recent evaluation report⁶ commented that:

"...centres were successfully engaging, supporting and working with families to give their children the best start in life."

Similar programs have been operational in the US for some time. Several decades of analysis have supported the model.⁷

"This will put in place the social infrastructure to change the educational outcomes of a generation"

> REFERENCES

1. See [Sandra E. Black, Paul J. Devereux, and Kjell G. Salvanes \(2011\)](#), [Peter Fredriksson and Björn Öckert \(2005\)](#), [Peter Fredriksson and Björn Öckert \(2009\)](#), [Szilvia Hamori \(2007\)](#), and [Lex Borghans and Ron Diris \(2015\)](#)
2. See [Julia B Isaacs \(2012\)](#) and [Susan B Neuman \(2006\)](#).
3. See [Debbie Cole \(2012\)](#), [Goodstart Early Learning \(2016\)](#) and [Cynthia Hoisington \(2008\)](#) for a description of play based learning and the Australian Curriculum for a description of the [Foundation Year \(Prep\) Curriculum](#).
4. See [Prof Eleanor Ramsay and Prof Michael Rowan \(2016\)](#).
5. See the [Australian Early Development Census](#).
6. See [Telethon Kids Institute](#).
7. See [Eliana Garcés, Duncan Thomas and Janet Currie \(2000\)](#), [J Currie, D Thomas \(1998\)](#), [W. Stephen Barnett \(1995\)](#) and [Martha Abbott-Shim, Richard Lambert & Frances McCarty \(2003\)](#).

> TABLE 1: Initiative Expenditure/Investment

	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year
	\$M	\$M	\$M	\$M
Child and Family Centre Construction	15.91	12.19	8.3	8.47
Ongoing costs	-	1.28	2.31	3.06
Total	15.91	13.47	10.61	11.53