

Department of Communities Tasmania

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The General Manager
City of Launceston
18 - 28 St John Street
Launceston TAS 7250

Dear Sir / Madam,

Subject: Response to public feedback on the Development Application.

Development Application:	DA0464/2021
Project:	Launceston Youth At Risk Centre
Property:	31 Brisbane Street Launceston

In response to a request from the City of Launceston Council, I provide the following information on the proposed Launceston Youth at Risk Centre.

Background and context

The Tasmanian Government is committed to working in partnership with families, community services and the broader community to improve the wellbeing of children and young people in Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework defines wellbeing as when a child or young person feels loved and safe; has access to material basics; has their physical, mental and emotional health needs met; is learning; is participating; and has a positive sense of culture and identity.

The Tasmanian Government has responded to a serious need in our community by developing the Youth at Risk Centre model. This model provides safe, supported accommodation for young Tasmanians aged between 12-15 years who are unable to safely live with their family of origin and who find themselves alone and with nowhere to live.

Tasmania's first Youth at Risk Centre in Moonah (Colville Place) was successfully introduced in 2018 under the first Affordable Housing Action Plan 2015 – 2019 (Action Plan 1). Action Plan 2 commits to a second Youth at Risk Centre in Launceston. The Launceston Centre will build off the successful operations of Colville Place and provide an important new service for children and young people in the greater Launceston area.

How it will operate?

The objective of a Youth at Risk Centre is to provide a safe and secure home for children and young people 12-15 years old who are alone and experiencing (or at risk of) homelessness.

The Centre will be based on strong collaboration and engagement with the young person and allied services to build connections for the young person and reunify them with their family of origin and if that is not possible for safety reasons, transition them to an alternative safe home.

The Centre will provide a home-like environment, essential for the health and wellbeing of for up to eight young people. This supported accommodation model provides a safe home with meals, laundry services, and individual bedrooms with study areas. One bedroom will be designed to disability accessibility standards.

Each young person's circumstances are unique and their supported accommodation needs will vary, so young people may stay a few nights or up to 12 months or longer if appropriate. The support and accommodation will be provided as long as the young person needs it and will ensure they do not exit into homelessness.

The service will operate under the supervision of male and female staff, with a minimum of one staff member present 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A separate staff bedroom with an ensuite will be provided for overnight stays along with meeting rooms, staff offices, etc. A full time Youth Coordinator will manage the service in conjunction with a minimum of three Youth Development Coaches, Support Workers and Clinical Support staff. Staff on-site will be there to deliver the service, work with the young people and ensure a safe, secure and well-managed site.

Key principles for the operations of the service are outlined below.

- **be developmentally appropriate** – the service will be appropriate for the developmental ages of the resident children and young people. It will apply an **Advantage Thinking** approach to build young people's resilience, strength and readiness to make a positive contribution to the community and move towards a successful transition to adulthood. Negotiating relationships, developing life and independent living skills, understanding sexual identity, developing an understanding of what they value and stand for are all part of the working with young people their developmental stage
- **strengthen family connections** – the goal is that young people are able to return to the care of parents and family. Where this is not safe or possible, the goal will be to build capacity of the child or young person to transition to an alternative safe and stable place to live longer-term
- **a coordinated service response** – the organisation managing the centre will work with key allied services and provide a care-team approach to deliver a connected and integrated service.
- **a child centred response** – the centre will create opportunities for children and young people to participate in the decisions affecting them so they are an active participant in their own life; including being able to have a say and have their opinion heard and valued
- **safety and security** –the Centre will provide a safe and secure environment for residents and be positive and good neighbours. Behavioural agreements will be in place just like in any home with teenagers to deliver a safe, secure place for the resident, neighbours and broader community eg curfews, visiting hours, and appropriate behaviours. These agreements are common across other similar services such as Colville Place and essential for young people learning boundaries and life skills. Experience and research indicate young people need and welcome clear and consistent structure.
- **culturally responsive** – the centre will be culturally appropriate and inclusive of diversity including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, other cultures, community identity, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation and difference of thought, ideas and interests
- **be child safe** – the centre will adopt the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations so the centre:
 - creates an environment where children's safety and wellbeing are at the centre of thought, values and actions
 - places emphasis on genuine engagement with and valuing of children and young people
 - creates conditions that reduce the likelihood of harm to children and young people
 - creates conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying any harm
 - responds to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm.

A care team and youth support plan will be designed for each resident based on their individual needs, applying a strengths-based approach. A key focus will be connecting young people with school and education programs and providing education in essential living skills.

Semi-formal meeting and entertainment spaces are provided to encourage engagement and involvement by young people with support staff and services. This will encourage and support young people to discuss ideas, concerns, provide feedback and suggestions, and to address such things as general business and rules relating to the centre. These meeting rooms will also be used to interview young people to assess their needs, discuss progress against their individual plans and work with external services such as counselling, education or support providers.

As outlined above, an important element is the property will provide a home-like environment through its operation, staffing and building. The property was selected because it is not clinical or institutional. It is well located to services and supports young people to access schools and local parks and services. The property will be furnished to provide a home-like environment for young residents including across the dining area, a kitchen and entertainment areas.

With the location being part of the 'Arts Precinct' of Launceston and close distance to 'Aurora Stadium', opportunities for healthy, active recreational and creative activities will be provided and encouraged for residents to participate in individually and as a group. These activities will also include participation in local youth activities external to the centre, such as Launceston City Mission's Art Therapy, Healthy Headspace, Squad Goals and Life Hacks in the Kitchen workshops – part of their Young People Living Well program. It will be important to also work with ReLink to link residents to their social, sporting and arts programs.

Who will manage the centre?

Youth, Family and Community Connections (YFCC) was selected to operate the centre through a competitive procurement process. YFCC are a Tasmanian-based, non-government organisation with over 40 years extensive experience providing crisis and transitional support and accommodation services for young people in Tasmania.

YFCC provides a range of services to young people, families and individuals in communities in Tasmania, with the aim that they are able to access to the support, encouragement and resources they need. They value integrity, diversity, initiative and collaboration.

YFCC provide highly qualified staff with expertise in the community services sector, professional and effective counsellors who have skills and experience in delivering services to a diverse population in a range of settings, and extensive contract and project management experience and skills.

YFCC will use the international Education First model in their approach, based on Advantage Thinking. This supports young people to develop and succeed in education and employment, and shares the vision of the Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework. YFCC recognises the need to work in partnership with families, community services, neighbours and the broader community to improve the wellbeing of children and young people in Tasmania.

YFCC have committed to consult with relevant stakeholders, allied services and neighbours of the centre to successfully integrate the new service into the local community. They have a strong track record of positively engaging with stakeholders around their services.

They will implement a detailed and comprehensive communications plan to engage with all stakeholders, neighbours and the local community.

I trust this information assists with your assessment of the Development Application and any submissions from local stakeholders. Representatives from Communities Tasmania and YFCC would welcome the opportunity to support the application with further information and if required, providing a presentation to Council members and/or answering any additional queries.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Gilmour
Director, Portfolio & Supply
Department of Communities Tasmania

Dated 22 October 2021