

MEDIA RELEASE
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Auditor-General's report to Parliament on implementing the Strong Family Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line

The Auditor-General, Mr Rod Whitehead, has tabled his Report on the Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line.

The audit assessed whether, as the primary point of access, the Advice and Referral Line had been implemented effectively to provide expected levels of service to support the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

Overall, Mr Whitehead found the Advice and Referral Line was meeting its intended outcomes as outlined in the Strong Families Safe Kids reforms, although 7 recommendations were made to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Advice and Referral Line.

Mr Whitehead stated there were clear drivers and rationale for change to the overall child safety system, with a key pillar of the reforms being the establishment of a 'single front door' that eventually became the Advice and Referral Line. Although the push for detailed planning and rollout of the Advice and Referral Line did not occur until two years into the reforms, leading to truncated timeframes for delivery, the implementation was broadly successful.

In assessing whether the Advice and Referral Line was operating effectively, Mr Whitehead said, 'Access to the Advice and Referral Line by telephone or use of the on-line form is broadly effective, although improvements to the early intervention pathways out of the Advice and Referral Line are required to realise the goals of the Advice and Referral Line and broader Strong Family Safe Kids reforms'. Pleasingly, Mr Whitehead said a key outcome from the reforms was a decrease in referrals that needed to be assessed by Child Safety Services, enabling it to focus on more complex and resource intensive cases.

Mr. Whitehead found the understanding of the Advice and Referral Line and its role amongst stakeholders was not strong. This was attributed to inconsistent feedback to referrers and clients and not enough education on role of the Advice and Referral Line.

Whilst the Department of Communities Tasmania was monitoring the success of the Advice and Referral Line through the reduction in referrals to Child Safety Services and reduction in children placed in out of home care, Mr Whitehead stated client satisfaction with the Advice and Referral Line had not yet been subject to a detailed review.

The complete Report can be downloaded from www.audit.tas.gov.au.

ENDS

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