

Tasmania's childhood trauma rates rise sharply, Australian Childhood Foundation report finds

By Ellen Coulter

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Incidents of childhood trauma in Tasmania have reached a five-year high, according to a report by the Australian Childhood Foundation.

The foundation's report found conditions that led to abuse, violence and trauma for children in the state were getting worse.

The report's co-author Joe Tucci said there was also a large number of children in urgent need of trauma intervention who were not getting it.

"We know that there are at least three times as many children who haven't been able to get a service from us because of a lack of funds," he said.

Foster carer Judy said she had seen the impacts of trauma on children first hand.

"Just feeling generally that life's not worth living and 'I'm very sad', and 'I don't know why I'm alive', and 'I feel really sad'," she said.

She said her foster children had used Tasmania's Child Trauma Service, which provided specialist counselling to children who had experienced abuse and family violence.

The service is run by the Australian Childhood Foundation.

Its report showed the service had accepted referrals for 245 children requiring specialised trauma services over the past five years.

The highest number has come in 2014.

Mr Tucci said the children's issues were becoming more complex.

"So these kids have got higher levels of trauma," he said.

"They've experienced higher levels of disruption and dislocation from their community and their family and they need a lot more support."

Parental drug and alcohol misuse is a factor in 93 per cent of current cases, compared with 72 per cent in 2010.

The number of parents experiencing mental illness also rose steeply to 85 per cent compared with 38 per cent in 2010.

"Families aren't coping with the modern day rigours of life and unfortunately for themselves, they're also not necessarily able to access the kinds of services and support they need," Mr Tucci said.

He said the foundation wanted to expand the service to reach more children but its contract would end next year.

In a statement, Human Services Minister Jacquie Petrusma said specialised therapy services for children in out-of-home care would continue and were currently subject to a tender process.

Topics: community-and-society, child-abuse, child-care, child-health-and-behaviour, tas

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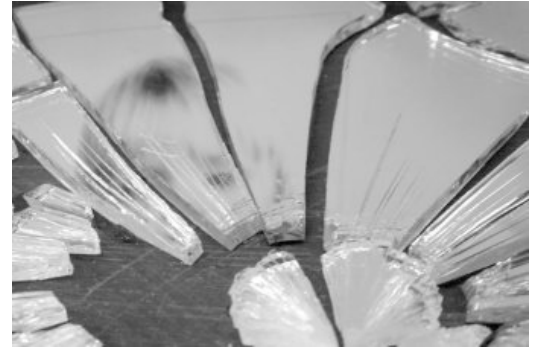


PHOTO: The Australian Childhood Foundation has accepted referrals for 245 children requiring trauma services in the past five years. (Kat Jackson: www.sxc.hu)

MAP: TAS

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Australian Childhood Foundation Chief Executive Joe Tucci

