

## Media Release

### Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## Researcher to reveal key elements to success of Tasmania's early years services

A leading education and early years researcher is glowing in his praise of Tasmania's Child and Family Centres.

Associate Professor Nick Hopwood, from the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) School of Education, will share findings from a three-year study of services for children and families in New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania in a Peter Underwood Centre presentation in Hobart on Wednesday.

"What the Child and Family Centres (CFCs) are trying to do is not new but the way they are going about it is different, and what they are achieving as a result is just remarkable," Associate Professor Hopwood said.

"Mothers have said they wished their older children had been born when the Child and Family Centres were available."

The Department of Education's CFCs offer a one-stop shop of services for children from birth to five years, principal carers and families. This mix differs according to local needs, as identified by the community.

Their establishment was announced by the Tasmanian Government in 2009.

Associate Professor Hopwood said the core values, architecture and most importantly the persistent and flexible approaches of staff were the key elements in the success of the CFCs.

"The physical spaces are very important, and are undoubtedly helping to make some innovative practices possible," he said.

"They are happy places for children.

"Values around family inclusion, community consultation and collaboration are demonstrably being enacted in the day-to-day work in the CFCs.

“And the professional teams in the CFCs embody a dynamic constellation of the right mix of the right people.

“Together, these ingredients are producing agile, persistent and evolving work at the frontier of support for families with young children that is making a real difference and breaking cycles through which disadvantage is perpetuated.”

Child and Family Centres are located in Beaconsfield, Bridgewater, Burnie, Chigwell, Clarence Plains, the Derwent Valley, East Devonport, George Town, Geeveston, Queenstown, Ravenswood and St Helens.

The research project, *Creating Better Futures* – which was funded by the Australian Research Council - examined interactions between professionals, volunteers and parents; traced outcomes months after interventions concluded; and compared diverse approaches to service delivery.

The aim was to identify the most effective ways parenting services help families in adverse circumstances to build parents’ confidence, capacity and resilience, rather than solving the problems on their behalf.

Associate Professor Hopwood said the importance of early intervention was a “no-brainer”.

“We know that the first few years of life are particularly crucial and that the right support at this time can shift children’s trajectories for years to come,” he said.

“But there is a big difference between recognising that and pulling it off in practice.

Associate Professor Hopwood will reveal the most effective initiatives at a Horizon Series presentation for the Peter Underwood Centre on Wednesday, 8 November.

“Crucially these are all features of existing practices and can be implemented in many settings without the need for major re-organisations or retraining of staff,” he said.

Launched in February 2015, the Peter Underwood Centre is a partnership between the University of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Government in association with the Office of the Governor of Tasmania.

**Interviews/photos:** By arrangement.

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