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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**A mental health response for young Tasmanians**

The Mental Health Council of Tasmania (MHCT) has released a report detailing the experience of Tasmania's young people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Building upon the work undertaken in November of 2019 as part of their Tasmanian Youth Mental Health Forum, during 2020 and 2021 MHCT facilitated discussions with interested community members and mental health services providers, including a series of consultations with over 370 young people across Tasmania, to hear about the barriers to maintaining their mental wellbeing.

In regional and remote communities across Tasmania in particular, young people cited a lack of services in their community as a major barrier to achieving and maintaining good mental wellbeing.

The impacts of COVID have compounded and highlighted many ongoing concerns held by young people, leading to reduced hope for their future, with many feeling that the pandemic has limited the opportunities they would have otherwise looked forward to.

MHCT CEO, Connie Digolis, said, "With many young Tasmanians coming to a crucial crossroad in their lives, they're looking for assurances and certainty about what lies ahead. Because of the pandemic though, they're faced with uncertainty, which is impacting on their mental wellbeing. While we may not be able to remove the uncertainty entirely, we can ensure that our young people are supported through this challenging period."

Mental health service providers across the state have seen an increasing number of young people trying to access support. They also noted that those that are reaching out are presenting with poorer levels of mental health and increasingly complex issues. This has increased pressure on the mental health sector, meaning young people are waiting longer to access the support they need.

The MHCT report highlights a series of nine opportunities for change, to help address the issues raised during consultations, and build a brighter future for Tasmania's young people:

1. Develop system-wide interim solutions to ease service capacity constraints
2. Implement measures to better integrate the youth mental health system
3. Develop a central access point service model
4. Provide youth peer work in mental health care
5. Develop mental health literacy and health promotion campaigns
6. Promote and expand capacity of early intervention supports
7. Improve service accessibility
8. Provide safe identity-based social groups and support services
9. Focus on Workforce Development

Ms. Digolis acknowledged that while there is promising work underway, there is still a lot that needs to be done.

"Everyone that we talk to across communities, government and the mental health sector, recognises the importance of providing our young people with the support and guidance they need to maintain their mental wellbeing. We must now work together to build the strength and hope of our young Tasmanians, ensuring no matter where they live, they have the support and opportunities they need to thrive."

The full MHCT Youth Report can be found via [the MHCT website](#).

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