

# Media release

Friday 2 May 2025

## New primary care family and sexual violence support service

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**General practices and Aboriginal medical services will soon have help to better support victim-survivors of family and sexual violence.**

Primary Health Tasmania (Tasmania PHN) has commissioned experienced local organisation Engender Equality to deliver Tasmanian Primary Care Family and Sexual Violence Support, with funding under an Australian Government pilot.

Engender Equality will work with the Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS) and Laurel House to deliver the free service.

Primary Health Tasmania Acting CEO Susan Powell said the service will help GPs and other practice staff identify and support their patients experiencing family and sexual violence, including child abuse.

"It will also help them refer their patients to specialist services, increasing the likelihood of victim-survivors receiving the support they need as quickly as possible," she said.

"Research shows one in five women make their first disclosure of family violence to their GP – so it's important GPs know how best to respond, and which specialist services they can refer their patients to.

"This new service will provide practical support to GPs in the short term, and help build their knowledge and capacity over the long term.

"It will also help improve integration and coordination between people involved in supporting victim-survivors."

Engender CEO Alina Thomas says the service is due to start on Tuesday 6 May.

"At Engender Equality, we are committed to creating communities where everyone can live free from violence," she said.

"This primary care pilot is a significant step towards achieving that vision by integrating our expertise with primary care providers across Tasmania.

"We will be reaching out to all general practices and Aboriginal medical services around the state to introduce the service and explain how they can connect with it."

Ms Thomas said Engender Equality's collaboration with Laurel House and SASS brings together an unrivalled depth of specialist knowledge in family, domestic and sexual violence, and child sexual abuse.

"Together, we will provide comprehensive support to GPs who in turn will be able help victim-survivors and their families navigate confronting and complex situations," she said.

SASS CEO Shirleyann Varney said this initiative is about "creating safer and more supportive environments for everyone".

"Through this pilot, we aim to build stronger relationships with primary care providers, ensuring victim-survivors receive timely, specialist, and trauma-informed support," she said.

Laurel House CEO Kathryn Fordyce said engaging with rural and remote communities is crucial in the mission to address family, domestic and sexual violence and child sexual abuse.

"General practices and Aboriginal medical services play a pivotal role in this effort, as they are often the first point of contact for victim-survivors in these areas," she said.

"As well as having specialist staff based in each region of Tasmania, this new service will be available by phone and online – meaning no practice will miss out on support, no matter where they are based."

General practices and Aboriginal medical services will be able to find out more at [engenderequality.org.au/pcfsv](http://engenderequality.org.au/pcfsv) (**note:** this website will be live from Tuesday 6 May).

Family, domestic and sexual violence can affect people of any age and gender. Statistics show at least 28% of Tasmanian women have experienced sexual and/or intimate partner violence (*ABS, Personal Safety Survey, 2021-22*). About the same proportion of all Tasmanians have experienced child sexual abuse (*Australian Child Maltreatment Study, 2023*).

Primary Health Tasmania is also in the process of commissioning the delivery of training to help Tasmanian GPs and their practice teams recognise, respond to and refer cases of family, domestic and sexual violence and child sexual abuse.

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### **Reporting on family, domestic and sexual violence**

#### **Please consider including the following crisis support lines:**

- 1800RESPECT – 1800 737 732 (National Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Counselling Service)
- 1800MYSUPPORT – 1800 697 877 (Tasmania's Sexual Assault Support Line – supported by SASS in southern Tasmania and Laurel House in north and north-west Tasmania)

Primary Health Tasmania Limited  
1300 653 169  
[info@primaryhealthtas.com.au](mailto:info@primaryhealthtas.com.au)  
ABN 47 082 572 629