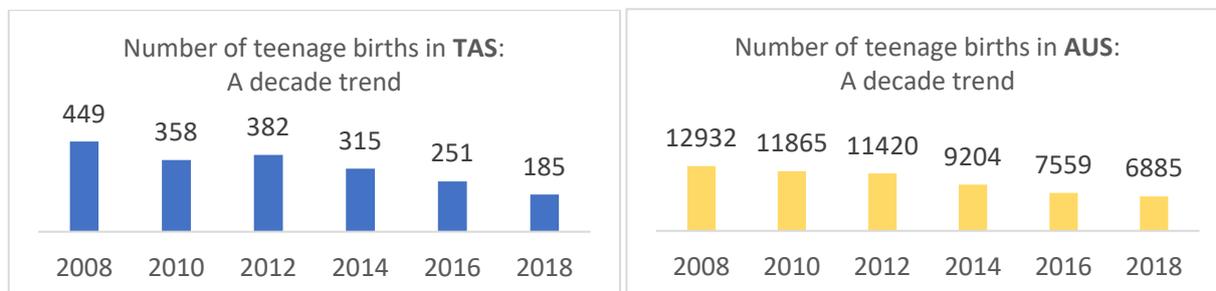
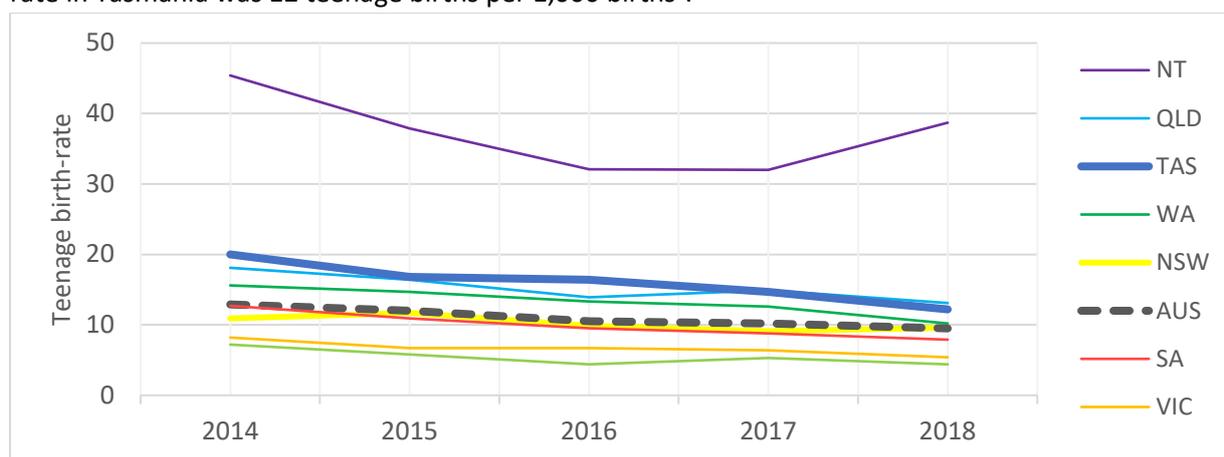


PREVALENCE

The number of births by girls and women age 19 or under in Australia has gone down over time. Australian teenage births almost halved between 2008-2018 and in Tasmania they declined by 40%. But there are still thousands of teenage women giving birth in Australia each year¹.



The teenage birth-rate in Tasmania is among the highest in the country. This rate is measured by the number of births to females aged 19 and under per thousand live births. In 2018, the teenage birth-rate in Tasmania was 12 teenage births per 1,000 births¹.



TEEN PARENTS' ASPIRATIONS

To support teen parents with their education, it is important to look beyond the statistics and listen to what these young people themselves have to say. Pregnant and parenting teens have high aspirations for themselves and their child^{2,4,5,10,12,14,16}.



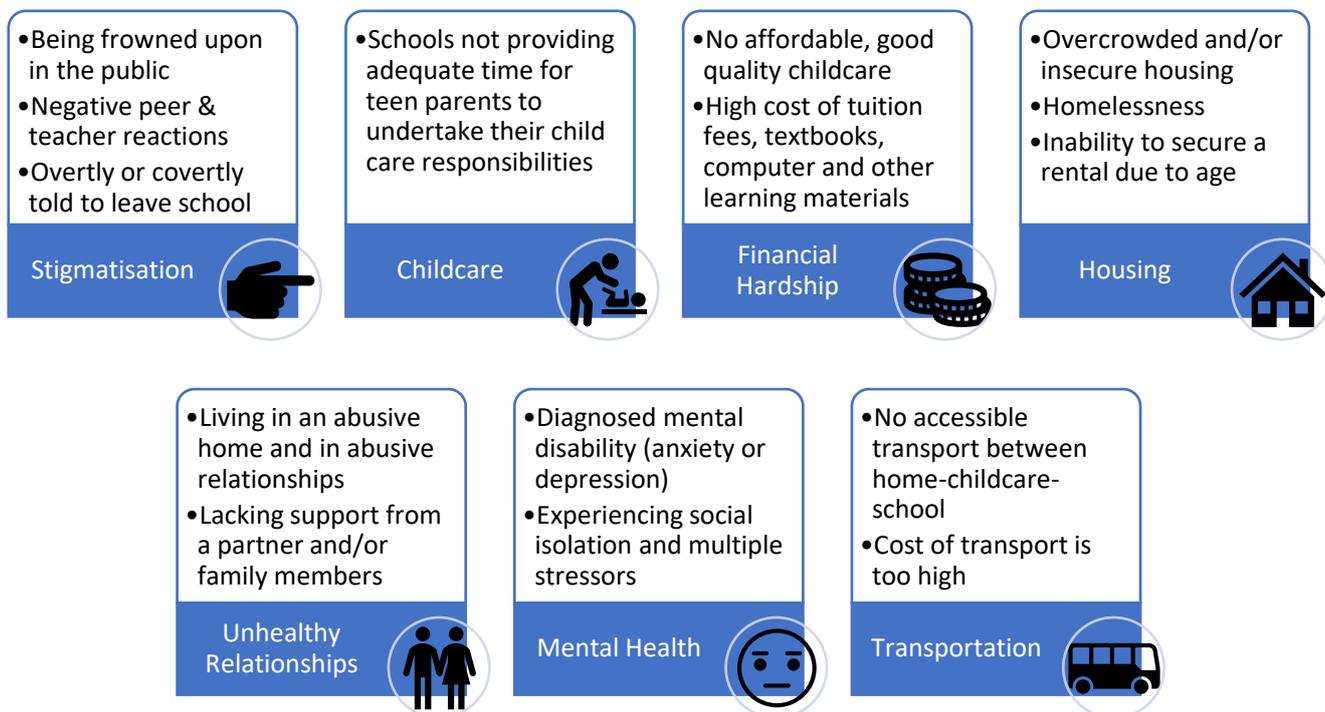
"We do want to be a good parent and give the best to our children, and to re-connect to education or employment and improve our lives."⁴

"I dropped out in grade 10 and I was out of home when I was 16 so when I became pregnant I wanted to strive more for my future."²

"My new goals are gaining a good job to provide for my children and also assist my children to become happy, healthy and well-rounded adults one day. I think for both of those goals education is the key."²

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS FOR TEEN PARENTS

Despite their high aspirations, pregnant and parenting teens face many barriers to success. Often, these challenges are interrelated^{2,4,5,10,11,13,15}:



EDUCATION FOR PREGNANT & PARENTING TEENS

Although there are legal protections and high-level commitments for pregnant and parenting teens to remain in education^{2,5,8,10}, this does not always translate to support on the ground. Reasons for these young people to leave school tend to be more to do with the barriers above, and with lack of school support, rather than with being pregnant itself^{2,5,8,10,11,14}.

Advice from one young parent to other young parents is:

“Going to school is important. Things will be easier with education.”²

The Tasmanian Department of Education Retaining and Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Students policy highlights that schools have the responsibility to ensure that these students are supported in continuing their education. There are two general principles for this support⁸:

- 1 Schools will be places where pregnant and parenting students are welcome even if their attendance is disrupted due to issues associated with pregnancy and parenting.
- 2 Schools will act to prevent direct and indirect discrimination, including harassment or exclusion, on the basis of being pregnant or a parent.

Example: Young Mums Program

Claremont College runs a program for young mothers and mothers-to-be. This program is a great way to continue your education while meeting new people and having fun. By participating in the Young Mums Program you will be able to complete subjects which contribute to gaining your TCE.⁷

SUPPORTING PREGNANT AND PARENTING TEENS

As outlined in the Department of Education Tasmania's policy document, schools should support pregnant or parenting students by⁸ (see also 2,10,11):

Nominating a case manager (a social worker or key teacher) to support the student.

Developing flexible programs to accommodate the student's educational needs and actively promoting the importance of completing school.

Providing students with advice about school based support to help them make informed decisions about their future.

Ensuring that professional development, training and appropriate resources are available to staff to assist them in supporting the student.

Ensuring that curriculum content and teaching practices reflect and support this policy.

Developing links with other services to ensure that the health, welfare, financial, social needs of the students are met in ways which increase the chances of them completing their education.

Developing and promoting a policy to retain pregnant and parenting teens in education.

Developing processes to monitor educational provisions and outcomes for pregnant and parenting students.

If necessary, in the last few weeks of the student's pregnancy, seek advice from her doctor in relation to her participation at school.

As an additional resource, the Department of Education Western Australia⁹ provides an extensive checklist for schools, principals, teachers, case managers to use when establishing whether appropriate actions have been taken in supporting pregnant or parenting students.

What does the evidence say about best practices for supporting these teens?^{3,4,5,6,11}



Services that provide a wrap-around approach are most useful: either through direct service delivery or by referring the teens to other trusted agencies. This includes services that provide education support, counselling, health care, and education about child development to teenage parents.

Youth-friendly services are non-judgemental and help pregnant and parenting teens with support, dignity, security and an optimism towards the teens' and their children's future. The use of peer mentoring in youth-friendly spaces has shown to benefit as well.



Sex and relationships education that is effective in reducing the rate of teenage pregnancy often is delivered professionally by trained individuals or teachers; considers the range of attitudes and values that young people bring about the topics; includes a variety of teaching methods; and involves the local community.

Awareness of the teens' diverse backgrounds and circumstances is also crucial, for example young people from First Nations background, from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, with particular mental or physical health needs, in out of home care, or experiencing homelessness.



Improving outcomes for pregnant and parenting young people also means improving the prospects of their children for healthy and happy lives.

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