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Invest in Tasmanians

*Face the Challenges Ahead*

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2010-2011

State Budget Submission



***Invest in Tasmanians  
Face the Challenges Ahead***

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**Tasmanian Council of Social  
Service**

**Submission to the Tasmanian Government's  
2010-11 State Budget**

## ***Our Vision:***

A fair, just and inclusive Tasmania.



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# ***Introduction***

The Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) is pleased to present to the Tasmanian Government a submission to the 2010-11 State Budget process.

TasCOSS is the peak industry body for Tasmania's non-government community services industry. TasCOSS represents both the interests of its members and the interests of Tasmanians affected by poverty and inequality.

Each year TasCOSS provides the Department of Treasury and Finance with recommendations on how we believe Government resources should be invested through the State Budget to improve the lives of Tasmanians who are living on low incomes or experiencing social or economic disadvantage.

The State Budget is the Tasmanian Government's most significant policy statement. The Budget not only details the Government's spending priorities for the coming 12 months, but it also articulates the Government's ongoing policy and strategic vision. The State Budget has significant implications for Government-funded services, many of which are provided by the community sector, and for the capacity of low income and disadvantaged Tasmanians to access these services.

This submission represents the priority issues that have been identified by TasCOSS member and constituent organisations through our ongoing consultation and policy development processes.

The TasCOSS submission to the 2010-11 State Budget focuses on the issues that have been identified in the policy platform of the 'Our Island, Our Voices' campaign, which our organisation is coordinating in the lead up to the 2010 state election. The aim of the campaign has been to obtain election commitments from all parties on policies that will improve education and training outcomes, build stronger services and communities, support a healthier Tasmania, and inject new funding into community service organisations.

The *Our Island Our Voices* policy platform has been developed following extensive consultation with our member social service organisations and a number of other non-governmental bodies. As in past years, our submission is designed to achieve greater social inclusion and highlight the need for investment in services that will enable all Tasmanians to lead active lives in the community with dignity and security.

TasCOSS acknowledges the Government's positive Preliminary Response to the Social Inclusion Commissioner's Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania. TasCOSS believes, however, that there are many other practical measures that can be taken immediately to address social inclusion and improve the lives of Tasmanians living on low incomes or experiencing social or economic disadvantage. A summary of these measures is contained in the next section.

## **Tasmanian Council of Social Service**

The Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) has served as the peak industry council for the Tasmanian non-government community services industry and its clients since 1961.

TasCOSS' vision is for a fair, just and inclusive Tasmania.

TasCOSS values:

- The rights of all Tasmanians to opportunity, justice and equity.
- Policy solutions that are socially and economically sustainable.
- The experience and talents of people affected by poverty and inequality.
- Working collaboratively and in partnership.
- The commitment and passion of people working in the community services industry.
- A diversity of responses to the range of needs within the community.
- Our independence as a non party-political organisation.
- Robust civil society and the importance of a strong community sector in maintaining this.
- A strong and representative role and mandate for our work.

TasCOSS is recognised as the major peak body for welfare and related issues in Tasmania and is an independent member of the national Councils of Social Service network.

## **Linkages between this submission and Tasmania *Together***

TasCOSS is a partner in the Tasmania *Together* process, the State's twenty-year economic, social and environmental plan.

TasCOSS seeks opportunities to contribute to Tasmania *Together* to ensure it continues to appropriately represent the interests of low income and disadvantaged Tasmanians and the community services industry. TasCOSS fully supports the integral role Tasmania *Together* now has in Tasmanian government. Every recommendation contained in this submission has been linked to the relevant Tasmania *Together* goal(s).

## **Costings**

Where possible, TasCOSS has costed its recommendations, or provided an approximate guide to assist departments in costing initiatives based on our recommendations.

# Summary of Recommendations

## 1. Essential Services

- 1.1 Two-part concessions for electricity, gas, water and sewerage that include a capped percentage of consumption (the cap depending on household size).
- 1.2 Concessions that increase at pace with essential service price increases.
- 1.3 Funded home-auditing and retrofitting programs for social housing and low income tenants and owner-occupiers.
- 1.4 Price regulation of APAYG, and continued price regulation of residential electricity customers.
- 1.5 The installation of solar hot water systems in all new social housing dwellings.
- 1.6 Concessions to enable low-income residents without access to reticulated water services to store adequate water and access water delivery in times of drought.

## 2. Housing

- 2.1 Reform the provision of social housing in Tasmania by investing new recurrent funding to create a viable, sustainable and responsive system that supports the needs of tenants.
- 2.2 Allocate increased funding to Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading to enable greater compliance and enforcement of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997.
- 2.3 That the Tasmanian Government allocate funds to commence the establishment of an ongoing consumer engagement mechanism with respect to housing and homelessness. This strategy should particularly target low income and disadvantaged housing consumers, including homeless Tasmanians, public housing tenants and private renters.

### **3. Transport**

- 3.1 Fund a Passenger Transport Future Fund to drive sustainable transport initiatives.
- 3.2 Increase the level of the Community Service Obligation to Metro Tasmania to provide for purchase of 20 buses over 4 years with funding for associated service costs.
- 3.3 Establish a consumer reference group for passenger transport services.

### **4. Education**

- 4.1 Double the funding for the Raising the Bar Closing the Gap Initiative.
- 4.2 Fund increased access to affordable and appropriate accommodation and transport for students living in remote, regional and urban fringe areas.
- 4.3 Provide resources to investigate and respond to the nature and incidence of absenteeism in schools.
- 4.4 Invest in evidence-based programs to enable schools to provide supportive school environments.
- 4.5 Fund a mandatory state-wide program to tackle bullying and discrimination.
- 4.6 Improve resource allocation for students with disabilities in mainstream schools so that they are truly included. This includes improving access to and training of teacher's aides as well as improving forward planning for the transition from school to work for young people with a disability.
- 4.7 Allocate funding to implement comprehensive and sequential sexual health and relationships education from K-12 in partnership with government and non-government organisations.

#### **Adult Literacy**

- 4.8 Provide funding for a co-ordinated state-wide adult literacy strategy.

## **5. Health Promotion**

- 5.1 Fund a *Health in all Policies* process to drive health promotion activity across all State Government agencies and the community including a Health Promotion Task Force reporting directly to the Premier.
- 5.2 Provide funding for community-based programs that facilitate social involvement and offer reciprocity opportunities; such programs could be provided by existing community organisations such as neighbourhood and community houses, health centres, libraries and schools.

## **6. Mental Health**

- 6.1 Fund a social marketing strategy to address stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness in the Tasmanian community.
- 6.2 Support a pilot program in the community sector to establish partnerships with Tasmanian employers and industry groups to encourage and support employers and workplaces to employ Tasmanians with a mental illness.
- 6.3 Increase access for mental health consumers to supported accommodation, recovery and rehabilitation programs and to mainstream education and training opportunities including the Tasmanian Polytechnic .
- 6.4 Provide more funding to both government and non-government mental health services for the employment of additional support workers and specialist services, including recovery and rehabilitation interventions.

## **7. Assistive Technology**

- 7.1 Significantly increase the base funding for the Community Equipment Scheme, and index the Scheme's funding to the Health CPI in order to meet the increasing demands on the Scheme, and the increasing costs of advanced technology and equipment.

## **8. Gambling**

- 8.1** Reduce the negative social impacts of gambling on the Tasmanian community by:
- Reducing bet limits to \$1 per game
  - Tightening restrictions on venue opening hours
  - Increasing the amount of taxation revenue from gaming machines that is directed to programs designed to address the social impacts of gambling.

## **9. Unemployment**

- 9.1** Allocate increased funding, beyond federal contributions, to non-government organisations, to provide pre-, post- and on-going employment support for people who face ongoing barriers to, and discrimination within, the workplace.
- 9.2** Provide further education and training opportunities to disadvantaged job seekers in areas of locational disadvantage by enabling the delivery of accredited training programs in community based settings.
- 9.3** Allocate increased resources for the development of local area-based partnerships to generate local employment and training pathways.

## **10. Youth and Adult Justice**

- 10.1** Significantly increase funding to the Youth Justice system.
- 10.2** Allocate funding to implement the *Breaking the Cycle: Tasmanian Corrections Plan*.

## **11. Elder Abuse**

- 11** Fund the development of a coordinated, whole-of-government strategy for addressing elder abuse in Tasmania.

## **12. Community Service Organisations**

- 12.1** Provide funding to reduce the gap between public sector and community service remuneration and conditions and to meet any funding implications that arise from the community services pay equity case that will be heard by Fair Work Australia in 2010.
- 12.2** Continue to apply the community services funding indexation formula and allocate new recurrent funding for organisations to invest in quality improvement practices.
- 12.3** Allocate recurrent funding to create a community services governance, management and professional development fund that is administered by a panel of non-government representatives.
- 12.4** Refund the TasCOSS Industry Development Unit to provide organisational and industry wide support services.
- 12.5** Fund an independent community services workforce capacity study that maps the current workforce and identifies barriers towards attracting and retaining staff and provides recommendations for a workforce planning and development strategy for Tasmania.
- 12.6** Provide adequate funding to establish a Community and Disability Services Commissioner in the Office of the Ombudsman.

## **13. Climate Change**

- 13.1** Allocate adequate funding to ensure that the interests of low income and disadvantaged Tasmanians are represented in policy debates about climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- 13.2** Provide funding to develop and implement an education campaign within the Tasmanian community services industry on climate change, to assist community sector organisations to reduce their carbon emissions, and to increase the capacity of the sector to act as a conduit for information on climate change.

# 1. Essential Services

In Tasmania, 34% of the population are reliant on government pensions or allowances to survive. People living on a low income spend a much larger proportion of their income on essential services than others, and increases in government pensions and beneficiary payments are lagging behind increases in the cost of living.

Tasmanians use relatively more household electricity annually than other Australians and in particular have a greater demand for heating in winter. Combined with the relatively older and thermally inefficient housing stock in Tasmania, these factors mean that Tasmanians on low incomes are particularly exposed to fuel poverty.

Electricity prices in Tasmania have risen significantly in recent years, at a rate much higher than general increases in the cost of living. These rises will continue and become more marked with the introduction of a Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. Water and sewerage prices in Tasmania are also set to rise by 10% annually for at least the next three years. Water and sewerage reforms may result in tenants being billed for water and sewerage services for the first time.

As well as redesigned and comprehensive concessions for electricity, water and sewerage that increase with household size and keep pace with price rises, TasCOSS recommends that concessions be extended to cover gas, particularly in light of the present Tasmanian Government policy to install gas in many new public housing dwellings.

We also propose that essential service tariffs be re-weighted between fixed and consumption costs, with a greater weighting on the consumption portion of an account. This will allow customers to react to price signals and save money by reducing consumption and in the case of electricity, give greater incentive to consume during off peak periods.

Continued electricity retail price regulation is also important for low income consumers in Tasmania. Our household electricity market cannot support retail competition, and any move towards it will likely lead to poor outcomes for consumers and higher prices. Likewise, TasCOSS has proposed that Aurora Pay As You Go electricity is included under retail price regulation, as a significant proportion of the customers of this service are on a low-income and particularly vulnerable to price rises. Price regulation merely guarantees cost reflectiveness, however, and not affordability for those living on a low income. Therefore, TasCOSS reiterates the need for appropriate electricity concessions that prevent fuel poverty.

Water and sewerage reforms must be designed to protect the needs of Tasmanians living on low incomes. Metered two-part pricing should be introduced, with the cost of a meter roll-out averaged over time or borne by State Government. Two-part pricing based on customer profiling is inherently flawed and unjust.

Furthermore, TasCOSS believes that tenants should not bear the costs of property improvements via improvements in water and sewerage infrastructure. Therefore, tenants should only pay the consumptive portion of a water and sewerage bill, and not the fixed portion.

There is clear evidence that retrofitting and energy efficiency measures can significantly lower household electricity use and result in savings for consumers, also improving quality of life and health outcomes and reducing emissions. To achieve these benefits for vulnerable and low income groups, TasCOSS recommends funded retrofitting of all social housing, public buildings (including those occupied by social service organisations), and low income rental and low income privately owned dwellings.

Community-based programs to provide these services have proved effective in other jurisdictions, and given adequate funding, there is capacity for community organisations to establish training and employment projects around energy auditing, retro-fitting services and equipment provision (for instance, pelmet and curtain making ventures). TasCOSS is also calling for the installation of solar hot water systems, as a minimum, in all new social housing dwellings.

Finally, a significant number of Tasmanians do not have access to reticulated (mains) water supply and rely on rain water collection. These obviously include people living in rural areas, as well as increasing numbers of low income households who have moved to urban fringe areas in search of affordable housing. Housing in such areas is often old and many properties, having been originally built as holiday accommodation, have inadequate water tanks and septic systems.

In dry periods, households without mains water supply may need to buy additional water. Currently there is no specific government program available to assist low income households to purchase water. TasCOSS therefore proposes that a scheme be developed and funded that targets households in need and provides assistance with purchasing additional water for reasonable levels of household use and/or, for longer term and more sustainable assistance, with increasing their storage tank capacity.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1.1** Two-part concessions for electricity, gas, water and sewerage that include a capped percentage of consumption (the cap depending on household size).
- 1.2** Concessions that increase at pace with essential service price increases.
- 1.3** Funded home-auditing and retrofitting programs for social housing and low income tenants and owner-occupiers.
- 1.4** Price regulation of APAYG, and continued price regulation of residential electricity customers.

- 1.5 The installation of solar hot water systems in all new social housing dwellings.
- 1.6 Concessions to enable low-income residents without access to reticulated water services to store adequate water and access water delivery in times of drought.

**Department:** Treasury and Finance; Premier and Cabinet; Health and Human Services

**Estimated cost:** Uncosted

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

Goal 1: A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians

Goal 9: Increased work opportunities for all Tasmanians

Goal 12: Sustainable management of our natural resources.

## 2. Housing

The Commonwealth Economic Stimulus Plan's Social Housing Initiative has delivered a significant injection of capital funding for new social housing properties in Tasmania. By the middle of 2012 \$125 million will have been invested in building 512 new social housing properties.

While this new injection of capital funds is welcomed it will not make the current financial arrangements for public housing viable. Housing Tasmania will still have an operating deficit and will inevitably have to continue to sell off existing housing stock. As a result the public housing system will not have the funding base from which to consistently grow stock levels, remodel stock, or invest appropriately in property maintenance.

With 3000 Tasmanians on the public housing waiting list Tasmania cannot afford to have a public housing system that is financially unviable and lacks the capacity to grow to meet demand. A comprehensive reform process must be undertaken, which aligns the provision of public and community housing in Tasmania with the directions set by the Tasmanian and Commonwealth Governments through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Partnership Agreement on housing.

To ensure that Tasmania can deliver on the COAG agreement, the State Government must embark on a public housing reform process that strengthens the capacity and viability of community housing in Tasmania. TasCOSS strongly believes that any reform of public housing, which leads to the creation of a new social housing system in Tasmania, will be dependent on both the Commonwealth and State Governments contributing new recurrent funding. TasCOSS believes that the Tasmanian Government would need to invest between \$15-30 million in new recurrent funding to make any new social housing system work.

Reforming the provision of public and community housing in Tasmania needs to be based on a funding and implementation commitment to:

1. **The best interests of the tenants:** This means the State Government must ensure that it:
  - i) has a comprehensive consumer engagement strategy (both broadly with public housing tenants and specifically as part of any urban renewal process for particular suburbs);
  - ii) minimises risks to tenant outcomes by having in place appropriate legislation and regulation;
  - iii) guarantees that rents are kept affordable and protects tenants from financial hardship; and
  - iv) boosts funding for tenancy support.
  
2. **Funding public and community housing on a financially viable basis:** This means that the State Government must ensure that:

- i) Community housing providers have a sufficient recurrent funding stream, which enables the growth and maintenance of stock, while ensuring the rents can be kept affordable;
- ii) Any transfer of public housing stock is done on the basis of the stock being in good condition; and
- iii) Funding enables stock levels to grow so that housing providers can adopt a mixed tenancy approach.

**3. Having appropriate transitional processes:** Building the capacity of community housing in Tasmania is a complex task and needs to be undertaken with appropriate planning. It is essential to any process of reforming social housing government that:

- i) There is an open, transparent and collaborative reform process that fully involves community service organisations;
- ii) Policy issues such as waiting lists and ensuring that other parts of the service system are not negatively impacted, are worked through collaboratively;
- iii) Funding is allocated to build the capacity of local community housing providers; and
- iv) The impact of other state government reforms on any social housing reform processes are fully understood, such as water and sewerage.

### **Residential Tenancy**

TasCOSS recommends increasing the funding allocation to the Office of Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading, to enable that body to fulfil the compliance and enforcement duties it has under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*, and which are likely to increase after the review of this Act. It is likely that due to raised awareness of tenancy issues, the new Rental Deposit Authority will result in an increased number of disputes around bond allocation. TasCOSS is also of the opinion that CAFT does not presently have sufficient resources to undertake adequate enforcement of the Act. We recommend an immediate increase in annual funding for CAFT, and suggest that this should not be dependent on the outcomes of the review of the Act, and that any recommendations implemented from that review are adequately and separately resourced.

Low income tenants in the public and private rental market are among some of the most disadvantaged and socially excluded Tasmanians, but their voices are generally not heard in the making of housing policy. Significant reform of social housing is proposed and consistent with the Department of Health and Human Services' position paper on consumer and community engagement, Housing Tasmania needs a properly resourced process to ensure that there is meaningful and ongoing consultation with those most affected by the changes.

**Recommendations:**

- 2.1** Reform the provision of social housing in Tasmania by investing new recurrent funding to create a viable, sustainable and responsive system that supports the needs of tenants.

**Estimated Cost:** Between \$15– 30 million in additional funding annually

- 2.2** Allocate increased funding to Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading to enable greater compliance and enforcement of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997.

**Estimated Cost:** \$200,000 annually

- 2.3** That the Tasmanian Government allocate funds to commence the establishment of an ongoing consumer engagement mechanism with respect to housing and homelessness. This strategy should particularly target low income and disadvantaged housing consumers, including homeless Tasmanians, public housing tenants and private renters.

**Estimated Cost:** \$50,000 annually

**Department:** Health and Human Services (Housing Tasmania); Justice

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

Goal 1: A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians

### **3. Transport**

Tasmania presently lacks a comprehensive, integrated and affordable passenger transport system that meets the needs of its populace. TasCOSS and other social service organisations have consistently raised the lack accessible transport as a major factor influencing the State's poor workforce participation rates, health and social inclusion outcomes.

TasCOSS urges Government to recognise that a comprehensive, affordable public transport system that meets the needs of Tasmanians will require significant subsidies and may run at a loss. Any such losses, however, will be offset by gains in social inclusion, increased economic participation by those on a low income, a reduced cost of road maintenance and development and reduced emissions. Minimum service levels should be set based on what is needed for the community to be able to access services and education, training, employment, recreational and social opportunities.

Metro Tasmania is constrained by its current financial situation which does not provide it the flexibility to explore initiatives which may improve the range and quality of Tasmania's urban passenger transport options, provide more sustainable transport options and increase patronage of public transport. Metro needs additional funding now to improve its viability into the future.

The provision of 20 new buses and associated service costs would allow Metro to met current peak time demand, significantly improve its financial viability and place it in a position to expand services.

Those Tasmanians most disadvantaged by a lack of accessible transport continue to be those living in rural and remote areas of this state. Given that Tasmania's population is one of the most decentralised populations of any Australian state and that Tasmania continues to have the highest levels of people living on government income support payments, a lack of affordable passenger transport effectively promotes exclusion.

Currently there are more reasons than ever to make major investments in passenger transport solutions for Tasmanians. Projected labour shortages mean that it will be more important to have a mobile labour force. Good transport will be fundamental to enabling people to access educational and training opportunities so that they are 'work ready' and able to contribute to a more productive workforce. Furthermore, part of ensuring higher literacy and numeracy standards in Tasmania is ensuring that students can get to school.

Projections of higher oil and energy prices and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions mean that we will need to be innovative in seeking solutions that provide more efficient transportation options that reduce our reliance on oil. Higher oil prices are likely to lead to a higher reliance on public transport, and that public transport must be appropriate, affordable and accessible.

Feedback both to the *Review of Core Passenger Transport Services* and to TasCOSS consultations have clearly indicated that service levels of passenger transport need to be increased, particularly in urban fringe areas. Service users indicated that hourly services during daytime hours were insufficient and that early morning, late evening and weekend services were minimal. The centralisation of health and human services in major urban areas means that many people experience difficulty in accessing these services.

Feedback to TasCOSS in relation to the *Tasmania Tomorrow* reforms has revealed additional transport requirements on students that will mean increased public transport will be necessary to accommodate the new system.

In rural and remote communities, TasCOSS consultations and the *Core Passenger Transport Review* clearly indicate that people in these areas do not have access to affordable transport options that reflect their needs. Bus services often do not run at times that suit the needs of passengers.

TasCOSS is aware that as a result of the *Core Passenger Transport Review* the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources (DIER) is looking to encourage bus operators to consult more closely with the communities they service to determine need. TasCOSS welcomes this initiative, but remains concerned that in the absence of additional resources, bus operators will not be able to respond to identified needs because of viability issues. Where, for example, there are insufficient passengers to make a bus run viable for people to access employment, education or social opportunities, DIER should be able to subsidise this service, provided sufficient need is established.

In many areas there are a range of transport providers, including private operators and community transport providers. Sometimes these services cover similar routes, for example taking passengers to major urban centres for medical treatment. It would appear that passengers sometimes choose community transport options over a private bus service because it is door-to-door and significantly cheaper.

Strategies to coordinate these services could mean better use of available resources, increased viability of transport services and better outcomes for potential users. Such a system would require that those currently entitled to use community transport services are able to travel on other services with similar concessions.

Creation of a Passenger Transport Future Fund would enable all parties engaged in passenger transport delivery and support to apply for funding to enable the delivery of sustainable transport options. Metro Tasmania, Local Government, Community Transport Services Tasmania, private operators and DIER, could all seek funding from the pool to:

- enable infrastructure development, such as park and ride facilities, bus and bicycle lanes, fitting buses with bike racks, improving kerbside infrastructure;
- run pilot programs, such as trialling new services requested in core passenger transport consultations with rural communities, running school buses on general access routes or local transport brokerage initiatives; or

- fund major projects, such as integration of core passenger transport services with community and patient travel services.

Part of the reason that passenger transport services are poor in Tasmania is that transport users have not had a voice in decision-making in this area. A consumer reference group would enable the future service needs of users of passenger transport service to take more prominence in policy making and push exploration of models of sustainable transport delivery.

**Recommendations:**

- 3.1** Fund a Passenger Transport Future Fund to drive sustainable transport initiatives.

**Estimated Cost:** \$20m per year over 4 years

- 3.3** Increase the level of the Community Service Obligation to Metro Tasmania to provide for purchase of 20 buses over 4 years with funding for associated service costs.

**Estimated Cost:** \$3m per year over 4 years

- 3.3** Establish a consumer reference group for passenger transport services.

**Estimated Cost:** \$50 000 per year over 4 years

**Department:** Infrastructure, Energy and Resources.

**Links to Tasmania *Together*:**

Goal 1: A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians.

Goal 2: Confident, friendly and safe communities.

Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected.

## 4. Education

Poor educational outcomes negatively affect a person's health, employment and income opportunities. In Tasmania there is a clear relationship between early school leaving and long-term unemployment, low income and disability sickness support.

Tasmania's school-based educational outcomes continue to be poor in relation to other states and territories. The disparity between Tasmania's educational outcomes and national figures are striking. In 2008, 64.9% of Tasmanian students went on to complete year 12 compared to 74.5% nationally.

TasCOSS recommends that funding to schools be targeted where it is most needed as there are schools in areas of disadvantage and rural areas that require more resources and support than other schools. In the current funding system, the socioeconomic status of students is taken into account and schools in greater need currently receive more funding than schools from more advantaged areas. However, the additional expenditure allocated for high needs schools does not reflect the significant amount of additional investment actually required. The *Raising the Bar Closing the Gap* initiative has been valuable in directing more resources to schools of higher need, but this funding is still not sufficient to provide the level of support required.

An issue that is a consistent theme in our consultations with Tasmanians living on low incomes is that the lack of transport and accommodation options for students who do not live in urban areas impacts on educational outcomes. The proportion of 15-19 years olds who have not completed year 10 is considerably higher in remote areas. Tasmania's dispersed population poses a challenge to ensuring maximum participation in education and training.

While the State Government has begun to address the lack of appropriate accommodation and transport for rural and urban fringe students traveling into urban areas, there are still too many students who find affordable accommodation and accessible transport a barrier to participating in education and training. There need to be more low cost accommodation options for rural and regional students traveling to urban centres. Transport to and from education and training centres needs to be accessible and more responsive to students timetabling needs.

The State Government has focused its efforts to improve retention rates on reform of year 11 and 12 structures and early learning initiatives. While the early learning initiatives are strongly supported, we are concerned that not enough is being done in the primary and secondary years to keep students engaged in education. This year's Department of Education Annual Report indicates that absenteeism rates are increasing and that many Tasmanian students disengage from schooling well before years 11 and 12.

The reasons that students disengage from education are complex, but providing an environment where students feel welcome, safe and supported is fundamental to good learning outcomes and student engagement. Some Tasmanian schools have implemented anti-bullying initiatives, but evidence suggests that to be most effective, anti-bullying programs need to be part of a broader framework which enables a supportive school environment.

Evidence-based whole of school approaches to providing supportive environments are essential to enabling students from low socio-economic backgrounds, students with learning disabilities and students with intellectual and physical disabilities to remain engaged in schooling. There must also be enough qualified and skilled support staff for young people with special needs.

Tasmania has the second highest teenage pregnancy rate in Australia. Unfortunately, there is too little investment and support by the State Government to deliver sexual health and relationships education and the decision as to whether to provide such programs is left to the discretion of individual schools and teachers.

TasCOSS calls for the State Government to implement system-wide sexual health and relationships education programs in partnership with government and non-government services.

### **Adult Literacy**

In the ABS *Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey 2006*, Tasmania had the highest proportion of people aged 15-74 at the lowest literacy levels compared to other Australian states. Of particular concern is Tasmania's high number of people with low level health literacy skills. Health literacy is defined as "the knowledge and skills required to understand and use information relating to health issues such as drugs and alcohol, disease prevention and treatment, safety and accident prevention, first aid, emergencies, and staying healthy".

Tasmanians with lower literacy levels are also likely to have poorer educational outcomes, lower income levels, fewer employment opportunities, poorer health outcomes and fewer opportunities for social participation and social inclusion. People with lower literacy levels who participated in the ABS study were more likely to assess their health as 'fair' or 'poor' and less likely to participate in community, cultural, neighbourhood or recreational activities.

While there are a number of adult literacy programs offered across the state, Tasmania currently has no long term, statewide, comprehensive Adult Literacy Strategy to coordinate and support these programs and improve adult literacy outcomes into the future. TasCOSS recommends that such a strategy be developed that includes:

- A media and promotional campaign to raise awareness and break down barriers and stigma around adult literacy;
- The establishment of a central organising body or system to maintain linkages and opportunities for ongoing networks, information sharing and

collaboration; provide support for service providers and service users, including an adult literacy hotline to link people to appropriate service providers; and

- Training and support for service providers to use the Australian Core Skills Framework to measure outcomes and improvements across different literacy levels and to moderate outcomes across the different programs currently offered.

**Recommendations:**

- 4.1 Double the funding for the Raising the Bar Closing the Gap Initiative .
- 4.2 Fund increased access to affordable and appropriate accommodation and transport for students living in remote, regional and urban fringe areas .
- 4.3 Provide resources to investigate and respond to the nature and incidence of absenteeism in schools .
- 4.4 Invest in evidence-based programs to enable schools to provide supportive school environments.
- 4.5 Fund a mandatory state-wide program to tackle bullying and discrimination.
- 4.6 Improve resource allocation for students with disabilities in mainstream schools so that they are truly included. This includes improving access to and training of teacher's aides as well as improving forward planning for the transition from school to work for young people with a disability.
- 4.7 Allocate funding to implement comprehensive and sequential sexual health and relationships education from K-12 in partnership with government and non-government organisations.

**Adult Literacy**

- 4.7 Provide funding for a co-ordinated state-wide adult literacy strategy.

**Departments:** Education; Premier and Cabinet

**Estimated costs:**

Recommendation 4.1	An additional \$8m annually over the next 3 years
Recommendation 4.7	\$600 000 annually
Remaining recommendations:	Uncosted

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

Goal 3: High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce.

Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected.

Goal 9: Increased work opportunities for all Tasmanians.

## 5. Health Promotion

Tasmania has some of the poorest health outcomes in the nation – above only the Northern Territory in most indicators. We have high levels of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, harmful tobacco and alcohol use and suicide. Our life expectancy is several years below the national average.

There is a clear gradient in health status and outcomes between the most disadvantaged and the most advantaged groups in our society, with lower socioeconomic status being associated with higher disability levels, higher premature death rates, poorer health, a higher incidence of chronic conditions and higher levels of health care use.

Tasmania has the lowest average household incomes of all states and territories; 34% of the population is reliant on government pensions and allowances. We have the poorest educational outcomes and low levels of adult literacy. It is recognised internationally that these factors have a very significant influence on health outcomes.

The Tasmanian Government *State of Public Health Report 2008* notes:

*...differences in health outcome measures are likely to be determined by the cumulative effect of socioeconomic and demographic factors, rather than by the quality of Tasmanian hospitals and health care system, or by matters such as the length of our elective surgery waiting lists.*

Our poor health is also due to factors such as social exclusion, rurality, lack of access to health services and a high prevalence of risk factors like smoking and obesity.

The Tasmanian health budget is focused on the acute health sector. The allocation of recurrent funding to Public Health in Tasmania in 05-06 was 2.8%. Of this, only 18.8% went on health promotion activities. It is time to make a strategic investment in addressing *causes* of poor health in Tasmania, and not just focus on the symptoms.

The work of addressing the causes of poor health is often referred to as *health promotion*. Many health promotion activities take place in Tasmania and are funded and run by a diverse array of government, community and private agencies. In many cases, inadequate or short term funding makes it difficult to evaluate or extend the programs to where they are needed most.

The lack of dedicated funding and a comprehensive, long-term strategy makes it difficult to address the major causes of ill health in this state. The absence of a strategic approach to health promotion means that activities are much less effective than they could be, that they may not be reaching those most at risk and that they are not necessarily making a long-term difference to the health status of Tasmanians.

There needs to be leadership from a senior minister to drive a whole of government approach to health promotion, ensuring that health and social equity impacts are assessed in all government decision making, particularly in relation to policy impacting employment, education, transport, planning and housing.

There are numerous examples of health and equity impact assessment tools being used around Australia and internationally. Under this system all government departments are required to systematically examine all policies and programs to assess their impact on health and inequality.

There needs to be a significant injection of funding into health promotion activities, including funding for a comprehensive tobacco control program, funding for a comprehensive social marketing campaign in relation to safe alcohol use and investment in infrastructure that supports active living.

There needs to be an advisory body that can assist in the coordination of health promotion activity and determine funding priorities. This body should include representation from all Tasmanian political parties, key health promotion bodies and key industry groups. The task force would have the role of implementing processes to ensure that health and social equity impacts are assessed in all government decision making, particularly in relation to policy impacting employment, education, transport and housing.

Health promotion activity should focus on hard-to-reach population groups who are most at risk of poor health. It should support long-term strategic initiatives that extend beyond community education and behavioural change campaigns, to include community development and advocacy initiatives that act on the social determinants of health and seek to redress the gradient in health outcomes.

## Social Involvement Improves Health Outcomes

Social isolation is a serious and debilitating experience that can have long-lasting negative impacts on the physical and mental health of individuals. It can also adversely affect communities, neighbourhoods and families. Isolation is a risk for many individuals, and particularly for those with mobility limitations, such as aged people and people with a disability, and for those with communication constraints such as people with hearing impairments or people not proficient in speaking and understanding English. It is also likely to affect people experiencing ill health, particularly those with mental illness.

Many isolated people receive care from family, friends, volunteers or professional carers. The care receiving role is often a passive one which provides little or no opportunity for reciprocity, that is, to provide assistance or support to others in return. The TasCOSS report *Enhancing Quality of Life Addressing Poverty and Disadvantage through the HACC Program* found that for many Tasmanians, the opportunity to help others and contribute to their community is a very important component of a good quality of life. Community and locally-based organisations are ideally situated to offer programs and activities that provide opportunities for reciprocity.

The State Government already funds community and neighbourhood houses throughout the State that provide opportunities for involvement through locally-based programs. Some community health centres, libraries, on-line access centres,

schools and other groups also provide such programs. However, an increase in funding would allow for additional social, educational and recreational programs targeted at isolated individuals within communities, as well as for programs that build in opportunities for reciprocity.

**Recommendations:**

- 5.1 Fund a *Health in all Policies* process to drive health promotion activity across all State Government agencies and the community including a Health Promotion Task Force reporting directly to the Premier.

**Estimated cost:** Uncosted

**Facilitate social involvement**

- 5.2 Provide funding for community-based programs that facilitate social involvement and offer reciprocity opportunities; such programs could be provided by existing community organisations such as neighbourhood and community houses, health centres, libraries and schools.

**Estimated cost:** \$1 million per annum

**Departments:** Health and Human Services, Premier and Cabinet; Education

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

Goal 1: A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians.

Goal 2: Confident, friendly and safe communities.

Goal 4: Active, healthy Tasmanians with access to quality and affordable health care services.

Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected.

## **6. Mental Health**

One in five Australians, or as many as 100,000 Tasmanians, will experience some form of mental illness during their lifetime. Mental illness can affect anyone at any stage of life. Research indicates that people living with a mental illness are far less likely to be employed and have considerably less secure employment than people without a mental illness. People living with a severe mental illness generally have lower educational attainment and skills than the broader community and are usually in lower paid employment.

Some of the reasons why people who live with a mental illness struggle to maintain employment include; negative employer and community attitudes, employer inflexibility, the episodic nature of mental illness and a lack of suitable jobs. These barriers can often feel insurmountable for someone looking for work, particularly during the recovery and rehabilitation process.

Employment is a fundamental component of a meaningful, productive life, providing a sense of purpose and a role in the community. It also helps financially and increases access to positive influences and opportunities. For people living with a mental illness, employment can often be the single most effective way to improve their overall health and wellbeing. Unemployment, however, can often be a trigger for instances of low self-esteem, depression and other episodic conditions. Tasmania's future economic prosperity depends on the productivity of our workforce and increasing the number of Tasmanians participating in employment, education or training.

Tasmania's workforce participation rate is 10% lower than the national average. With more than half of working-age Tasmanians living with a severe mental illness without work, removing barriers for this population group into employment or training is a practical way of addressing Tasmania's poor workforce participation rate.

### **Recommendations:**

- 6.1** A social marketing strategy to address stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness in the Tasmanian community.
- 6.2** Support a pilot program in the community sector to establish partnerships with Tasmanian employers and industry groups to encourage and support employers and workplaces to employ Tasmanians with a mental illness.
- 6.3** Increase access for mental health consumers to supported accommodation, recovery and rehabilitation programs and to mainstream education and training opportunities including the Tasmanian Polytechnic.

**6.4** Provide more funding to both government and non-government mental health services for the employment of additional support workers and specialist services, including recovery and rehabilitation interventions.

**Department:** Health and Human Services; Economic Development; Tourism and the Arts.

**Estimated Cost:** Uncosted

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

Goal 3: High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce

Goal 4: Active, healthy Tasmanians with access to quality and affordable healthcare services

Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected

Goal 9: Increased work opportunities for all Tasmanians

## **7. Assistive Technology**

The Community Equipment Scheme (CES) provides a variety of equipment, continence aids and appliances to eligible clients living in the community.

For many people with health problems and/or disabilities, assistive equipment and aids are essential to allow them to live in their own homes and to enjoy active lives in their communities. For many, assistive equipment is a pre-requisite for social inclusion. Unfortunately the cost of much health-related equipment is prohibitive for people living on low incomes, and many Tasmanians rely on the CES for their equipment needs.

The 2009 *Joint Standing Committee on Community Development Report on the Provision of Assistive Technology and Equipment for People with Disabilities* indicated the woeful inadequacy of funding for the CES in meeting the equipment needs of Tasmanians with a disability. This lack of resources means that people go without equipment that would have a fundamental impact on their quality of life. The Joint Standing Committee's report found that "Increased funding to address the unmet demand is an immediate priority with indexation to ensure that future demand can be accommodated".

The lack of funding has limited the ability of the scheme to meet demand, to increase the range and quantity of equipment on offer and to cover the cost of maintenance, repair and replacement of loan equipment. This causes delays in supplying standard equipment, unpredictable waiting times and the need to prioritise the provision of aids for clinical needs over aids which enable social participation.

Inflation and advances in health technology have led to increased costs of disability and health-related aids and equipment and will continue to do so. We therefore recommend not only that the base funding for the CES be increased, but also that the funding be indexed annually to movements in the Health Consumer Price Index.

### **Recommendations:**

- 7.1** Significantly increase the base funding for the Community Equipment Scheme, and index the Scheme's funding to the Health CPI in order to meet the increasing demands on the Scheme, and the increasing costs of advanced technology and equipment.

**Estimated Cost:** An additional \$2 million per annum

**Department:** Health and Human Services

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

Goal 2: Confident, friendly and safe communities.

Goal 4: Active, healthy Tasmanians with access to quality and affordable health care services.

Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected.

## **8. Gambling**

The negative social impacts of gambling and in particular, of electronic gaming machines (EGMs) has been well documented in the 2008 *Social and Economic Impact Study into Gambling in Tasmania* and more recently in the 2009 Productivity Commission report. Both studies found that there is a disproportionate amount of problem gambling associated with EGMs.

Based on figures from the former study it may be conservatively estimated that EGMs are responsible for between \$24m and \$78m worth of bankruptcy, lost productivity, loss of employment, increased crime and higher prisoner numbers, emotional distress to families, relationship break-ups, violence, poor general health, depression and suicide annually in Tasmania.

Earlier this year the Tasmanian Gaming Commission (TGC) considered a range of initiatives which could minimise the social costs associated with EGMs. The Gaming Commission said that it "considers that significant changes could be made to the design and operation of EGMs that would reduce their negative impact on problem gamblers ...without material detriment to the recreational gambler." The TGC noted that there are a range of effective interventions including reducing maximum bet limits and reducing hours of access to machines.

The Legislative Assembly has recently passed the Gaming Control Bill to reduce bet limits from \$10 per game to \$5. TasCOSS contends that the bet limit should be reduced further to \$1 as recommended by the Productivity Commission on the basis that this would reduce the harm from high intensity gaming. Even a \$5 limit allows someone to lose \$600 or more than many Tasmanians' weekly income, in an hour. A \$1 limit would reduce the maximum loss in an hour to \$120.

Tasmania has the lowest restrictions on opening hours for poker machine venues in Australia. The Productivity Commission has recommended longer shutdown periods around Australia based on the Queensland model where venues are not able to open before 10am. Tasmania's shutdown period should be at least 6 hours which is the minimum imposed by most mainland states and venues should not be able to open before 10am.

The State tax levied on gaming machines is high (at 25.88% for hotels), the Community Services Levy at 4% (of which half is allocated to addressing problem gambling through research, services, treatment and community education) is extremely low in comparison. Government revenue from gambling activities needs to be better distributed towards addressing the social impacts of gambling, including directly assisting people who have a wide range of financial, vocational, legal, health, and relationships problems brought about by problem gambling.

**Recommendations:**

- 8.1** Reduce the negative social impacts of gambling on the Tasmanian community by:
- Reducing bet limits to \$1 per game;
  - Tightening restrictions on opening hours;
  - Increasing the amount of taxation revenue from gaming machines that is directed to programs designed to address the social impacts of gambling.

**Department:** Treasury and Finance (Revenue, Gaming and Licensing Division)

**Estimated cost:** Uncosted

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

Goal 1: A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians

Goal 2: Confident, friendly and safe communities.

## **9. Unemployment**

Participation in the labour force can have many benefits for the individual, the community and the economy. While Tasmania's labour force participation rate has increased in recent years it is still lower than the national rate and the number of Tasmanians reliant upon a government pension or allowance as their major source of income increased from 31% in 2005-06 to 34% in 2007-08.

In July 2009, people who were long-term unemployed (those unemployed for 12 months or more) made up over one-third (35 per cent) of all unemployed people looking for full-time work in Tasmania, the highest proportion of all states and territories. Tasmania's ageing population, higher rates of disability, lower educational qualifications, and lower health status all affect labour force participation rates.

Furthermore, Tasmania has the highest proportion of children living in jobless families of all states and territories, with 22 per cent of all children aged under 15 living in families where no parent was employed in 2006. Long-term unemployment is a key cause of social exclusion and poverty through a lack of income, loss of skills, experience and self-confidence.

There are many people who experience difficulty not only becoming 'work ready' but also maintaining employment once they get a job. People who may require additional support include: the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, people with health problems, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, young people and single parents.

Throughout TasCOSS consultations we heard from people who said that specific and targeted employment support was what they needed to enable them not only to return to work but also to stay in the job.

TasCOSS is calling on Government to fund, beyond federal contributions, pre, post and on-going support for disadvantaged job seekers. This funding would provide a pool of money for employers to access in order to provide local support from specialist workers (for example, mental health, drug and alcohol or youth workers) in order to better deal with issues that can derail disadvantaged job seekers' employment in the first 12 months. Employers would also need to be provided with advice on enabling flexible hours, part-time work, training options and other workplace adaptations.

The role of support workers would be to educate and advise employers about the particular barriers to on-going employment an employee might be facing, and to ensure that employers have the skills, knowledge and sensitivity to support disadvantaged employees.

People living in areas of locational disadvantage (including low socio economic areas and remote communities) have fewer opportunities to access well resourced, quality education and training.

TasCOSS welcomed the establishment of five further LINC-style training hubs in regional communities. TasCOSS recommends the Government fund more LINC's and locate them in the areas of most need. It is essential that these LINC's are developed in consultation with existing local community-based organisations.

In areas without LINC-style training hubs, however, the State Government needs to better resource community-based solutions to education and training. TasCOSS consultations have confirmed the value of being able to undertake education and training, for example, at the local neighbourhood house. Utilising existing community resources to provide education and training opportunities can be particularly effective due to the relationships and associated services already in place. It is essential that registered training providers are funded and resourced to partner with community-based organisations to provide certificate training at a local level.

While the Government's *Workforce Participation Program* allows community sector support organisations to apply for seed funding for initiatives that create pathways into jobs for disadvantaged job seekers, there needs to be more funding for local area-based partnerships to provide pathways into employment and training.

It is important that the guidelines for these grants are flexible enough to allow funding to vary according to the significance and complexity of the barriers faced by individuals. Staff need to be resourced in each local area to bring together not-for-profit community organisations, local business and industry, education and training providers, and State and local government to develop local job creation opportunities and specific training programs.

### **Recommendations:**

- 9.1** Allocate increased funding, beyond federal contributions, to non-government organisations, to provide pre-, post- and on-going employment support for people who face ongoing barriers to, and discrimination within, the workplace
- 9.2** Provide further education and training opportunities to disadvantaged job seekers in areas of locational disadvantage by enabling the delivery of accredited training programs in community based settings; and
- 9.3** Allocate increased resources for the development of local area-based partnerships to generate local employment and training pathways.

**Department:** Economic Development

**Estimated Cost:** Uncosted

**Links to Tasmania Together:**

Goal 1: A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians

Goal 3: High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce.

Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected.

Goal 9: Increased work opportunities for all Tasmanians.

## 10. Youth and Adult Justice

### Youth Justice

One of clearest determinants of social exclusion is involvement in the criminal justice system at a young age. The Youth Justice system is under strain and under-funded and the reforms to Child and Family Services will not address these issues. A well-funded Youth Justice system is required to assist young offenders to address the many barriers they face to successful engagement with education, community and employment.

Caseloads for Youth Justice workers are high and difficult to manage (60 in the South, 25-30 in the North-West and 30-40 in the North) compared to other Australian states (16 in Victoria). The number of Youth Justice case workers needs to be increased to lower caseloads and improve outcomes for clients. More managers need to be employed so that case workers are supported in their challenging roles supporting Youth Justice clients.

The *Youth Justice Framework for Community Collaboration* (2008) emphasises the importance of the Youth Justice system working with and within communities. According to the *Report into Ashley, Youth Justice and Detention* (2007), non-government organisations have 'proven conclusively' that they provide effective alternatives to sentencing for young offenders but community organisations' lack of funding impedes the ability of otherwise excellent services to have a stronger and longer lasting impact. Significantly increased funding needs to be provided to enable non-government organisations to provide further diversionary programs.

Funding should be allocated to enable universal screening for mental illness, drug and alcohol addiction and acquired brain injury for Youth Justice clients. Screening is a cost effective practice and often, without screening, the underlying issue that is most relevant to the anti-social and criminal behaviour goes undetected. Funding should also be allocated to update AYDC's screening and assessment tools.

### Recommendations:

#### Youth Justice

**10.1** Significantly increase funding to the Youth Justice system in order to:

- Reduce caseloads by increasing the number of Youth Justice case workers;
- Increase the number of Youth Justice managers;
- Resource a range of community based activities to support and reintegrate young offenders or young people at risk of offending;
- Fund universal screening of Youth Justice clients for mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse and acquired brain injury.

**Estimated Cost:** \$5 million annually

**Adult Justice**

**10.2** Allocate funding to implement the *Breaking the Cycle: Tasmanian Corrections Plan*.

**Estimated Cost:** Uncosted

**Department:** Health and Human Services; Education; Justice

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

Goal 2: Confident, friendly and safe communities.

Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected.

## **11. Elder Abuse**

The incidence of emotional, physical, sexual, psychological and financial abuse and neglect of older people in Tasmania has been documented by Advocacy Tasmania, Council on the Ageing Tasmania COTA (Tas), The Public Trustee and TasCOSS. The TasCOSS research report *Safe as Houses* provides current evidence of a range of forms of abuse of elderly people in the Tasmanian community. The most prevalent form of elder abuse is financial abuse which is often accompanied by psychological abuse. National expert Associate Professor Gerry Naughtin has estimated that there are approximately 3-4000 Tasmanians affected by elder abuse. Older people, aged care workers and family members say that they do not know what to do when they are confronted by an incidence of elder abuse.

At a time when Tasmania has the fastest rate of population ageing in the nation, there is an urgent need to ensure that the most vulnerable elderly people in our community are offered adequate protection. In all states except for Tasmania, elder abuse strategies are in place. Governments collaborate with community based organisations to offer prevention and response services such as elder abuse hotlines, advocacy, counselling, public awareness and education resources, and aged and community care worker training.

### **Recommendation 11: Fund an elder abuse strategy for Tasmania**

The development of a coordinated, whole -of-government strategy for addressing elder abuse in Tasmania that includes:

- Protocols for coordinating services to respond to elder abuse;
- A central contact number for elder abuse issues and a public awareness campaign;
- Information, counselling, referral and advocacy services;
- Access to legal assistance;
- A website with links to support organisations;
- Community and aged care worker training;
- Research to better understand the nature and extent of elder abuse in Tasmania and to support empowerment and prevention initiatives; and
- Law reform: prioritise review and monitoring of financial powers of attorney.

**Department:** Premier and Cabinet

**Estimated Cost:** Less than \$1 million annually

### **Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

Goal 2: Confident, friendly and safe communities

Goal 4: Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected

## 12. Community Service Organisations

### **Recommendation 12.1:** Wages and conditions

Provide funding to reduce the gap between public sector and community service remuneration and conditions and to meet any funding implications that arise from the community services pay equity case that will be heard by Fair Work Australia in 2010.

**Department:** Health and Human Services

**Rationale:** There have been a number of developments which reinforce the need for the Tasmanian Government to support community service organisations to better remunerate their staff. In 2009, the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission heard a community service work value case, which delivered an increase to the wages of community service workers of between 18% and 37%. As result of this decision the QLD Government allocated \$414 million over four years to support community service organisations.

The Australian Government has recently announced that it has reached an agreement with unions representing community service workers to run a pay equity case under the new Fair Work system. Given that Tasmania is transferring its workplace relations powers to the Commonwealth the State Government must make an allocation to meet any remuneration increase that results from the Fair Work Australia case.

In addition to the inadequacy of wages in the community services industry in Tasmania, there are a number of industrial standards where the community services industry has fallen behind. A lack of paid maternity leave, family friendly work and flexibility are some matters that, given the nature of the industry and high female employment rates, limit the appeal of the industry as a viable alternative to other industries that provide greater support.

TasCOSS also notes that the Productivity Commission study into the not-for-profit sector in Australia highlights the need to address inadequate wages in the community services sector as a critical response to workforce shortages.

**Estimated cost:** Uncosted

### **Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- Goal 1: A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians.
- Goal 2: Confident, friendly and safe communities.
- Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected.

## **Recommendation 12.2: Indexation and funding**

Continue to apply the community services funding indexation formula and allocate new recurrent funding for organisations to invest in quality improvement practices.

**Department:** Health and Human Services

The Tasmanian Community Services Industry has an indexation formula in place with the Tasmanian Government, which provides funding security for community service organisations. The level of service that community service organisations provide is dependent on the indexation formula continuing to apply.

The current indexation formula that was agreed between the Tasmanian Government and the community service organisations was the outcome of a long period of negotiation. After an intense period of lobbying by the community sector, particularly during the state election of 2002, and a subsequent period of negotiation, the formula was agreed upon and set in place in May 2003. It has applied to the financial years from 2003-04 onwards and TasCOSS has always understood that there was an indefinite commitment to the formula from the Tasmanian Government.

The formula combines movements in state service award wages (in the previous financial year) with the most recent CPI figure. The agreement that was negotiated in 2002/2003 meant that this combination would shift over the period from 2002-03 to 2006-07 so that the role played by wages movements would increase at the expense of CPI. Accordingly, in 2002-03, the combination was 64% of SSA movement and 36% CPI, resulting in a 2.7% indexation. For the 2004-05 financial year the combination was 72/28. In 2006-07 the full ratio of 80% of SSA combined with 20% of CPI was applied.

The continual application of the agreed indexation formula has been a clear example of the Government working with community service organisations in partnership. TasCOSS believes that the agreed indexation formula should, however, be guaranteed by the Government issuing a written indexation policy, as this would remove some of the uncertainty around indexation that has recently emerged.

Ensuring that funding levels keep pace with cost increases outside the control of not-for-profits is essential to maintaining the viability of community service providers. Unfortunately this has not been the case in Tasmania, particularly with the introduction by DHHS of the quality and safety framework, which has added a new layer of reporting and administration to the work of community service organisations. Ensuring organisations are focused on quality and safety is important, but unless the reforms are resourced they will result in a reduction in the amount of staff time and resources organisations can spend on the management and deliver of services to clients. This would be a poor outcome.

**Estimated cost:** Uncosted

### **Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- Goal 1: A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians.
- Goal 2: Confident, friendly and safe communities.

- Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected.

**Recommendation 12.3: Governance, management and professional development fund**

Allocate recurrent funding to create a community services governance, management and professional development fund that is administered by a panel of non-government representatives.

**Department:** Health and Human Services

**Rationale:** There are more than 350 non-government, not-for-profit community service organisations that provide human, community and social services in Tasmania, with over 240 of them receiving funding from DHHS. These organisations are vital to the health and well-being of Tasmania, and need to be supported to ensure their long-term viability and sustainability, as well as to ensure the quality and professionalism of the support they provide.

The ability of the sector to grow and continue to provide effective care and support to Tasmanians depends upon the levels of investment organisations can make in strengthening their management and governance capacity.

The importance of strengthening the leadership capacity within non-government organisations was one of the critical recommendations from the Victorian Government's *Stronger Community Organisations Project* conducted in 2007. Governance and management within the not-for-profit sector have also been identified as critical areas that need investment by the Productivity Commission in its recent study into the not-for-profit sector.

Investment in the management and governance capacity of organisations is a foundation for guaranteeing to the Tasmanian community, clients, consumers, and funding bodies that organisations are delivering quality services that lead to better outcomes. It would also complement the implementation of the DHHS quality and safety framework, which has a focus on governance, risk management, and quality improvement.

The aim of a Community Service Governance, Management and Professional Development Fund should be to strengthen the core capacity of community service organisations. The purpose of the fund would not be about promoting innovation, but reinforcing the governance, management and professional capacities of the community services sector to manage over \$200 million in State funding.

It is envisaged that individual community service organisations, peak bodies, or coalitions of organisations would be able to make applications for funding of between \$5,000-50,000 to directly invest in governance, management or service area specific training programs. The fund would be open to one off or multi-year:

- applications to support staff within community service organisations to undertake graduate or post-graduate level study in social work, community services, management, business, administration, or areas allied with specific service types;
- applications to support individual community service organisation boards or individual board members complete governance training, such as the AICD company directors course or Certificate IV qualifications in governance; and
- applications from coalitions of organisations or peak bodies to set up a stream of governance, management, or professional development learning workshops.

The applications would be reviewed by a panel of non-government, community service organisation representatives that would be responsible for making funding decisions.

**Estimated cost:** \$1 million (\$4 million over 4 years)

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- Goal 1: A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians.
- Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected.
- Goal 10: Thriving and innovative industries driven by a high level of business confidence.

**Recommendation 12.4: Industry Development**

Refund the TasCOSS Industry Development Unit to provide organisational and industry wide support services.

**Department:** Health and Human Services

In July 2006 TasCOSS received funding from the Department for Health and Human Services to establish an industry development unit to provide support to community service organisations. The funding for the unit goes to June 2010. Over the last four years TasCOSS has worked collaboratively with DHHS to refine its industry development services and undertake an evaluation of the unit's work.

In the current financial year the unit is producing a workforce toolkit for community service organisations, a partnership toolkit, completing an organisational culture and workforce retention study, mapping approaches to outcomes-based contracting in other jurisdictions and looking at lessons for Tasmania, facilitating peer learning networks across the state, organising capacity building information sessions, providing a clearing house service, and continuing to provide one-to-one advice to organisations over the phone. In addition to these activities the Industry Development Unit continues to engage with community service organisations and DHHS on key community service industry policy issues, such as quality and safety.

Ensuring that TasCOSS (and other Peak Bodies) has the capacity to provide industry (or sector) development services was one of the key findings of the Peaks Review commissioned by the (DHHS) in 2008-2009. Given the findings of the review DHHS needs to continue to fund the industry development unit. An appropriately funded industry development unit in TasCOSS would continue to provide resources and support to community service organisations and complement the Government, Management and Professional Development Fund recommended above.

An independent evaluation of the work of the industry development unit is also currently being completed. Based on the evaluation findings TasCOSS believes that the industry development unit should be refunded for three years, with funding being incorporated into TasCOSS' CORE contract, which also needs to be renewed beyond June 2010.

**Estimated cost:** \$375,000 (\$1.125 million over 3 years)

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)
- Thriving and innovative industries driven by a high level of business confidence. (Goal 10)

**Recommendation 12.5: Workforce capacity study**

Fund an independent community services workforce capacity study that maps the current workforce and identifies barriers towards attracting and retaining staff and provides recommendations for a workforce planning and development strategy for Tasmania.

**Department:** Health and Human Services

**Rationale:** A thorough and reliable profile of the community services workforce is an important foundation for effective workforce planning and improving training for skills development. Unfortunately, there is currently very little reliable data on the actual scope of the community services workforce. This crucial gap in knowledge seriously inhibits effective workforce planning and the development of appropriate training initiatives.

**Estimated cost:** \$100,000

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- Goal 1: A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians
- Goal 4: Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected

**Recommendation 12.6: Community and Disability Services Commissioner**

Provide adequate funding to establish a Community and Disability Services Commissioner in the Office of the Ombudsman.

**Departments:** Justice / Health and Human Services

**Rationale:**

The rapid growth of the non-government community services industry, fuelled by the outsourcing of responsibilities once held by the Tasmanian Government has resulted in community service organisations (CSOs) delivering services that have very significant impacts on consumers.

It is imperative that the broader Tasmanian community maintains its trust in the capacity of CSOs to deliver consistently high-quality services. With services delivered by State Government agencies, consumers, where they believe there has been a breakdown in service quality, have recourse to the Ombudsman. Unlike other states, in Tasmania there is no parallel system of grievance investigation/resolution which applies to the non-government sector. The powers and resources of the Ombudsman generally, and the Health Complaints Commissioner specifically, do not permit the oversight of this crucially important industry.

DHHS is currently developing a Quality and Safety Framework for community service organisations. The creation of a Community and Disability Services Commissioner should underpin the framework.

**Estimated Cost:** \$200,000 annually

**Links to Tasmania *Together*:**

- Goal 4: Active, healthy Tasmanians with access to quality and affordable health care services.

## **13. Climate Change**

Climate change is one of the most serious issues facing Tasmania. The impacts of climate change will disproportionately affect people living on low incomes due to their inability to afford safeguards and necessary adjustments to their living conditions – such as insuring property and contents against storm and other damage and/or moving from low lying areas, or to areas with greater employment opportunities. Low income households are also likely to be more adversely affected by climate change mitigation policies, such as the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, due to the resulting increased prices of energy, fuel and goods and services.

The State Government is taking climate change seriously with the establishment of the Tasmanian Climate Change Office within the Department of Premier and Cabinet, a *State Framework for Action on Climate Change*, a *Framework for Action for Reducing the Tasmanian Government's Greenhouse Gas Emissions* and a *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008*. While these actions are positive, more needs to be done to ensure that low income Tasmanians are included. The interests of low income households must be considered and programs put in place to include those living on low incomes by assisting them to deal with both the effects of climate change and of climate change mitigation.

It is essential that the interests of low income Tasmanians, along with other low income Australians, are represented in related policy debates and the development of responses.

TasCOSS proposes that funding be provided for consultation with low income Tasmanians, research into relevant policies and programs in other Australian jurisdictions and overseas, and for representation of the interests of low income Tasmanians on any councils, panels or advisory and/or consultative committees that are established to address climate change in Tasmania.

The State Government's *Framework for Action for Reducing the Tasmanian Government's Greenhouse Gas Emissions* covers all government activities including its 'core agencies, Parliament House, hospitals, schools and government business enterprises' (p 6).

TasCOSS is concerned that the Tasmanian community services industry, an industry largely funded by the State Government and one to which much government service delivery is outsourced, is not being similarly targeted and resourced. The community services industry is large and diverse, with organisations ranging from those with hundreds of employees and services across the State, to services with a single employee. Equally, there are varying levels of knowledge and understanding about climate change, as well as varying capacity to act to reduce emissions. A well-targeted education campaign, and additional funding to implement emissions reduction measures would assist the industry to play its part in lowering the State's total greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition, the community service industry is well-placed to act as a conduit for information on climate change between Government and low income, disadvantaged and vulnerable Tasmanians. Community service organisations have well-established and strong links to local communities throughout Tasmania, and especially to groups within those communities that may have difficulties accessing information or be hard to reach with mainstream marketing and communication strategies. In partnership with the State Government, we believe that community services organisations could play a vital role in information dissemination about climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

Adequately resourced community organisations can assist policy-makers and researchers to include in their work information about vulnerable communities. Not only do community service organisations understand and reflect diversity within communities, they can also provide realistic assessments of the adaptive capacity of the communities they serve.

### **Recommendations:**

- 13.1** Allocate adequate funding to ensure that the interests of low income and disadvantaged Tasmanians are represented in policy debates about climate change adaptation and mitigation.

**Estimated cost:** \$100 000 per annum

- 13.2** Provide funding to develop and implement an education campaign within the Tasmanian community services industry on climate change, to assist community sector organisations to reduce their carbon emissions, and to increase the capacity of the sector to act as a conduit for information on climate change.

**Estimated cost:** \$150 000 per annum

**Department:** Premier and Cabinet (Tasmanian Climate Change Office); Health and Human Services

### **Link to Tasmania Together:**

Goal1: A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians.

Goal 2: Confident, friendly and safe communities.

Goal 5: Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected.

## **Tasmanian Social Policy Council**

The Tasmanian Social Policy Council (TSPC) is TasCOSS' primary social policy development body. The Council is chaired by the President of TasCOSS and its membership is representative of TasCOSS members.

The TSPC determines TasCOSS' policy agenda and assists the work of TasCOSS' Social Policy and Research team in developing social policy positions.

### **The TasCOSS Policy Development Process**

Each year TasCOSS consults with its member and constituent organisations to identify the priority issues and recommendations to be included in our submission to the State Budget process.

Organisations are asked to identify the major issues concerning their clients, services and regions. These issues are then developed into policy positions by TasCOSS social policy staff, before the final recommendations contained in this submission are prepared.

This policy development process is overseen by the TSPC, which assesses the issues to be addressed in the budget submission and later endorses the final recommendations and priority issues as contained in the submission.

This process ensures that all recommendations TasCOSS makes to Government are grounded in solid consultation, are based on the needs of clients who use community sector services and are representative of the industry.

### **Tasmanian Social Policy Council Members 2009-2010**

Noel Mundy	President TasCOSS, Mission Australia
Ken Abery	Foster Carers Association Tasmania
David Closs	TasDeaf
Ria Brink	Karinya Young Womyn's Service
Tracey Bullen	Drug Education Network
Sue Burke	Grandpower
Luke Campton	Hobart City Mission
Pattie Chugg	Shelter Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drugs Council
Tracey Currie	
Stuart Davies	Community Transport Services Tasmania
Denese Ferguson	Wyndarra Centre
Kathleen Flanagan	Anglicare
Glynis Flower	Hobart Women's Health Centre
Maxine Griffiths	Council on the Ageing Tasmania
Miriam Herzfeld	Individual member
Debra Hindle	Individual member
John Hooper	Tasmanian Association of Community Houses

Alex Huntir	St Michael's Association
Carolyn Jeanneret	Break O'Day Health Resource Assoc.
Mary Johnson-Goeldner	Launceston Community Legal Centre
Gwyn Jones	Individual member
Jack Lane	Hobart Benevolent Society
Louise Leslie	Choose Life Services
Georgina McLagan	Centacare
Jacqui Maginnis	Individual member
Jill Maxwell	Volunteering Tasmania
Lindy O'Neill	Uniting Care Services
Joanna Seijka	Youth Network of Tasmania
John Stuart	Launceston Benevolent Society
Michelle Swallow	Mental Health Council of Tasmania
Therese Taylor	Colony 47
Clare Thompson	Individual member
Sue Williams	Family Planning Tasmania

**Ex-Officio**

Tom Muller	TasCOSS Chief Executive Officer
Martin Gibson	TasCOSS Manager Social Policy and Research
Miranda Kellett	TasCOSS Policy and Research Officer
Kath McLean	TasCoSS Policy and Research Officer
Melissa Iocco	TasCOSS Policy and Research Officer
Dr Carol Patterson	TasCOSS HACC Project Officer
Klaus Baur	TasCOSS HACC Project Officer