



Community Services Industry Plan 2007
Report on First Phase Feedback April – June 07
Industry Plan – Yes / No?
July 2007

Overview

Feedback was received from community services organizations (CSOs) around the state, with a reasonably even balance between the north-west and southern regions, with slightly lower level of responses from the northern region.

Responses were received through a mix of one-on-one discussion, consultation forums held in the north-west and the south and written feedback from individual organizations.

The questions were asked in parts to provide opportunity to comment on key aspects of the project and the following report captures the common themes within those parts.

Q1. Do you agree with developing an Industry Plan?
Why /not? Please identify key risks and opportunities.

1a. Do you agree with developing an Industry Plan?

Almost without exception the responses received supported developing an Industry Plan. Only one response disagreed with the project.

Why develop an Industry Plan?

To achieve greater unity within the industry, for the purposes of:

- Greater voice in advocacy and in negotiations, and
- In order to act strategically in shaping our future.

1b Risks identified:

- The Plan may be driven by government agendas and political cycles;
- The Plan may limit thinking within the industry;
- Achieving adequate representation and participation for (very) small organizations;
- Competition (real or perceived) for resources between CSOs may create a barrier to collaborative activity required to achieve and implement a Plan.

1c Opportunities identified:

- Addressing common issues through collaborative action and unity of purpose (greater cohesion within the Industry);
- Greater voice and control or influence over direction and future of the Industry;
- Increased capacity to deliver better services (through actions undertaken);
- Addressing sustainability within the industry (real cost of services and funding models);
- Improve communication with industry stakeholders and particularly demonstrating the value of the Industry (to Government but also the general public).

Question raised:

Will the Plan be able to address issues faced by CSOs delivering commonwealth funded services as well as state funded services?

Q2. Definition of the Industry

2a. What comprises the Community Services Industry?

The proposed definition of the industry was accepted however, **preventative health and volunteering** were identified as key omissions.

The recurrent theme of the need to strengthen reference to **volunteering** occurred through the document as well as through definition of the industry.

2b. Vision for the Industry

A range of vision and objective statements were offered that all served to focus attention on **quality outcomes for clients and Tasmanians**.

Overall this feedback shifted from the negative focus of alleviation of poverty to positive focus of **increasing good outcomes for Tasmanians**.

Important issue raised

Disadvantage and vulnerability are not always marked by poverty. The Plan vision / objective statements need to reflect this.

A range of components statements were offered as follows:

- A cohesive approach by the industry and government to addressing community issues;
- Continuous innovation to address the complex needs of those we serve and advocate for;
- A fairer, inclusive, just and healthier Tasmania by 2015;
- Better health outcomes for all people in Tasmania;
- The needs of the most vulnerable people in our society are addressed with well trained workers. This in turn develops and educates an accepting community;
- Improved quality of life for all Tasmanians through a caring culture and efficient and effective industry.

2c. Comments on common values across the Industry:

Client focus is not strong enough;

- Disadvantage and vulnerability are not always obvious or marked by poverty;
- A tension between compassion and caring as key values and an observation that the Industry needs to make use of more business focused language.

An interesting discussion took place at one of the face-to-face consultations about whether or not values and passion differentiate the community services industry, or whether a range of industries see these as key values and drivers.

2d. Comments on common objectives for the Industry:

- Focus on quality services and quality outcomes for Tasmanians.
- Alleviation of poverty and addressing disadvantage remained an important focus.

Q3. Framework for the Industry Plan

The proposed framework for the plan was broadly accepted.

Specific comments on the proposed objectives for the Plan:

Some feedback observed that the proposed objectives for the Plan were not adequately action-focused and should express actual outcomes the Plan is aiming to achieve:

“Too woolly, sounds like just planning to plan.”

Some of the suggestions for objectives read like goal statements that might inform the action sections of the Plan. These observations supported the critical issues the sector is concerned to address under Q4, eg:

“Develop volunteer management practice and better strategies for working with volunteers in the future.”

“Develop policies related to the funding and purchasing of services such as sustainability, indexation, the management of growth, and the management of unmet need between the government and non-government sectors.”

Risks and Opportunities identified for the proposed Plan:

- Concern about the capacity of the sector to act independently from government was highlighted in the context of high and increasing levels of accountability.
- Risk of impatience with the process given the length of time it will take to achieve outcomes.
- Opportunity: small organizations to find a place in negotiating with funding bodies as opposed to being excluded in favour of large organizations.

Q4. Key issues for the Plan

The following three were the critical issues identified as requiring attention in the Plan:

- **Sustainability.** This includes issues like workforce development, diversity, funding and business models (key elements identified - compliance, quality assurance and accountability costs, training and development, administrative costs and complexity in multi-funded services, efficiency and productivity, collaborative working models);
- **Service Planning.** This includes acknowledgement of impact of demographic change and need to participate in planning for services, and improving community transport (community transport was specifically identified as a critical issue now and into the future);
- **Better relationships with funder stakeholders,** in particular government at state and commonwealth levels.

Q5. Governance for the Plan

The critical issues identified for a successful Plan were ensuring **representation** and **participation**.

Key risk identified:

A smaller decision-making forum with limited accountability to a consultative forum and the broader sector carries the following risk of eroding both representation and participation due to multiple layers between decision-making and the broader sector.