



# Media Release

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## Spending package welcomed

4 February, 2009

The Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) has welcomed the Federal Government's financial stimulus package announced yesterday.

TasCOSS CEO, Tom Muller said, "In particular we welcome the injection of funds into social and public housing and into the maintenance of State public housing stock. There are over 3000 Tasmanians on the public housing waiting list who desperately need a home."

"The Tasmanian community services sector has been calling for significant spending on public housing for years. It is now up to the State Government to work with the community sector and act quickly to get new public housing on the ground for those in need."

"We also welcome the focus on education infrastructure and increased funding for schools. We urge the State Government to ensure that Tasmanian schools most in need receive priority assistance with this money," Mr Muller said.

"Our major disappointment with the Federal package is the absence of any increase in benefits for unemployed people or in the rate of pensions and other allowances. We urge the State Government to work through the COAG process to push for a permanent increase in Federal Government income support payments, especially since 31% of Tasmanian households rely on these as their major source of income."

"This is an opportunity for the State Government to make its own investments to complement the Federal measures and to protect low income Tasmanians from the worst effects of the economic slowdown," Tom Muller said.

"The Federal Government's plan to provide free ceiling insulation for owner-occupied homes for instance, should be matched by a State commitment to insulate and retro-fit State-owned public housing properties. This would not only allow public housing tenants to save on home energy bills, but it would also contribute to lowering the State's greenhouse gas emissions – and it would create local jobs," Mr Muller said.

Tom Muller concluded, "We welcome the Federal stimulus package and urge the State Government to complement it with smart social investment of its own."

**Tom Muller is available for interview and additional comment**

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