

## Draft “Our Island, Our Voices” election platform for consultation with TasCOSS members

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The release of the “Our Island, Our Voices” draft election platform is a chance for TasCOSS members to review (and to assist us in refining) the key issues that we will be lobbying all political parties on over the coming months.

The “Our Island, Our Voices” platform has been developed based on previous consultations TasCOSS has undertaken with members. It has also been informed by the recently released TasCOSS report *Just Scraping By? Conversations with Tasmanians living on low incomes* and with an appreciation of the tight fiscal environment Tasmania will be facing over the coming 2-4 years.

### Questions for feedback:

To assist members in providing feedback we ask that you respond to the following questions:

- **Central message:** Is the purpose behind the “Our Island, Our Voices” campaign clear in the opening?
- **Thematic areas:** Do you support the thematic areas? Do you have alternatives?
- **Policy positions:** Are the positions under each theme the right priorities? Are there priorities missing which you believe are more important? If there are, what would you remove?

Please send feedback to [melissa@tascoss.org.au](mailto:melissa@tascoss.org.au) by 26 June 2009.

### Forums for TasCOSS members:

Please also be aware that TasCOSS will be holding forums for members to provide feedback on the platform. The forums will include:

- a brief review of the State Budget,
- an overview of the “Our Island, Our Voices” campaign and opportunities for TasCOSS members to be involved, and
- a facilitated process for feedback on the election platform.

The forums are being held at:

**Hobart:** Monday 22 June from 2:00-4.30pm at the Glenorchy Civic Centre,  
**Burnie:** Wednesday 24 June 2-4.30pm at Café Bliss, 44A Wilmot St, Burnie  
**Launceston:** Thursday 25 June, 10-12.30pm, Anglicare Training Room, ground floor, 122 Elizabeth Street

Please RSVP to [melissa@tascoss.org.au](mailto:melissa@tascoss.org.au) by Friday, 19 June.

### About “Our Island, Our Voices”:

The “Our Island, Our Voices” campaign is a non-party political campaign that TasCOSS has been organising over the last three months. The campaign will be the vehicle through which the positions in this platform are communicated to Tasmanian political parties and the broader community over the coming months. A document summarising the campaign can be downloaded from [www.tascoss.org.au](http://www.tascoss.org.au).

# The Our Island, Our Voices Platform

*Our Island, Our Voices* is a non-party political campaign launched to make sure that Tasmanian citizens are the ones shaping Tasmania's future.

The campaign is built on a belief that the quality of the visions and policies that all political parties in Tasmania put forward must be judged by the degree to which they contribute to a socially and economically vibrant Tasmania into the future.

While the next four years in Tasmania will be shaped by the recession currently hitting the Australian economic, it will be the priorities of the next Tasmanian Government that determines how we as a community cope and thrive as the economy picks up.

Below are the five key *Our Island, Our Voices* themes, with specific policy positions, that the campaign will focus on promoting and which we invite all Tasmanians to get behind.

Responding to the themes and committing to the policy positions listed is the campaign's challenge to all Tasmanian political parties.

## **Strengthen the foundations of the Tasmanian economy**

If Tasmania is to create and sustain new opportunities for economic prosperity then as a community we must prioritise building on the strengths of the public education system, expanding access to skills and training opportunities, and investing in programs that support families and children earlier. At a minimum all political parties must:

- Explain to Tasmanians before the March 2010 election how they will ensure Tasmania achieves the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) target of lifting retention rates for year 12 or equivalent attainment to 90% by 2015. In 2008 Tasmania's retention rate fell to 61.8%.

Parties should also commit to:

- Funding for a renewed focus on supportive school environments, particularly for students with special needs.
- Increasing access to educational opportunities by providing affordable and appropriate accommodation and transport for students living in remote, regional and urban fringe areas.
- Delivering initiatives that help young people who are disengaged from school to reconnect and learn.
- Investing in alternate job creation and work participation programs to support disadvantaged jobseekers and to prevent the newly unemployed from becoming long-term unemployed.
- Fully funding the 30 new Child and Family Centres committed to by the State Government in 2008, and build on their role to create a stronger integrated system of universal and primary services for all children.

## **Create opportunities for social and economic participation**

The work of the Tasmanian Demographic Change Advisory Council highlights that for Tasmania to prosper the State must prioritise initiatives that maximise social and economic participation in the short and long-term. All political parties must commit to:

- Putting the delivery of social housing on a viable financial footing, with the capacity to increase stock levels, keep rents affordable, and make properties thermally efficient.
- Increasing access to affordable public and publicly subsidised transport in urban, urban fringe, and rural areas.
- Establishing a review to identify and cost short, medium and long-term measures to improve the accessibility of Tasmanian cities and towns for people with mobility issues.
- Increasing access to pre-employment, post-employment and on-going employment support to people who face barriers to, and discrimination within, the workforce.
- Allocating new funding for pre and post-release programs to support Tasmanians in the criminal justice system.
- A system wide reform of the youth justice system.

## **Prioritise a healthier Tasmania**

The poor health of Tasmanians is not good news, while access to health services continues to be inadequate for too many. All political parties must commit to:

- Creating a high level inter-government mechanism to drive and coordinate health promotion activities and prioritise outreach services for at risk population groups.
- Increasing access to health services in rural and regional areas through the use of outreach services, better community and health-related transport services, better service planning, and better use of technology.
- Establishing a food security system in Tasmania that seeks to ensure that all Tasmanians have access to affordable and nutritious food.
- Boosting funding for early intervention mental health services delivered by government and non-government services.
- Continuing to focus on strengthening the drug and alcohol sector in Tasmania.
- Increasing the base funding to the Community Equipment Scheme and indexing funding in order to meet the increasing demands on the scheme.
- Funding a Tasmanian Elder Abuse Strategy to support older Tasmanians facing emotional, physical and psychological abuse.

## **Ensure accountability to social outcomes**

The ultimate responsibility of the Tasmanian State Government is to deliver the conditions which enable all Tasmanians to enjoy a good quality of life. To help ensure that future state governments are accountable to this goal, all political parties should commit to:

- Maintaining a fiscal strategy that enables Tasmania to deal with increases in demand for health and human services, as a result of demographic change, and continue to prioritise investment in education and skills enhancement.
- Ensuring that all new government legislation includes a social equity impact statement.
- Undertaking an initial ‘social inclusion’ audit of existing government policies and practices within the first 18 months of government to identify those areas that contribute to ‘exclusion’. This would form the basis for a reform agenda to improve the way government operates.
- Reforming the Board structures of Tasmanian Government business entities, so that they include one representative with proven expertise on consumer issues.
- Reducing the negative impact of gaming machines in Tasmania, and investigating the possibility of increasing tax on gaming revenue with funds being quarantined for those communities affected by high levels of problem gambling.

### **Invest in community organisations**

Community service organisations play a vital role in all Tasmanian communities, and support individuals and families in many different areas of life. To strengthen this role all political parties should commit to:

- Signing a **‘Strengthening Community Services Agreement’** with community service peak bodies by June 2010, which would recognise the vital role of community organisations as independent civil society actors and set out agreed priorities for reform between 2010-2014, including the points below.
- An independent review of the impact of wage levels in the community services industry on the quality of services that are delivered and the capacity for the industry to attract and retain professional staff. This review would be undertaken in the first 18 months of the next Tasmanian Government.
- A shift in Government contracting arrangements for community services that balances competitive tendering with an investment approach.
- The establishment of a Strengthening Community Services Fund – such a fund would allow organisations to apply for resources to implement processes that are aimed at strengthening their governance and management systems, identify strategies for achieving efficiencies, and to support organisations that are interested in changing their structures or creating joint programming initiatives.
- The development of a 2025 Community Services Futures Plan for Tasmania – this should be completed by 2014, and be the agreed vehicle for responding to structural challenges within the industry and the demographic changes taking place in the Tasmanian community.