

A summary of the “Our Island, Our Voices” campaign strategy

This campaign strategy was endorsed by the TasCOSS Board at its March Board meeting, and is the basis for ongoing consultation and engagement with TasCOSS members and other interested stakeholders. The campaign is being funded by donations from TasCOSS members, and is totally non-party political.

The campaign is being organised and implemented by TasCOSS and overseen by an Advisory Group. The Advisory Group held its first meeting on 28 May and includes representatives from TasCOSS, TACH, HACSU, the Salvation Army, Anglicare, Colony 47 and the MHCT.

1. Introduction:

The lead up to the March 2010 election presents TasCOSS and its members with a critical opportunity to try and shape the policy directions of Tasmania. The uncertain nature of the election outcome means that there is potentially more political and public space to leverage our agenda.

The uncertainty also means that while it is important to have a guiding campaign strategy it is equally as important to be willing to change tact as events unfold. This document should therefore be read as indicative with decisions about implementation based on a willingness to be flexible and responsive to opportunities.

The key objectives of a campaign should be:

- to make specific investments and reforms in critical social policy areas, including issues specifically relevant to the viability and sustainability of community service organisations, a key component of the political platforms of the three main political parties; and
- to make public debate of our priorities a key theme in the lead up to and during in the election.

To achieve these objectives the community sector needs to:

- Make our issues local issues that are central to individual candidates; and
- Make our issues public issues that are central to party platforms and their political narratives.

Achieving these two things requires us to:

- Use a process to facilitate local action that drives the issues in the electorate at least six months before the election;
- Systematically seek to influence the political platforms of all parties;
- Systematically seek to influence public debate by ensuring a high level of awareness about critical social policy issues;
- Have an organised and coordinated membership that supports the local action and the public campaigning; and
- Have a mechanism that enables our membership, their staff, and members of the broader community to be active advocates for social justice.

This paper summarises the *Our Island, Our Voices* strategy, which has been developed to achieve our aims. We have also included an indicative timeline until March 2010 (see Appendix A).

2. Reviewing the last election campaign strategy

In 2006 TasCOSS did not know when the election would be held, and when it was announced the organisation modified the budget submission it had released in October 2005 and turned it into its call to the parties.

The organisation then carried out the following activities in February 2006:

- Released a Call to the Parties document
- Launched the document through the media, and carried out ongoing media
- Meet with new candidates
- Held community forums
- Published an election newsletter
- Monitored party commitments

The approach used by TasCOSS in 2006 was essentially media driven and supplemented by candidate meetings and forums.

The TasCOSS 2006 call to parties focused on:

- Affordable housing – in response the parties focused on the creation of an affordable housing organisation and private rental support; there was no systematic approach
- Employment – in response the ALP committed to expanding P2J
- Concessions – in response all parties made a commitment to review concessions, introduce some new concessions and expand others
- Community sector development – in response all parties supported the need for an industry plan in some fashion
- Community and public transport – there was no real response to this
- Early-intervention, children and family services – in response all parties made a range of commitments
- Other issues – the ALP had a good policy on oral health; the Liberals committed to an Elder Abuse Strategy; and the Greens committed additional resources to mental health services and rolling back gambling.

While TasCOSS obtained a number of key commitments through the election campaign from all parties, commitments to tackle the larger structural drivers of poverty and disadvantage were missing.

Key differences between 2006 and 2010: We know when the election is going to be held and can run a longer-campaign that melds local activities with state-wide initiatives that are coordinated through TasCOSS.

The financial environment is fundamentally different. In 2006, Tasmania was still enjoying an economic boom and commitments could be made on the basis of an expanding economy. In 2010, Tasmania will be in the middle of an economic downturn, the longevity of which is uncertain. The community services industry needs to make sure that addressing disadvantage and the needs of the industry are a priority in this context, particularly as whoever is elected might have to make deeper expenditure savings after the election.

3. The campaign strategy for the 2010 election

This section summarises the key elements of the *Our Island, Our Voices* campaign and will guide the work of TasCOSS and the Advisory Group.

In implementing the campaign TasCOSS and the Advisory Group are committed to being flexible and willing to alter the campaign in response to events and opportunities to maximise the impact and effectiveness of the campaign.

A new campaign: The “Our Island, Our Voice” campaign:

- The launch of the “Our Island, Our Voice” campaign in July/August 2009.

A campaign website and targeting candidates:

- The campaign will launch a dedicated website.
- The website will be used to:
 - Provide a mechanism whereby people can sign up to the campaign and email all candidates and parties to show their support
 - Central to the campaign is getting as many people as possible to sign on and become supporters of the campaign, so we can target the candidates with key messages during the six months before the election. The website will enable supporters to target their emails either directly to all candidates or to candidates in specific electorates
 - Provide template letters, which community service organisations, their staff, and the broader public will be able to email directly to sitting candidates and new candidates
 - Provide election ‘how to guides’ for community organisations to run events in their local areas
 - Provide a mechanism to do surveys – i.e. a survey on party commitments to housing, sector funding, disability, etc. The campaign can then put out media releases with the results of the surveys
 - Provide a mechanism whereby community sector members can post video messages – this might be unnecessary, but is worth considering.
 - Provide a mechanism whereby the community sector can track the policies of the different parties
 - Establish Twitter, Myspace, and Facebook pages to complement the site and grow the campaign supporter base

A campaign platform:

- The campaign will release a platform covering social policy and industry policy commitments all parties are being asked to sign on to. This should be released after the State Budget and well before the election.
- The intention is to launch the website when the platform is launched – and immediately ask people in the sector to sign on and email all political parties to demonstrate their support.
- After the launch of the Policy Platform, separate two-page papers on each recommendation will be developed and released.

Lobbying parties and candidates:

- Once the platform is released the campaign will coordinate lobbying to influence the election commitments of the political parties.

Coordinating activities with other Peak Bodies:

- TasCOSS will work with TACH and the community houses so that they can run local community campaigns in the key electorates before and during the election.
- TasCOSS is also meeting with other Peak Bodies and the aim is to ensure that other Peak Bodies see the community campaign approach as one they support and want to be involved in. For example, Peak Bodies could use the website to put up a template letter that they then get their membership and broader constituency to send to all candidates and political parties.
- It will be important to draw on the policy expertise of different Peaks, particularly in determining key policy positions and drafting background policy position papers.
- It is also hoped that Peak Bodies and other community organisations with a strong regional presence will coordinate and resource electorate specific activities.

Advertising:

- Television and other advertising – a well resourced campaign will allow us to drive our key messages through the media and build interest and grow the supporter database.
- The campaign needs to identify opportune times for television advertising, and to schedule it so that we build message momentum over a period of six months.

Community and other advertising opportunities:

- Targeting community newsletters – this would involve placing adverts in community newsletters, church newsletters, and local government gazettes advertising the campaign and asking people to ‘take action’ or ‘send a message’ about housing, disability, mental health, etc.
- Look to provide local community groups with ‘postcards’ supporting the campaign that could be sent to political parties. This could be a useful way of providing campaign material to other community groups, including churches.

Pre-election events:

- Depending on resources and time, the campaign will also hold events before and during the election period:
 - Maximise the TasCOSS Dorothy Pearce Address for electoral impact. This is going to be held in September 2009.
 - Organise a debate between the political parties during anti-poverty week.

- Hold a community sector advocacy day at parliament during the week of 16 November, which is the last parliamentary sitting week of both the MLCs and MHAs. This could be quite a powerful strategy to directly target all members of parliament. TasCOSS and the sector successfully held a housing advocacy day at parliament in October 2007, and VCOSS have recently held an advocacy day at the Victorian Parliament on funding and indexation.
- Election road shows and events – coordinate a series of activities around the State in Feb/March 2010.

Local area or issue policy snapshots:

- TasCOSS is planning to:
 - Release a series of short (4-page) policy papers on either issues (housing, transport, etc) or geographical location (the north, or north-west) that integrate known data and qualitative case study material from our recent research. The policy papers will also include policy recommendations.
 - Monitor all party announcements during the election, and provide a consolidated comparative document to the membership prior to the 20 March 2010.

Coordinating media:

The campaign will coordinate media, and could seek to provide the key papers with 'feature stories' or ideas for a 'series of feature stories' in the months leading up to the election.

Continuing through to the federal election:

The campaign may continue throughout 2010 until the federal election.

Appendix A: Indicative timeline until March 2010

Activity	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Organise campaign	XXXXX	XXXXX											
Launch TasCOSS report		XXXXX											
TasCOSS member meetings and briefings – building support		XXXX	XXXX										
Prepare policy platform – and then out for consultation to TasCOSS members			XXXXX – needs to go to TSPC	XXXXX	XXXX								
Launch campaign				XXXX	XXXX								
Prepare website			XXXXX	XXXX	XXXX								
Launch website and platform				XXXXX	XXXX								
Invite members to sign on and send platform support emails				XXXXX	XXXXX								
Write TasCOSS poverty briefing papers and platform briefing papers			XXXX	XXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXX	XXXX					
Write template letters			XXXX	XXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX
Compile list of community newsletters/stakeholders, and promote coalition			XXXX	XXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX				
TasCOSS and TACH – regional forums				XXXX	XXXXX								
Dorothy Pearce							XXXX						
Anti-poverty week debate								XXXX					
Organise and promote sector advocacy day					XXXX	XXXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX				
Release of TasCOSS briefing papers and platform briefing papers							XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX
Template letters action to go with briefing papers							XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX
Survey's on issues, and media releases on results						XXXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX
TACH and TasCOSS – second regional forums											XXXX	XXXX	XXXX
Tel/newspaper ads									XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	
10 day countdown to election day													