

Human Services, Human Rights

Tasmanian Council of Social Service Inc. (TasCOSS)
Submission to the Tasmanian Government's 2007/08 State Budget



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Our Vision

A strong organisation providing leadership in the community for a fair, just and inclusive Tasmania.



Tasmanian Council of Social Service Inc
(TasCOSS)
PO Box 1126
Sandy Bay TAS 7006

Ph (03) 6231 0755
Fax: (03) 6223 6136
Mob: 0409 214 781

Email: mat@tascoss.org.au
Web: www.tascoss.org.au

Contact: Mathew Rowell, Chief Executive Officer

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*“The right to development is the measure of
the respect of all other human rights.
That should be our aim: a situation in which all individuals
are enabled to maximise their potential, and to contribute
to the evolution of society as a whole”.*

Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations.

Introduction and Executive Summary

The Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) is proud to present to the Tasmanian Government our submission to the 2007/08 State Budget process, *Human Services, Human Rights*.

TasCOSS is the peak industry body for Tasmania's non-government community services sector. Its membership comprises individuals and organisations active in the provision of community services to low income, vulnerable and disadvantaged Tasmanians. TasCOSS represents the interests of its members and their clients to government, the public, the private sector and the media.

Each year TasCOSS provides the Department of Treasury with our recommendations on how we believe Government resources should be invested through the State Budget to improve the lives of low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians.

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 also articulates the Government's ongoing policy and strategic vision. The State Budget has significant implications on Government funded services, many of which are provided by the community sector, along with the capacity of low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians to access these services.

TasCOSS considers its annual submission to the State Budget process as the single most important piece of advocacy and policy work it does each year. It represents the priority issues that have been identified by TasCOSS' member and constituent organisations through our ongoing policy development processes.

Human Services, Human Rights

TasCOSS' submission to the 2007/08 Tasmanian State Budget is focussed on the rights of every Tasmanian to access basic services, participate in their community and have a say in the decisions that affect their lives.

With Tasmanians being asked to consider a possible Tasmanian Charter of Human Rights, TasCOSS emphasises that the provision of basic services and the necessities of life are fundamental human rights.

This submission identifies areas that require additional Government investment to alleviate poverty and disadvantage in the Tasmanian community, and to improve access for low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians to basic services and resources. It recommends practical solutions to address the challenges of housing affordability and unemployment in Tasmania, as well as strategies to improve service delivery to low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians.

TasCOSS urges the Tasmanian Government to consider the recommendations contained in this submission to ensure every Tasmanian can fulfil their right to maximise their potential and participate in their community.

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 consumers since 1961.

TasCOSS' vision is to provide a strong organisation providing leadership in the community for a fair, just and inclusive Tasmania.

TasCOSS values:

- The rights of all Tasmanians to opportunity, justice and equality.
- Policy solutions that are socially and economically sustainable.
- The experience and talents of people affected by poverty and inequality.
- The passion and commitment of people working in the community sector.
- Working collaboratively and in partnership.
- A diversity of responses to the range of need within the community.
- Our independence as a non party-political organisation.

TasCOSS is engaged in four main activities:

- Provide leadership and stimulate debate.
- Promote policy solutions to government and the community.
- Advocate for change.
- Support and develop the community sector.

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

Tasmanian Social Policy Council

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

The TSPC is responsible for determining TasCOSS' major policy positions and establishing the priority social issues that TasCOSS pursues. It also assists the work of the TasCOSS Social Policy and Research Unit, in developing social policy positions that are grounded in solid consultation and represent the interests of the Community Services Industry and its clients.

TasCOSS' Policy Development Process

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

Organisations are asked to identify what the major issues are for their clients, services and region. These issues are then developed into policy positions by TasCOSS' social policy staff, before forming the final recommendations contained in this submission.

This policy development process is overseen by the TSPC, who initially determine the issues to be addressed in the budget submission and then endorse the final recommendations and priority issues as contained in the submission.

This process ensures that all recommendations TasCOSS make to Government are grounded in solid consultation and are representative of the Industry. They are also based on the needs of clients that access services from organisations in our industry.

Linkages between this submission and Tasmania *Together*

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

TasCOSS is constantly seeking opportunities to contribute to Tasmania *Together* to ensure it continues to represent the interests of low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians and the Community Services Sector. 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.

Costings

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

A Fairer Tasmania

In forming this Budget Submission, we have consulted with a wide cross-section of the non-government community services industry to identify eight areas requiring additional Government investment in the 2007/08 State Budget.

1. Affordable Housing

Further investment in a range of strategies to increase the supply of affordable housing across the full spectrum of the housing market.

2. Learning and Working Tasmanians

Additional support for a range of innovative job-pathway strategies aimed at reducing barriers for disadvantaged Tasmanian job-seekers to access meaningful and sustained employment.

3. Consumers of Health and Community Services

Enhancing safeguards for consumers of Tasmanian health and community services and protecting their rights.

4. Human Services

Alleviating unmet demand and improving the capacity of services provided by the Government and Non-Government sectors to alleviate disadvantage and hardship in the Tasmanian community.

5. Passenger Transport Services

Investing in services to improve the provision of affordable and accessible passenger transport services to Tasmanians that are transport-disadvantaged.

6. State Concessions

Review the appropriateness and effectiveness of concessions currently provided by the Tasmanian Government to alleviate poverty and disadvantage in the community.

7. Consumers

Further safeguard and enhance the rights of particularly vulnerable low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanian consumers.

8. A Tasmanian Charter of Human Rights

Continue the process towards developing a Tasmanian Charter of Human Rights.

Priority Issue:

In its previous submissions to the Tasmanian Government's State Budget process, TasCOSS has selected the priority issues that its members most wanted to see addressed in the next State Budget.

This year, the Tasmanian Social Policy Council has endorsed **Affordable Housing** as TasCOSS' number one priority issue for the next state budget.

This is based on the input that TasCOSS has received from its member organisations across Tasmania confirming that housing affordability is the most significant issue for their clients.

TasCOSS has included recommendations in this submission calling on the Tasmanian Government to invest in a range of strategies aimed at increasing supply of affordable housing, and to alleviate the pressure on low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians in housing stress.

TasCOSS strongly recommends that the Tasmanian Government consider Affordable Housing as an urgent priority issue for the 2007/08 State Budget.

Summary of Recommendations:

1. Affordable Housing

Recommendation 1.1

Allocate additional resources to Housing Tasmania's capital investment program to facilitate the purchase and/or construction of an additional 500 properties to be owned and managed by Housing Tasmania by 2011.

Recommendation 1.2

Provide additional resources to private rental support services to enable special assistance payments to low-income tenants in the private rental market who have their income support payments suspended.

Recommendation 1.3

Provide additional resources to Private Rental Support Services aimed at assisting low-income Tasmanians to remain in the private rental market.

Recommendation 1.4

Continue to support Home Ownership Assistance Programs with the provision of additional funding for a pilot-program based around shared-equity models for appropriate Housing Tasmania clients seeking to enter home-ownership.

2. Learning and Working Tasmanians

Recommendation 2.1

Continue to fund the successful Partnerships to Jobs Program, with additional resources to further expand the focus of the program to support ventures aimed at assisting disadvantaged Tasmanian jobseekers.

Recommendation 2.2

Continue to provide for capacity building strategies in community sector organisations seeking to develop Partnerships to Jobs projects.

Recommendation 2.3

Establish a *Community Partnerships to Learning* program, based on the successful *Partnerships to Jobs* model, for the purpose of supporting community based training and learning opportunities for low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians who experience barriers to engaging in mainstream education and training.

Recommendation 2.4

Provide funding to each of Tasmania's four Community Legal Centres to allow the employment of an additional legal position in each centre.

Recommendation 2.5

Commit to ensuring at least 20% of new traineeship positions in the state service in the year 2006/07 are targeted to people who are either long-term unemployed, mature-aged or entering the workforce for the first time.

Commence a high-profile marketing and information campaign to encourage other employers and industries to consider mature aged workers and

unemployed Tasmanians as capable of filling skill-shortages in key areas of the economy.

3. Consumer of Health and Community Services

Recommendation 3.1

Provide funding to establish an independent representative and advocacy body for consumers in the Tasmanian health system

Recommendation 3.2

That funding to the Health Complaints Commission is substantially increased in line with the request from the Commissioner in its 2004-05 Annual Report.

Recommendation 3.3

Investigate the need for a Community & Disability Services Commissioner within the Office of the Ombudsman.

4. Human Services

Recommendation 4.1

Commit to a service-system reform agenda of Tasmania's alcohol and other drug services that parallels the Bridging the Gap process of reforming Tasmania's mental health services.

This process must include a comprehensive mapping exercise of all alcohol and other drug services currently provided by the government and non-government sectors.

Recommendation 4.2

Continue the important work of the Bridging the Gap Initiative by investing in the following three areas:

1. Supported accommodation. Two more facilities of 12 beds each to provide cluster style supported accommodation services to people experiencing mental illness and who require Level 3 supported accommodation.
2. Individual packages of care to provide support and assistance to individuals living in their own homes who require support and care in this environment .
3. Respite beds. That six beds each be created in the north, north west and an additional six beds in the south of the state in order to provide respite for people experiencing significant mental health issues.

Recommendation 4.3

Continue the early intervention focus in Children and Family Services as initiated in the 2006 State Budget.

Recommendation 4.4

Allocate an additional \$9.8 million per annum to disability services to address current levels of unmet need.

Recommendation 4.5

Allocate one-off funding of \$3.1 million in the 2006/07 State Budget to build seven new group-homes for Tasmanians with disabilities.

Recommendation 4.6

That the Tasmanian Government undertakes a comprehensive system reform of Tasmania's government and non-government disability support services.

5. Passenger Transport Services

Recommendation 5.1

Ensure all adult and concession fare structures on privately operated bus services are consistent with the fare structure of Metro Tasmania.

Recommendation 5.2

Ensure a concession is incorporated in all student fare structures.

Recommendation 5.3

Establish an appropriately resourced and representative Ministerial Advisory Council of Passenger Transport Services.

Recommendation 5.4

Continue the separate Core Passenger Transport Services Review unit within the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources, to implement the recommendations of the current review process and monitor the impact of these changes.

6. State Concessions

Recommendation 6.1

Allocate resources for a comprehensive review of the operation and efficacy of all concession arrangements in Tasmania.

7. Consumer Rights

Recommendation 7.1

That a considerable increase in resources be granted to Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading, consistent with the increased impact and complexity of choices facing Tasmanian consumers.

Recommendation 7.2

Provide core funding to a new, generalist non-government organisation, *Consumers Tasmania*, and supplement funding to Tasmania's community legal services to assist with their consumer advice and advocacy work.

8. A Tasmanian Charter of Human Rights

Recommendation 8.1

Allocate appropriate departmental resources to continue the process of developing a Tasmanian Charter of Human Rights

Recommendation 8.2

Initiate a community information campaign to promote a culture of awareness and respect for human rights in Tasmania.

1. Affordable Housing

The provision of safe, secure and affordable shelter is a fundamental human right that for many Tasmanians remains unmet.

Over recent budgets, the Tasmanian Government has endeavoured to address the crisis in housing through a series of policies and initiatives, including the Affordable Housing Strategy launched in 2003 and a community housing initiative announced in 2005 to provide an additional 700 properties over the next four years.

However, TasCOSS and its member organisations have been frustrated by the apparent low-priority the State Government has given the need for sustained additional investment in expanding the supply of affordable housing, particularly public housing.

Around 3,000 Tasmanians are currently on waiting lists for public housing and the system continues to be under enormous pressure and unable to meet the needs of the most vulnerable Tasmanians.

Furthermore, low-income Tasmanians find it increasingly difficult to access affordable and appropriate housing in the private rental market or through purchasing their own home, which increases pressure on public housing.

In this environment TasCOSS is disappointed that the State Government decided not to continue several initiatives in the Affordable Housing Strategy, particularly the additional investment in Housing Tasmania's capital investment program. We also note that several initiatives in relation to innovative home ownership models that were proposed within the original Affordable Housing Strategy have never progressed beyond the conceptual stage.

TasCOSS therefore calls on the Tasmanian Government to re-commit to affordable housing by making it a major spending priority for the 2007/08 State Budget.

We recommend that the government provide funding to increase supply in the social housing system, as well as further assistance and incentives for low-income Tasmanians that want to purchase their own home.

Only a significant investment by the State Government will guarantee the right of Tasmanians to live in safe, secure and affordable housing.

Recommendation 1.1 Public Housing

Allocate additional resources to Housing Tasmania's capital investment program to facilitate the purchase and/or construction of an additional 500 properties to be owned and managed by Housing Tasmania by 2011.

Department:

Health and Human Services (Housing Tasmania)

Rationale:

TasCOSS and its member organisations are passionate advocates for a sustainable and effective public housing system in Tasmania because we know that public housing is the only way low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians can be protected from the extremities of the housing market.

Public housing makes up around 5.8% of all Tasmanian dwellings and around 30,000 Tasmanians reside in Housing Tasmania properties. The public housing system is a large and important government service.

Housing Tasmania's recent market rent review confirmed that 99% of public housing tenants will spend 25% or less of their household income on their housing, confirming that public housing remains the most affordable and secure housing tenure for low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians.

The Productivity Commission's *Report on Government Services*, released in early 2006, showed again that Housing Tasmania remains a highly efficient Government service, with a 98% property occupancy rate throughout the previous year.

However, to maximise its effectiveness, Housing Tasmania must have adequate resources to ensure it can not only maintain and adapt its existing property portfolio to the changing needs of its clients, but also to grow and diversify its property portfolio.

Without these resources, our once celebrated public housing system will become a run-down, marginalised and a culturally stigmatised housing safety net, accessible only to the most urgent cases of need.

TasCOSS and its member organisations have called for the Tasmanian Government to commit to investing in social housing to ensure it continues to represent at least 6% of all Tasmanian residential properties.

On current housing market projections, this would require a net-expansion in the social housing system of around 1,200 properties before 2012. Such a commitment would also provide the necessary additional housing for all Tasmanians in most urgent need of public housing assistance on the category 1 waiting list.

In December 2006, upon launching the Affordable Housing Organisation, the Premier Paul Lennon MHA stated that the initiative will deliver "700 additional properties" in the social housing system over the next four-years.

We therefore call on the Tasmanian Government to allocate appropriate additional resources to Housing Tasmania in the 2007/08 State Budget, to facilitate the purchase and/or construction of an additional 500 properties to be owned and managed by Housing Tasmania, over the next four years.

This investment will ensure a net expansion in Tasmania's social housing system of 1,200 properties by the year 2012, thus maintaining the system at the important benchmark of 6% of all Tasmanian housing.

This investment would also demonstrate a commitment to maintain an effective and sustainable Tasmanian public housing authority and ensure the service has the capacity to support Tasmanians in most urgent housing need.

A four-year capital investment program would provide Housing Tasmania with the capacity to make long-term investments in land and property developments and ensure it can continue a maintenance program of its existing property portfolio.

Finally, TasCOSS advises the Tasmanian Government to consider now the implications of the Federal Government not entering into a new Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA) when the current agreement concludes in 2008.

The State Government must ensure low-income Tasmanians in need of housing assistance are not further disadvantaged in the likely event that the CSHA is not renewed. TasCOSS recommends that the Departments of Treasury and Health and Human Services consult with the community sector, in planning for this outcome to ensure Housing Tasmania's service delivery capacity is not detrimentally affected.

Estimated Cost:

\$25 million in the 2007/08 State Budget as part of a \$100 million, four-year capital investment program.

This recommendation will progress the Tasmania *Together* goals to:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)

**Recommendation 1.2 Private Rental Support:
Emergency Rental Subsidy**

Provide additional resources to private rental support services to enable special assistance payments to low-income tenants in the private rental market who have their income support payments suspended.

Department:

Health and Human Services (Housing Tasmania)

Rationale:

Under the Federal Government's Welfare to Work changes, some of our most vulnerable Tasmanians risk having their income support payments suspended for up to eight-weeks.

Over the next four years, as many as 5,000 Tasmanians, including sole-parents with school-aged children, long-term unemployed and Tasmanians with a disability, will be required to meet participation requirements in regards to searching for employment. They risk having their income support payments suspended for up to eight weeks, if found to be breaching their mutual obligation requirements.

While the Australian Government is funding some limited case management assistance to some individuals who have their income payments suspended (particularly those with dependent children), TasCOSS is concerned that this assistance is not available to every person who has their income payments

suspended. We are concerned that this will lead to a potentially significant number of Tasmanians being left without any income for up to eight weeks, putting even further pressure on support services provided by the State Government and the Community Sector.

In relation to housing, we are particularly concerned about the potential impact on Tasmanians in the private rental market who have their income support payments suspended, are not able to access case-management assistance and are therefore unable to meet their rental payments. While public housing tenants are safeguarded by Housing Tasmania's policy of income-based rent, meaning that a tenant pays no rent if they stop earning an income, there are no such regulations to protect tenants in the private rental market who may have their income payments suspended.

Private rental tenants who have no income to pay their rent risk going into debt or being evicted, putting even further pressure on individuals, the public housing system, and the community support services they access during this time.

In the absence of a state funded emergency relief program, TasCOSS recommends that the State Government provide additional funding to private rental support services to enable them to provide short-term rental assistance specifically for low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians who have their income suspended.

This would complement the existing services provided by private rental support services and ensure that vulnerable Tasmanians do not fall even further into hardship and poverty as a result of their income payments being temporarily suspended.

We believe the State has a responsibility to provide a similar level of assistance to Tasmanians in the private rental market who have their income temporarily suspended, as would be provided to tenants in the public housing system, who pay rent specifically linked to their capacity to pay.

Cost:

An additional \$100,000 for Private Rental Support Services

This recommendation will progress the Tasmania *Together* goals to:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)

**Recommendation 1.3 Private Rental Assistance:
 Tenancy Support Services**

Provide additional resources to Private Rental Support Services aimed at assisting low-income Tasmanians to remain in the private rental market.

Department:

Health and Human Services (Housing Tasmania)

Rationale:

One of the most concerning aspects of the affordable housing crisis in Tasmania has been the dramatic increase of rent in the private rental market. With increased property values comes increased rents and low-income tenants are especially struggling to absorb rising rental costs within already limited household budgets.

An estimated 21,300 Tasmanian households experience housing stress, in which at least 30% of the household income is spent on rent or mortgage repayments. A report by Anglicare Tasmania in 2005 found that some disadvantaged groups were paying as much as 60% of their household income on rent – an unsustainable situation for any person on a limited and fixed income.

Projections of the Tasmanian private rental market in the medium term suggest that these conditions will only continue and potentially worsen, particularly as rising interest rates put upward pressure on rents.

However, for many low-income Tasmanians the private rental market remains their only realistic choice of housing. The public housing system is generally inaccessible, while with rising house prices, home ownership is an even more difficult prospect for low-income earners.

We know many low income Tasmanians are being required to pay what would normally be unaffordable rent for their level of income, to remain in a suitable property in the private rental market. This is putting enormous pressure on these households, who are also trying to budget for the increased cost of living and often high levels of personal debt.

It is therefore essential that appropriate services are available to assist low-income Tasmanians in the private rental market, to ensure they have access to affordable housing, and that their housing costs have minimal impact on their capacity to purchase other essential goods and services.

TasCOSS is also concerned about the potential impact on the private rental market of large-scale developments such as the proposed Bell Bay Pulp Mill. Northern Tasmania is already experiencing high demand for private rental properties, with 'rent-bidding' a common practice. Demand for short to medium term accommodation for workers temporarily relocating into the Greater Launceston region during the construction of the Pulp Mill, is likely to add further pressure on an already restricted market, with low-income earners likely to be at greatest risk of being squeezed from the market. It is the Tasmanian Government's responsibility to ensure developments have minimal negative impact on the community, particularly in relation to such issues as housing.

TasCOSS therefore calls on the Tasmanian Government to allocate additional resources to services aimed directly at assisting low-income Tasmanians in the private rental market.

These services include not only private rental support services provided by Anglicare Tasmania and Colony 47, but also support services aimed at assisting tenants in private rental, including the Tenancy Support Service provided by Centacare Tasmania and The Salvation Army.

TasCOSS notes that in the 2006/07 state budget, funding for private rental support services reduced by around \$1 million. This was in response to softening demand for these services, with the tight rental market making it even more difficult for low income Tasmanians to enter into private rental tenancies and be eligible for assistance.

Despite this, TasCOSS recommends that funding for these services should be restored at the 2005/06 levels in the next state budget and that this additional funding should be made available for services to further assist low-income tenants in housing stress to remain in the private rental market.

Cost

\$1 million in additional funding

This recommendation will progress the Tasmania *Together* goals to:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)

Recommendation 1.4 Home Ownership Assistance Program

Continue to support Home Ownership Assistance Programs with the provision of additional funding for a pilot-program based around shared-equity models for appropriate Housing Tasmania clients seeking to enter home-ownership.

Department:

Health and Human Services (Housing Tasmania)

Rationale:

TasCOSS supports the Tasmanian Government's emphasis over recent years on assisting more low-income Tasmanians to purchase their own home.

Despite the dramatic increases in property values in Tasmania, home ownership remains not only the most desired form of tenure, but also the most practical and realistic way for low income earners to acquire wealth and guarantee a secure future for themselves and their families.

The original Affordable Housing Strategy placed great importance on ensuring home ownership remained a realistic goal for low income and disadvantaged Tasmanians.

The State and Commonwealth Governments make a significant contribution to affordable and sustainable home ownership for Tasmanians on low incomes. The Home Ownership Assistance Program (HOAP), the Streets Ahead initiative and stamp duty relief for first home-owners have all assisted a significant number of low-income earners to buy their own home.

TasCOSS recommends that the Tasmanian Government continue to support these programs through the 2007/08 State Budget.

TasCOSS also calls on the Government to explore further measures to reduce the barriers preventing low-income earners from purchasing their own home. The Affordable Housing Strategy proposed several initiatives that should be explored in the future.

These proposals included:

- Methods to support home purchasers on low incomes who are considered to be in housing stress;
- Examine the capacity of Government and the private sector to structure housing finance to provide protection in times of interest rate volatility;
- Shared equity models of home-ownership, with Government or community organisations partnering with low-income tenants to access affordable housing finance.

The 2006/07 State Budget included a 21% reduction in funding for Home Ownership Assistance Programs (HOAP), from \$3.6 million in 2005/06 to \$2.8 million. This was based on market projections of reduced demand for the program, primarily as a result of increases in housing costs.

TasCOSS recommends that funding for the HOAP program should be restored to the 2005/06 levels in the next State Budget and that this additional funding should be earmarked to progress new strategies aimed at reducing barriers to home ownership.

If appropriate, this process could be conducted in partnership with the new Affordable Housing Organisation.

Cost

\$800,000 additional funding.

This recommendation will progress the Tasmania *Together* goals to:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)

2. Learning and Working Tasmanians

Reducing unemployment in Tasmania, particularly the number of Tasmanians that experience long-term unemployment, remains critically important for reducing the prevalence of poverty and disadvantage in our community.

Households with secure employment are more likely to have secure housing, better health outcomes and lower rates of alcohol and drug use. It is also widely acknowledged that young people raised in households with at least one member of the family in paid employment, attained higher education levels, and are less likely to be unemployed themselves, than young people raised in jobless households.

TasCOSS acknowledges that much has been achieved in reducing the level of unemployment in Tasmania. Our unemployment rate has fallen from over 10% in 2000, to 6.5% this year, with over 28,000 new jobs having been added to the Tasmanian labour market since then.

However, governments not only have the responsibility to encourage positive economic circumstances to facilitate employment growth, but also to invest in training and support services to ensure our workforce have the skills and resources that are needed to maintain economic growth for the betterment of the broader community.

TasCOSS is calling on the State Government to invest in a range of strategies to assist unemployed and low-skilled Tasmanians to develop skills and resources needed to access opportunities emerging through Tasmania's relative economic prosperity.

This is particularly critical given that Tasmania continues to be burdened with Australia's highest unemployment rate and the nation's highest levels of long-term unemployment. Latest figures available from Centrelink show that over 10,000 Tasmanians have been unemployed for over 12-months, 7,000 of which have not had paid employment for over 2 years. We also know that the number of jobless households in Tasmania has remained constant over recent years, despite improvements in the broader labour market.

The Federal Government's Welfare to Work changes will mean that a further 5,000 Tasmanian single parents, long-term unemployed and people with disabilities, who were previously be entitled to pension payments, are now required to look for employment.

The Tasmanian Government needs to invest in a range of innovative strategies to ensure these disadvantaged jobseekers have access to the necessary resources, incentives and training opportunities to provide them with the best chance of finding meaningful and long-term employment.

TasCOSS also calls on the Government to ensure vulnerable Tasmanian workers have reasonable access to non-union information, support and advocacy services in the non-government sector.

Recommendation 2.1 Expansion of Partnerships to Jobs

Continue to fund the successful Partnerships to Jobs Program, with additional resources to further expand the focus of the program to support ventures aimed at assisting disadvantaged Tasmanian jobseekers.

Department:

Economic Development

Rationale:

Since launched in 2003, the Tasmanian Government's Partnerships to Jobs Program (P2J) has achieved positive employment outcomes for over 400 disadvantaged Tasmanian job seekers.

This is a significant achievement for a program that provides seed funding to community-based enterprises that generate employment opportunities for people with multiple barriers to employment. The program also supports job-pathway initiatives that aim to provide long-term unemployed Tasmanians with the basic skills, support and confidence they need to take up employment opportunities as they emerge.

In recognition of the success of the P2J model in generating employment outcomes for disadvantaged Tasmanian job seekers, the State Government allocated an additional \$250,000 to the program in the 2006 State Budget. This funding was to provide for specific initiatives aimed at assisting groups with multiple barriers to employment, including new migrants, single parents, mature jobseekers and people with disabilities. These groups were identified as over represented among long-term unemployed through research conducted by the Department of Treasury's Economic Research Unit.

TasCOSS calls on the Tasmanian Government to further build on the successful outcomes already achieved through the P2J program, by expanding the focus of the program.

We believe that while the need to achieve employment outcomes for long-term unemployed Tasmanians must remain a central objective of the P2J program, there are other pressures emerging in the Tasmanian labour market that will impact on disadvantaged Tasmanian jobseekers and should therefore be considered within the scope of P2J.

In particular, TasCOSS and its member organisations are extremely concerned about the impact of the 'Welfare to Work' changes announced by the Federal Government in 2005. We estimate that over the next four years, around 5,000 Tasmanian single parents and people with disabilities, who were previously eligible for a pension, will be required to search for work.

These people face significant barriers to finding employment. Job-pathway programs will be critical in ensuring these people have the support and skills to enable them to find work.

In this regard, P2J could have an important role in assisting these people to find work through its capacity to support community-based initiatives aimed at assisting disadvantaged jobseekers to be 'job-ready'.

Organisations in the community sector that are already providing important services to Tasmanians affected by the 'Welfare to Work' changes, can often be the most logical services to coordinate and provide programs aimed at assisting these people into employment.

We also know that severe skills shortages across a number of key sectors and industries are likely to have a significant impact on future growth of the Tasmanian economy. There is a need to invest in skills and training opportunities across all parts of the labour market. Tasmanians that are currently unemployed, or underemployed, offer a valuable resource that with appropriate training and development opportunities could contribute to addressing some of these skill-shortages.

The P2J program offers enormous potential to engage employers and industry, with the community sector to provide fast-track training opportunities to both unemployed Tasmanians, as well as those who are working, but are in unskilled, low-paid positions.

For many of these people, whose circumstances often mean conventional training programs such as TAFE are inaccessible or inappropriate, P2J-sponsored initiatives can provide alternative training opportunities to enable these people to reach their full potential, particularly if they incorporate a vocational training component in partnership with employers.

Cost:

An additional \$500,000 annual funding to the Partnerships to Jobs Program.

This recommendation will progress the Tasmania *Together* goals to:

- Create a culture that encourages people to learn and develop new skills, including life skills, throughout their lives. (Goal 4)
- Increase job and meaningful work opportunities in Tasmania. (Goal 16)
- Ensure education and training provides our workforce with the skills to support our business and industry. (Goal 18)

Recommendation 2.2 Partnerships to Jobs: Building capacity in the Community Sector.

Continue to provide for capacity building strategies in community sector organisations seeking to develop Partnerships to Jobs projects.

Department:

Economic Development

Rationale:

This year TasCOSS was awarded an 18 month contract by the Department of Economic Development to provide capacity building services to community sector organisations developing proposals as part of the Partnerships to Jobs (P2J) program. This is a time-limited contract and without further funding, this service will cease in 12-months time.

TasCOSS has attempted to avoid using our budget priority statement as a self-serving document to advocate for the continuation of any programs or contracts that we have been awarded by the state government.

However, we strongly believe that any expansion of the P2J program must include some ongoing provision for capacity building in the non-government sector, in order to ensure the continued success of the program.

We know many community sector organisations could deliver successful P2J projects, but require assistance to build their capacity to engage in employment creation initiatives and access P2J funds. This assistance can include idea development, support with generating a business plan, and eventually a successful P2J application.

The State Government, through the Department of Economic Development, invests heavily in supporting the Tasmanian business sector with industry planning to increase the capacity of industry. TasCOSS believes the Government has a similar responsibility to support capacity building in the non-government community services industry.

There is also a need to coordinate networks within the non-government sector to firstly identify and assist appropriate organisations in the sector that could be interested in employment projects eligible for P2J funding.

Cost:

\$200,000 per annum.

This recommendation will progress the Tasmania *Together* goals to:

- Increase job and meaningful work opportunities in Tasmania. (Goal 16)
- Ensure education and training provides our workforce with the skills to support our business and industry. (Goal 20)

Recommendation 2.3 Community Partnerships to Learning

Establish a *Community Partnerships to Learning* program, based on the successful *Partnerships to Jobs* model, for the purpose of supporting community based training and learning opportunities for low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians who experience barriers to engaging in mainstream education and training.

Department:

Education
Economic Development

Rationale:

Equality of access to education and training must be a fundamental goal of the public education system. Governments have a responsibility to ensuring all Tasmanians have access to quality, affordable compulsory and post-compulsory education and training opportunities.

The Tasmanian Government has a range of strategies in place to improve access for low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians to the full spectrum of the education and training system.

However, the institutional-based education and training system does not suit everyone. For a multitude of reasons TAFE, University and similar campus based training providers, are inappropriate or inaccessible to many individuals. Consequently, we need to support alternative community based

training providers that seek to increase participation levels in post-compulsory education and training for people who can not access mainstream training providers.

There are several successful examples of community based organisations partnering with registered training organisations to deliver training programs to people who would otherwise be unlikely to access mainstream education. These programs are successful because the training is provided in an informal, familiar environment, often within their local community, rather than a classroom. The training is also suited to the specific needs of participants. Important services such as childcare and transport is also often available on-site to ensure participants have access to the support they need to complete their training.

TasCOSS strongly supports the community based training model because we believe it has the potential to deliver significant positive outcomes for individuals and the community. It can also clear a pathway for people to undertake their initial training in a community-based environment, before moving into further formal education at TAFE or in vocational training and eventually employment.

The Federal Government's Welfare to Work changes also require us to consider innovative ways to assist people with multiple barriers to employment, to gain the skills and qualifications they need to re-enter the labour market. Targeted community based training models can be particularly effective to assist single parents and the long-term unemployed to gain basic qualifications in a community-based environment that is less intimidating or formal, than mainstream programs.

Apart from the Department of Education's Adult and Community Education (ACE) grants, there is no formalised funding structure to assist community based training programs in Tasmania. Ideas for training are usually generated from the community and based on a need identified within that community, while funding is derived from various sources and the training is usually provided on a one-off basis. There are several community-based organisations that already provide informal training, such as adult education, that may be prepared to expand what they currently offer to also provide formal qualification-based training courses.

TasCOSS is therefore recommending that the Government establish a program based on the model of the Partnerships to Jobs, to provide funding and support to assist organisations in developing community-based training models that reflect the needs of their clients and compliment the existing services provided by that organisation.

This *Community Partnerships to Learning* program should provide funding to assist community-based organisations to assist with the cost of delivering formal certificate based training in the community, we well as promote and assist with partnering these organisations with appropriate registered training organisations.

Organisations would be encouraged to develop a training model based on a need identified within their local community. Training should be based on the interests and existing skills of likely participants in the program and be directed towards generating further education or employment outcomes for

participants. The organisation would also need to consider the indirect costs of providing the support to participants, such as childcare or transport costs, that may be required to ensure success of the program.

We envisage the Department of Education as being responsible for assessing proposals for funding under this new program. Organisations would be encouraged to access other funding streams, such as the Tasmanian Community Fund or other Government grants, to assist with the cost of delivering the training program. This model of training may also be appropriate for accessing unemployed job-seeker accounts and additional Commonwealth funding that has been made available specifically to assist people entering the workforce for the first time through the Welfare to Work reforms.

Estimated Cost:

\$1 million recurrent funding

This recommendation will progress the Tasmania *Together* goals to:

- Create a culture that encourages people to learn and develop new skills, including life skills, throughout their lives. (Goal 4)
- Increase job and meaningful work opportunities in Tasmania. (Goal 16)
- Ensure education and training provides our workforce with the skills to support our business and industry. (Goal 18)

Recommendation 2.4 Funding of Community Legal Centres

Provide funding to each of Tasmania's four Community Legal Centres to allow the employment of an additional legal position in each centre.

Department:

Justice and Industrial Relations

Rationale:

Tasmania's community legal centres have a proud history of representing the interests of low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians across a wide range of legal and welfare matters.

Despite their limited resources each centre provides information, advocacy and representative services for low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians across a range of legal matters, including civil and family law disputes, disputes with Centrelink, Industrial Relations and anti-discrimination cases. Without these services, many low-income Tasmanians would be unable to access professional legal representation and are extremely vulnerable in the justice system.

Demand for the Community Legal Centre services has significantly increased as a result of policy changes at both a State and Commonwealth level.

Services have experienced a significant increase in requests for assistance as a result of the recent changes to industrial relations and income support payments. However, additional funding has not been made available to increase the capacity and resources of the centres. This causes frustration for centre management and staff, as well as the many Tasmanians who seek their services. Remarkably, the North-West Tasmania Community Legal

Centre is funded for only one lawyer, who is expected to provide services to all population centres on the North West Coast, the West Coast and the Bass Strait Islands. The Hobart and Launceston Community Legal Centres, along with the Women's Community Legal Centre are also reporting high demand for the level of service offered.

Community Legal Centres play an important role in the non-government community services industry and an integral service to vulnerable, low-income Tasmanians. They deserve the support of the Community, State and Federal Governments.

TasCOSS believes Community Legal Centres are likely to play an increasingly important information and advocacy service for particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged Tasmanian workers, within the context of the new WorkChoices industrial climate. Casual and seasonal workers, particularly those from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds, are often not members of unions, and it is vital that services are available in the non-government sector so that these workers can access information on their rights as employees, as well as representation and advocacy in workplace disputes.

Community Legal Centres provide advice and representative services in relation to unfair dismissal, breaches of awards, Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs), and workplace harassment.

The recent closure of the Working Women's Centre in Hobart means that the industrial relations services provided by the Community Legal Centres are even more important.

There is also an important correlation between the impact of the federal Government's Welfare to Work reforms and the WorkChoices changes, with a significant number of vulnerable, low-skilled and disadvantaged workers re-entering a labour market with fewer workplace safeguards and protection.

Tasmania is currently the only state that does not provide funding to community legal services. We believe that the State Government must invest in these important services to ensure the most vulnerable Tasmanians are able to access adequate legal service.

Cost:

\$320,000 recurrent funding. (\$80,000 to fund an additional legal position at each Tasmanian Community Legal Centre)

This recommendation will progress the Tasmania *Together* goals to:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)
- To have a community where people feel safe and are safe in all aspects of their lives

Recommendation 2.5 Mature Aged Traineeships.

Commit to ensuring at least 20% of new traineeship positions in the state service in the year 2006/07 are targeted to people who are either long-term unemployed, mature-aged or entering the workforce for the first time.

Commence a high-profile marketing and information campaign to encourage other employers and industries to consider mature aged workers and unemployed Tasmanians as capable of filling skills shortages in key areas of the economy.

Department:

Department of Premier and Cabinet

Rationale:

TasCOSS recommends that the Tasmanian Government commit to a quota system to ensure at least 20% of new traineeships in the state service are directly targeted towards long-term unemployed and mature aged job seekers entering the labour market for the first time.

We believe this is a highly effective way for the Government to not only directly assist Tasmania's most disadvantaged job seekers to find employment, but also to set an example to other Tasmanian employers, by demonstrating that mature aged and long-term unemployed workers are capable of filling the void presented by the skill shortages in key industries.

The Government's skills strategy identified the need to further develop the skills of existing Tasmanian workers to satisfy high demand for more skilled workers across a number of sectors in the labour market. We remind Government of the need to also invest in the skills of unemployed Tasmanians, particularly those with multiple barriers to employment, including the long-term unemployed, mature aged and unskilled workers, new migrants to Tasmania and people with disabilities.

The State Government can show leadership in this area by ensuring all Government departments target these groups for traineeships within the state service. The Government should then use this strategy as the basis of a marketing campaign to encourage other Tasmanian employers to consider disadvantaged, mature aged job seekers for trainee positions within their own labour force.

Cost:

Traineeships would be cost-neutral to Government.
\$100,000 one-off funding would be required for an adequate marketing campaign.

This recommendation will progress the Tasmania *Together* goals to:

- Create a culture that encourages people to learn and develop new skills, including life skills, throughout their lives. (Goal 4)
- Increase job and meaningful work opportunities in Tasmania. (Goal 16)
- Ensure education and training provides our workforce with the skills to support our business and industry. (Goal 18)

3. Consumers of Health and Community Services

TasCOSS members and constituent organisations in the community sector provide a range of valuable health and community services with a focus on the specific needs of low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians.

TasCOSS also has as its mandate to represent the interests of low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanian consumers, with a particular emphasis on their capacity to access essential services. This includes basic health care and health services.

TasCOSS has been closely following the recent debate about the standard of health services in Tasmania, particularly in relation to the pressure on our public hospitals and access to GP and specialist medical services. Over the last 12 months especially, our members have reported to us their growing concern about the lack of voice being given to health consumers in this debate.

Access to quality and affordable health care is vital to a person's quality of life and their capacity to engage in their community.

Australians who are socio-economically disadvantaged are over represented in nearly every outcome indicator of poor health, including Type 2 Diabetes, Asthma and Heart Disease. There is also a clear parallel between poor socio economic position and lower than average life expectancy.

Low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians face significant challenges in accessing affordable health services. Our ageing population, low income base and decentralised communities are all significant barriers to ensuring all Tasmanians have reasonable access to quality and affordable health care.

In consultation with our members and constituent organisations, TasCOSS has considered what contribution we can make to the current debate about health services that is both constructive and represents our areas of expertise.

In representing the interests of low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians in the health system, we believe there is a need to increase the involvement of consumers in the Tasmanian Health System. The consequence of such involvement will improve the rights of all Tasmanian health and community service consumers, and especially those of low-incomes.

Recommendation 3.1 Tasmanian Health Consumers Advocate

Provide funding to establish an independent representative and advocacy body for consumers in the Tasmanian health system.

Department

Health and Human Services

Rationale:

TasCOSS calls on the Tasmanian Government to provide funding to establish an independent representative and advocacy body for consumers in the Tasmanian health system.

In consultation with our members and constituent organisations, we have identified the need for a consumer voice and advocacy service in the Tasmanian health system as a priority issue for our sector. Our members feel that low-income Tasmanians represent the most disadvantaged group in accessing services in the Tasmanian health system, but are essentially unrepresented in decision-making in the health system. There is also a lack of advocacy and representative services available to consumers seeking information and resolutions to grievances in the public health system. An outcome of this is that consumers often feel frustrated and powerless within the large, complex and intimidating health service.

Tasmania does have several advocacy groups that seek to represent the interests of Tasmanians with a particular medical condition or disability. However, these groups lack the resources and/or the mandate, to provide broader representation of consumers in the health system.

Therefore, we propose the establishment of a new organisation to serve as a representative body for consumers in the Tasmanian health system. This organisation should be independent of Government and health service providers, but have close links with all sectors of the Tasmanian health system, including the Department of Health and Human Services, private medical and community health services, along with professional organisations such as the Australian Medical Association (AMA) and the Divisions of General Practice.

There are several examples of successful health consumer representative bodies operating in other Australian jurisdictions, such as the Queensland Health Consumers Council and the Western Australia Health Association. Although the scope and role of these organisations differ depending on the resources and mandate of the respective organisations, they all play an important role of providing a peak representative body for consumers in the health system.

We envisage an appropriately resourced and fully functional Tasmanian health consumers organisation would provide a range of advocacy and information services for consumers in the public health system, as well as provide a representative voice for health consumers to engage with Government and health service providers on health policy and the provision of health services. Eventually, the organisation should have the capacity to conduct its own research into the experiences of Tasmanians in the health system.

It is imperative that the organisation is provided with the necessary resources to ensure it can generate the professional expertise to carry out its role as a constructive representative of consumers in the health system. At a minimum the organisation would require funding for appropriately qualified staffing, as well as the capacity for the organisation to engage and represent consumers across the whole state and a marketing budget to increase public awareness of the new organisation and its service.

Cost:

\$500,000 recurrent funding

This recommendation will progress the Tasmania *Together* goals to:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)
- Provide all Tasmanian with the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their lives. (Goal 12)
- Have a system of government that is open, seeks and listens to people's views and ideas, and used them in decision making at all levels.(Goal 13)

Recommendation 3.2 Health Complaints Commissioner

That funding to the Health Complaints Commission is substantially increased in line with the request from the Commissioner in its 2004-05 Annual Report.

Department

Justice and Industrial Relations

Rationale:

The 2004-05 Annual Report of the Health Complaints Commissioner was remarkable for its candour about the inadequacy of resources currently made available to that Office. The Commissioner voiced a clear view: "The funding allocation has been insufficient to meet the increased complaint caseload and this affects the capacity of the OHCC to undertake the statutory functions with which the Commissioner is charged" (p1).

The Tasmanian Government has demonstrated its commitment to improving the capacity of the Tasmanian health system with substantial increases in resources to the acute and primary health care systems. It must now extend this commitment to the complementary role played by the Commissioner. As with other consumer issues raised by TasCOSS in this submission, the work of the OHCC does not simply protect the interests of individual consumers. Rather, it provides an important feedback mechanism on systemic features of the Tasmanian health system.

Estimated Cost

\$250,000

This recommendation will progress the Tasmania *Together* goals to:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)
- Have a system of government that is open, seeks and listens to people's views and ideas, and used them in decision making at all levels.(Goal 13)

Recommendation 3.3 Disability and Community Services Commissioner

Investigate the need for a Community & Disability Services Commissioner within the Office of the Ombudsman.

Department(s)

Justice and Industrial Relations

Rationale:

The rapid growth of the non-government community services industry, fuelled by the outsourcing of responsibilities once held by the Tasmanian Government, is characterised by changed qualitative dimensions, not just quantitative ones. That is, community service organisations (CSOs) are now delivering 'sharp-end' 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 have recourse to the Ombudsman where they believe there has been a breakdown in service quality. There is no parallel system of grievance investigation/resolution applying 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.

TasCOSS urges examination of the New South Wales Government model where a Disability and Community Services Commissioner (in effect, the Deputy Ombudsman) has specific powers to conduct individual and systemic reviews of the work of CSOs.

Cost:

\$150,000 (estimated cost for nine-month review process involving community consultation)

This recommendation will progress the Tasmania *Together* goals to:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)
- Have a system of government that is open, seeks and listens to people's views and ideas, and used them in decision making at all levels.(Goal 13)

4. Human Services

This year, TasCOSS calls on the Tasmanian Government to build on the progress that has been achieved over recent state budgets in improving community services in the Government and Non-Government sectors.

The community sector has worked closely with the Department of Health and Human Services over recent years to address decades of neglect and unmet need in Tasmania's social services. Together, we have achieved progress in improving the provision of services to improve the life chances of many Tasmanians who have been relegated as an afterthought in the policy agendas of successive State Governments.

However, it is critical the Government continues to invest in these service areas to ensure they meet the changing needs and expectations of clients, by providing quality services that deliver positive outcomes for the whole community.

Recommendation 4.1 Alcohol and other Drug Services

Commit to a service-system reform agenda of Tasmania's alcohol and other drug services that parallels the Bridging the Gap process of reforming Tasmania's mental health services.

This process must include a comprehensive mapping exercise of all alcohol and other drug services currently provided by the government and non-government sectors.

Department

Health and Human Services

Rationale

Over recent state budgets the Tasmanian Government has made a number medium and long-term budgetary and policy commitments in some key areas for the non-government community services sector.

Significant long-term funding commitments in key areas such as mental health, disability service and children's and family services have provided a foundation for increased investment, improved service delivery and long-term strategic planning in both Government and non-government services.

Tasmania's non government community service organisations have identified alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) services as an area in urgent need for a similar long-term funding and policy commitment in the 2007/08 State Budget.

TasCOSS and its member organisations feel that the ATOD service system is an area that has been neglected over recent state budgets. Funding injections into Alcohol and Drug Services (ADS) have been essentially indexed to overall increases in DHHS funding and there has been no provision for investment in services or infrastructure beyond inflationary levels.

Our members are reporting significant increases in demand for services from individuals and families affected by issues related to alcohol and drug dependency, and growing levels of unmet need.

Critically, there is a view that unmet demand for ATOD services has a significant impact on services in areas such as supported accommodation, mental health, child protection and other support services for vulnerable Tasmanian families. It also puts greater pressure on the acute health and criminal justice systems.

Tasmania's ATOD service system is a priority area requiring a comprehensive review of service capacity and to establish a framework to lead future investment by Government and non-government services.

TasCOSS recommends that the State Government allocate additional funding through the 2007/08 budget to commence a four-year service system reform process for Tasmania's alcohol and drug services. This process should parallel the successful 'Bridging the Gap' system reform agenda of Mental Health Services.

Cost:

\$250,000 in 2007/08 to conduct the service system review.

This recommendation will progress the Tasmania *Together* goals to:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)
- Develop an approach to health and well-being that focuses on preventing health and encouraging healthy lifestyles. (Goal 5)
- Improve the health and well-being of the Tasmanian community through the delivery of coordinated services. (Goal 6)

Recommendation 4.2 Mental Health Services

Continue the important work of the Bridging the Gap Initiative by investing in the following three areas:

1. Supported accommodation. Two more facilities of 12 units each to provide cluster style supported accommodation services to people experiencing mental illness and who require Level 3 supported accommodation.
2. Individual packages of care to provide support and assistance to individuals living in their own homes who require support and care in this environment .
3. Respite beds. That six beds each be created in the north, north-west and an additional six beds in the south of the state in order to provide respite for people experiencing significant mental health issues.

Department

Health and Human Services

Rationale

The Bridging the Gap Report and subsequent policy directions from Cabinet resulted in an additional \$12 million per annum being invested in the provision of a wide range of mental health services to many Tasmanians.

This project has now been primarily completed, with the final capital projects yet to be finalised, but well under development, and the recurrent programs rolled out both in the non-government and government components of the broader mental health service system. The Bridging the Gap recurrent initiatives have now been fully integrated into mental health services and are operating at close to full capacity. This system reform and funding injection went a significant way toward meeting the unmet need in mental health services for Tasmanians.

With the Commonwealth now offering COAG funding for mental health services, and with the Bridging the Gap initiative having been completed, it is time for the state government to continue to ensure that those suffering from a mental illness and their families have access to the services they need in order to ensure full participation in normal life.

The above three areas for investment have been identified as areas of ongoing need, and continued investment in these three streams of service delivery will ensure that we do not fall behind and face significant waiting lists again for support and accommodation. Respite beds in particular play a valuable and important role in ensuring clients and their carers and families receive the support they need to avoid acute care admissions, which are both costly and detrimental to recovery and well being.

Cost

\$3 million capital funding to build two additional cluster-style supported accommodation facilities.

\$1.6 million annual recurrent funding for these facilities.

\$2 million for respite care.

\$2.2 million for 30 additional individual packages of care

This recommendation will progress the Tasmania *Together* goals to:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)
- Develop an approach to health and well-being that focuses on preventing health and encouraging healthy lifestyles. (Goal 5)
- Improve the health and well-being of the Tasmanian community through the delivery of coordinated services. (Goal 6)

Recommendation 4.3 Children and Family Services

Continue the early intervention focus in Children and Family Services as initiated in the 2006 State Budget.

Department:

Health and Human Services

Rationale:

In the TasCOSS submission to the 2006/07 State Budget Process we recommended that the Government “commit to a significant package of resources for the establishment of a system wide approach to supporting families and children in Tasmania”.

TasCOSS was therefore pleased to see the Government announce during the State Election campaign, investment in a range of early intervention strategies in children’s and family services. These investments included a young mothers program based out of Claremont College, additional community policing services to support children in families engaged in criminal behaviour, additional child health nurses, universal screening of all Tasmanian children’s hearing, additional case managers and youth-specific psychologists based out of Children’s and Family Services.

There is a significant research base which now points to the need to invest in services for children younger in life. This evidence also points to the notion that children’s most formative years are the first three years, and that significant development occurs from 0 – 5. By providing increased investment and services for families with children in this age bracket, significant benefits for the children can be achieved. It is also important that it becomes possible to identify and develop protective factors which contribute to a strengthened capacity for families and communities in the longer term.

TasCOSS recommends that the Tasmanian Government continue this early intervention focus in children’s and family services with additional investment in a range of services through the 2007/08 state budget.

We have called for a system wide approach to supporting Tasmanian families, which incorporate the following three tiers of services:

1. Universal and primary services for all children;
2. Secondary services for children at risk and who are vulnerable;
3. Tertiary services for children in need of care and protection.

Within this system wide approach, the State Government should consider investing to establish the following programs and services.

Tier 1 programs, which include, but are not limited to:

- Universal maternal and child health and home visiting personnel to provide support, assessment and referral services to all Tasmanian children;
- Universal home visiting services, with an emphasis on vulnerable families;
- Parent information and support line and parenting services;
- Health and well-being programs, parenting and social development education provided within schools and the community setting; and
- Full time equivalent funding to all Neighbourhood Houses;

Tier 2 programs include:

- Respite programs;
- Family Support Services programs;
- Intensive parenting programs;
- Case management; and,
- Therapeutic intervention.

Tier 3 programs include;

- Out of home care programs that can more effectively provide for children and young people with complex needs and challenging behaviours;
- Intensive family support and parenting programs;
- Child and adolescent mental health services;
- Child Protection services;
- Case management;
- Therapeutic interventions – eg sexual assault, young people sex offender programs;
- Youth justice programs.

TasCOSS acknowledges that the child protection system in Tasmania is clearly under-resourced and there is need for additional investment to address pressure in a range of acute children's services.

However, we also that by increasing investment in universal, 'tier-1' program areas, we can considerably reduce the long-term costs of tier 3 protective end of the spectrum.

Cost:

\$25 million per annum

This recommendation will progress the Tasmania *Together* goals to:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)
- Develop an approach to health and well-being that focuses on preventing health and encouraging healthy lifestyles. (Goal 5)
- Improve the health and well-being of the Tasmanian community through the delivery of coordinated services. (Goal 6)

Recommendation 4.4 Disability Services

Allocate an additional \$9.8 million per annum to disability services to address current levels of unmet need.

Department

Health and Human Services

Rationale

In its 2005/06 state budget, the Tasmanian Government allocated an additional \$80 million over four years to disability services. This funding was essentially directed to addressing the most urgent needs in the system, such as state service salaries, staff recruitment and group home infrastructure; this has left little to alleviate unmet need for services.

Despite the roll-out of this additional funding, waiting lists have actually increased for individual support packages and group home accommodation.

TasCOSS members have reported their growing frustration with this unmet need for basic disability services. They have also expressed concern about the perceived lack of priority given by Government to address what is

essentially a failure to meet the basic needs of Tasmanians with a disability, along with their carers and families.

In December last year the Government announced several important initiatives for Tasmanians with a disability, including formation of a new Disability Bureau in the Department of Premier and Cabinet and a Ministerial Advisory Council reporting directly to the Premier. The Government also launched a Disability Framework for Action, detailing a whole-of-government strategy to fully integrate Tasmanians with a disability in Government services and programs and therefore the broader community.

TasCOSS has supported these initiatives but has also stressed to Government the need to further invest in disability services in order to meet its responsibilities to ensure a basic level of service is available to every Tasmanian requiring support.

It is estimated that an additional \$9.8 million is required to meet the outstanding acute needs of clients.

This funding must be targeted directly at sharp end services, including:

- An additional \$2.6 million to meet the operational costs for seven new groups home to be operated by non-government organisations;
- \$5 million to address the current waiting list for individual support packages (ISP);
- \$1.4 million to address waiting lists for day support packages, and;
- An additional \$800,000 for the Community Equipment Scheme.

This funding will increase the capacity of disability services in the Government and non-government sectors and ensure every Tasmanian with a disability, who is assessed as in need of assistance can expect to be able to access these services in a prompt and efficient manner.

Estimated Cost:

\$9.8 million in recurrent funding.

This recommendation will progress the goals of Tasmania *Together* to:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)
- Develop an approach to health and well-being that focuses on preventing poor health and encouraging healthy lifestyles. (Goal 5)
- Improve the health and well-being of the Tasmanian community through the delivery of coordinated services. (Goal 6)

Recommendation 4.5 Disability Group Homes

Allocate one-off funding of \$3.1 million in the 2006/07 State Budget to build seven new group-homes for Tasmanians with disabilities.

Department

Health and Human Services

Rationale:

As detailed in Recommendation 4.4, an additional seven new group-home accommodation facilities are required to address current levels of unmet need in disability services.

These facilities would meet the current level of demand for supported accommodation and provide a strong foundation for managing future growth in demand for services.

TasCOSS recommends that, when completed, the Government hands over these facilities to be managed by the community sector. This would be consistent with Government's Living Independently Initiative.

Cost:

\$3.1 million one-off capital funding.

This recommendation will progress the goals of Tasmania *Together* to:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)
- Develop an approach to health and well-being that focuses on preventing poor health and encouraging healthy lifestyles. (Goal 5)
- Improve the health and well-being of the Tasmanian community through the delivery of coordinated services. (Goal 6)

Recommendation 4.6 System Reform of Disability Services

That the Tasmanian Government undertakes a comprehensive system reform of Tasmania's government and non-government disability support services.

Department:

Health and Human Services

Rationale:

The last two state budgets have featured significant investments in Tasmanian disability service system.

The 2005/06 state budget provided an additional \$80 million over four years to alleviate the most urgent gaps in services, by implementing the recommendations of the 2004 review into disability services and providing some additional funding for individual support packages and disability group homes.

The 2006/07 state budget featured funding to establish the Disability Bureau within the Department of Premier and Cabinet, as well as the Companion Card program and the implementation of the Disability Framework for Action.

TasCOSS and its member organisations have applauded the State Government's effort to enhance the provision of services for Tasmanians with a disability, as well as the organisations that support them.

However, we believe a broad system reform of disability services as a necessary process to significantly improve disability services system and enhance the life chances of Tasmanians with a disability.

This reform agenda should be based on the model adopted by the Department of Health and Human Services in relation to Mental Health Services in the lead up to the *Bridging the Gap* funding package announced in the 2004. The reforms should be comprehensive and consider a holistic approach to government and non-government service delivery.

Specifically, TasCOSS recommends that this reform agenda consider:

- Mapping and designing a full best practice service system for disability services across both nong-government and government services including a supported accommodation framework designed to meet the needs of current and future clients;
- Reviewing the role of the Department of Health and Human Services in coordinating disability services;
- Best practice models for coordinating government and non-government services, including individual case management and cross-diagnosis;
- Contractual and funding arrangements for non-government disability service providers;
- Long term planning to provide appropriate levels of service within the disability sector, and;
- Strategies to protect and enhance the rights and liberties of the clients of disability services.

TasCOSS understands that despite significant funding increases for disability services over recent state budgets, waiting lists for individual support packages and group homes have actually increased. This shows that even with additional funding, the system remains unable to meet demand. The non-government disability sector believes that the inevitable outcome of this situation is for the State Government to take responsibility of reforming the delivery of disability services in the government and non-government sectors.

Cost:

\$300,000

This recommendation will progress the goals of Tasmania *Together* to:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)
- Develop an approach to health and well-being that focuses on preventing poor health and encouraging healthy lifestyles. (Goal 5)
- Improve the health and well-being of the Tasmanian community through the delivery of coordinated services. (Goal 6)

5. Passenger Transport Services

TasCOSS' member and constituent organisations consistently identify the lack of access to affordable transport services as a major barrier for their clients to other essential services and to their participation in employment, education and training opportunities.

For many low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians, the availability of affordable and accessible transport services can be the determining factor in their capacity to access health care and other government and community services, access and maintain employment, participate in education and training and to basically be a full and active member of their community.

In Tasmania, policies guiding the provision of passenger transport services feature an added level of complexity due of our decentralised population and the high needs of different communities across the state. The lack of any overarching strategic framework to plan the development and expansion of services, has resulted in an eclectic mix of bus services provided by the public sector and private bus operators across different regions in the State.

We believe the consequence of this is that many communities across the state receive inadequate services for their transport needs, while the Tasmanian Government fails to generate maximum outcomes for the significant investment it makes in Tasmania's passenger transport services.

TasCOSS supports the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources' review of core passenger transport services and several of our member organisations have participated in this review. The outcome of this review will be a series of recommendations to Government of options to improve the provision of passenger transport services in Tasmania. It is our understanding that some of the major areas of reforms will be considered as part of the 2007-08 State Budget process.

TasCOSS expects that these reforms will significantly change the way transport services operate in Tasmania. We make the following recommendations to ensure these changes improve transport outcomes for low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians and their communities.

Recommendation 5.1 Adult & Concession Fare Structures

Ensure all adult and concession fare structures on privately operated bus services are consistent with the fare structure of Metro Tasmania.

Department

Infrastructure, Energy and Resources

Rationale

The Tasmanian Government provides around \$52 million each year to over 200 private bus operators across Tasmania. This is largely an investment in subsidising the cost of providing transport services in regional areas. Without this assistance, many services in rural and semi-rural communities would either not be financially viable or at least significantly more expensive for consumers of the service.

However, a regular complaint of users of private bus services is that passenger fares are inconsistent across different bus operators and regions. Passengers can travel the same distance, on similar busses provided by different bus operators, and pay different fares. In some areas of the state that are serviced by multiple private bus operators, the fares can be completely different for essentially the same service.

The current review of core passenger transport services is expected to significantly influence changes in the Government's contractual arrangements with private bus operators.

TasCOSS recommends that the outcome of these changes should provide:

1. A consistent whole-of-system fare structure for privately operated bus services in Tasmania; consistent with the current distance-based fare structure of Metro Tasmania services;
2. Additional provision for long distance services in regional areas, to ensure they remain affordable for low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians; and
3. Provide a concession fare structure that is consistent with Metro Tasmania's concession fare arrangements, which are loosely indexed at 50% of the equivalent full adult fare.

Cost

To be determined through the core passenger transport review.

This recommendation will progress the goals of Tasmania *Together* to

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)
- Foster and value vibrant and diverse rural, regional and remote communities that are connected to each other and the rest of the world. (Goal 7)

Recommendation 5.2 Student Concession Fares

Ensure a concession is incorporated in all student fare structures.

Department(s)

Infrastructure, Energy and Resources
Education
Health and Human Services

Rationale

Another common complaint with Tasmania's passenger transport services is the inequity of cost structures in relation to student bus services, particularly in relation to the different fares that students pay.

We understand that this issue is likely to be addressed as an outcome of the Government's review of core passenger transport services. TasCOSS would welcome any measures to make the student fare structure more equitable, and that better reflects the need of families that rely on school bus services to access education and training.

Currently, the fares that students pay differ depending on the service they use. Some students pay the standard \$1.20 student fare per trip, others pay a tokenistic 30 cent fare and many pay nothing. The fare is usually determined through the contractual arrangements that private bus operators have with the State Government, which generally ignore the capacity of different groups to pay different levels of fares. Consequently, some students from more affluent backgrounds can pay nothing to use a certain service, while a student from a low-income background may pay the standard \$1.20 fare for a similar service, but provided by a different operator.

A way of addressing this inequality is to require all student passengers to pay the same level of fares, and effectively abolish the token fare and free services that currently exist. This would mean that all students would pay the standard \$1.20 student fare with the added revenue generated from more students paying a fare, being reinvested into improving passenger transport services.

TasCOSS recommends that the Government maintain a concession fare for students from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds within the student fare structure.

We would propose that any student concession fare be extended to at least recipients of the student assistance scheme as well as students entitled to a Commonwealth Health Care Card.

Cost

To be determined through the review of Core Passenger Transport Services Review.

This recommendation will progress the goals of Tasmania Together to:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)

Recommendation 5.3 Ministerial Advisory Council on Passenger Transport Services

Establish an appropriately resourced and representative Ministerial Advisory Council of Passenger Transport Services.

Department

Infrastructure, Energy and Resources

Rationale

TasCOSS recommends that the State Government establish a Ministerial Advisory Council on Passenger Transport Services, which reports to the Minister for Infrastructure on issues concerning Tasmania's core passenger transport system.

Membership of this council should include all major stakeholders in Tasmania's passenger transport system, including service providers,

consumers, advocacy groups, community transport services, local government and relevant State Government departments. The Council would also provide an important reference point for both Government departments and service operators to seek feedback on policies relating to service delivery.

TasCOSS believes a Ministerial Advisory Council on Passenger Transport Services would address two significant concerns we have with transport services in Tasmania. Firstly, there is no existing structure to facilitate discussion between service operators, consumers and government regarding Tasmania's passenger transport services, and secondly, there is very limited opportunity for consumers to be represented in policy decision making.

A Ministerial Advisory Council would establish a formal and structured process for addressing the broad issues around Tasmania's transport services. It would also encourage Government and service operators to have a whole of system perspective of the issues for Tasmania's passenger transport system, incorporating public transport, privately operated services, taxi services and community transport. Finally, it would bring transport services to the fore of the responsible Minister's policy agenda.

Cost

\$100,000 recurrent funding for a Ministerial Advisory Council on Passenger Transport Services. This includes appropriate resources and secretariat support to the Council.

This recommendation will progress the goals of Tasmania Together to:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)
- Provide all Tasmanians with the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their lives. (Goal 12)
- Have a system of government that is open, seeks and listens to people's views and ideas, and used them in decision making at all levels.(Goal 13)
- Have a system of government that is accountable to the people and plans for the future at all levels. (Goal 15)

Recommendation 5.4 Review of Core Passenger Transport Services

Continue the separate Core Passenger Transport Services Review unit within the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources, to implement the recommendations of the current review process and monitor the impact of these changes.

Department

Infrastructure, Energy and Resources

Rationale

The Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources current review of core passenger transport services is expected to report its findings and recommendations to Government by June 30, 2007.

These recommendations are likely to propose some dramatic and complex changes to Tasmania's passenger transport services, particularly for the many privately operated bus services that provide essential transport services in regional Tasmania.

TasCOSS expects that the Government will implement several of these recommendations and we believe that the extent of these changes warrants the continuation of the review of Core Passenger Transport Services to implement and monitor these reforms. This should include responsibility for increasing public awareness of any changes to their transport services.

Furthermore, we recommend that this unit is the appropriate body to provide secretariat and executive support to the proposed Ministerial Advisory Council on Passenger Transport Services, as detailed in recommendation 5.3.

Cost:

\$500,000 internal departmental resources

This recommendation will progress the goals of Tasmania Together to:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)
- Have a system of government that is open, seeks and listens to people's views and ideas, and used them in decision making at all levels.(Goal 13)

6. *State Concessions*

Each year, the Tasmanian Government provides over \$230 million of concessions to low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians. These concessions assist low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians to access a range of services and experiences.

Every State Government department and Government Business Enterprise provides concessions to low-income Tasmanians, making it the only true whole of government service to support low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians.

Recommendation 6.1 Review of State Government Concessions

Recommendation

Allocate resources for a comprehensive review of the operation and efficacy of all concession arrangements in Tasmania.

Department

Department of Premier and Cabinet
Department of Treasury and Finance.

Rationale

For the past three years, TasCOSS has argued for a review of all Tasmanian Government concessions. Concessions matter to low-income Tasmanians – they can potentially make a substantial contribution to the wellbeing of households struggling to manage on inadequate incomes.

Our work over the past twelve months has reinforced our view that such a review be supported by the Tasmanian Government. During 2006, TasCOSS conducted an important research project that investigated the experiences of Aurora Energy pre-payment meter consumers. That research, made possible by support from the National Consumers Electricity Advocacy Panel, DIER and Aurora Energy, confirmed that knowledge and uptake of existing concessions is at worryingly low levels. One in three consumers surveyed were not aware of any form of concession relating to electricity. Of particular concern was that 11% of consumers dependent on Commonwealth Government pensions/benefits were not aware of concessions available to them.

Rationalising, targeting and promoting of concessions are long overdue. Investigation of streamlined mechanisms to access those concessions, and the development of consistent, coherent eligibility criteria, require urgent attention. In the recent Tasmanian election, the Government pledged that it would conduct this review. It is now time to allocate the resources to give expression to that pledge.

Estimated cost

\$200,000

(Project officer, administrative backup, costs of public consultation rounds and related publications)

This recommendation will progress the goal of Tasmania *Together*:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)
- Have a system of government that is open, seeks and listens to people's views and ideas, and uses them in decision making at all levels. (Goal 13)

7. Consumer Protection

TasCOSS has consistently pointed to the low-income character of our population, with too few people in the workforce and below-average wages being paid to those who are in work. It is especially important that appropriate protections be in place so that low-income Tasmanians can at least obtain value for money with the purchases of goods and services that are essential to their lives. Here, Tasmania faces an important structural challenge. The primary 'driver' of our low-income status – low levels of educational attainment compared to other states – also represents a significant barrier to successful consumer transactions. Consumer transactions are complex and challenging, often having a substantial impact on household finances.

The Tasmanian Government has four important roles to play in consumer protection – legislation, policy development, regulatory compliance and support to non-government consumer organisations. In each of these areas, Tasmania lags far behind other states. There are no 'quick fix' solutions to the structural economic and educational attainment problems facing Tasmania. A Tasmanian community likely to remain deficient in financial and educational resources will need increased protection and support in transactions for goods and services.

Recommendation 7.1 Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading

Recommendation

That a considerable increase in resources be granted to Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading, consistent with the increased impact and complexity of choices facing Tasmanian consumers.

Department

Department of Justice and Industrial Relations

Rationale

The Office of Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading has been one of very few government agencies not to receive real increases in funding in recent years despite significant increases in the range and complexity of challenges facing Tasmanian consumers. Tasmania lags behind other states in the proactive promotion of consumer issues and has consistently lagged in the development of established protections such as the Rental Deposit Authority (now legislated but not yet implemented).

Estimated Cost

\$750,000

This recommendation will progress the goal of Tasmania *Together*:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)
- Have a system of government that is open, seeks and listens to people's views and ideas, and used them in decision making at all levels.(Goal 13)

Recommendation 7.2 Support to non-government consumer organisation.

Recommendation

Provide core funding to a new, generalist non-government organisation, *Consumers Tasmania*, and supplement funding to Tasmania's community legal services to assist with their consumer advice and advocacy work.

Department

Department of Justice

Rationale

Unlike other Australian states, Tasmania does not have a dedicated non-government consumer information/advocacy organisation. In other states, these organisations (some generalist, some focused on specific consumer domains such as utilities and consumer credit) have proved to be effective partners to state government consumer affairs agencies.

These organisations play important roles not only in keeping consumers informed but also in challenging businesses (for-profit *and* not-for-profit) to establish fair and transparent practices. TasCOSS contends that a generalist Consumers Tasmania organisation is required as part of a coherent whole-of-community response to the evolving consumer environment.

Estimated Costing

\$250,000 – Consumers Tasmania

This recommendation will progress the goal of Tasmania *Together to*:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal 1)
- Provide all Tasmanians with the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their lives. (Goal 12)
- Have a system of government that is open, seeks and listens to people's views and ideas, and used them in decision making at all levels.(Goal 13)

8. A Tasmanian Charter of Human Rights

TasCOSS' submission to the 2006/07 State Budget included a recommendation that the Tasmanian Government work toward the development of a Tasmanian Charter of Human Rights. We recommended that the Government consider the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Human Rights Act 2003 as an appropriate model for a Tasmanian Charter of Human Rights. The ACT Human Rights Act leads the nation by bringing human rights to the fore of the decision making and actions of government, and by promoting a culture of respect and awareness of the importance of human rights.

In early 2006 the Government announced that it had asked the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute to provide advice on options for enhancing human rights in Tasmania. In September the Law Reform Institute released its issues paper for public comment.

Recommendation 8.1 Tasmanian Charter of Human Rights

Allocate appropriate departmental resources to continue the process of developing a Tasmanian Charter of Human Rights

Department

Justice and Industrial Relations

Rationale

Should the Tasmanian Government support the concept of a Tasmanian Charter of Human Rights, the drafting of the legislation is likely to occur within the 2007/08 State Budget cycle.

Therefore, TasCOSS recommends that the Tasmanian Government consider the additional departmental resources that would be required to undertake this process within the context of the 2007/08 State Budget process.

Departmental resources will need to be allocated for engaging with key stakeholders in the Tasmanian community on the content of a Tasmanian Human Rights Act, as well as provide for any structural changes within Government departments to facilitate the full implementation of the new Human Rights framework.

TasCOSS has recommended that any Tasmanian Human Rights Act should be largely based on the model adopted by the Australian Capital Territory. A key feature of this model is the need for all Government departments and the justice system to comply with the Human Rights Act, and for the Justice Department to prepare a 'Statement of Compatibility' with the Human Rights Act for every piece of legislation brought before the Parliament, as well as all new major initiatives, policies and programs across all Government departments.

If Tasmania were to adopt this model, the responsibilities of each Government Department, along with the court system, would increase. This would require some additional resources to be provided to all Government departments, particularly the Department of Justice and Industrial Relations.

Cost

To be determined.

This recommendation will progress the goal of Tasmania Together to:

- Ensure all Tasmanians have a reasonable standard of living with regard to food, shelter, transport, justice, education, communication, health and community services. (Goal1)
 - Foster an inclusive society that acknowledges and respects our multicultural heritage, values diversity and treats everyone with compassion and respect. (Goal 9)
 - Have a system of government that is accountable to the people and plans for the future at all levels. (Goal 15)
-

Recommendation 8.2 Human Rights Awareness Campaign

Initiate a community information campaign to promote a culture of awareness and respect for human rights in Tasmania.

Department

Justice and Industrial Relations

Rationale

One of the major reasons TasCOSS is strongly advocating for a Tasmanian Charter of Human Rights is because we believe it will significantly increase community awareness of human rights and promote a greater culture of respect for the rights of all Tasmanians.

We believe that a Tasmanian Human Rights Act provides a powerful opportunity to improve community awareness of the rights of all Tasmanians and therefore encourage compassion and tolerance within our community.

TasCOSS therefore recommends that as part of the process to establish a Tasmanian Charter of Human Rights, the Tasmanian Government allocate resources to fund a community awareness and information campaign, promoting the Human Rights Act.

This campaign should seek to inform Tasmanians on the content of the Human Rights Act and what it means for them. The campaign should also seek to educate Tasmanians about how individuals and communities can work to enhance human rights within their community. The campaign would also need to be responsible for educating Government agencies about their new responsibilities in being accountable to a Human Rights Framework.

The public component of the information campaign should include advertising through the media and ensure information is made about to the community.

Cost

\$100,000

This recommendation will progress the goal of Tasmania Together to

- Foster an inclusive society that acknowledges and respects our multicultural heritage, values diversity and treats everyone with compassion and respect. (Goal 9)
- Have a system of government that is accountable to the people and plans for the future at all levels. (Goal 15)

Tasmanian Social Policy Council

(Membership 2006)

Alex Huntir	President of TasCOSS St Michael's Association
Sue Ham	Past-President of TasCOSS Colony 47 Inc
Dave Willans	Vice-President of TasCOSS Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT)
Jo Flanagan	Anglicare Tasmania
Mariana Campbell	Individual Member of TasCOSS
Ken Hardaker	Advocacy Tasmania
Gwyn Jones	Individual Member of TasCOSS (Mental Health Council of Tasmania)
Lianne Barden	The Link Youth Health Services
David Clements	Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Council (ATDC)
Glynnis Flower	Tasmanian Association of Community Houses (TACH)
Jen Fitzgerald	Hobart Working Women's Centre
Sheila Given	Council of the Ageing (COTA)
David Treanor	Kalista
Annette Horsler	Tasmanian Deaf Society
Ross Duncan	MS Society
Pattie Chugg	Shelter Tasmania
Margaret Reynolds	Individual TasCOSS Member (ACROD)
Ann Hughes	Individual TasCOSS Member
Maxine Griffiths	Volunteering Tasmania
Rhonda Macintyre	Salvation Army
Jenhi Sheyan	Hobart Women's Health Centre
Georgina McLaghan	Centacare
Mark Redmond	Colony 47 Inc
Kevin Marriot	TasChard
Rod MacGregor	Mental Health Council
Pip Barnard	Tasmanian Catholic Justice & Peace Commission
Ex-Officio	
Mat Rowell	TasCOSS CEO
Tom Muller	TasCOSS, Manager Social Policy and Research
Luke Martin	TasCOSS Social Policy Officer