

# Investments for an inclusive Tasmania

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*‘When money goes on rent, petrol, bus money for the kids to go to school...then there’s not much left to buy food so you don’t eat much – you probably get one meal for tea, that’s about it’.*

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2009-2010

State Budget Submission



***Investments for an inclusive  
Tasmania***

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**Tasmanian Council of Social  
Service**

**Submission to the Tasmanian Government's  
2009-10 State Budget**

## ***Our Vision:***

A fair, just and inclusive Tasmania.



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## **Introduction**

The Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) is pleased to present to the Tasmanian Government a submission to the 2009-10 State Budget process, *Investments for an inclusive Tasmania*.

TasCOSS is the peak industry body for Tasmania's non-government community services industry. TasCOSS represents both the interests of its members and the interests of Tasmanians affected by poverty and inequality.

Each year TasCOSS provides the Department of Treasury and Finance with recommendations on how we believe Government resources should be invested through the State Budget to improve the lives of Tasmanians who are living on low incomes or experiencing social or economic disadvantage.

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

TasCOSS considers its annual submission to the State Budget process a significant advocacy and policy document. The submission represents the priority issues that have been identified by TasCOSS member and constituent organisations through our ongoing consultation and policy development processes.

### ***Investments for an inclusive Tasmania***

The TasCOSS submission to the 2009-10 State Budget focuses on social inclusion and the need for Government to invest in a range of social initiatives to ensure that all Tasmanians have opportunities to be actively involved in the communities in which they live.

Unfortunately there remain many people in the Tasmanian community who are excluded – from education, from the workforce, from civic, social and recreational activities, from access to goods and services, and from opportunities to enjoy active and fulfilling lives. Groups who are especially vulnerable to exclusion include people living on low incomes, people with disabilities, recent refugee arrivals, and older people.

This year, TasCOSS make recommendations for social investments that will facilitate inclusion, increase opportunities and improve the quality of life for many Tasmanians. Our recommendations provide practical solutions to some of the challenges and barriers to inclusion – including educational attainment, transport, housing affordability, health status, unemployment, workplace support, and access to quality services.

Our submission also makes recommendations that address issues arising from climate change. The recommendations focus on ensuring that the interests of low income Tasmanians – who are particularly vulnerable to both the effects of climate change and to the impact of strategies introduced to mitigate the effects of climate change – are included in climate change policy debates and responses. We also make recommendations that will provide low income Tasmanians with significant, long-term protection from the increased costs, related to climate change, of household energy and water.

In the past year, TasCOSS policy staff has undertaken an extensive consultation project with Tasmanian living on low incomes. We spoke with 150 people from all areas of the State about what it is like to live on a low income. The issues raised by people we spoke with inform this Budget submission. We heard about widespread social exclusion due to poor health; disability; inadequate financial resources; mobility constraints; lack of access to transport, health and other services; and lack of education, training, literacy and language skills. We also heard about adults and children going without things that most Tasmanians take for granted, such as adequate and nutritious food, a warm home, new clothing, social and recreational activities.

Throughout this submission, we quote from some of the Tasmanians we spoke with this year – their words underscore the need for many of the recommendations we make in this submission.

We ask that the Tasmanian Government considers the recommendations in this submission – and implements them to ensure that more Tasmanians have the necessary resources and opportunities to participate actively 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 clients since 1961.

TasCOSS' vision is a fair, just and inclusive Tasmania.

TasCOSS values:

- The rights of all Tasmanians to opportunity, justice and equity.
- Policy solutions that are socially and economically sustainable.
- The experience and talents of people affected by poverty and inequality.
- Working collaboratively and in partnership.
- The commitment and passion of people working in the community services industry.
- A diversity of responses to the range of needs within the community.
- Our independence as a non party-political organisation.
- Robust civil society and the importance of a strong community sector in maintaining this.
- A strong and representative role and mandate for our work.

TasCOSS has three key areas of focus:

- Achieving a socially just society
- Strengthening the industry
- Building on the strengths of the organisation.

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

**Linkages between this submission and Tasmania *Together***

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

TasCOSS seeks opportunities to contribute to Tasmania *Together* to ensure it continues to appropriately represent the interests of low income and disadvantaged Tasmanians and the community services industry. 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(s).

**Costings**

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

# **Summary of Recommendations**

## **1. Social inclusion**

### **Recommendation 1.1: Social Inclusion Impact Statements**

Implement a system of Social Inclusion Impact Statements to assess the impact of State Government policy initiatives on social inclusion.

## **2. Housing and homelessness**

### **Recommendation 2.1: Viable public housing**

Ensure a viable, integrated and responsive public housing program in Tasmania by providing an additional \$30m in recurrent funding to Housing Tasmania to:

- Increase the supply of public housing
- Remodel existing stock so that it meets current needs
- Address the maintenance backlog

### **Recommendation 2.2: Addressing homelessness**

Take serious steps toward addressing homelessness in Tasmania by:

- Providing adequate new resources to develop and implement a comprehensive homelessness strategy that delivers improved integrated housing and support services with consideration to evidence of need
- Increase the State Government contribution to Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services by 40%.

### **Recommendation 2.3: Urban renewal**

Fund strategies to improve public transport networks, community services, shopping facilities, recreation areas and employment growth in areas of need to support communities to overcome the consequences of concentrated and long-term disadvantage.

### **Recommendation 2.4: Residential Tenancy Act Review**

Conduct a review of the *Residential Tenancy Act 1995*.

### **Recommendation 2.5: Rental Deposit Authority**

Allocate funding for the establishment of a Rental Deposit Authority.

### **3. Health and well-being**

#### **Recommendation 3.1: Health promotion**

Strengthen the role and effectiveness of health promotion in Tasmania by:

- Providing significant new resources to health promotion
- Increasing the focus on health promotion both within DHHS and across all government agencies
- Providing adequate funding for the coordination and evaluation of health promotion activities, both government and non-government, throughout Tasmania.

#### **Recommendation 3.2: Food security**

Provide funding for a research project into the issue of food security in Tasmania to:

- Investigate the extent and nature of food insecurity in Tasmania
- Identify groups who experience or are likely to experience difficulties with access to affordable nutritious food throughout the State
- Explore best practice responses
- Report on the findings to inform a future State Government response.

#### **Recommendation 3.3: Consumer engagement**

Strengthen consumer engagement with Tasmania's health system by providing funding for a representative body for Tasmanian health consumers and by strengthening the capacity of existing health consumer advocacy groups.

#### **Recommendation 3.4: Mental health advocates**

Allocate funds to increase the number of mental health advocates to enable increased support to be provided to mental health consumers across the State.

#### **Recommendation 3.5: Early intervention mental health services**

Provide increased capacity for early intervention in relation to mental health issues by:

- Increasing funding for the development of a range of early intervention mental health services to be delivered by government and non-government services
- Allocating funding to enable whole-of-government coordination of mental health promotion, prevention and intervention services, resources and research.

#### **Recommendation 3.6: Brain injury support services**

Allocate funding to increase acquired brain Injury support services across the state.

## **4. Education, employment and training**

### **Recommendation 4.1: Pathways for disengaged students**

Allocate funding to enable schools to establish education programs and partnerships with community organisations to provide pathways for disengaged students to re-engage with education and training offered within the school community; or to undertake education and training opportunities within the broader community

### **Recommendation 4.2: Supportive school environments**

Allocate funding for the development of supportive school environments through:

- Implementing a state education system-wide policy framework on supportive school communities in order coordinate support to schools, teachers and students
- Ensuring that schools are equipped with sufficient numbers of support staff such as speech pathologists, social workers and psychologists.

### **Recommendation 4.3: Life skills education in schools**

Allocate funding to implement life skills education programs state-wide, in partnership with government and non-government organisations in the following areas:

- Comprehensive and sequential sexual health and relationships education from K-12
- Drug education and harm minimisation
- Budgeting and financial literacy.

### **Recommendation 4.4 Student transport and accommodation**

Allocate resources to increase the provision of:

- Affordable and appropriate accommodation options for students from rural and remote areas
- Increased transport options for students in rural, remote and urban fringe areas to assist them to engage in further education and training opportunities.

### **Recommendation 4.5 Engaging parents and children in early learning**

Allocate funding to local community-based organisations to provide early learning opportunities for children of 'hard to reach' parents in local school and off-campus environments as a way of supporting successful transition into school.

**Recommendation 4.6: Increasing training opportunities**

Provide further education and training opportunities to disadvantaged job seekers in areas of locational disadvantage by:

- Funding further LINC-style training hubs and locating them in the areas of most need
- Increasing funding to enable the delivery of accredited training programs in community based settings
- Allocating increased resources for the development of local area-based partnerships to generate local employment and training pathways
- Ensuring those in need have access to childcare while undertaking training.

**Recommendation 4.7: Employment support**

Allocate increased funding, beyond federal contributions, to non-government organisations to provide pre-, post- and on-going employment support to people who face ongoing barriers to, and discrimination within, the workplace.

## **5. Transport**

**Recommendation 5.1: Increasing public transport services**

Allocate additional funding to increase minimum service levels for public transport services in urban and urban fringe areas.

**Recommendation 5.2: More responsive rural transport services**

Allocate additional funding to rural transport services so that Tasmanian communities have minimum daily return services to a regional centre that are appropriate to community need.

**Recommendation 5.3: Coordination of transport services**

Design and implement, in conjunction with locally-based community services, strategies to better coordinate core passenger transport services with community transport options.

**Recommendation 5.4: Passenger transport brokerage in rural and remote areas**

Provide funding to local government authorities in areas outside of major urban centres to deliver passenger transport brokerage projects.

**Recommendation 5.5: Assisting novice drivers**

Allocate additional funding and resources to assist disadvantaged and low income learner drivers state-wide to meet the 50 hour log book requirement.

## **6. Access to quality services and opportunities for inclusion**

### **Recommendation 6.1: Facilitate social involvement**

Provide funding for community-based programs that facilitate social involvement and offer reciprocity opportunities; such programs could be provided by existing community organisations such as neighbourhood and community houses, health centres, libraries and schools.

### **Recommendation 6.2: Support for volunteering**

Allocate funding for a comprehensive Tasmanian Volunteering Strategy, which supports volunteer recruitment, training, management and recognition, and in which the Tasmanian Government would have a key role in supporting the volunteering process.

### **Recommendation 6.3: Elder Abuse Strategy**

Establish and implement a whole-of-government Elder Abuse Strategy to protect older Tasmanians from abuse and to foster collaboration between government agencies, and between government and community-based organisations to reduce instances of abuse and mistreatment.

### **Recommendation 6.4: Gambling**

Reduce the negative social impacts of gambling on the Tasmanian community by:

- Reducing the number of gaming machines and gaming venues in Tasmania
- Increasing the amount of taxation revenue from gaming machines that is directed to programs designed to address the social impacts of gambling
- Placing a limit on the number of gaming machines that can be located in areas of social disadvantage.

### **Recommendation 6.5: HACC program**

Increase funding to the Home and Community Care (HACC) program to help improve the quality of life of low income and socially disadvantaged HACC service users through the provision of:

- Additional diverse, free or low fee, social support programs
- Programs that enable active community engagement, volunteering and/or paid work options
- Programs that provide or facilitate opportunities for reciprocity
- Additional flexible transport services, especially in isolated areas
- Food and nutrition focused programs, including social eating programs, nutrition promotion and education, and assistance with food preparation in people's homes
- Additional assistance with equipment and home modification costs.

**Recommendation 6.6: Youth Justice system**

Significantly increase funding to the Youth Justice system in order to:

- Reduce caseloads by increasing the number of Youth Justice case workers
- Increase the number of Youth Justice managers
- Resource a range of community-based activities to support and reintegrate young offenders or young people at risk of offending
- Increase the capacity for universal screening of Youth Justice clients for mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse and acquired brain injury.

**Recommendation 6.7: Community Equipment Scheme**

Increase base funding for the Community Equipment Scheme, and index the Scheme's funding to the Health CPI in order to meet the increasing demands on the Scheme, and the increasing costs of advanced technology and equipment.

**Recommendation 6.8: Specialised smoke alarms**

Allocate funding to subsidise the purchase of appropriate smoke alarms for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

**Recommendation 6.9: Supporting sex workers**

Allocate new funding to a peer sex worker outreach project to focus on empowerment, education and other preventative measures that raise overall health and safety standards within the sex industry and that minimise the risk of violence and illness.

**Recommendation 6.10: Emergency relief**

Allocate funding for the provision of emergency relief assistance to Tasmanians experiencing financial hardship to augment Commonwealth Emergency Relief Program funding.

## **7. An effective community services industry**

**Recommendation 7.1: Wages and conditions**

Provide funding to reduce the gap between public sector and community services remuneration and conditions.

**Recommendation 7.2: Governance and management**

Provide additional funding to develop the management and governance capacity of community service organisations by:

- Scoping a community services leadership, management and innovations centre of excellence

- Increasing access to Skills Tasmania sponsored tertiary level community service management and leadership qualifications
- Increasing access to Skills Tasmania sponsored governance training and mentoring assistance program for boards and committees

**Recommendation 7.3: Workforce planning and development**

Resource the development of a workforce planning and development framework for the community services industry, and invest in improving the responsiveness and relevance of training.

**Recommendation 7.4: Workforce promotion**

Allocate funding to develop a community services workforce promotion strategy.

**Recommendation 7.5: Peak bodies**

Increase core funding to community service industry peak bodies.

**Recommendation 7.6: Community and Disability Services Commissioner**

Provide adequate funding to establish a Community and Disability Services Commissioner in the Office of the Ombudsman.

**Recommendation 7.7: Funding arrangements**

Adopt an investment model for funding community service organisations that facilitates innovation, learning and practice development.

## **8. Climate change and water**

**Recommendation 8.1: Socially just and equitable climate change policy**

Allocate adequate funding to ensure that the interests of low income and disadvantaged Tasmanians are represented in policy debates about climate change adaptation and mitigation, and in the development of responses, in order to support socially just and equitable climate change policy in Tasmania.

**Recommendation 8.2: Resourcing the community services sector**

Provide funding to develop and implement an education campaign within the Tasmanian community services industry on climate change, to assist community sector organisations to reduce their carbon emissions, and to increase the capacity of the sector to act as a conduit for information on climate change.

**Recommendation 8.3: Home energy audit and retro-fitting program**

Provide funding to establish a community-based home energy auditing and retro-fitting service for low income and disadvantaged Tasmanians to increase the energy efficiency and in particular, the thermal efficiency of their homes.

**Recommendation 8.4: Increase thermal efficiency of public housing stock**

Increase the thermal efficiency of public housing stock in Tasmania by:

- Extending the trial program for increasing the thermal efficiency of Housing Tasmania properties to more public housing dwellings throughout the State
- Introducing a minimum thermal efficiency standard to be met by all new public housing stock.

**Recommendation 8.5: Ensure affordability of household water supply**

In the event of the introduction of household water metering and consumption charges in Tasmania, TasCOSS recommends that the State Government:

- Develop a water tariff structure that includes a low fixed component (or supply charge) and a very low cost (or free) small first tariff block that is considered a 'lifeline' or 'human right' tariff. The tariff structure would also include inclining tariff blocks with the second block priced to ensure affordability at slightly higher than minimum consumption levels.
- In the absence of a 'lifeline' tariff structure, introduce a concession for household water supply at a level that will provide genuine assistance to low income households. The concession, like the electricity concession, should be provided through a Community Service Obligation on water suppliers to Pension and Health Care Card holders.
- Provide an additional concession targeted to large low income households whose non-discretionary water use will remain high.

**Recommendation 8.6: Assistance for rural and urban fringe households**

Introduce targeted measures to assist low income households who do not have access to reticulated (mains) water supply to either purchase additional water for reasonable levels of household use in times of low rainfall and / or to increase their storage tank capacity.

# 1. Social inclusion

*We are treated like the scum of the earth. We're expected to go out and get all these jobs. We have no choice, we can't help this. We can't get out of the poverty trap. (Scottsdale 2008)*

## **Recommendation 1.1: Social Inclusion Impact Statements**

**Implement a system of Social Inclusion Impact Statements to assess the impact of State Government policy initiatives on social inclusion.**

**Department:** Premier and Cabinet

**Rationale:** Building a truly inclusive Tasmania requires a whole-of-government approach. It is hard to conceive of an area of State Government responsibility that does not in some way impact on social inclusion.

The *State of Public Health Report 2008* released earlier this year by Dr Roscoe Taylor, Director of Public Health, highlighted the social determinants of health and well-being and the relationship of income to health disparities. Dr Taylor has called for health/equity impact statements to be prepared for State Government policy to ensure that policy initiatives are consistent with measures to promote positive population health outcomes. TasCOSS support this proposal.

There are numerous examples of health and equity impact assessment tools being used around Australia and internationally. One example is the system of Poverty Impact Statements introduced by the Irish Government. Under this system all government departments are required to systematically examine all policies and programs to assess their impact on poverty and inequality. Such a system could provide a tool for predicting the potential positive and negative impacts of a proposal on social inclusion.

An effective social inclusion strategy will have clear goals and benchmarks, and a social inclusion assessment tool could provide the mechanism for ensuring that State Government policy is consistent with these goals. It provides the opportunity to maximise desired outcomes and minimise any costs to the Tasmanian community. Tasmania *Together* benchmarks could provide the basis for the indicators that could be included in such an assessment tool. Once implemented, such a system would become a standard part of the policy development process and assist in ensuring better policy outcomes.

**Estimated Cost: Uncosted**

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

## **2. Housing and homelessness**

*Your home is everything – you put so much into it – it's your everything ...  
Both the kids wrote a letter [to Santa] and that's what they said they wanted  
for Christmas – a house. It was very sad. (North-West Coast 2008)*

Secure affordable housing is fundamental to enabling an inclusive Tasmania. Over 2500 Tasmanians are homeless. Around 2700 Tasmanians are on the waiting list for public housing because they are without appropriate, affordable accommodation. Many more Tasmanians live in expensive, overcrowded, poorly heated and poorly maintained housing.

Secure appropriate housing is a fundamental prerequisite for young people being able to engage in schooling, and for enabling Tasmanians to engage in further education, training and employment. If we are looking to build stronger communities then the most basic starting point is ensuring that people have somewhere safe and secure to live.

2006 figures suggest that nearly 40% of Tasmanian renters (in the region of 11 000 households) are experiencing rental stress, that is, paying more than 30% of their income on rent. For Tasmanian households who are living on low incomes this leaves very little for heating, food, transport and all of the other costs associated with social and economic participation in their community.

Fundamental to ensuring that all Tasmanians have access to secure affordable housing is a viable public housing system. There is a significant cost associated with providing affordable housing, but without it we ensure the social exclusion of a significant number of Tasmanian families into the future.

Of course public housing is only part of the solution to providing affordable appropriate housing for Tasmanians. Part of reducing the pressure on the public housing system is to ensure that the private rental market provides adequate protections for tenants.

### **Recommendation 2.1: Viable public housing**

**Ensure a viable, integrated and responsive public housing program in Tasmania by providing an additional \$30m in recurrent funding to Housing Tasmania to:**

- **Increase the supply of public housing**
- **Remodel existing stock so that it meets current needs**
- **Address the maintenance backlog**

**Department:** Health and Human Services (Housing Tasmania)

**Rationale:** Public housing has been shown to be an efficient and cost effective model for delivering quality affordable housing to people on low incomes. Other models for delivering low cost housing have been explored both within Australia and overseas, but these have not been able to deliver the same outcomes in terms of affordability and have required similar investments from governments to cover the gap between rents paid and the returns required by investors.

Unfortunately the viability of Housing Tasmania has been significantly affected by the reduction in State and Commonwealth investment in public housing, the targeting of public housing to households with high or special needs, and the historic debt to the Commonwealth.

Commonwealth and State Government funding under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA) decreased 17% and 19% respectively in dollar terms over the last decade. In real terms the decrease has been even more significant.

In addition to funds for new housing stock, Housing Tasmania must be adequately resourced to remodel and maintain its existing housing stock. There is currently a mismatch between the supply of three and four bedroom properties and the demand for one and two bedroom properties. Modification of stock to meet demand requires funding.

Demographic change projections for Tasmania indicate an ageing population and an associated increase in the number of Tasmanians with an age related disability. Older people currently occupy around 21% of Tasmania's public housing properties. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute projections are that the number of older Australians living in low income rental households will increase dramatically in coming years (ie 2026 figures are likely to be more than double 2001 figures) and Tasmania's public housing stock will need to be modified to accommodate the increasing demand for properties that facilitate independent living for older people and people with disabilities.

It is estimated that there is a \$90m maintenance backlog for Housing Tasmania properties. It is unacceptable that public housing tenants are forced to reside in poorly maintained properties and that a major public asset is being allowed to depreciate in this manner.

Treasury figures indicate that that Tasmanian Government received in excess of \$180m in revenue from property related taxes and duties in 2006/07. This is approximately \$90m per annum more than it received 5 years earlier in 2001/02 and around \$120m more than it received 10 years earlier in 1996/97. The State Government has received a huge windfall from the property boom and with property values being unlikely to significantly fall in the future, this significantly increased annual income is likely to continue in coming years. To direct \$30m of this extra income into ensuring an adequate safety net for those who are most affected by the housing affordability crisis would seem to be very achievable.

The KPMG review of social and affordable housing in Tasmania provides an opportunity to make substantial investment in public housing in Tasmania and to

place Housing Tasmania in best position to take advantage of the changes at Commonwealth level.

**Estimated Cost: \$30 million per annum recurrent**

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians (Goal 1)

**Recommendation 2.2: Addressing homelessness**

**Take serious steps toward addressing homelessness in Tasmania by:**

- **Providing adequate new resources to develop and implement a comprehensive homelessness strategy that delivers improved integrated housing and support services with consideration to evidence of need**
- **Increase the State Government contribution to Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services by 40%.**

**Department:** Health and Human Services (Housing Tasmania)

**Rationale:** On any given night, more than 2500 Tasmanians are homeless. Around 400 seek shelter in parks, playgrounds, clothing bins and in the lee of community facilities. 2000 more live in boarding houses, caravan parks or “couch surf” in friends’ and family’s accommodation. Services to people experiencing homelessness in Tasmania are over-stretched and in urgent need of increased resources. The shortage of affordable housing in Tasmania means that crisis and transitional housing is being blocked by the absence of longer term options for service clients. 1200 people were turned away from SAAP services in Tasmania in 2006-07.

The State Government, through its Social Inclusion Unit, is developing a homelessness strategy for Tasmania. Homelessness data shows that many of those who are homeless are in this situation because of domestic violence, mental health or alcohol or other drug issues. Many of these are young people. The strategy must be supported by sufficient resources to ensure not only that there are sufficient emergency, transitional and long-term accommodation options to meet the need, but that there are also sufficient and appropriate services to support people to obtain and successfully maintain tenancies and to address the issues that contribute to their homelessness.

Part of this strategy should be a mechanism for ongoing consultation and dialogue with the community services sector in relation to initiatives designed to address housing affordability and homelessness. There are a number of Commonwealth and State Government initiatives including the National Rental Affordability Scheme, the Housing Affordability Fund, the A Place to Call Home initiative, the Affordable Housing Strategy, the Homelessness Strategy, the Common Ground initiative and the \$60m allocated for public housing in Tasmania, which all potentially impact on the services provided by community housing and homelessness support providers.

Better outcomes will be achieved from these initiatives if they are informed by the local knowledge of service providers.

TasCOSS is aware that the role of SAAP services is currently being reviewed as part of the development of national strategies to address homelessness; however, in the absence of a national strategy there are currently very high levels of unmet need in Tasmania that are not likely to be addressed by any Australian Government initiatives in the near future. The Tasmanian government needs to act now to ensure that services are able to respond to Tasmanians in need of shelter.

**Estimated Cost: \$3.8m** (a 40% increase to the State Government's contribution to the 2008-09 SAAP services budget of \$9.5m)

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians (Goal 1)

**Recommendation 2.3: Urban renewal**

**Fund strategies to improve public transport networks, community services, shopping facilities, recreation areas and employment growth in areas of need to support communities to overcome the consequences of concentrated and long-term disadvantage.**

**Department:** Infrastructure, Energy and Resources

**Rationale:** There are many areas throughout the state that can be characterised as areas of multiple disadvantage. These areas are characterised by inadequate transport services; a lack of community, health, and retail services; limited recreational infrastructure; and few training and employment opportunities. Often these are areas with high concentrations of public housing which is being increasingly allocated to Tasmania's most vulnerable families.

Recent Australian research confirms that the life chances of residents living in areas of concentrated disadvantage are significantly impeded. Significant targeted investment is required to provide the infrastructure and services which will provide people living in these areas with opportunities to participate socially and economically in their community.

**Estimated Cost: Uncosted**

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians (Goal 1)

**Recommendation 2.4: Residential Tenancy Act review**

**Conduct a review of the Residential Tenancy Act 1995.**

**Department:** Justice (Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading)

**Rationale:** In an environment of prohibitively high house prices, a shortage of low-cost rental accommodation, and enormous pressure on community housing providers and the public housing system, it is critical that low income earners who are forced to rely on the private rental market are protected by robust tenancy legislation. TasCOSS is concerned that Tasmania's Act does not provide tenants with sufficient protection. For this reason there should be a full, independent review of the *Residential Tenancy Act* (RTA).

Our members have serious concerns about the condition of some properties being offered for rent, with many lower-rent properties effectively substandard. While the *Substandard Housing Control Act 1973* is supposed to regulate the condition of rental housing, it would appear that this legislation is not being used and that there is confusion as to who has responsibility for its implementation.

Members have also observed activities of landlords and agents that constitute breaches of the *Residential Tenancy Act 1995*, such as failure to provide condition reports, unlawful evictions, inspections or visits by the landlord without notice, unlawful retention of bonds by landlords, and failure to perform repairs and maintenance within legislated timeframes. In part, this occurs because the shortage of affordable housing means tenants feel vulnerable and powerless, and are worried that asserting their rights under the Act will jeopardise their chances of obtaining a positive reference. But it also occurs because of the lack of proactive enforcement of the Act by the Office of Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading, the limited penalties within the Act for unlawful conduct by landlords, and the limited dispute resolution mechanisms available to tenants, which means that for many disputes, the only recourse is to the Courts.

A review of the RTA should be conducted by the independent Tasmanian Law Reform Institute, and incorporate a public consultation process so that the views of industry, the community sector, landlords and tenants can all be considered.

The review should consider the following:

- the effectiveness of the *Residential Tenancy Act* in achieving regulation of residential tenancies and in ensuring that the rights of both parties to any agreement are adequately protected;
- the current powers of the Residential Tenancy Commissioner, and whether any changes or extension to those powers are appropriate;
- the appropriateness of penalties imposed by the Act, and whether or not they should be extended; and
- the need for any amendments or additions to the Act.

In relation to the need for amendments or additions, the review should consider whether the following areas should be covered, or more tightly controlled, by legislation:

- the standard at which residential properties may be let and re-let, particularly whether current legislative arrangements are providing appropriate protection to tenants in relation to substandard housing;
- increases in the rent payable on properties, particularly during a tenancy;

- the practice of 'rent bidding', 'rent banding' and 'rental auctions';
- discriminatory treatment of tenancy applicants, including through the use of irrelevant and unnecessary questions on tenancy application forms;
- the use of residential tenancy databases by Tasmanian agents and landlords; and
- the provision of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms that are accessible and affordable, especially for people who have literacy issues, limited education or financial means, or backgrounds that have contributed to a distrust of authority (such as refugees who have experienced violence perpetrated by authorities in their countries of origin).

**Estimated Cost: \$100, 000**

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)

**Recommendation 2.5: Rental Deposit Authority**

**Allocate funding for the establishment of a Rental Deposit Authority**

**Department:** Justice (Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading)

**Rationale:** The establishment of the Rental Deposit Authority (RDA) or 'rental bond board' has been repeatedly delayed. Despite the relevant amendments to legislation being passed in December 2005, and an original launch date of 1 January 2006, there is still no indication as to when an RDA will be operational in Tasmania.

The costs associated with setting up such an authority have been cited as contributing to the delay of this initiative. Our understanding however that, once established, is this project will be cost neutral as in other states. The costs associated with running the authority will be met through interest earned on bonds deposited.

**Estimated Cost: \$1 million** establishment costs (which will be recouped through interest earnings)

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)

### **3. Health and well-being**

*When money goes on rent, petrol, bus money for the kids to go to school ... then there's not much left to buy food so you don't eat much – you probably get one meal for tea, that's about it. (Glenorchy 2008)*

On most health status indicators, Tasmanians fare poorly compared to most other Australians (with the major exception of Indigenous Australians). In addition, according to the Tasmanian *State of the Health Report 2008*, 'there are significant inequalities in health between population groups within Tasmania'. The Report demonstrates that low socioeconomic status – which is more prevalent in Tasmania than in other states and territories – is strongly linked to poorer health, a higher incidence of chronic conditions and higher levels of use of the health care system

It is increasingly understood that social and economic factors are major determinants of health status. It is therefore necessary not to see health policy as simply about medicine and service provision, but as a much broader field that encompasses all of the aspects of this Budget submission – social inclusion, education, income, employment, housing, and access to services.

Poor health status is a major factor in social exclusion. Those experiencing poor health – including both physical and mental illnesses – are often unable to participate in the workforce, in social and recreational activities, in education and training, in volunteering, or even in family and personal relationships.

TasCOSS calls for more emphasis to be placed on health promotion in Tasmania. This includes focus not only on the physical and behavioural issues and services, but also on the social, economic and environmental factors that contribute to poor health. Effective health promotion also involves increasing opportunities for participation and for consumers to exercise some control over their own health.

#### **Recommendation 3.1: Health promotion**

**Strengthen the role and effectiveness of health promotion in Tasmania by:**

- **Providing significant new resources to health promotion**
- **Increasing the focus on health promotion both within DHHS and across all government agencies**
- **Providing adequate funding for the coordination and evaluation of health promotion activities, both government and non-government, throughout Tasmania.**

**Department:** Health and Human Services

**Rationale:** Health promotion action has a necessarily broad focus and ranges from primary disease prevention activities through health education, behaviour change

campaigns; community development, action and advocacy; to major systemic and infrastructure changes. It focuses on the determinants of health, including the social, behavioural, economic and environmental conditions that are the root causes of health and illness.

In May 2008, TasCOSS, in conjunction with the Tasmanian Branch of the Australian Health Promotion Association held a public forum on health promotion in Tasmania. The forum was well attended by health service providers and policy staff from both the government and non-government sectors and by interested individuals. In the discussions that followed the presentations, consensus was reached on the urgent need for a renewed and strengthened focus on health promotion in the Tasmania, and on the need for coordination of existing health promotion activities and funding.

While many health promotion activities take place in Tasmania, they are often relatively small projects and programs run by a large number of government and non-government agencies that do not all have an overt health focus – such organisations include sport and recreation clubs, service clubs, community houses, schools and other educational institutions, community and other arts groups, the Parks and Wildlife Service, and the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and so on. Funding comes from a wide range of Federal, State and local government and non-government sources. Existing activities are largely disparate and uncoordinated. Centralised coordination and evaluation of health promotion activities and funding in Tasmania would go a long way towards maximising and increasing the efficacy of health promotion in Tasmania.

Tasmania's poor health status, determined largely by socioeconomic factors such as income levels, employment and educational attainment, is best tackled through significant investment in a comprehensive health promotion strategy involving government and non-government agencies and including central coordination. TasCOSS believes this must be funded and led by the State Government.

**Estimated cost: \$40 million over four years**

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)
- Active, healthy Tasmanians with access to quality and affordable health care services. (Goal 4)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 3.2: Food security**

**Provide funding for a research project into the issue of food security in Tasmania to:**

- **Investigate the extent and nature of food insecurity in Tasmania**
- **Identify groups who experience or are likely to experience difficulties with access to affordable nutritious food throughout the State**

- **Explore best practice responses**
- **Report on the findings to inform a future State government response.**

**Department:** Health and Human Services / Premier and Cabinet (Social Inclusion Unit)

**Rationale:**

Food security is a serious issue for many people living in poverty throughout the world. In recent years it has been recognised as a problem for many Australians who live on low incomes. The term food security refers to the ability to access a reliable, safe, sufficient, nutritious, and sustainable food supply. Lack of food security – or food insecurity – can result in serious adverse and long-term health impacts, particularly in children.

Recent TasCOSS consultations with Tasmanians living on low incomes found that a significant number of the people we spoke with had difficulties affording adequate nutritious food, and often felt they needed to prioritise payments for rent, electricity, medications and transport over good quality food. Many spoke of the prohibitively high cost of fruit and vegetables and of 'making do' with bread in the few days before their next income support payment fell due.

It appears that fresh fruit and vegetable prices are increasing in Tasmania due to the effects of drought, and that food prices in general are rising as a result of increasing fuel and other costs.

TasCOSS is aware that the Population Health Unit in DHHS has initiated some research in this area, but it would seem that this Unit does not currently have the resources to undertake the scale of research required to ascertain the exact nature and extent of the problem of access to food in Tasmania, particularly for low income Tasmanians. It would be useful to investigate existing research on food security, as well as responses to the problem in other jurisdictions. Research could also identify particular groups or areas that are likely to be most affected by food insecurity in Tasmania so that responses can be appropriately targeted.

**Estimated cost: \$150 000 over 18 months**

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)

**Recommendation 3.3: Consumer engagement**

**Strengthen consumer engagement with Tasmania's health system by providing funding for a representative body for Tasmanian health consumers and by strengthening the capacity of existing health consumer advocacy groups.**

**Department:** Health and Human Services / Premier and Cabinet

**Rationale:** This is the third year running that TasCOSS has recommended that the State Government provide funding to establish a representative body for consumers in the Tasmanian health system.

A key factor in both social inclusion and health promotion is participation. To be included is to be heard, therefore a social inclusion strategy must provide opportunities for individuals to participate and to increase their sense of personal agency and effectiveness. This is particularly the case in matters concerning health.

TasCOSS recommends that funding is provided to establish and maintain an organisation to serve as a representative body for consumers in the Tasmanian health system, and to work with existing advocacy groups that represent Tasmanians with particular health conditions. This organisation should be independent of government and health service providers but maintain close links with all sectors of the health system.

A necessary co-requisite is increased support for existing health consumer advocacy groups so that such groups can continue to build their capacity and that of their members to participate actively, advocate effectively, and to develop skills in representation of their own and others' interests.

**Estimated cost: \$500,000 per annum recurrent funding**

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)
- Active, healthy Tasmanians with access to quality and affordable health care services. (Goal 4)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 3.4: Mental health advocates**

**Allocate funds to increase the number of mental health advocates to enable increased support to be provided to mental health consumers across the State.**

**Department:** Health and Human Services

**Rationale:** A socially inclusive society is one in which the rights of people with a mental illness are respected and one in which the least restrictive options for their care and support are routinely implemented. Mental health advocacy is a safeguard to help ensure that Tasmanians with mental illnesses are provided some autonomy within what can be a very restrictive system. The ability to make decisions about one's own treatment has been shown to be a significant factor in assisting recovery. Mental health advocates assist people with mental health disorders to protect their rights and interests in a wide range of situations including employment, housing,

child custody and access, criminal justice and community-based mental health services. Tasmania currently has one funded mental health advocate.

Advocacy services for people with a mental illness are seriously under-funded in Tasmania and especially in the North and North-West regions of the State. It is particularly important that people with mental illness in regions where access to appropriate services is limited, are well-supported by specialist advocates. TasCOSS therefore calls for increased funding to provide for mental health advocates in North and North-West Tasmania, and for an additional position in the South.

**Estimated cost: \$285,000 per annum** to fund an additional three mental health advocate positions.

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)
- Active, healthy Tasmanians with access to quality and affordable health care services. (Goal 4)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 3.5: Early intervention mental health services**

**Provide increased capacity for early intervention in relation to mental health issues by:**

- **Increasing funding for the development of a range of early intervention mental health services to be delivered by government and non-government services**
- **Allocating funding to enable whole-of-government coordination of mental health promotion, prevention and intervention services, resources and research.**

**Department:** Health and Human Services

**Rationale:** Mental illness is a major cause of social exclusion. People with mental illness are particularly vulnerable to social and physical isolation, decreased participation in employment, education, and training activities. Mental illness can lead to and exacerbate a range of other illnesses and can impact on a person's personal and professional relationships, interactions with family and friends, and ability to participation in social and civic activities. Mental illness has an economic cost through reduced workforce participation and productivity and demand on the health care system.

According to COAG's *National Action Plan on Mental Health (2006-2011)*:

*promotion, prevention and early intervention are critical to enabling the community to better recognise the risk factors and early signs of mental*

*illness and to find appropriate treatment. Growing evidence suggests that when identified and treated early, mental illnesses are less severe and of shorter duration, and are less likely to recur.*

It is critical that locally-based mental health services are available when people need them, rather than having issues progress to an acute level. The evidence demonstrates that when early intervention mental health services accessible within the community provide timely support, the early identification of mental illness is improved and effective management made possible.

Experiences of mental illness and psychological distress were persistent themes throughout the TasCOSS consultations with people living on low incomes. Despite the positive changes that have occurred in recent years as a result of implementing recommendations from the *Bridging the Gap Report*, there is still important work to be done in the area of mental health promotion, prevention and intervention at a community-wide level. TasCOSS is also calling for funding to be allocated to enable the whole-of-government coordination of mental health promotion prevention and intervention services, resources and research.

**Estimated Cost:**    **\$1.5 million per annum** for increased early intervention programs in each region of Tasmania  
                                 **\$500,000 per annum** for cross-government coordination

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- Active, healthy Tasmanians with access to quality and affordable health care services. (Goal 1)

**Recommendation 3.6:    Brain injury support services**

**Increase funding to acquired brain injury support services across the state.**

**Department:** Health and Human Services

**Rationale:** Acquired brain injury (ABI) is a major, yet under-recognised health issue in Tasmania. The level of funding to ABI services in Tasmania is inadequate to meet the current needs of existing clients, and it is estimated there are more than 2,500 Tasmanians acquiring a brain injury each year.

Last year TasCOSS called on the State Government to increase resources to ABI support services and to fund brain injury education and prevention programs across the state. The State Government recently announced funding for the next 3 years for a brain injury awareness program targeted at secondary schools and colleges. We welcome this. An increase in awareness will most likely lead to an increase in referrals and without an increase in funding; ABI services will not have the capacity to meet the increased demand for their services.

One in 30 children will have some form of brain injury before they reach the age of 21. Research indicates about 60% of children in juvenile detention centres were found to have undiagnosed brain injury. These children often show behaviour that

look like a 'bad adolescent' behaviour; it has now been documented this is probably associated with a brain injury earlier in life. Research also indicates a trend for adults with ABI to have an increased likelihood of involvement in the criminal justice system – a cost which can be measured in financial terms (cost per inmate per day of incarceration). However, the cost of the impact on families and an individual's participation in life is immeasurable.

In some instances the lack of specialist ABI services, combined with a poor understanding and/or awareness of brain injury within the general community and particularly in referring services, results in people being offered inappropriate services which do not address their needs. For many others it results in not being provided a service at all. The State pays a cost for this neglect – an economic cost and a human cost.

TasCOSS is calling on the Government to increase the level of funding to meet the needs of people living with or affected by acquired brain injury across Tasmania.

**Estimated Cost: Uncosted**

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Active, healthy Tasmanians with access to quality and affordable health care services. (Goal 2)

## **4. Education, employment & training**

*I like aged care or working with young people...[but] I can't afford the TAFE courses, the costs of the courses, the cost of day care and travel...(Southern Tasmania 2008)*

Tasmania's school-based educational outcomes continue to be poor in relation to other states. Major issues include low literacy and numeracy rates, low retention rates for Years 11 and 12, poor completion rates of Year 12, barriers to education faced by disadvantaged and rural students and relatively low levels of post-school qualifications. Tasmania's post Year 10 retention rate is consistently lower than other states. According to *Tasmania's Education Performance Report 2007* the rate of students retained at Year 10 to Year 12 dropped from 69.4% (2004-2006) to 63.7% in 2007.

The ability to participate in meaningful, appropriate education, employment and training opportunities within local communities should be at the heart of any social inclusion agenda. TasCOSS recognises that education is not just about going to school or getting a job but is a lifelong process of engagement and participation. Lifelong learning promotes social inclusion and has outcomes for individual and community health and well-being.

It remains a fact that poor educational outcomes can affect all aspects of a person's life including their health, employment opportunities, social and civic participation, and income potential. Our consultations with Tasmanians on low incomes demonstrated that low educational attainment often coincides with poor mental and/or physical health, low literacy and numeracy levels, and poorer employment opportunities.

TasCOSS and its members remain concerned about the number of people who face persistent disadvantage and multiple barriers to education, training and employment opportunities in Tasmania. Such people include those at risk of disengaging from formal education, those living in rural, remote and urban fringe areas without adequate access to transport and accommodation.

### **Recommendation 4.1: Pathways for disengaged students**

**Allocate funding to enable schools to establish education programs and partnerships with community organisations to provide pathways for disengaged students to re-engage with education and training offered within the school setting or to undertake education and training opportunities within local community settings.**

**Department:** Education

**Rationale:** In order to improve Tasmania's post-Year 10 retention rates, the legal school leaving age was raised from 16 to 17 and the *Tasmania Tomorrow* reforms to the post Year 10 education system instituted. TasCOSS calls for these measures to be complemented by interventions that assist the many young people who have disengaged from schooling much earlier than Year 10, who are no longer connected with their school communities and face multiple barriers to engaging in education and training.

As is documented in the Department of Education's *Engaging Our School Communities Taskforce Report* (2006), there are many excellent examples of schools collaborating with communities through creating local partnerships with community organisations and businesses. It is clear that community-based programs that engage young people in non-mainstream education and training have proven successful and have provided young disengaged people with the opportunity to link with business and industry, as well to participate in their community.

Education providers indicate that where students are disengaged from school, there is often a need to find somewhere that the students and their family feel connected to, and community organisations often provide such a space. Schools can work with community organisations to provide alternative programs that enable students who do not feel comfortable in a school environment to continue to receive core education components and to develop pathways back to school.

TasCOSS strongly supports improving and strengthening the linkages and collaboration between schools and community organisations. However, funding, resources, staff and support for these programs is often insufficient or time limited. Funding should be allocated to schools to establish education programs and partnerships with community organisations to re-engage young people with education and training in school and/or through community organisations.

**Estimated Cost: \$1 million annually**

**Links to Tasmania Together:**

- High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce. (Goal 3)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 4.2: Supportive school environments**

**Allocate funding for the development of supportive school environments through:**

- **Implementing a state education system-wide policy framework on supportive school communities in order coordinate support to schools, teachers and students**
- **Ensuring that schools are equipped with sufficient numbers of support staff such as speech pathologists, social workers and psychologists.**

**Department:** Education

**Rationale:** It is essential that all education environments are safe, supportive and inclusive. One of the aims of socially inclusive education should be to assist children and young people to develop skills that will allow them to participate fully and productively within the community. TasCOSS agrees with the Brotherhood of St Laurence that 'schools need to be organised and resourced in ways that enable students to succeed despite any disadvantages with which they begin or which arise during their education.'

Research conducted by the Australian Council of State School Organisations (2008) reveals that parents' concerns about bullying and children's psychological well-being at school are beginning to outweigh their concerns about academic performance. There is an increasing expectation that schools will be responsive to the needs of their students and community. This requires schools to be able to deal effectively with complex issues such as bullying, mental health issues and behavioural concerns. Schools are also required to be supportive and inclusive of the diverse groups that comprise any school community.

Policy changes within the Department of Education have involved greater devolution of decision-making to principals and schools. While schools are often responsive and provide support to students that is appropriate and timely, it is the responsibility of Government to ensure that schools are resourced to provide this support to students. This involves two key factors: having adequate numbers of support staff in particularly disadvantaged schools, such as speech pathologists, social workers and psychologists; and having a coherent supportive schools policy framework to refer to. Currently, there is a lack consistency and coordination of state wide policy and support around the issue of how schools can be supportive communities. TasCOSS is calling for the Department to fund and implement a comprehensive supportive school communities policy framework and provide the equivalent of 3 full-time workers to provide state-wide policy and support to all state schools.

TasCOSS supports the Australian Education Union's position that there should be one school psychologist for every 1,000 students and one speech pathologist and social worker for every 1,500 students. These figures almost double the number currently in schools. TasCOSS is aware of unmanageable case-loads for these workers and of concerns that timely intervention with students is often not possible. There have been concerns expressed that some students referred may not be attended to within the school year.

**Estimated Cost:** **\$7.6m** to double the current number of support professionals  
**\$1 million** for a supportive school communities framework, staff and resources.

**Links to Tasmania Together:**

- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)
- High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce. (Goal 3)

- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

### **Recommendation 4.3 Life skills education in schools**

**Allocate funding to implement life skills education programs state-wide, in partnership with Government and non-government organisations in the following areas:**

- **Comprehensive and sequential sexual health and relationships education from K-12**
- **Drug education and harm minimisation**
- **Budgeting and financial literacy.**

**Department:** Education

**Rationale:** Social exclusion can often start early in life and it is sometimes lack of education, knowledge and support around decisions made early in life that can lead to disadvantage and poverty in later life. Tasmania has the second highest teenage pregnancy rate in Australia and increasing levels of sexually transmissible infections, binge drinking and drug use. Teen debt and youth gambling are also on the increase. It is essential that young people are provided with opportunities in school to build on essential life skills such as resilience, communication, problem-solving and decision-making skills, as well as up-to-date information on sexual health and relationships, drug and alcohol use and financial literacy that is age appropriate and delivered in a supportive and non-judgemental environment.

There are many effective and successful evidence based life skills programs and resources that have been developed address sexual health and relationships education, drug and harm minimisation education, and financial literacy. Unfortunately, there is often too little or only short-term investment and support by the State Government to deliver such programs inside and outside the Tasmanian school system, and implementation of these programs is left to the discretion of individual schools and teachers.

TasCOSS believes that all school students should have the opportunity to participate in these valuable programs and that they should be offered across the school system. Teachers and support staff require appropriate training, support and resources to deliver these programs and this support should be provided Department-wide to ensure that no school or student misses out.

TasCOSS calls for the State Government to implement system-wide life skills programs in partnership with Government and non-government services. This would include a Departmental state-wide coordinator of the programs.

**Estimated Cost: \$3.25 million** (representing half of the funding required, with the other half coming from the School Resources Package).

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce. (Goal 3)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

#### **Recommendation 4.4 Student transport and accommodation**

##### **Allocate resources to increase the provision of:**

- **Affordable and appropriate accommodation options for students from rural and remote areas**
- **Increased transport options for students in rural, remote and urban fringe area to assist them to engage in further education and training opportunities.**

**Department:** Education

**Rationale:** People living in regional and remote Tasmania are more likely than their urban counterparts to be excluded from, and encounter difficulties in accessing educational opportunities. The range of subjects and levels of study available to students living in rural and remote areas is often more limited than for those living in urban areas. According to *Australian Social Trends, 2008* (ABS) the proportion of 15-19 year olds who were no longer attending high school and had not completed year 10 was considerably higher in 'remote' and 'very remote' areas.

Many students do not have the option of undertaking Years 11 and 12 in their local area. For some rural communities, the nearest high school is located in an urban area. Since the *Report of the Core Passenger Transport Services* was released, changes have been made to student fare structures, however, more needs to be done to ensure that transport to and from urban learning centres is flexible and more frequent, reflecting the realities of variable student timetables and after-school activities. The *Tasmania Tomorrow* reforms may exacerbate transport problems for many students with the possible necessity to change campuses.

TasCOSS consultations indicated that lack of affordable and appropriate student accommodation is a barrier for students from rural and remote areas in Tasmania to participate in further education. Not only is a student under the age of 18 is not legally able to enter into a private rental situation, current rental prices are out of the reach for anyone on a low income, such as Austudy. Entering into a share-house situation is also expensive and often inappropriate. Students are often reliant upon friends and family to board with if they wish to continue their education. For many disadvantaged students this is not an option as they lack the extended support networks not only of people in stable or secure housing, but also of people who have space for them to board.

Recently the State Government announced funding for additional student accommodation facilities in Launceston and Hobart. TasCOSS is calling on the State Government to further increase the provision of affordable and appropriate student accommodation in urban centres for students living in rural and remote areas. The

availability of transport from regional, remote and urban fringe areas to urban centres also needs to be addressed to ensure that people are not excluded from participation in further education based on geographical differences.

**Estimated Cost: Uncosted**

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce. (Goal 3)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 4.5 Engaging parents and children in early learning**

**Allocate funding to local community-based organisations to provide early learning opportunities for children of 'hard to reach' parents in local school and off-campus environments as a way of supporting successful transition into school.**

**Department:** Education

**Rationale:** This year the State Government announced further funding for the *Launching into Learning* initiative - a program which enables schools to form strong relationships with families and their children before they enrol in kindergarten. The State Government has also recently funded non-government organisations to conduct pilot programs to assist with engaging hard to reach families.

International research highlights the value of early learning in leading to better educational outcomes for young people throughout their school experience. Children of disadvantaged parents often miss out on crucial early learning opportunities. Initial feedback from schools and service providers is that while *Launching into Learning* is a very effective program that reaches most of the target group, further resourcing is required to access the hardest to reach families.

To ensure that learning opportunities for children and parents in Tasmania are inclusive, TasCOSS recommends that the State Government fund further programs that work to engage hard to reach parents with positive early learning experiences. One model involves the provision of community-based peer mentoring programs. Such programs allow parents who are currently linked into support services and schools to connect with other parents and further explore their own learning needs. Providing an off-campus learning space is another strategy for encouraging beneficial social and school community connections for families. This must be viewed as a 'stepping stone' approach into school-based early learning opportunities.

Early indications are that the pilot programs funded by State Government have been effective in engaging some young people most in need of support into early learning initiatives. TasCOSS recommends further funding is allocated to expand these programs that support *Launching into Learning* initiatives throughout the State by

employing a part-time equivalent transition program coordinators to work with families in every Tasmanian primary school community.

**Estimated Cost: \$5.5 million**

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce. (Goal 3)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 4.6: Increasing training opportunities**

**Provide further education and training opportunities to disadvantaged job seekers in areas of locational disadvantage by:**

- **Funding further LINC-style training hubs and locating them in the areas of most need**
- **Increasing funding to enable the delivery of accredited training programs in community based settings**
- **Allocating increased resources for the development of local area-based partnerships to generate local employment and training pathways**
- **Ensuring those in need have access to childcare while undertaking training.**

**Department:** Education / Economic Development

**Rationale:** People living in areas of locational disadvantage (including low socio economic areas and remote communities) have fewer opportunities to access to well resourced, quality education and training.

This year TasCOSS welcomed the announcement that the Government would be establishing four more LINC-style training hubs in regional communities, based on the Huon LINC model. TasCOSS recommends the Government fund more LINC's and locate them in the areas of most need. It is essential that these LINC's are developed in consultation with existing local community-based organisations.

In addition to LINC's, the State Government needs to better resource community-based solutions to education and training. TasCOSS consultations confirmed the value of being able to undertake education and training, for example, at the local neighbourhood house. It is essential that registered training providers are funded and resourced to partner with community-based organisations to provide certificate training at a local level.

While the Government's *Workforce Participation Program* allows community sector support organisations to apply for seed funding for initiatives that create pathways into jobs for disadvantaged job seekers, there needs to be more funding for local area-based partnerships to provide pathways into employment and training. It is

important the guidelines for these grants are flexible enough to allow funding to vary according to the significance and complexity of the barriers faced by individuals. Staff need to be resourced in each local area to bring together not-for-profit community organisations, local business and industry, education and training providers and State and local government to develop local job creation opportunities and specific training programs.

A major barrier to engaging in training opportunities is the lack of affordable or accessible childcare. Where childcare has been provided on-site at the training location, this has proven effective for enabling young parents to undertake training. Community-based education and training opportunities need to be resourced to provide childcare services.

**Estimated Cost:**   **\$11 million** for four more LINC's  
                              **\$1 million** for accredited training programs  
                              **\$1 million** for community based partnerships  
                              **\$250,000** to increase childcare provision

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)
- High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce. (Goal 3)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 4.7:   Employment support**

**Allocate increased funding, beyond federal contributions, to non-government organisations, , to provide pre-, post- and on-going employment support to people who face ongoing barriers to, and discrimination within, the workplace.**

**Department:** Economic Development

**Rationale:** There are many people who experience difficulty not only becoming 'work ready' but also maintaining employment once they get a job. Many then require additional support to maintain that employment. People who may require additional support include: the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, people with health problems, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, young people and single parents.

Throughout TasCOSS consultations we heard from people who said that specific and targeted employment support was what they needed to enable them not only to return to work but also to stay in the job.

TasCOSS is calling on Government to fund, beyond federal contributions, pre- post and on-going support for disadvantaged job seekers. This funding would provide a pool of money for employers to access in order to provide local support from specialist workers (for example, mental health, drug and alcohol or youth workers) in

order to better deal with issues that can derail disadvantaged job seekers employment in the first 12 months. Employers would also need to be provided with advice on enabling flexible hours, part-time work, training options and other workplace adaptations.

The role of support workers would be to educate and advise employers about the particular barriers to on-going employment an employee might be facing and to ensure that employers have the skills, knowledge and sensitivity to support disadvantaged employees.

**Estimated Cost: \$800,000**

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce. (Goal 3)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

## 5. Transport

*A good quality of life is ... not feeling trapped at home because you can't go anywhere. (Bridgewater/Gagebrook 2008)*

The difficulty of accessing transport was a consistent theme throughout TasCOSS' 2008 consultations with people living on low incomes. Almost a decade earlier, Anglicare named lack of access to transport as a major barrier to social inclusion in Tasmania in their *Hearing the Voices* report.

Accessible transport means that people can get to and from work, education and training opportunities, that they can access quality healthcare and childcare, purchase healthy food, maintain friendships and participate in social, cultural and civic events.

Those Tasmanians most disadvantaged by a lack of accessible transport continue to be those living in rural and remote areas of this state. Given that Tasmania's population is one of the most decentralised populations of any Australian state and that Tasmania continues to have the highest levels of people living on government income support payments, a lack of affordable passenger transport effectively promotes exclusion.

Currently there are more reasons than ever to make major investments in passenger transport solutions for Tasmanians. Projected labour shortages mean that it will be more important than ever that we have a mobile labour force. Good transport will be fundamental to enabling people to access educational and training opportunities so that they are 'work ready' and able to contribute to a more productive workforce. Part of ensuring higher literacy and numeracy standards in Tasmania is ensuring that students can get to school. Projections of higher oil and energy prices and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions mean that we will need to be innovative in seeking solutions that provide more efficient transport options that reduce our reliance on oil. Higher oil prices are likely to lead to a higher reliance on public transport, and that public transport must be appropriate, affordable and accessible.

### **Recommendation 5.1: Increasing public transport services**

**Allocate additional funding to increase minimum service levels for public transport services in urban and urban fringe areas.**

**Department:** Infrastructure, Energy and Resources

**Rationale:** Feedback both to the *Review of Core Passenger Transport Services* and to the TasCOSS consultations clearly indicated that service levels of passenger transport need to be increased, particularly in urban fringe areas. Service users indicated that hourly services during daytime hours were insufficient and that early morning, late evening and weekend services were minimal. The centralisation of

health and human services in major urban areas means that people are experiencing significant inconvenience or choosing to forego these services.

Feedback to TasCOSS in relation to the *Tasmania Tomorrow* reforms is that this may place additional transport requirements on students and increased public transport will be necessary to accommodate the new system.

Minimum service levels should be set based on what is needed for the community to be able to access services and education, training, employment, recreational and social opportunities.

**Estimated Cost: Uncosted**

**Links to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1).
- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 5.2: More responsive rural transport services**

**Allocate additional funding to rural transport services so that Tasmanian communities have minimum daily return services to a regional centre that are appropriate to community need.**

**Department:** Infrastructure, Energy and Resources

**Rationale:** TasCOSS consultations and the *Core Passenger Transport Review* clearly indicate that that people in rural and remote communities in Tasmania often do not have access to affordable transport options that reflect their needs. Bus services often do not run at times that suit the needs of passengers, for example, coming and going with postal services.

TasCOSS is aware that as a result of the *Core Passenger Transport Review* that the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources (DIER) is looking to encourage bus operators to consult more closely with the communities they service to determine need. TasCOSS welcomes this initiative, but remains concerned that in the absence of additional resources, bus operators will not be able to respond to identified needs because of viability issues. Where, for example, there are insufficient passengers to make a bus run viable for people to access employment, education or social opportunities, DIER should be able to subsidise this service, provided sufficient need is established.

**Estimated Cost: Uncosted**

**Links to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1).
- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)

- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 5.3: Coordination of transport services**

**Design and implement, in conjunction with locally-based community services, strategies to better coordinate core passenger transport services with community transport options.**

**Department:** Infrastructure, Energy and Resources

**Rationale:** In many areas there are a range of transport providers, including private operators and community transport providers. Sometimes these services cover similar routes, taking passengers to major urban centres for medical treatment for example. It would appear that passengers sometimes choose community transport options over a private bus service because it is door-to-door and significantly cheaper.

Strategies to coordinate these services could mean better use of available resources, increased viability of transport services and better outcomes for potential users. Such a system would require that those currently entitled to use community transport services are able to travel on other services with similar concessions.

**Estimated Cost: Uncosted**

**Links to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1).
- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 5.4: Passenger transport brokerage in rural and remote areas**

**Provide funding to local government authorities in areas outside of major urban centres to deliver passenger transport brokerage projects.**

**Department:** Infrastructure, Energy and Resources

**Rationale:** TasCOSS consultations have indicated severe shortages of affordable transport options for people on low incomes living in rural areas. Bus services run infrequently and taxi services are expensive or non-existent. For some, car ownership is unaffordable and for others the high costs associated with car ownership place a considerable burden on their financial situation. High fuel prices also limit vehicle usage. The absence of affordable transport options means that Tasmanians living in rural areas are often excluded from educational, social and

economic opportunities and makes it every difficult for them to access health and community services.

In 2004/2005 Dorset Council in Tasmania's North-East trialled a project seeking to address the transport access issues for young people in the municipality. This project followed a review of transport options trialled internationally for rural and remote communities. The project was called the *Wheel Deal* and involved council employing a project officer to broker subsidised transport outcomes for young people with local transport providers.

In response to a transport request, the project officer would investigate the most suitable option among local transport services including the local bus service, taxi company and volunteer drivers. The project was awarded the *2005 Tasmanian Government Award for Excellence* and received positive evaluation as a model for providing affordable transport to young people in a rural area.

It is the view of TasCOSS that the State Government should seek to partner with local government authorities to establish this successful local model for addressing transport issues in each of Tasmania's rural and remote local government areas. The scope of the project could be extended population-wide, with subsidies made available to low income earners. Based on the *Wheel Deal* costings, this project would be a relatively inexpensive way of addressing many of the transport issues faced by Tasmanians living outside of major urban areas.

**Cost: \$1.5 million per annum**

**Links to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1).
- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 5.5: Assisting novice drivers**

**Allocate additional funding and resources to assist disadvantaged and low income learner drivers state-wide to meet the 50 hour log book requirement.**

**Department:** Infrastructure, Energy and Resources.

**Rationale:** A high percentage of Tasmanians from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds live in suburban and rural areas outside major population centres. Obtaining a driver's license maximises their chances of participating in post-compulsory education, training or employment, and of participating in their community.

Non-government community organisations providing services to people from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds are particularly concerned about the barriers preventing people from undertaking the 50 hours of driver training required

before applying for a provisional driver's license. These barriers include a lack of access to safe, suitable vehicles; the cost of professional driving tuition; and the cost of petrol, making it an expensive exercise to practice driving for 50 hours.

Under the Novice Driver Reforms made effective in August 2008, a learner driver who drives without an appropriate supervising driver, will lose their license and pay a fine. People on low incomes and disadvantaged backgrounds often have difficulty finding a licensed driver to supervise lessons who has access to a car, a full licence. Further to this, if a person loses their license twice they are sent back a licensing stage. People from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely than other learners to end up in this cycle of further disadvantage. The outcome of this is that many people are either not able to sit for their provisional license, are driving unlicensed, or are dependent on often irregular or difficult to access public transport services.

TasCOSS calls on the State Government to increase funding to learner driver programs to assist more disadvantaged drivers to meet the 50 hour log book state-wide.

**Estimated Cost: \$600 000 per annum**

**Links to Tasmania *Together*:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1).
- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

## **6. Access to quality services and opportunities for inclusion**

*You know you don't even have enough money to go and have a cup of coffee down the street. You just haven't. I think no, I can have a cup of coffee at home ... You can't even go to anything that's only going to cost you five dollars, you can't go. It limits your outings ... I don't socialise one bit. I would like to ... (North-West Coast 2008)*

A socially inclusive Tasmania is one in which marginalised groups are supported to participate fully in their community and to have access to the same protections and opportunities as other groups. State Government policy needs to be consistent in ensuring that its policies and programs not only assist in building inclusion, but also are not actively contributing to social exclusion.

The range of recommendations which follow in this section relate to services which could have a significant practical effect in supporting some of our most vulnerable and socially excluded groups: young offenders, older people, families affected by gambling, the hearing impaired, people with disabilities, sex workers and people who are in financial hardship.

There is a call to address the desperate under-funding of front-line services to provide early intervention with young offenders so that there are real opportunities to address offending and related issues before it is too late. There is a call for increased resources to help people to help themselves and lead more independent lives through assistive equipment, smoke alarms, better transport services and facilities and programs that facilitate community building. Some of the recommendations relate to fundamental rights issues, such as protecting older people from abuse and providing greater safety for sex workers.

Our recommendations in relation to gambling urge the State Government to examine the social and financial costs of existing policy and to curb the damage to Tasmania's lowest income families.

Perhaps the litmus test of poverty and need in Tasmania is the demand for emergency relief services. It should be of considerable concern that our members call for greater assistance in this area.

### **Recommendation 6.1: Facilitate social involvement**

**Provide funding for community-based programs that facilitate social involvement and offer reciprocity opportunities; such programs could be provided by existing community organisations such as neighbourhood and community houses, health centres, libraries and schools.**

**Departments:** Health and Human Services / Premier and Cabinet

**Rationale:** Social isolation is a serious and debilitating experience that can have long-lasting negative impacts on the physical and mental health of individuals. It can also adversely affect communities, neighbourhoods and families. Isolation is obviously linked to exclusion and is a risk for many individuals, and particularly for those with mobility limitations, such as aged people and people with a disability, and for those with communication constraints such as people who are deaf or hard of hearing or people not proficient in speaking and understanding English. It is also likely to affect people experiencing ill health, particularly those with mental illness.

Many isolated people receive care from family, friends, volunteers or professional carers. The care receiving role is often a passive one which provides little or no opportunities for reciprocity, that is, to provide assistance or support to others in return. Community and locally-based organisations are ideally situated to offer programs and activities that provide opportunities for reciprocity.

The State Government already funds community and neighbourhood houses throughout the State that provide opportunities for involvement through locally-based programs. Some community health centres, libraries, on-line access centres, schools and other groups also provide such programs. However, an increase in funding would allow for additional social, educational and recreational programs targeted at isolated individuals within communities, as well as for programs that build in opportunities for reciprocity.

**Estimated cost: \$1 million per annum**

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 6.2: Support for volunteering**

**Allocate funding for a comprehensive Tasmanian Volunteering Strategy, which supports volunteer recruitment, training, management and recognition, and in which the Tasmanian Government has a key role in supporting the volunteering process.**

**Departments:** Health and Human Services / Premier and Cabinet

**Rationale:** Volunteers are the cornerstone of the community services industry, its history and its future, with roughly 15,000 volunteers involved in governing and delivering services. However, with demographic change and the increasing complexity of client need it is becoming increasingly difficult for organisations to attract and support volunteers in their roles.

The Budget submission developed by Volunteering Tasmania points to a worrying decrease in the hours contributed by volunteers since 2000. That submission

identifies important service systems, including in the community services sphere, that are threatened by this decrease. A comprehensive strategy to address this problem must include support for volunteer-involving organisations, protection of the interests of volunteers, the development of a state-wide network of access-point organisations that are able to assist prospective volunteers to find appropriate roles and organisations, and the active promotion of volunteering as a central social inclusion mechanism.

**Estimated Cost: \$4 million**

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 6.3: Elder Abuse Strategy**

**Establish and implement a whole-of-government Elder Abuse Strategy to protect older Tasmanians from abuse and to foster collaboration between government agencies, and between government and community-based organisations to reduce instances of abuse and mistreatment.**

**Department:** Premier and Cabinet

**Rationale:** The protection of vulnerable people, regardless of their age or other characteristics, is a fundamental responsibility of an inclusive society.

Tasmania stands alone among the other Australian states for the absence of a State strategy for the protection of older people against elder abuse and mistreatment. In all other states, governments collaborate with community-based organisations to offer protection and response services.

Without a strategy, Tasmania lacks a coordinated approach necessary to address the abuse of elderly Tasmanians and the visible means for people to act to prevent and respond to abuse.

The Tasmanian State Government has shown a willingness to address the issues of elder abuse. The *Tasmanian Plan for Positive Ageing*, *Tasmania Together 2010* and the Demographic Change Advisory Council all indicate a preparedness to progress action on this undesirable social problem.

A strategy should incorporate a Government and community stakeholders' steering group, a whole-of-government policy position and the establishment of regional community-based independent agencies to provide a visible presence within the community to deliver services. Services should include: a telephone hotline, information and advocacy services, public awareness and education resources, community and aged care worker training and access to legal assistance.

**Estimated Cost: \$400,000**

**Links to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 6.4: Gambling**

**Reduce the negative social impacts of gambling on the Tasmanian community by:**

- **Reducing the number of gaming machines and gaming venues in Tasmania**
- **Increasing the amount of taxation revenue from gaming machines that is directed to programs designed to address the social impacts of gambling**
- **Placing a limit on the number of gaming machines that can be located in areas of social disadvantage.**

**Department:** Treasury and Finance (Tasmanian Gaming Commission)

**Rationale:** The recently released report on the *Social and Economic Impact Study into Gambling in Tasmania* (2008) demonstrated that gambling remains a problem for a significant number of Tasmanians. Electronic gaming machines continue to pose a particular risk to many problem gamblers, particularly in areas of social disadvantage. The *Impact Study* notes:

*It would appear that there is a greater propensity to locate gaming machine venues and gaming machines in relatively disadvantaged areas ... and that machines in disadvantaged areas earn higher per capita revenue [than those in less disadvantaged areas] (p.214)*

TasCOSS believes that further regulation of electronic gaming machines and of gaming venues, and a reduction in the number of gaming machines and venues would reduce the negative social impacts of this kind of gambling on Tasmanians.

In addition, while the State tax levied on gaming machines is high (at 25.88% for hotels), the Community Services Levy at 4% (of which half is allocated to addressing problem gambling through research, services, treatment and community education) is ridiculously low in comparison. Government revenue from gambling activities needs to be better distributed towards addressing the social impacts of gambling, including directly assisting people who have a wide range of financial, vocational, legal, health, and relationship problems brought about by problem gambling.

One of our biggest concerns in relation to gaming is the disproportionate effect on disadvantaged areas. In recommending a reduction in gaming machines and venues, in particular we are recommending regulation of the number of gaming machines and venues in areas of disadvantage. This would result in a change of the

mix of allocation of machines and venues between disadvantaged and more advantaged areas.

**Cost: Uncosted**

**Links to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)

**Recommendation 6.5: HACC program**

**Increase funding to the Home and Community Care (HACC) program to help improve the quality of life of low income and socially disadvantaged HACC service users through the provision of:**

- **Additional diverse free or low fee, social support programs**
- **Programs that enable active community engagement, volunteering and/or paid work options**
- **Programs that provide or facilitate opportunities for reciprocity**
- **Additional flexible transport services, especially in isolated areas**
- **Food and nutrition focused programs, including social eating programs, nutrition promotion and education, and assistance with food preparation in people's homes**
- **Additional assistance with equipment and home modification costs.**

**Department:** Health and Human Services

**Rationale:** The 2007-08 TasCOSS HACC Consumer Consultation Project focused on consultation with Tasmanian HACC consumers, carers and potential HACC consumers living on low incomes. Through interviews and focus groups held across the State, consumers were asked about the effects that living on a low income has on their lives and what they felt they needed for a good quality of life.

The above recommendation comes from the findings of this research. We found that many low income HACC consumers and their carers were isolated and socially excluded largely due to lack of income – and in addition, to lack of appropriate transport services. Many were unable to participate in social and recreational activities, were unable to afford to buy adequate nutritious food for themselves or to buy any 'extras', such as gifts for friends or family members.

In addition, while many HACC consumers receive care from service providers, and/or friends and family, few are in a position to reciprocate with assistance in kind, gifts or financial assistance. This leaves people feeling powerless and is a contributing factor to social exclusion. Providing opportunities for reciprocity facilitates social inclusion not only through social engagement, but also by enabling people to feel valued and included.

The removal or the lowering of fees for HACC-funded social support and community engagement programs would facilitate the inclusion of HACC consumers living on low incomes.

Additional resources to assist with expensive equipment and home modifications will enable HACC consumers living on low incomes to increase independence and to participate in the community

**Estimated cost: A 15% increase in the State contribution to the HACC program**

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 6.6: Youth Justice system**

**Significantly increase funding to the Youth Justice system in order to:**

- **Reduce caseloads by increasing the number of Youth Justice case workers**
- **Increase the number of Youth Justice managers**
- **Resource a range of community based activities to support and reintegrate young offenders or young people at risk of offending**
- **Increase the capacity for universal screening of Youth Justice clients for mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse and acquired brain injury.**

**Departments:** Health and Human Services / Education

**Rationale:** One of clearest determinants of social exclusion is involvement in the criminal justice system at a young age. The Youth Justice system is under strain and under-funded and the reforms to Child and Family Services will not address these issues. A well-funded Youth Justice system is required to assist young offenders to address the many barriers they face to successful engagement with education, community and employment.

Caseloads for Youth Justice workers are high and difficult to manage (60 in the South, 25-30 in the North-West and 30-40 in the North) compared to other Australian states (16 in Victoria). The number of Youth Justice case workers needs to be increased to lower caseloads and improve outcomes for clients. More managers need to be employed so that case workers are supported in their challenging roles supporting Youth Justice clients.

The *Youth Justice Framework for Community Collaboration* (2008) emphasises the importance of the Youth Justice system working within and with communities and according to the *Report into Ashley, Youth Justice and Detention*

(2007), non-government organisations have 'proven conclusively' that they provide effective alternative to sentencing for young offenders and that community organisations' lack of funding impedes the ability of otherwise excellent services to have a stronger and longer lasting impact. There is a significant mismatch between funds used to detain a relatively small number at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC) and the funds that support a much greater number of young offenders in the community. This mismatch in funding constrains non-government organisations from providing successful diversionary programs.

Funding should be allocated to enable universal screening for mental illness, drug and alcohol addiction and acquired brain injury of Youth Justice clients. Screening is a cost effective practice and often, without screening, the underlying issue that is most relevant to the anti-social and criminal behaviour goes undetected. Funding should also be allocated to update AYDC's screening and assessment tools.

**Estimated Cost: \$5 million**

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

### **Recommendation 6.7: Community Equipment Scheme**

**Increase base funding for the Community Equipment Scheme, and index the Scheme's funding to the Health CPI in order to meet the increasing demands on the Scheme, and the increasing costs of advanced technology and equipment.**

**Department:** Health and Human Services

**Rationale:** The Community Equipment Scheme (CES) provides a variety of equipment, continence aids and appliances to eligible clients living in the community.

For many people with health problems and/or disabilities, assistive equipment and aids are essential to allow them to live in their own homes and to enjoy active lives in their communities. For many, assistive equipment is a pre-requisite for social inclusion. Unfortunately the cost of much health-related equipment is prohibitive for people living on low incomes, and many Tasmanians rely on the CES for their equipment needs.

The base funding for the Community Equipment Scheme has not increased for seven years – with the exception of a one-off top-up injection of \$800,000 in 2008. This has limited the ability of the Scheme to meet demand, to increase the range and quantity of equipment on offer and to cover the cost of maintenance, repair and replacement of loan equipment. This causes delays in supplying standard equipment, unpredictable waiting times and a necessity to prioritise the provision of aids for clinical needs over aids which enable social participation.

Inflation and advances in health technology have led to increased costs of disability and health-related aids and equipment and will continue to do so. We therefore recommend not only that the base funding for the CES be increased, but also that the funding be indexed annually to movements in the Health Consumer Price Index.

**Estimated Cost: An additional \$1 million per annum**

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- Active, healthy Tasmanians with access to quality and affordable health care services. (Goal 4)
- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 6.8: Specialised smoke alarms**

**Allocate funding to subsidise the purchase of appropriate smoke alarms for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.**

**Departments:** Health and Human Services

**Rationale:** Public awareness campaigns and legislation have ensured that most Tasmanians are protected in their homes from fire by smoke alarms. This should be no different for deaf or hearing impaired Tasmanians. We see no reason why this relatively low cost and potentially life-saving measure could easily be immediately implemented. Tasmanians who are deaf or hard of hearing face many barriers to social inclusion, this should not be one of them.

The majority of smoke detectors commonly available have audible alarms and are therefore not suitable for most people who are deaf or hearing impaired. Some have a flashing strobe light and/or a vibrating pad that can be placed under a pillow, and these activate when smoke is detected. While a conventional smoke detector costs around \$80, smoke alarms for people with hearing impairments can cost between \$300-\$400 plus installation costs, as they must be fitted professionally.

The purchase of a smoke detector that is appropriate for hearing impaired people is often beyond the budget of many people on low incomes. With Tasmania's rapidly aging population and thus a likely growth in the number of people who will experience hearing loss, these smoke detectors are an essential health and safety measure for many Tasmanians. An inappropriate smoke alarm can have potentially devastating and fatal effects.

**Estimated Cost: \$200,000**

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- Active, healthy Tasmanians with access to quality and affordable health care services. (Goal 4)
- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)

- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

### **Recommendation 6.9: Supporting sex workers**

**Allocate new funding to a Peer Sex Worker Outreach Project to focus on empowerment, education and other preventative measures that raise overall health and safety standards within the sex industry and minimise the risk of violence and illness.**

**Department:** Health and Human Services

**Rationale:** Sex workers in Tasmania are some of the most marginalised workers in the State. There is currently no specialised sex worker support service in Tasmania. Tasmania is unique in Australia in its failure to provide a dedicated service to sex workers.

The Tasmanian Government should act immediately and fund a dedicated, peer-focused project to provide support services to sex workers across Tasmania. Tasmania's health and welfare services are largely reactive in their current contact with sex workers; often dealing with the ultimate consequences of violence, mental health issues and inadequate sexual health education. Statistical and anecdotal evidence gathered during the proposed Project will allow a better understanding of the Tasmanian sex industry, ensuring that agencies and Government departments are able to develop services and programs based on evidence and the needs of Tasmanian sex workers.

A Peer Outreach Project will focus on empowerment, education and other preventative measures that raise overall health and safety standards within the sex industry and minimise the risk of violence and illness. Such a project would also work to increase public health outcomes for all Tasmanians, as sex workers are key sexual health educators to their clients.

**Cost: \$140 000 per annum**

#### **Link to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Confident, friendly and safe communities (Goal 2)

### **Recommendation 6.10: Emergency relief**

**Allocate funding for the provision of emergency relief assistance to Tasmanians experiencing financial hardship to augment Commonwealth Emergency Relief Program funding.**

**Department:** Health and Human Services

**Rationale:** An unexpected large expense can push many who are struggling to make ends meet, into financial crisis. Timely emergency relief delivered in a professional manner can prevent individuals and families from spiraling into debt and poverty.

Emergency relief funding assists service providers to deliver emergency, financial or other assistance to individuals and families in immediate financial crisis. Its objective is to assist people to deal with their situation in a way that maintains dignity and encourages self-reliance.

TasCOSS consultations with people on low incomes indicated that many were unable to meet the basic costs of living due to the increasing costs of rent, energy, food and petrol. Our members inform us that more and more Tasmanians are turning to emergency relief services for food vouchers, prescription vouchers, petrol vouchers, assistance with rent and accommodation, part-payment of utility accounts, material assistance such as food parcels and clothing, and sometimes cash.

TasCOSS calls on the State Government to allocate funds, on top of the Federal Government contributions to the Emergency Relief Program, to support the non-government services assisting the growing numbers of Tasmanians who are unable to meet the rising costs of living.

**Cost: \$1 million per annum**

**Links to Tasmania *Together*:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

## **7. An effective community services industry**

*I got onto a Personal Support Program, you're on it for 2 years to put you back on the straight and narrow, get your life in order ... (Hobart 2008)*

There are more than 350 non-government, not-for-profit community service organisations that provide human, community and social services in Tasmania, with 240 of them receiving funding from DHHS. These organisations are vital to the health and well-being of Tasmania, and need to be supported to ensure their long-term viability and sustainability, as well as to ensure the quality and professionalism of the support they provide.

The community services industry is, however, facing more challenges than ever before. Skills shortages are affecting the industry and threaten the sustainability of the social services system. The community services workforce is one of the largest cost items for services and funders. Thus developing and ensuring effective targeted, responsive skills development strategies, is an important investment in the systems' foundation – its workforce.

Overhead costs, including volunteer management and training, insurance, administration, and IT costs, which are integral components of any project or service, have continued to increase faster and higher than grant indexation, resulting in an erosion of the financial capacity of organisations. The trend toward funding the direct costs of projects only on the part of Government and other funders is increasing this pressure on financial viability. In addition, DHHS has a specific growth strategy for the community sector, and a raft of performance management and quality assurance reforms are underway which are set to further increase compliance and administrative costs – traditionally regarded as overhead costs. These drivers are significantly undermining the capacity for organisations to invest in growth, innovation, service development, and the governance and management of organisations.

To meet these challenges and build a more effective community services industry, the industry has over 2007/2008 developed its own Industry Plan, which focuses on key areas to ensure the viability and sustainability of organisations and services. The State Government has also moved recently to initiate a strategic response to the challenges confronting the industry. The creation of the Office for the Community Sector in early 2008 is a welcome initiative, and provides the basis for the State Government and the industry to work together to build a socially inclusive Tasmania.

### **Recommendation 7.1: Wages and conditions**

**Provide funding to reduce the gap between public sector and community services remuneration and conditions.**

**Department:** Health and Human Services

**Rationale:** Salaries and conditions within the community services industry are at the lower end of the scale in Tasmania, particularly at the most populated salary points. This is a significant barrier to attracting and retaining people in the industry.

In today's employment market, people are moving out of the community services industry to other industries that pay higher wages. This means that the community services industry can no longer rely on the personal commitment of individuals, but must be able to compensate staff with financial rewards much closer to those of Government. A 2007 community services workforce survey undertaken by the Australian Services Union of over 2100 workers provides evidence of the challenge organisations are facing. It found that:

- 52% of workers are not committed to staying in the industry beyond the next 5 years
- 40% of workers who intended to leave the industry gave better pay elsewhere as the reason, and
- 77% of managers surveyed said lower wages was the main difficulty to attracting and retaining staff, and 75% reported that low wages was the main reason staff gave for leaving.

In Tasmania, the public sector offers the greatest competition for staff and provides the closest benchmark for salaries and conditions for community services. However, while more and more services are being outsourced by Government to non-government organisations, the wages differential between the public sector and community services industry is growing wider. This will be exacerbated as a result of the recent increase in the public sector award.

In addition to the inadequacy of wages, there are a number of industrial standards where the community services industry in Tasmania has fallen behind. A lack of paid maternity leave, family friendly work and flexibility are some matters that, given the nature of the industry and high female employment rates, limit the appeal of the industry as a viable alternative to other industries that provide greater support.

**Estimated cost: Uncosted**

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 7.2: Governance and management**

**Provide additional funding to develop the management and governance capacity of community service organisations by:**

- **Scoping a community services leadership, management and innovations centre of excellence**

- **Increasing access to Skills Tasmania sponsored tertiary level community service management and leadership qualifications**
- **Increasing access to Skills Tasmania sponsored governance training and mentoring assistance program for boards and committees**

**Department:** Health and Human Services

**Rationale:** Demographic change, the ageing population, the challenge of Tasmania's lagging social indicators and a specific growth strategy on the part of the DHHS mean that the community services industry is set to be a key growth industry. The ability of the sector to grow and continue to provide effective care and support to Tasmanians depends upon the levels of investment organisations can make in strengthening their management and governance capacity.

The importance of strengthening the leadership capacity within non-government organisations was one of the critical recommendations from the Victorian Government's *Stronger Community Organisations Project* conducted in 2007. The leadership initiatives funded by the Victorian Government present a innovative effective model that could serve Tasmanian needs well.

Investment in the management and governance capacity of organisations is a foundation for guaranteeing to the Tasmanian community, clients, consumers, and funding bodies that organisations are delivering quality services that lead to better outcomes. Investment in the management and governance of organisations is a critical risk management strategy for the DHHS as more services are out-sourced through reforms to Disability, Children and Families, and alcohol, tobacco and other drug services. It will also complement the development and implementation of a quality and safety framework by DHHS, which has a focus on governance, risk management, and quality improvement.

**Estimated cost:**    **\$150 000** to scope a centre of excellence  
                              **\$400 000** for tertiary management qualifications  
                              **\$150 000** for governance training and mentoring assistance

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)
- Thriving and innovative industries driven by a high level of business confidence. (Goal 10)

**Recommendation 7.3:    Workforce planning and development**

**Resource the development of a workforce planning and development framework for the community services industry, and invest in improving the responsiveness and relevance of training.**

**Department:** Health and Human Services

**Rationale:** A strategic approach to workforce planning and development for the industry is a critical piece of work that needs to be undertaken by the industry with support from the State Government.

A thorough and reliable profile of the community services workforce is an important foundation for effective workforce planning and improving training for skills development. Unfortunately, there is currently very little reliable data on the actual scope of the community services workforce. This crucial gap in knowledge seriously inhibits effective workforce planning and the development of appropriate training initiatives.

At the heart of workforce development must be an agreed set of core principles to underpin employment practice within the industry. The Southern Australian *Strong Community, Healthy State* framework provides a useful model for a Tasmanian approach to workforce planning and development.

Productivity and the quality of service outcomes are directly affected by the level of skills development investment; however, skills development requires a response that is broader than simply classroom training. Reviewing and identifying core competencies and addressing generic positions and competency portability are important steps that can be taken. There is also a need to review the relevance of accredited training to changing need and to increase access to skills development incentives for employer organisations.

**Estimated cost: Uncosted**

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

#### **Recommendation 7.4: Workforce promotion**

**Allocate funding to develop a community services workforce promotion strategy.**

**Department:** Health and Human Services

**Rationale:** Developing a community services workforce promotion strategy will contribute to ensuring the broader service system is built on a highly skilled workforce.

The need for a workforce promotion strategy is reinforced by the demographics of the workforce in Tasmania: 50% of the total workforce is aged 45 and over and 17% of the total workforce is aged 55 and over. Unless community service organisations can attract and retain new staff, the industry will not be able to provide the services the Tasmanian community and government expects.

The State Government should support the industry to develop, implement and promote strategies that target appropriately skilled, qualified and motivated workers who can provide a sustainable competitive workforce. The industry must complement any workforce promotion strategy by reviewing its employment practices and culture to ensure that organisations are competitive and can be seen as offering individuals career pathways.

**Estimated cost: \$600 000** over 3 years

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 7.5: Peak bodies**

**Increase core funding to community service industry peak bodies.**

**Department:** Health and Human Services

**Rationale:** The State Government is currently undertaking a review of community service peak body organisations, such as TasCOSS.

Community organisation peak bodies play a variety of different roles in Tasmania, but they are a crucial part of the health and human service system and play a critical role in promoting public debate and discussion about issues, such as poverty and disadvantage.

The capacity of peak bodies to fulfil these roles is impacted on by the level of funding they receive. TasCOSS, for example, has received no increase in its core funding since 2003/4, when additional funding was received for changes in the Community Services Award. While peak bodies have received no increase in core funding since 2003/4 the Tasmania Government's expectations have expanded as peak bodies are expected to engage in more and more policy discussions and debates. It is, therefore, crucial that TasCOSS and other peak bodies be resourced to appropriately fulfil their roles and to provide advice to government on the impact of different policy approaches.

Increasing the capacity of peak bodies at this stage would also complement the State Government's reforms to health and human services. With significant change expected in Disability and Children and Families Services it is important that peak bodies are resourced to fully engage in these reform processes, and be in a position to provide advice to member organisations and government.

**Estimated cost: Uncosted**

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 7.6: Community and Disability Services Commissioner**

**Provide adequate funding to establish a Community and Disability Services Commissioner in the Office of the Ombudsman.**

**Departments:** Justice / Health and Human Services

**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, where they believe there has been a breakdown in service quality, have recourse to the Ombudsman. There is no parallel system of grievance investigation/resolution which applies 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.

DHHS is currently developing a Quality and Safety Framework for community service organisations. The creation of a Community and Disability Services Commissioner should underpin the framework.

**Estimated Cost: \$200,000**

**Links to Tasmania Together:**

- Active, healthy Tasmanians with access to quality and affordable health care services. (Goal 4)

**Recommendation 7.7: Funding arrangements**

**Adopt an investment model for funding community service organisations that facilitates innovation, learning and practice development.**

**Department:** Health and Human Services

**Rationale:** While innovative practice in community services adds significant value to social outcomes for communities, pressure to achieve financial efficiencies and reduce infrastructure expenses are increasingly eroding the capacity of organisations to engage systematically in innovation, learning and service model development. Moreover, current funding arrangements between community organisations and government mean that many organisations have inherently unstable funding, and cannot invest in innovation, learning and practice development. Competitive tendering practices also mean that organisations are less likely to share learning.

A new approach to promoting innovation and learning is required. Adopting an investment model is recognised nationally and internationally as a responsible approach to the development, growth and delivery of high quality professional support services. In Tasmania adopting an investment model would complement the State Government service system reforms in disability, children and families, and alcohol, tobacco and other drug services, and also the work of the Office for the Community Sector.

With these reforms the State Government has an opportunity to embed in new service agreements funding levels that enable organisations to invest in service development, shared learning and continual improvement. The importance of resourcing innovation, learning and practice improvement cannot be underestimated given workforce shortages and changing population demographics, and therefore the need for community organisations and government to identify new and sustainable ways of working into the future.

**Estimated cost: Uncosted**

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

## 8. Climate change and water

*The kids and I, we all get into our beds in the winter straight after tea at 7pm to keep warm and save power. There's no family time. (Rocherlea 2008)*

Climate change is one of the most serious issues facing the world today – and Tasmania is not immune from its effects. The impacts of climate change are likely to affect people living on low incomes disproportionately due to their inability to afford safeguards and necessary adjustments to their living conditions – such as insuring property and contents against storm and other damage and/or moving from low lying areas or to areas with greater employment opportunities. Low income households are also likely to be more adversely affected by climate change mitigation policies, such as the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, due to the resulting increased prices of energy, fuel and goods and services.

The State Government is taking climate change seriously with the establishment of the Tasmanian Climate Change Office within the Department of Premier and Cabinet, a *State Framework for Action on Climate Change*, a *Framework for Action for Reducing the Tasmanian Government's Greenhouse Gas Emissions* and a Climate Change (State Action) Bill introduced into Parliament. While these actions are positive, more needs to be done to ensure that low income Tasmanians are included. The interests of low income households must be considered and programs put in place to include those living on low incomes by assisting them to deal with both the effects of climate change and of climate change mitigation.

Household water supply is a related issue and, in some areas of Tasmania, access to potable water is already a serious issue due to continuing drought. Major reform of the State's water and sewerage system is underway which is likely to result in significant changes to the way households pay for their water supply. Household water supply may be metered in the future resulting in an additional bill that will have a serious impact on already stretched low income household budgets. A safety net system must be put in place from the outset of the new system to ensure that low income and vulnerable households can maintain access to essential water supply.

### **Recommendation 8.1: Socially just and equitable climate change policy**

**Allocate adequate funding to ensure that the interests of low income and disadvantaged Tasmanians are represented in policy debates about climate change adaptation and mitigation, and in the development of responses, in order to support socially just and equitable climate change policy in Tasmania.**

**Department:** Premier and Cabinet (Tasmanian Climate Change Office)

**Rationale:** As mentioned above, low income households are likely to experience disproportionate detriment from the effects of both climate change and its mitigation.

It is therefore essential that the interests of low income Tasmanians, along with other low income Australians, are represented in related policy debates and the development of responses.

TasCOSS proposes that funding be provided for consultation with low income Tasmanians, research into relevant policies and programs in other Australian jurisdictions and overseas, and for representation of the interests of low income Tasmanians on any councils, panels or advisory and/or consultative committees that are established to address climate change in Tasmania. It is also important that these interests are represented in the national policy arena.

Funding for this purpose should be discrete and targeted, and could be provided for specific consultation and research projects and/or to an organisation, such as TasCOSS, for ongoing research and policy work.

**Estimated cost: \$100 000 per annum**

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 8.2: Resourcing the community services sector**

**Provide funding to develop and implement an education campaign within the Tasmanian community services industry on climate change, to assist community sector organisations to reduce their carbon emissions, and to increase the capacity of the sector to act as a conduit for information on climate change.**

**Departments:** Health and Human Services / Premier and Cabinet (Tasmanian Climate Change Office)

**Rationale:** The State Government's *Framework for Action for Reducing the Tasmanian Government's Greenhouse Gas Emissions* covers all government activities including its 'core agencies, Parliament House, hospitals, schools and government business enterprises' (p 6). The Tasmanian Climate Change Office is working closely with government agencies to inform and educate, and to identify and resource 'climate change champions' to promote emissions reduction messages within State services. This is valuable and necessary work.

TasCOSS is concerned that the Tasmanian community services industry, an industry largely funded by the State Government and one to which much government service delivery is outsourced, is not being similarly targeted and resourced. The community services industry is large and diverse, with organisations ranging from those with hundreds of employees and services across the State, to services with a single employee. Equally, there are varying levels of knowledge and

understanding about climate change, as well as varying capacity to act to reduce emissions. A well-targeted education campaign, and additional funding to implement emissions reduction measures would assist the industry to play its part in lowering the State's total greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition, the community service industry is well-placed to act as a conduit for information on climate change between Government and low income, disadvantaged and vulnerable Tasmanians. Community service organisations have well-established and strong links to local communities throughout Tasmania, and especially to groups within those communities that may have difficulties accessing information or be hard to reach with mainstream marketing and communication strategies. In partnership with the State Government, we believe that community services organisations could play a vital role in information dissemination about climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

Adequately resourced community organisations can also assist policy-makers and researchers to include in their work information about vulnerable communities. Not only do community service organisations understand and reflect diversity within communities, they can also provide realistic assessments of the adaptive capacity of the communities they serve.

TasCOSS believes that, with adequate additional funding, the Tasmanian community services industry can not only be assisted to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, but can also play a key role as a conduit between Government and low income and vulnerable Tasmanians for information on climate change adaptation, mitigation and their effects.

**Estimated cost: \$150 000 per annum**

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Confident, friendly and safe communities. (Goal 2)
- Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected. (Goal 5)

**Recommendation 8.3: Home energy audit and retro-fitting program**

**Provide funding to establish a community-based home energy auditing and retro-fitting service for low income and disadvantaged Tasmanians to increase the energy efficiency and in particular, the thermal efficiency of their homes.**

**Department:** Infrastructure, Energy and Resources

**Rationale:** Tasmanian residential electricity prices will have increased by nearly 24% between January 2008 and July 2009 and will continue to rise when the national Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme is introduced. The State Electricity Concession for Pension and Health Care Card holders was recently increased substantially. However, this can only go so far in assisting with increasing costs.

Longer term and more sustainable assistance can be provided by ensuring that dwellings are as thermally efficient as they can be and that household appliances and hot water heaters are efficient in their use of energy.

Much Tasmanian housing stock is old and thermally inefficient, and due to our cool climate and limited access to gas, Tasmanians use more household electricity than other Australians. In addition, the latest available figures (from the *ABS Household Expenditure Survey 2003-04*) demonstrate that Tasmanians also spend a higher proportion of their incomes on household fuel and power than Australians in other states and territories.

There is clear evidence that the implementation of energy efficiency measures in households can have significant impact on electricity use and can result in cost savings on electricity bills.

Programs operate in other states and territories which provide free energy audits for low income households and low cost or free retro-fitting to effectively 'weather-proof' homes. Simple measures, such as installing pelmets, heavy curtains and insulation, and ensuring draughts are controlled with draught-stopping devices, can be taken to improve the thermal efficiency of dwellings. Such measures have been demonstrated to have a substantial impact on energy use and allow households to cut their consumption, and their costs, dramatically in many cases.

Community-based programs to provide these services have proved effective in other jurisdictions, and there is capacity for community organisations to establish training and employment projects around energy auditing, retro-fitting services and equipment provision (for instance, pelmet and curtain making ventures).

**Estimated Cost: \$1 million per annum**

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Increased work opportunities for all Tasmanians (Goal 9)
- Sustainable management of our natural resources. (Goal 12)

**Recommendation 8.4: Increase thermal efficiency of public housing stock**

**Increase the thermal efficiency of public housing stock in Tasmania by:**

- **Extending the trial program for increasing the thermal efficiency of Housing Tasmania properties to more public housing dwellings throughout the State**
- **Introducing a minimum thermal efficiency standard to be met by all new public housing stock.**

**Departments:** Health and Human Services (Housing Tasmania) / Premier and Cabinet (Tasmanian Climate Change Office)

**Rationale:** The State Government's *Framework for Action on Climate Change* includes as an action, a trial program to provide "free energy efficiency audits and insulation upgrades for selected low income housing in three 'test' sites across the State". This is being undertaken on selected Housing Tasmania properties by the Tasmanian Climate Change Office in conjunction with Housing Tasmania.

TasCOSS applauds this initiative and would like to see the trial program extended to more Housing Tasmania properties across the State. Housing Tasmania, as the owner and manager of Tasmania's public housing stock, has a responsibility to provide not only secure, affordable housing, but also high quality housing. While Housing Tasmania rents are affordable and tenancies are secure, properties can be unaffordable to live in given their thermal inefficiency and consequent heating costs.

A major strategy in a future State climate change strategy must be the retro-fitting of all public housing stock to increase its thermal efficiency. In addition, TasCOSS would like to see the introduction a minimum energy efficiency standard set – and met – by all new public housing stock.

**Estimated Cost: Uncosted**

**Link to Tasmania Together:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)
- Increased work opportunities for all Tasmanians (Goal 9)
- Sustainable management of our natural resources. (Goal 12)

**Recommendation 8.5: Ensure affordability of household water supply**

**In the event of the introduction of household water metering and consumption charges in Tasmania, TasCOSS recommends that the State Government:**

- **Develop a water tariff structure that includes a low fixed component (or supply charge) and a very low cost (or free) small first tariff block that is considered a 'lifeline' or 'human right' tariff. The tariff structure would also include inclining tariff blocks with the second block priced to ensure affordability at slightly higher than minimum consumption levels**
- **In the absence of a 'lifeline' tariff structure, introduce a concession for household water supply at a level that will provide genuine assistance to low income households. The concession, like the electricity concession, should be provided through a Community Service Obligation on water suppliers to Pension and Health Care Card holders**
- **Provide an additional concession targeted to large low income households whose non-discretionary use will remain high.**

**Departments:** Treasury and Finance / Infrastructure, Energy and Resources

**Rationale:** Water and sewerage system reforms in Tasmania are long overdue with sub-standard systems operating in many areas. The Tasmanian Treasurer estimates that it will take about \$1 billion to bring the State's water and sewerage infrastructure

up to contemporary standards over the next decade. TasCOSS believes that Tasmanian consumers cannot alone be expected to pay for the required new infrastructure after years of insufficient investment by local governments and the State. There is a clear need to balance responsibility for financial contributions from all stakeholders, including the State government, over time.

Water, like electricity, is an essential service and a key requirement for a healthy life. It is vital that access to a high quality water supply be supported and maintained for those living on low incomes. It appears likely that household metering systems will be introduced as part of the reforms and that households will eventually pay for their consumption by volume. A metered, consumption based charging system for household water in Tasmania will require a range of social policies designed to protect low income and vulnerable households from financial stress and hardship associated with maintaining their access to water, and from disconnection from an essential service.

The introduction of new water supply arrangements for Tasmania provides an opportunity to establish a progressive and innovative tariff structure that both ensures universal access to water as an essential service, and encourages conservation of an increasingly scarce resource.

TasCOSS proposes a tariff structure with:

- a relatively low fixed component or service fee (of no more than 20%),
- a small low cost or free first tariff block (the size of which would need to be determined by existing usage data), and
- inclining tariff blocks, the second of which would be priced to ensure affordability. (Note that the third and subsequent inclining blocks could be set to ensure cost recovery and return on investment.)

Such a tariff structure could obviate the need for a large-scale concession system, if the 'lifeline' tariff block were large enough to cover low household consumption. Concessions would still need to be provided to some households, such as large low income households which have high water consumption and little capacity to reduce their usage.

If such a tariff system is not introduced, it will be necessary for new State Government funded concessions to be introduced. These concessions should be made available based on need which can, for the most part, be determined by eligibility for and holding of a Pensioner Concession or Health Care Card. The value of a concession must be set at a level that genuinely assists those on low incomes to maintain uninterrupted access to household water supply. It may also be necessary to introduce an additional concession targeted to large low income households; particularly if an inclining block tariff system for water is introduced.

#### **Estimated Cost: Uncosted**

#### **Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)

- Sustainable management of our natural resources. (Goal 12)

**Recommendation 8.6: Assistance for rural and urban fringe households**

**Introduce targeted measures to assist low income households who do not have access to reticulated (mains) water supply to either purchase additional water for reasonable levels of household use in times of low rainfall and / or to increase their storage tank capacity.**

**Departments:** Treasury and Finance / Infrastructure, Energy and Resources

**Rationale:** A significant number of Tasmanians do not have access to reticulated (mains) water supply and rely on rain water collection. These obviously include people living in rural areas, as well as increasing numbers of low income households who have moved to urban fringe areas in search of affordable housing. Housing in such areas is often old and many properties, having been originally built as holiday accommodation, have inadequate water tanks and septic systems.

In dry periods, households without mains water supply may need to buy additional water. Currently there is no specific government program available to assist low income households to purchase water. TasCOSS therefore proposes that a scheme be developed and funded that targets households in need and provides assistance with purchasing additional water for reasonable levels of household use and/or, for longer term and more sustainable assistance, with increasing their storage tank capacity.

**Estimated Cost: Uncosted**

**Link to Tasmania *Together*:**

- A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians. (Goal 1)

## **Tasmanian Social Policy Council**

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

The TSPC is responsible for determining major TasCOSS policy positions and establishing the priority social issues that TasCOSS pursues. It also assists the work of the TasCOSS Social Policy and Research team in developing social policy positions.

### **The TasCOSS Policy Development Process**

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

Organisations are asked to identify the major issues concerning their clients, services and regions. These issues are then developed into policy positions by TasCOSS social policy staff, before the final recommendations contained in this submission are prepared.

This policy development process is overseen by the TSPC, which assesses the issues to be addressed in the budget submission and later endorses the final recommendations and priority issues as contained in the submission.

This process ensures that all recommendations TasCOSS makes to Government are grounded in solid consultation, are based on the needs of clients who use community sector services and are representative of the industry.

### **Tasmanian Social Policy Council Members 2008**

Alex Huntir	President of TasCOSS, St Michael's Association
Ankarah Grace	Hobart Women's Health Centre
Ann Hughes	Australian Association of Social Workers (Tas. Branch)
Theresa Moore	Youth Network of Tasmania
Christopher John	Lifeline
David Clements	Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Council
David Owen	TasCOSS Individual Member
Deborah Smith	Uniting Care Family Services
Georgina McLagan	Centacare Tasmania
Grant Roberts	Tas Deaf
John Hooper	Tasmanian Association of Community Houses
Gwyn Jones	TasCOSS Individual Member
Jo Flanagan	TasCOSS Board Member, Anglicare Tasmania
Ken Abery	Foster Carers Association
Ken Hardaker	Advocacy Tasmania
Maxine Griffiths	Volunteering Tasmania
Michelle Swallow	Mental Health Council of Tasmania

Miriam Herzfeld	Eat Well Tasmania
Pattie Chugg	TasCOSS Board Member, Shelter Tasmania
Ronda McIntyre	Salvation Army
Sarah Freeman	Pregnancy and Counselling Support
Sheila Given	Council of the Ageing Tasmania
Sue Williams	Family Planning Tasmania
Therese Taylor	Colony 47
Tracey Bullen	Drug Education Network

**Ex-Officio**

Tom Muller	TasCOSS Chief Executive Officer
Martin Gibson	TasCOSS Manager Social Policy and Research
Melissa Iocco	TasCOSS Policy and Research Officer