



TasCOSS response to the A Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania: A Consultation paper

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TasCOSS welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Social Inclusion Unit's *A Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania Consultation Paper*. TasCOSS is the peak body for the community services sector in Tasmania and the principal voice for low income and disadvantaged Tasmanians. TasCOSS is supportive of a Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania that aims to improve the quality of life, standards of living and opportunities to participate in social, civic and economic life for all Tasmanians.

In the TasCOSS publication *An Unfair State: Poverty Disadvantage and Exclusion in Tasmania* (2007) we called for "a wide ranging social inclusion strategy for a fairer Tasmania that draws on the skills, capacities and resources of the whole community but is championed by the political, human and financial capital of the State Government" (2007: 1). TasCOSS welcomed the Government's commitment to establish a well resourced Social Inclusion Unit and to develop a Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania. In our 2009-10 Budget Submission *Investments for an Inclusive Tasmania* we outline a number of initiatives that if resourced we believe will lead to increased social inclusion and participation in Tasmania. We will refer to aspects of our Budget submission in our response below.

A social inclusion strategy that will improve the lives of low-income Tasmanians needs to be a long-term strategy that has at its heart a commitment to reducing poverty in Tasmania. 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. Economic solutions must be complemented by initiatives that create and enhance social and civic participation and create more inclusive communities.

There are some key challenges and opportunities for the Tasmanian Government in developing and implementing this Social Inclusion Strategy. These challenges are:

- to include the voices of low income and disadvantaged people;
- to develop coordinated cross-government responses to social exclusion; and
- to work collaboratively with Tasmanian communities.

This strategy must also be prepared for whole-of-government and whole-of-community level responses to the impacts of climate change, demographic change and the current global financial crisis. These factors have the potential to reinforce and cause further social exclusion in Tasmania.

1. What individuals or groups do you consider to be socially excluded in Tasmania?

While social exclusion is deep and persistent for many people in Tasmania, social exclusion can affect a diverse range of individuals and groups in different ways. One can be excluded because of one's level of education, refugee status, sexuality, ethnic

background, lack of mobility, age, gender, financial status, or religious beliefs, among other factors. As noted in the *Consultation Paper*, a person may be excluded as part of a larger group (for example people living with a disability or mental illness), because of where they live or because of an event, for example losing a job or going to prison (2008: 5).

It should not be a surprise that people living on low incomes include some of the most socially excluded and disadvantaged people in Tasmania. People living on low incomes are also more likely to be socially isolated, have fewer opportunities to maintain relationships and to participate in social and civic activities. People on low incomes include those receiving Commonwealth income support payments as well as those who are working who earn low wages, or are part-time or casually employed, as well as people who are 'under' employed or marginally attached to employment.

The Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) defines the bottom 40% of Australian households as low income households. This would include households with family incomes \$40 000 or less per annum and individual incomes of \$30 000 or less per annum. All household whose major source of income is government income support payments (pension and allowances) can be considered 'low-income' households. In Tasmania these make up around 31.5% of all households (TasCOSS 2007: 4). There are also households in which people are working and receiving low wages who would also be considered to be low-income. It is important to emphasise that people on low incomes are not a homogenous group; they can include young people, people with disabilities, refugees and migrants, single parents, the elderly, and people with mental illnesses and chronic health issues.

There are a variety of poverty line measures that may be used to indicate the level of poverty in Tasmania and depending on which of these is referred to, Tasmania could be said to have anywhere between 12.7% and 28.1% of the population living in poverty (TasCOSS 2007: 3). Poverty line measures, however, provide little indication of what it means to live in poverty and how this relates to what constitutes an acceptable standard of living.

In *Left out and missing out: Towards new indicators of disadvantage* report (Saunders *et al* 2007) the interaction between poverty, deprivation and social exclusion is explored. The research identified what Australians consider to be the essential items for a basic standard of living and who was missing out on these.

The essentials that many Australians were going without included:

- a substantial meal at least once a day;
- medical and dental treatment when needed;
- disability support and mental health services when needed;
- good public transport;

- a decent and secure home;
 - \$500 in emergency savings;
 - ability to pay a utility bill;
 - access to regular dental treatment;
 - regular social contact;
 - to be treated with respect by other people;
 - up-to-date schoolbooks and clothes;
 - a weeks holiday from home; and
 - a hobby or leisure activity for children.
- (Saunders *et al* 2007: 2).

One of the projected impacts of climate change is that energy prices and the prices of many consumables will rise. Clearly those likely to be most affected by these impacts are people on low incomes. This group has limited capacity to ensure that their housing is energy efficient and less capacity to absorb any increases in the cost of living.

Lacking essential items for a basic standard of living can lead to social exclusion. According to the ACOSS report *Who is Missing Out? Hardship Among Low Income Australians*, the people who are most lacking essential items in Australia are indigenous people, sole parent families, unemployed people, people with disabilities and people who are renting (2008: 1). The study found that of the people on Commonwealth support payments those on *Newstart Allowance* (for unemployed people), *Parenting Payment* (mainly sole parents) and *Disability Support Pension*, were the most likely to experience deprivation of essential items.

While people on low incomes live all over the state, people who live in low socio-economic areas of Tasmania are at an increased risk of social exclusion. A key part of any social inclusion strategy needs to be coordinated and targeted plans for areas of concentrated disadvantage. Areas of concentrated disadvantage have higher levels of people living on disability/sickness support payments and higher levels of long-term unemployment (TasCOSS 2007: 3). Furthermore, people on low incomes living in remote, regional and rural Tasmania are at an increased risk of social exclusion due to the geographical isolation, lack of services and support in these areas, as well as adequate affordable transport options. The increases in the cost of living, such as the cost of fuel and fresh fruit and vegetable in rural remote and regional Tasmania mean that making ends meet is particularly difficult for people living on low incomes.

Barriers to social inclusion

- 2. What are the barriers to social inclusion for these individuals or groups? and**
- 3. Are there any structural and/or institutional processes that inhibit an individual or group from fully participating in the Tasmanian community?**

While there are many factors that lead to social exclusion, TasCOSS emphasises the need for this strategy to address structural and institutional processes that lead to or exacerbate social exclusion in Tasmania. Poor health is one of the major impediments to a person's ability to participate in their community. The correlation between the social determinants of health and social exclusion must be emphasised. The Director of Public Health's *The State of Public Health Report 2008* reinforces the relationship between low socio-economic status and poorer health in Tasmania, stating "there is a clear gradient in health status between the most disadvantaged and most advantaged groups in our society, with lower socioeconomic status being associated with higher levels of disability and premature death rates" (Taylor 2008a: 16). In a presentation given at the TasCOSS *Fairer Futures* conference titled *The Social Determinants of Health Tasmania 2008*, Dr. Taylor clearly stated that the health status of Tasmanians is significantly determined by factors such as employment, housing, access to services, income status, education and literacy, social justice and social inclusion and support (Taylor 2008b: 10). It is becoming increasingly evident that people on low incomes are more likely to have poorer health outcomes than the rest of the population. We know that poor health leads to social exclusion through decreased opportunities to participate in education, employment and training, which can in turn lead to further inequities and health issues.

The increasing cost of basic items such as fresh fruit and vegetables and fuel are a barrier as is the inadequacy of Commonwealth support payments to meet basic cost of living. According to ACOSS, over the three years from June 2005 the average price of food has risen by 15%, rents have risen by over 17%, household energy bills have risen by 17% and fuel has risen by 41% (ACOSS 2008: 1).

As outlined in TasCOSS' Budget Submission for 2009-10 there are currently a number of structural inequalities that are currently inhibiting social inclusion for all Tasmanians, particularly those living on low incomes. The rationalisation of the delivery of essential health and community services poses a threat to social inclusion as it leads the centralisation of services. This means that those who lack mobility and/or transport services to urban centres go without. The following structural and institutional areas of housing and homelessness, health and well being, education, employment and training, transport and service delivery and availability must be addressed in order to ensure that all Tasmanians have the opportunity to be socially included.

1. Housing and Homelessness

Safe, secure, affordable and appropriate housing is essential to enable social inclusion and participation. The lack of affordable and appropriate private rental and public housing options means that many Tasmanians are living in temporary and inappropriate accommodation or sleeping rough. Housing plays a fundamental role in the formation of life chances and opportunities that define social exclusion and the impact of homelessness on the life chances of young people is of particular concern.

2. Health and well-being

Tasmanians have some of the poorest health indicators in the nation. We know that health status is largely determined by social factors and can lead to or exacerbate social exclusion. The lack of affordable housing, poor transport services, low school retention rates, barriers to employment and training, high levels of unmet need in mental health, disability and brain injury support services, the inability to access or afford nutritious food and a lack of a well funded and coordinated approach to preventive health measures are all barriers to good health outcomes and social inclusion for Tasmanians.

3. Education

Poor educational outcomes are a key driver of poverty and disadvantage and Tasmania's educational outcomes continue to be poor in relation to other states. There are a number of people excluded or at risk of exclusion due to Tasmania's low literacy and numeracy rates (for adults as well as young people), high levels of student disengagement from school, 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.

4. Employment and training

Employment is a key factor to enabling the ability to earn an income and access to employment related social networks. For many people employment that is meaningful and flexible is a way forward into social inclusion. Many Tasmanians are unable to take the steps they need toward gaining employment as they are unable to access training opportunities due to afford the costs associated with courses, do not have adequate transport options or because they are unable to access childcare. Tasmanians who have disabilities, chronic health issues, or who are carers, single parents or from culturally diverse backgrounds often face discrimination and lack of ongoing support in not only getting a job but keeping one.

5. Transport

The inability to access transport is one of the key barriers to social inclusion. A lack of affordable transport impedes access to work, education and training opportunities, to quality healthcare and childcare, and makes very difficult for many Tasmanians to purchase healthy and affordable food, maintain friendships and participate in social, cultural and civic events. People in isolated rural areas and urban fringe areas are particularly disadvantaged by inadequate passenger transport services. For some Tasmanians the requirements associated with obtaining a drivers license are prohibitive.

4. In what ways do barriers to social inclusion inter-relate for socially excluded Tasmanians?

TasCOSS' consultations with Tasmanians living on low incomes demonstrated that the nature of exclusion often compounds as one form of disadvantage can lead to another. Bullying and discrimination at school may lead to low participation in schooling, poor educational outcomes, low incomes and poor health. Chronic illness may lead to lack of employment, low incomes, low mobility and social interaction. Living on a low income may mean lack of access to training opportunities, transport and health services. This means that poverty is rarely 'exited' and the difficulties of living on a low income are often exacerbated by debt, stigma, poor health, social isolation, poor housing, reduced access to quality services and low self-esteem.

For many Tasmanians living on low incomes, the lack of a financial safety net means that it may only take one incident – a medical emergency, a car breaking down, or a number of bills arriving at the same time – to tip them over the edge from getting by to a situation of compounding debt.

ACOSS' *Who is missing out?* report found that the people who were most likely to be excluded are also most likely to experience multiple deprivation. As mentioned in Question 1, these are often indigenous people, sole parent families, unemployed people, people with disabilities, renters and young people (2008: 1)

5. What current whole-of-government and/or whole-of-community projects or programs addressing social exclusion do you consider are effectively operating in Tasmania?

A Social Inclusion Strategy offers the opportunity for more commitment and better co-ordination of whole-of-government approaches. This is not only to work better across departments but to increase Government's awareness of contradictory policies and practices that reinforce or hinder social inclusion. .

There are excellent examples of partnerships and collaborative projects currently underway that involve partnerships between Government, non-government and private sectors as well as the community. These partnerships are built on common goals, shared visions, co-operation, trust and mutual respect. One such example is the TOOL project which aims to improve the education and training outcomes for young people on the Eastern Shore of Hobart who are at risk of disengaging from education and at risk of entering the criminal justice system. TOOL involves dedication of resources, capital and commitment from a number of different stakeholders which include several government departments, businesses, schools and neighbourhood houses. Each are rallied around the same purpose which is to get young people who have disengaged from school (and so at high risk of social exclusion) to re-engaged in their communities and local businesses through practical and hands-on training opportunities.

Another example on community co-operation is the "Eating With Friends" program where local community groups, schools, churches, neighbourhood houses, ethnic

communities and health centres come together to promote social inclusion, good nutrition and to combat social isolation.

Tasmania *Together* is a whole of government initiative informed by whole of community to determine goals and benchmarks for a better Tasmania. The experience of other jurisdictions is that clear goals and benchmarks are fundamental to a successful Social Inclusion Strategy (ACOSS 2007: 27) as targets serve to build public support for action and enable measurement of progress. Tasmania *Together* already has goals and benchmarks in relation to many areas of social inclusion such as social housing, levels of problem gambling, access to transport and health services, general health outcomes, levels of participation in community organisations and school retention rates, to name a few. Tasmania *Together* goals also have the advantage of sitting outside of departmental boundaries and thus generate the possibility of whole-of-government responses as well as broad community support. The Social Inclusion Strategy provides an opportunity to reinvigorate and build on the work of Tasmania *Together*. Tasmania has an advantage over some other jurisdictions in implementing a Social Inclusion Strategy because of the extensive work done as part of the Tasmania *Together* project in engaging the Tasmanian community in developing goals and benchmarks and measuring progress against these.

6. What should be the role of the Social Inclusion Unit in addressing social exclusion in Tasmania and promoting, developing and implementing whole-of-government and whole-of-community responses?

The role of the Social Inclusion Unit should be to co-ordinate a whole-of-government response to social exclusion and to drive the process towards achieving a more socially inclusive Tasmania. This includes (but is not limited to):

- establishing a long-term strategy and vision for social inclusion in Tasmania;
- engaging in regular consultation with individuals, communities and other stakeholders;
- ensuring that the voices of the ‘excluded’ are heard and responded to;
- establishing clear social inclusion goals and benchmarks including a ‘poverty benchmark’ for Tasmania;
- undertaking and/or commissioning research in social inclusion and exclusion in Tasmania; and
- developing a mechanism for social inclusion assessment or ‘impact statements’ (see below).

Social inclusion ‘Impact Statements’:

In our Budget Submission for 2009-10, TasCOSS called on Government to “implement a system of Social Inclusion Impact Statements to assess the impact of

State Government policy initiatives on social inclusion” (2008: 12). Poverty impact statements are a feature of the Irish Social Inclusion Strategy and involve government agencies and local authorities assessing policies and programs at the design, implementation and review stages in order to assess the likely impact they will have on poverty and on inequalities which are likely to lead to poverty.

In their paper “Social Equity Assessment Tools: A Background Paper” the Population Health Unit within DHHS state that Social Impact Statements are a way to “provide the framework within which predictions can be made regarding the potential positive and negative impacts of a proposal while it is at the planning stage, to both maximise desired outcomes and minimise the costs or losses to communities” (2008: 3). Impact statements would also provide system for the regulation of legislation and to measure the impact of proposed policy changes.

According to the paper, Social Impact Statements have three broad functions, which are to:

- Identify social issues and potential social impacts relevant to particular policies for particular communities and circumstances;
- Assess those impacts, in terms of their magnitude, duration, and the probability of their occurrence; and
- Recommend measures that will reduce negative impacts and enhance positive impacts of a decision. (2008: 4).

At TasCOSS’ Social Inclusion Member’s Forum in September 2008, it was widely agreed that impact statements for future and present government policies should be a key feature of Tasmania’s Social Inclusion Strategy. TasCOSS suggests that 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.

7. What is required to address intergenerational disadvantage in Tasmania?

Any intervention that effectively addresses any of the structural barriers to inclusion – living on a low income, lack of good quality affordable housing, lack of employment and training opportunities, limited access to health services - will have an impact in addressing inter-generational disadvantage. TasCOSS emphasise, however, that the importance of education and training opportunities and particularly early years education, in addressing intergenerational disadvantage in Tasmania.

Early years education initiatives should be complemented by strong and coordinated early years and family support programs including pre-natal support, universal child

health nurse services, community houses, family support services, child protection and out-of-home-care services. The State Government's recent announcement that thirty Child and Family Centres are to be established and located in areas according to need is a positive step in this direction.

TasCOSS is concerned about the high numbers of students, particularly in disadvantaged areas, that are disengaged or tenuously engaged with school. The life chances of these young people are significantly diminished, sometimes from a very early age, by the poor educational outcomes that result from limited school attendance. Good educational outcomes, on the other hand, provide greater opportunities for employment and higher incomes to enable people to break the inter-generational poverty cycle.

The Tasmanian State Government has clearly signaled its focus on education, its support for schools in disadvantaged areas and for early years education. These should be fundamental elements of a social inclusion strategy that seeks to address inter-generational poverty. Further measures should include a renewed focus on preventing and addressing early disengagement from school. These should include strategies to provide supportive school environments and to provide pathways, which may involve partnerships with local organisations, for disengaged students to return to education.

Early years education programs have been shown to improve school retention rates and the educational outcomes of students. The Tasmanian Government's *Launching into Learning* initiative, which facilitates early learning in disadvantaged communities, appears to be a very positive one, especially when complemented by initiatives to engage 'hard to reach' parents and their children. Such programs are being offered on on-campus and off-campus settings and provide opportunities for intergenerational learning as well as peer based learning for parents.

Providing adult literacy and post secondary education and training opportunities in local areas are fundamental to enabling adults living on low incomes a pathway into employment. In our consultations with Tasmanians living on low incomes, TasCOSS encountered a number of people who, despite low engagement with schooling, obtained enormous benefit from adult learning opportunities. We also encountered a number of people who wanted to pursue TAFE or related courses, but who were unable to because of the cost of the courses, associated travel and lack of access of childcare facilities.

8. What is required to address locational or placed-based disadvantage in Tasmania?

Coordinated and targeted plans for areas of concentrated disadvantage need to be a key part of Tasmania's social inclusion strategy. Tony Vinson's influential study *Dropping Off the Edge* (2007) clearly demonstrates that disadvantage is geographically concentrated in certain areas of Tasmania. By comparing data from previous Victorian & NSW studies Vinson showed that the indicators of poverty in areas of multiple

disadvantage remained largely unchanged over time despite policy changes designed to address these factors. Vinson's conclusion is that macroeconomic and broad scale policy change is not sufficient to make significant differences to the wellbeing of people living in areas of multiple disadvantage. Instead, targeted location based strategies and investment addressing the multiple drivers of poverty is the only approach likely to yield results.

According to the Brotherhood of St Laurence place based approaches have rightly been identified as a key factor in social exclusion but the scale of intervention required for a meaningful policy response has not been clear. They argue that while place-based approaches can have positive value in overcoming social and civic deficits they cannot completely substitute for action by government in 'people' rather than 'place' - based policy arenas, such as income support, education and employment (2008: 4). In their report "Place Based Policy at the Crossroads" they name ten key points for policy to reduce place based disadvantage which are:

1. Clarity of purpose for place-based interventions;
 2. Facilities & infrastructure investment – economic, employment;
 3. Importance of urban planning;
 4. Data to track key social inclusion outcomes – people, place;
 5. Importance of predictive capacity;
 6. Appropriate governance & institutional arrangements at all levels;
 7. Importance of scale;
 8. Importance of engagement, respect, positive story telling;
 9. Sustainability and
 10. Need for an overall framework for an Australian approach to social inclusion.
- (2008: 5)

TasCOSS believes that in order to engage local communities, there must be a high degree local participation and ownership of the process if there is to be any significant long term change. These are the following priorities when aiming to ameliorate place based disadvantage in Tasmania:

- Local communities must be consistently engaged with and worked with in genuine partnership in identifying priority areas for action, solutions and where possible, participate in action to address identified issues;
- Transport must improved in order to ensure it is accessible, responsive and flexible in ways that meet community need;
- Affordable, appropriate and secure housing of all kinds (public, crisis, transitional, private rental) is absolutely essential;
- urban renewal and infrastructure development must be a priority in areas of concentrated and deep disadvantage;
- locally based services and outreach services must be available to meet community need; and

- Locally based training and education must be provided, particularly in community based 'off campus' settings.

9. What is required to address transitional disadvantage in Tasmania?

As is acknowledged in the Consultation Paper, "critical transition points" include exiting prison, state care, evictions from public housing, leaving school and leaving hospital. These are the times in which low income and disadvantaged Tasmanians are at an increased risk of further social exclusion, and homelessness in particular, as they may not have the existing support network and financial reserves to assist them through these transitional points. Support is critical at these transition points and this support needs to be timely and appropriate. Being able to access housing and transport that is both affordable and appropriate is an essential part addressing transitional disadvantage in Tasmania, as are support services that are accessible, free or affordable, within local communities and that are linked up to other services.

Issues relating to education also need to be addressed in order to ensure that people are not disadvantaged at critical educational transition points, including:

- Improving the transition to years 11 and 12;
- Improving post school participation in further education and training;
- the need for affordable and appropriate transport for those students who attend education and training institutions away from their home towns; and
- Increased numbers of support services in all educational institutions.

Both the Victorian and South Australian Social Inclusion Strategies have initiatives and plans to lift retention to year 11 and 12 rates. The Tasmanian Social Inclusion Unit should work with the Department of Education to continue to make lifting retention rates a priority in Tasmania.

10. What needs to be done to prevent individuals or groups from becoming socially excluded in Tasmania? and

11. What needs to be done to enable individuals or groups who are presently socially excluded to become connected with their community?

TasCOSS recommends the following strategies as measures to connect the disconnected and prevent future exclusion:

1. Housing and Homelessness

Safe, secure, affordable and appropriate housing is essential to enable social inclusion and participation. The current barriers to social inclusion through structural deficiencies in housing need to be addressed by:

- Increasing the supply of **public and affordable housing** and performance of necessary **maintenance** work on existing public housing properties;
- Implementing a comprehensive **homelessness strategy** that delivers improved integrated housing and support services;
- Increasing resources to **supported accommodation** programs as well as programs to support **private rental** tenants on low incomes;
- Investing in **urban renewal** strategies in order to improve public transport networks, community services, shopping facilities, recreation areas and employment growth in areas of need
- Increasing **thermal efficiency** of housing by providing cost-free energy audits and cost-free or low cost retro-fitting of properties to low income households.

2. Health and well-being

Tasmanians have some of the poorest health indicators in the nation. We know that health status is largely determined by social factors and that poor health can lead to or exacerbate social exclusion. We can improve health outcomes for Tasmanians by:

- Strengthening the role and effectiveness of **health promotion** in Tasmania across all government agencies and by providing adequate funding for the coordination and evaluation of health promotion activities, both government and non-government, throughout Tasmania;
- Investigating the extent and nature of **food insecurity** issues in Tasmania in order to develop appropriate responses;
- Strengthening **consumer engagement** with Tasmania's health system by establishing a representative body for Tasmanian health consumers and by strengthening the capacity of existing health consumer advocacy groups;
- Increasing the number of **mental health advocates** and invest in locally based **early intervention mental health services**; and
- Allocating funding to increase **acquired brain injury** support services across the state.

3. Education

TasCOSS believes that education should be the cornerstone of Tasmania's Social Inclusion Strategy. Lack of education is a key driver of poverty and increases the likelihood of social exclusion. TasCOSS recommends the following strategies to improve educational participation and outcomes in Tasmania:

- Establish education programs and partnerships with community organisations to provide **pathways for disengaged students** to re-engage with education and training;

- Implement state education system-wide policy framework on **supportive school communities** in order coordinate support to schools;
- Ensure that schools are equipped with sufficient numbers of **support staff** such as speech pathologists, social workers and psychologists;
- Implement **life skills education** programs state-wide in the areas of sexual health and relationships education, drug education and harm minimisation and budgeting and financial literacy;
- Allocate resources to increase the provision of affordable and appropriate **student accommodation** and increased **transport options** for students in rural, remote and urban fringe areas to assist them to engage in further education and training opportunities; and
- Engage parents and children in **early learning** opportunities in local school and **off-campus environments** as a way of supporting successful transition into school.

4. Employment and training

For many people obtaining meaningful employment is a way forward into social inclusion. But it is not just about having or getting a job. Employment that is irregular, inflexible, unsupportive can lead to further social exclusion. This can be alleviated in the following ways:

- Provide further **education and training** opportunities to disadvantaged job seekers in **areas of locational disadvantage** by enabling the delivery of accredited training programs in community based settings;
- Invest in the development of **local area based partnerships** to generate local employment and training pathways;
- Ensure those in need have **access to childcare** while undertaking training within the community; and
- 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

The inability to access transport is one of the key barriers to social inclusion. Access to transport can be improved by:

- Increasing minimum service levels for **public transport services** in urban and urban fringe areas;

- Improving **rural transport services** so that Tasmanian communities have minimum daily return services to a regional centre that are appropriate to community need;
- Better **coordination** of **core passenger transport** services with **community transport** options;
- Provide funding to local government authorities in areas outside of major urban centres to deliver passenger **transport brokerage projects**; and
- Assist disadvantaged and low income **novice drivers** to meet the 50 hour log book requirement.

6. Access to quality services and opportunities for inclusion

Accessible local based services and opportunities for active participation within one's community is an essential element of a socially inclusive society. TasCOSS recommends:

- More community-based programs that **facilitate social involvement** and offer reciprocity opportunities;
- Establishing a comprehensive Tasmanian **Volunteering Strategy**, which supports volunteer recruitment, training, management and recognition;
- Establishing and implementing a whole-of-government **Elder Abuse Strategy** to protect older Tasmanians from abuse;
- Reducing the negative **social impacts of gambling** on the Tasmanian community by reducing the number of gaming machines and gaming venues, increasing the amount of taxation revenue from gaming machines that is directed to gambling support programs and by placing a limit on the number of gaming machines that can be located in areas of social disadvantage;
- Investing in a number of a range of free or low fee programs to improve social inclusion for low income and socially disadvantaged **HACC service users**;
- Increasing opportunities for pre-release training and education opportunities for people in Tasmanian prisons and detention centres and offer a range of activities to support and reintegrate offenders or people at risk of (re)offending;
- Increasing 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;
- Allocating funding to subsidise the purchase of **appropriate smoke alarms** for people who are deaf or hard of hearing; and
- Increasing the provision of **emergency relief assistance** to Tasmanians experiencing financial hardship to augment Commonwealth Emergency Relief Program funding.

12. What guiding principles do you think a social inclusion strategy for Tasmania should adopt?

In *An Unfair State*, TasCOSS outlines the reasons why Tasmania needs a comprehensive Social Inclusion Strategy in order to address social exclusion (2007: 11-12). These may be viewed as principles for a Social Inclusion Strategy:

- Poverty should not be entrenched;
- Tasmanians should not have to accept substandard situations;
- Access to services should not depend upon the ability to pay;
- Disadvantage should not be locational;
- Disadvantage should not lead to stigmatization; and
- Individuals and communities should not be disconnected or excluded.

The guiding principles for *A Fairer Victoria* (2008) also give a good indication of what a Tasmanian Social Inclusion Strategy should be aiming for:

- Better, more accessible mainstream services;
- Support disadvantaged groups;
- Support disadvantaged places;
- Involving Communities in decisions affecting their lives; and
- Making it easier to work with government

13. Considering the approaches (eg place-based, issues-based) adopted by other jurisdictions, how should a social inclusion strategy be developed for Tasmania?

A combination of approaches is required in order to best address the variety of structural factors that lead to social exclusion in Tasmania. Victoria's social inclusion strategy *A Fairer Victoria: Strong People Strong Communities 2008* is a comprehensive strategy which adopts a combination of issues-based and place-based strategies in relation to early years, education/employment, health and well-being and developing communities. South Australia's *Social Inclusion Initiative 2002-2010* has emphasised the importance of transitional disadvantage and breaking the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage through addressing critical transition or prevention points. Tasmania can draw on these experiences.

At a minimum a combination of issues and placed based approaches is required. The Social Inclusion Unit already has responsibility for developing two issues strategies in relation to literacy and numeracy and homelessness in Tasmania. Within these strategies it would appear that there are opportunities to focus on transition points. For example within the literacy and numeracy brief there may be a focus on appropriate

interventions for early learning/primary/secondary and post school interventions. For homelessness, the transition points identified in the consultation paper may be used, ie transition from state care, transition from prison, among others. At the same time the nature and influence of locational disadvantage is clear and a Tasmanian social inclusion strategy must include place based strategies.

14. What should be the priority areas for a strategy and which individuals, groups or issues need to be addressed first?

TasCOSS would like to emphasise education as a priority area for Tasmania's Social Inclusion Strategy. This means going beyond the focus on literacy and numeracy and working towards improving educational attainment and retention rates to year 11 and 12 as well as and working to change Tasmanian attitudes to education so that education is valued not only for future vocational reasons, but valued as an end in itself.

Considering Tasmania's poor health outcomes compared to other Australian states and the links between social inequities, poorer health outcomes and living on a low income, another priority should be to focus on improving social inclusion through a Social Determinants of Health Framework.

Climate change must also be identified as a critical issue for all communities. We would like to stress the need to ensure that the interests of all Tasmanians are considered in developing and implementing policies to address the effects of climate change – in particular that those most vulnerable - low income and disadvantaged Tasmanians - are included and protected.

15. In developing a strategy, do you consider the following approaches to be applicable in the Tasmanian context:

- a cohort approach
- a lifecycle approach
- an issues-based approach
- a critical transition points approach
- a locational or place-based approach

TasCOSS believes a range of approaches should be used in order to address the complex and multilayered nature of poverty and disadvantage in Tasmania.

16. Do you consider that there are any other approaches that may be suitable for application in Tasmania?

A social determinants of health framework should be adopted as a way to keep the focus on addressing the range of structural barriers that lead to social exclusion in Tasmania.

17. What needs to be considered when developing a governance structure to successfully implement a social inclusion strategy in Tasmania? (*Please consider the role of the structure in promoting whole-of government and whole-of-community responses in delivering services and projects to achieve the goals of the Strategy*)

TasCOSS would like to emphasise the important role the Premier must play in leading a whole of government and community approach to social inclusion. The Premier must develop and lead strategies to break down policy silos and get government agencies working together in the name of alleviating social exclusion for all Tasmanians.

The Social Inclusion Unit is correctly situated in the Department of Premier and Cabinet where there is an opportunity to influence policy making across state government departments.

A social inclusion advisory committee or board comprising key community stakeholders will be important in providing on-going advice in relation to the strategy and as a mechanism for communication and connection with the broader community. Partnerships with stakeholder groups, in the manner of Tasmania *Together* partnerships may also be a valuable way of enabling whole of community responses.

Whole of community responses require a place based focus. Bringing stakeholders together at a local level in relation to a local action plan provides a focal point for participation that enables practical outcomes and real opportunities for collaboration. The first step in successfully engaging communities in social inclusion activity is working with local communities so that they are determining their own priorities for action within the framework of the social inclusion agenda. Experience from other jurisdictions is that stimulating and working with local leadership is a challenging, but fundamental task in obtaining social inclusion outcomes at a local level.

The Social Inclusion Commissioner will play a valuable role as a champion for social inclusion for who is able to publicly articulate the rationale for social inclusion policy and practice. It is important that the Commissioner has the opportunity to address cabinet, but to be separate from the executive arm of government such that he or she has sufficient independence to critique government responses to and outcomes in relation to the Social Inclusion Strategy.

Social Inclusion Impact assessments would provide a mechanism for ensuring that Government legislation, regulation, policies and services are consistent with social inclusion objectives.

18. Are there any other comments that you would like to make in relation to the development of a Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania?

TasCOSS congratulate the State Government on its commitment to a social inclusion strategy looks forward to continuing work to work with the Social Inclusion Unit.

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