

TasCOSS calls for relief of Housing Tasmania's \$230m debt in State Budget

10 April 2013

The Tasmanian Council of Social Service has urged the State Government to free up more funds for maintaining and building public housing in next month's State Budget.

Housing Tasmania has a historic debt to the Commonwealth of \$229.8 million, and servicing this debt is costing the government's public housing authority \$17 million a year.

This means almost half the annual funding Tasmania receives from the Commonwealth for housing is being eaten up by debt repayments.

"If the State Government spread this debt across government, Housing Tasmania would be able to expand and improve public housing stock, instead of always being on the back foot with its budget," TasCOSS CEO Tony Reidy said today.

"Housing Tasmania has \$90 million of maintenance backlogs alone, and we estimate that there needs to be another 1400 new public and social housing properties built in Tasmania by 2015 to meet demand," Mr Reidy said.

TasCOSS – the peak body for the state's community services sector – has made the Housing Tasmania recommendation as part of its 2013-14 State Budget Priorities Statement, *Fundamentals for a healthy and equitable Tasmania*. ([Read the BPS here](#))

Many of the TasCOSS recommendations address three key social determinants of health: quality of education, quality of housing and access to transport. When people lack affordable, decent housing, it can lead to poor health in the short, medium and long term.

"We know that Tasmania has experienced a huge leap in the cost of housing, with rents doubling and even trebling over the past decade while earnings have remained static," Mr Reidy said today.

“There were 2163 people on the waiting list for public housing in Tasmania as of 31 December 2012. We would like to see the burden of the \$230 million Commonwealth housing debt shared across government so that Housing Tasmania can meet this great unmet need for affordable housing,” Mr Reidy said.

His comments came on national Youth Homelessness Matters Day. A Hobart Youth Homelessness Matters Day event will be held today (10 April) in the Elizabeth Mall, from 11am to 2pm.

TasCOSS CEO Tony Reidy is available for further comment on 0419 361 915

For comment on Youth Homelessness Matters Day, contact Joana Siejka, chair of the National Youth Coalition for Housing and executive officer of the Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) on 0458 235 511