



Tasmanian Council of Social Service

Rethink Mental Health: TasCOSS submission

28 Feb 2015

About TasCOSS

TasCOSS is the peak body for the Tasmanian community services sector. Its membership comprises individuals and organisations active in the provision of community services to low income, vulnerable and disadvantaged Tasmanians. TasCOSS represents the interests of its members and their clients to government, regulators, the media and the public. Through our advocacy and policy development, we draw attention to the causes of poverty and disadvantage and promote the adoption of effective solutions to address these issues.

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Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the State Government's long-term plan for mental health, the Rethink Mental Health Project. TasCOSS commends the Government for honouring its commitment to achieving better outcomes for Tasmanians for whom a mental illness is a serious barrier to being socially connected, employed, housed and in good health. We welcome the commitment to hearing from consumers, carers and families alongside service providers and clinicians. As the Rethink paper notes, community organisations are at the forefront of mental health service provision (pp7 and 9). Mental health issues are of great concern to many TasCOSS member organisations.

In this brief submission, TasCOSS endorses the Mental Health Council of Tasmania's (MHCT) submission to the Rethink Project. In particular, TasCOSS reiterates:

- The importance of upholding the principles of human rights and freedoms.
- Mental wellbeing, like physical health, benefits from preventative and early interventions. Relatively little investment reaps great personal, social and economic rewards.
- Community sector organisations need to be adequately resourced to work with people with a mental illness, proportionate to the growing needs, and to enable the growth of community based programs, such as Red Cross MATES and the PHaMs programs. During recent TasCOSS health consultations, members reported an increase in occurrence and severity of mental illnesses.
- The need for dedicated investment in the housing sector to provide affordable, supported accommodation options for people with long-term debilitating psychosocial disabilities.
- The importance of understanding the relationship between mental health and social context. Social factors (housing, employment, income, education) both influence and are influenced by mental wellbeing. This correlational relationship needs to be at the forefront of all policy decisions.

TasCOSS adds one point to those contained in the MHCT submission; that is, the importance of investment in the Early Years sector in light of the Government's decision to abolish the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation (TEYF). Critical brain development is shaped by children's early experiences and environment, with life-long consequences. Investing early in the lives of children has been demonstrated to improve long-term outcomes in mental and emotional health. Since its inception, TEYF has channelled funding to programs and initiatives that improve the long-term mental health of Tasmanians by starting with children aged 0-6 years. Its abolition will have detrimental effects on Tasmania's mental health status.

We look forward to ongoing participation in the reform process, and are happy to discuss further any of the points raised in this submission.

