



## 2016/17 State Budget Analysis: Older Tasmanians

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**TasCOSS has a vision of a Tasmania where**

**Vulnerable Tasmanians of all ages have access to safe, affordable housing, public transport, preventative health services and adequate support from Government and community services.**

### **Analysis**

There is little commitment in this Budget to policies, programs and services to older Tasmanians.

The initiatives for older Tasmanians under the Government's *Affordable Housing Strategy* are welcome, in particular the supported accommodation initiative for older people at risk of homelessness.

The lack of a dedicated funding allocation over the Forward Estimates to support the State's *Protecting Older Tasmanians from Abuse: Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy* is of great concern.

Ominously, a note in the Budget Papers indicates the Elder Abuse Helpline (run by Advocacy Tasmania) will be funded from existing DHHS funds in future years. Given demands on DHHS's budget, this is likely to be an unreliable funding arrangement for such an important service.

The Elder Abuse Helpline is the only element of the Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy to receive future funding. There is no forward allocation, for instance, for promotion of the Helpline or for public awareness raising, education for service providers or data collection.

Elder abuse has not gone away. It is vital that public awareness campaigns continue and that service providers are well-informed about the issue and about avenues for support, assistance and redress. Most importantly, it is vital that older Tasmanians are both well-informed and protected from abuse of all kinds.

The establishment of a comprehensive Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy was hard won by the sector and other advocates. It now seems that its implementation is continuing to be wound back—the previous government provided \$650k per annum for four years for its implementation, while the current government has allocated only \$150k per annum over three years, with no dedicated funding commitment thereafter.

TasCOSS will continue to advocate for the Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy to be renewed and funded appropriately so it can contribute effectively to protecting older Tasmanians from abuse.

The single-year funding provided to COTA Tas suggests the Government has plans to develop a new ageing strategy in 2016/17.

TasCOSS will work to ensure that any new strategy continues and builds on the focus on inclusive ageing and adequate funds for implementation.

## Initiatives

### Engaging Older Tasmanians

Tasmania's Council on the Ageing (COTA Tas) has been granted \$125k for one year to work with the Government (DPAC) on consultations for the development of a new Government strategy on ageing. This will replace the previous *Inclusive Ageing Tasmania 2012-2014 Strategy*.

While this is a new allocation, it can be seen as a one-year extension of COTA's three-year funding contract that ends on 30 June 2016. That funding has allowed COTA to undertake work on implementing and promoting *Inclusive Ageing* in Tasmania.

### Elder Abuse

The final tranche of the Liberal Party's 2014 election commitment of \$450k over three years to 'support the Elder Abuse Strategy' is provided in this Budget. The DHHS chapter in the Budget Papers states that from 2017-18, 'recurrent funding will be provided for the Tasmanian Elder Abuse Hotline from within the Agency's existing allocations.' It is worrying both for the reasons outlined above and because, while funded in 2016-17, no other elements of the Strategy are funded beyond this.

### Housing for older people

As part of the *Affordable Housing Strategy* it was announced that housing initiatives that target older Tasmanians are due to start in 2016-17. These include the acquisition of a Hobart site for 30 inner city units, and of a site for the construction of supported accommodation for 50 older people who would otherwise be at risk of homelessness. In addition, accessible units for older people in Somerset and Newstead will be completed in 2016-17.

## Gaps

### Elder Abuse

There appears to be no ongoing commitment to the implementation of a comprehensive Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy over the period of the Forward Estimates.