



Tasmanian Council of Social Service Inc

2016/17 State Budget Analysis



**INTEGRITY
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2016/17 State Budget Analysis: The critical early years

TasCOSS provided advice to State Government to assist it to work towards the following outcome:

All Tasmanian children grow up in a safe, supportive and loving environment

Analysis

While TasCOSS acknowledges a number of positive developments in this Budget in this area the Government has yet to articulate a cohesive vision and sufficient funding of support and assistance to Tasmanian children during the vital 'early years'. Without this overarching vision, focus and commitment, the educational, employment and participation outlook for children in our State will not improve.

TasCOSS and the community services sector look forward to working with the Government to develop policy and programs that offer genuine support and assistance to children and families in the critical first years of life.

TasCOSS welcomes those initiatives in this Budget that do support children in their early years, and their families, including:

- child protection system reforms that appear to acknowledge the importance of the early years with an increased focus on intervening early, even before birth, with support and assistance.
- funding allocated for the implementation of the new *Education Act*, including providing for the extension of school attendance age. However, we believe the allocations from 2019/20 will need careful monitoring to ensure sufficient funds are provided for teachers and classrooms, as well as to support both younger and older students.
- funding for the Learning for Life program and for School Community Hubs is also welcome as both focus not only on supporting engagement in education from the early years, but also on involving communities as well as students, families and educators.

The loss of the independent Tasmanian Early Years Foundation (TEYF) means the loss of sector development, research, professional development and training work in this vital area. TEYF's grants program funded many practical, cross-sectorial, place-based initiatives that supported communities, families and children specifically in the early years. This is a significant loss that provides meagre savings for the Government.

Initiatives

Education Act review

Costs associated with implementation of the new *Education Act* (not yet in force) were allocated in this Budget, including \$4.5Million for both 2016/17 and the following year, for an implementation team to oversee the transition from the old Act. Also allocated is \$6.3Million per annum from 2019/20 to meet

additional teaching and other costs associated with the extension of school age at both ends of schooling (commencing in the 2020 school year).

Learning for Life & School Community Hubs

Funding of \$1.6Million over four years has been provided as a co-investment between the Government and the Smith Family for programs that focus on encouraging engagement in education from the early years to tertiary level. The School Community Hubs concept is based on the understanding that improving educational outcomes cannot be achieved by a single organisation and must take account of cultural factors, attitudes and relationships. This year's allocation is \$400k.

Child Protection system redesign—*Strong Families, Safe Kids*

While not specifically and fully an early years initiative, the Child Protection system redesign involves an increased focus on intervening early, even before birth, and providing support and assistance to families and children to prevent problems occurring at a later time.

\$20Million over four years has been allocated to support implementation of a range of strategies identified in the *Strong Families, Safe Kids Implementation Plan*. \$15Million will go to DHHS and \$5Million to the Department of Education for a Student Wellbeing Initiative to provide additional support to children in both government schools and Child & Family Centres.

Gaps

Tasmanian Early Years Foundation (TEYF)

The TEYF was among a number of government-funded boards and foundations identified for abolition by the Government in its first Budget in 2014/15. Despite an announcement ahead of last year's Budget that the TEYF would be assisted to transition to an independent non-government organisation by 2016, no funding has been allocated to enable this.

In addition, the \$500k grants program once administered by the TEYF has also disappeared. This significant divestment of funds to the early years has not been compensated for by any other initiatives in any Government Department.

[More detail can be found in TasCOSS's 2016/17 Budget Priorities Submission](#)



2016/17 State Budget Analysis: Planning

TasCOSS provided advice to the State Government to assist it to work towards the following outcome:

Tasmania's planning system supports and promotes the social goals of affordable housing, good health and social inclusion through access to work, learning services and social hubs.

Analysis

Effective spatial planning for social inclusion has been one of TasCOSS's key interests in recent years. Good planning in relation to land use, transport and services infrastructure, and urban design has the potential to facilitate and encourage the supply of affordable and sustainable housing and transport, to promote healthy and socially connected lifestyles, and to support access to education, employment, basic services, and participation in the community. In the absence of overarching guidance at the State level, however, market forces alone are not guaranteed to deliver adequate results, particularly in the area of housing affordability but also in areas such as access to healthy food and transport.

The creation of a statewide planning scheme is only the first step towards a reorientation of the Resource Management and Planning System towards planning for positive social outcomes. The Government must also deliver an overarching set of high-level statements of principle that lay out the planning system's social, economic and environmental objectives and identify strategies and guidelines for achieving them.

The Tasmanian Government continues to indicate a commitment to a wholesale reform of the state's spatial planning system, to include the development of a suite of state planning policies intended to provide strategic direction to the planning system. The Budget's funding for planning reform and for the Tasmanian Planning Commission appears to support this goal; it remains to be seen when, how, and to what effect the promised policies will be delivered.

Initiatives

TasCOSS is happy to see that funds continue to be allocated for planning reform and for the Tasmanian Planning Commission, each of which has received an additional \$200k in 2016-17.

Gaps

The governance of spatial planning—how decisions related to spatial planning are made and implemented—is in its own way as important as a planning system's outcomes. TasCOSS believes that the reform of the planning system currently underway presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to engage Tasmanians in the discussion about the social objectives of the State's planning system. Spatial planning in Australia has tended to be top-down and the province of highly specialised bureaucratic cultures and operating systems. This situation runs contrary to the basic object of planning processes,

which is to create environments that are pleasant, efficient and safe for all residents—a series of criteria that can only be judged by Tasmanians themselves. Indeed, one of the objectives of the Tasmanian Resource Management and Planning System is “to encourage public involvement in resource management and planning.”

TasCOSS believes strongly that the Government should fund and hold a series of consultations across the State to inform the Government of what stakeholders and residents across the State think the planning system’s key social goals and concerns should be. Consultations must include Tasmanians whose voices can be hard to hear, including low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians, older and younger people, people living with disability, Aboriginal Tasmanians, and people from CALD backgrounds. Consultations should include as a minimum:

- Hobart and the South East
- Launceston and the North East, and
- The North West and West Coast.

[More background can be found in TasCOSS’s 2016 Budget Priorities Submission: Planning](#)



2016/17 State Budget Analysis: Older Tasmanians

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.



2016/17 State Budget Analysis: Energy and climate change

TasCOSS has a vision of a Tasmania where

Vulnerable Tasmanian households will be able to reduce their energy usage and costs, know where to go for assistance and avoid disconnection.

Analysis

Notwithstanding the absence of detail about the *Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme* announced in the Budget Papers, TasCOSS welcomes this scheme that will provide ‘up to \$10Million in loan funding’ to increase access to energy efficiency products for small businesses and households. We await further details about the scheme which is due to start in the 2016-17 financial year. However, TasCOSS recognises that not all Tasmanian households are in a financial position to take out a loan, including an interest free loan; furthermore, the 26.4% of Tasmanians who live in rental properties are also unlikely to benefit from the scheme.

TasCOSS is disappointed that no energy efficiency programs for low income households have been funded by this government. For many years TasCOSS has been calling on the Government to renew its investment in energy efficiency programs for low-income households. Previous governments have funded energy efficiency programs for low-income earners in rental properties (both public and private); not only was assistance provided at no cost to participants, the programs were very effective in improving the energy efficiency of dwellings and increasing the affordability of electricity for participating households.

The Government’s Draft *Climate Change Action Plan* proposed that the Government provide energy efficient electric heaters to 100, and insulation to 50 Housing Tasmania properties over five years. While TasCOSS welcomes this proposal, we are critical of the very small numbers involved and we labelled the proposal ‘a very poor effort’ in our submission to the Government on its Draft *Climate Change Action Plan*.

TasCOSS maintains that increasing the energy efficiency of dwellings is the single most effective, long-term measure that can be taken to increase the affordability of household electricity, and to increase comfort and health outcomes for many Tasmanian families living on low incomes.

The establishment of an *Energy Security Taskforce* is both a significant and expensive move (\$3Million over two years). It follows a comprehensive deliberative process undertaken by the Government to establish its Tasmanian Energy Strategy. Funding has been allocated for several initiatives from that strategy, most notably—and expensively—over \$2Million to ‘advance the case for a nationally funded

second interconnector' (note that this was also a Liberal Party election promise). Funds for this have appeared in State Budgets in 2014-15, 2015-16 and again in 2016-17.

Initiatives

Energy Efficiency

Among the 'key deliverables' of the Department of State Growth was the announcement that the Government 'is in partnership with Aurora Energy ... developing a Tasmanian Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme.' It explained that the new scheme 'will facilitate no interest loans to support small business and households invest in a range of energy efficiency products', and 'up to \$10Million of loan funding will be made available to support the scheme with the final design to be announced in coming months.' There appears to be no funding allocated for this program in the Budget and few other details are currently available.

Energy security

In response to the recent energy supply crisis that saw both Hydro storage fall to very low levels and the failure of the Basslink undersea cable, the Government has established an Energy Security Taskforce and provided funding for it in this Budget through the Finance-General Division. The Taskforce will 'undertake an energy security risk assessment and provide advice on further measures to enhance energy security.' The Taskforce comprises as Chair Geoff Willis (former Chair of Aurora Energy), Sibylle Krieger (a current non-executive director of the Australian Energy Market Operator and a former member of Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal in NSW), and Tony Concannon (the current Chair of Reach Solar Energy, a former executive director of International Power and previous Chair of the Electricity Supply Association of Australia).

\$3Million in funding is provided over two years for the Taskforce and for reviews into Government businesses, including continuing reviews of Forestry Tasmania and the Retirement Benefits Fund.

Gaps

Climate change

There were no announcements in the Budget on climate change initiatives; however, we expect to see a final version of the Tasmanian *Climate Change Action Plan* released in September (following public consultation on a Draft *Climate Change Action Plan* that ended in March this year). This *Action Plan* will identify strategies that we hope will receive funding outside of the budget cycle, including a proposal from TasCOSS to provide 'energy literacy' workshops for frontline community sector workers across Tasmania.

Energy efficiency programs for low-income households

No additional money was provided in this Budget to assist low-income households that are not in the existing Aurora Energy-run YES (Hardship) Program. Some energy efficiency assistance to households in financial hardship continues to be available through a program announced in the 2015-16 Budget that is supported by the Government.

[More detail can be found in TasCOSS's 2016/17 Budget Priorities Submission](#)

2016/17 State Budget Analysis: Justice

Analysis

In the absence of an overarching social and economic plan, the State Government remains subject to short-term funding pressures; this is particularly evident in the budget for the Department of Justice.

In a reminder that the extra funding received for some important social initiatives was short term, the new budget round reveals the cessation of some of these programs is now on the horizon. The extra funding for the Victims of Crime service through the *Family Violence Action Plan 2015-20* is an example of this. The Forward Estimates show that from 2019-20 the funding ceases, reflecting the end of the plan. Similarly, from 2018-19 funding for Community Corrective Services drops as the “Back on Track” funding ends.

The withdrawal of Australian Government funds for national partnership agreements continues to affect State Governments. In this budget the Tasmanian Government has provided funds to legal assistance services, including three of the community legal centres and Legal Aid, in response to the reduction in Australian Government funding for the provision of legal services through the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services. In spite of this funding the CLCs still face a precarious position—with a significant cut in Commonwealth funding to take effect from 1 July 2017.

Initiatives

The Tasmanian Prison Service (TPS) has received \$1.2Million over four years to provide compulsory treatment of sex offenders. The funding is to enable the TPS to increase the programs it currently offers. The mandatory treatment of sex offenders was a Tasmanian Liberal Party pre-election commitment.

Legal Aid has received a one off payment of \$496k for Legal Aid and Community Legal Centres. The goal of the funding is to fill a gap left from the withdrawal of Commonwealth funds and enable the Legal Aid Commission and Tasmania’s three Community Legal Centres to maintain their current levels of service delivery for the time being.

In a worrying trend, the increased rate of incarceration of women has seen the need for more space at the Women’s Prison. An extra \$850k has been allocated to create 20 new beds, with funding also provided for the construction of buildings to house the new prisoners, and \$1.3Million extra for more prison officers.

The Office of the Public Guardian is also receiving more funds in response to increased demand for its services. It will receive an extra \$100k recurrent funding, and a one-off payment of \$200k to develop a new case management system.

The project to consolidate a range of tribunals and create the Civil and Administrative Tribunal has been progressed with funding of \$120k provided over the next four years.

Gaps

Since 2015 parole boards have taken into account whether or not convicted sex offenders participate in appropriate treatment while in prison. The mandatory treatment of sex offenders goes a step further to make it compulsory for sex offenders to participate in treatment. There is research that suggests that there is value in providing treatment to sex offenders but TasCOSS has significant concerns about whether coerced treatment will achieve the protection the community hopes for; people can only be encouraged to change, they cannot be mandated to change. We would argue that investment needs to be made in a whole range of approaches to reduce sexual offending, from working with young people at risk of committing sexual offences through to the provision of support and supervision to offenders who have been released from prison. This budget contains no funding for these approaches.

There is also no evidence of any funding being allocated to meet the projected increase in prison numbers which will follow the abolition of suspended sentences, or of funding for the programs that will be required to replace them should the government decide to proceed in its determination to do so. The Sentencing Advisory Council, which was not asked to comment on whether Suspended Sentences should be removed or not, but only to provide advice on what alternatives should be set in place when the Government removed them, described a range of possible initiatives, including fines, home detention, imprisonment, Drug Treatment Orders and extended community correction orders¹. All of these are costly. The Council published a costing based on currently imposed fully—and partly—suspended sentences that would result in a prison sentence (and its length), a Drug Treatment Order (and its length) a Community Correction Order (either on its own or combined with a prison sentence). The results of the modelling suggested that removing suspended sentences would require investment an extra \$11 to \$35Million per annum².

The extra funding for legal assistance services (to address the loss of Commonwealth funding) is a one off. These services are still under threat, and may be forced to dramatically reduce services from 2017-18. The funding also doesn't address the loss of funds to the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO). This office may be forced to close as a result of these cuts from the Commonwealth. The EDO plays an important role in advising the community on environmental and planning decisions.

¹ Sentencing Advisory Council 2016, Phasing Out Suspended Sentences: Final Report No. 6, <http://www.sentencingcouncil.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/342321/Phasing_out_Suspended_Sentences_report_final_for_Web2.pdf>

² Walker, J & Bartels, L 2015, *Exploring the Costs of Alternatives to Suspended Sentences in Tasmania*, a report prepared for the Sentencing Advisory Council Tasmania. <<http://www.sentencingcouncil.tas.gov.au/>>



2016/17 State Budget Analysis: Transport

TasCOSS provided advice to the State Government to assist it to work towards the following outcome:

All Tasmanians are able to travel where they need to go to participate in work, training, education, volunteering, and social and recreational activities, and to access services.

Analysis

TasCOSS is pleased that the Government has put together a strong, comprehensive draft Transport Access Strategy, but is disappointed that no funds have been allocated this year for implementation.

Until the level and nature of funding for the Strategy's recommendations is known, it is not clear how the Strategy will improve options for Tasmanians who don't have access to a private car. Furthermore, the Strategy's promises may prove easy to dismantle.

Initiatives

The 2016-17 Budget includes \$31Million towards 100 new buses for Metro Tasmania. A renewed fleet is necessary if Metro is to progress towards meeting its requirements under the transport standards of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. According to the latest targets, 80% of fleets should be disability-accessible by the end of 2017; however, as of June 2015, only 53% of Metro's services were being provided with DDA-compliant vehicles, and a 2012 review found that Tasmania lagged significantly behind most other states in the provision of disability-accessible vehicles.³ New buses for Metro are therefore a legislated requirement.

The \$31Million, however, appears to represent primarily a bringing-forward of monies allocated for bus replacement, rather than an injection of fresh funds. It is not clear how Metro is expected to continue to improve services on an annual subvention that is not rising.

The Budget also allocates \$3.573Million this year to DGS for Passenger Transport, \$350k more than the \$3.223Million projected in last year's forward estimates. However, this additional sum does not come up to the \$450k that was projected for bus services procurement this year—work which has been rolled into Passenger Transport. Given how important it will be to finalise the Transport Access Strategy this year, and the complexity of the process of renegotiating bus contracts, these savings may prove to be a false economy.

TasCOSS also notes with concern that although the number of older and disabled Tasmanians is rising, funding for the Transport Access Scheme (which subsidises taxi fares) dropped by \$30k this year and stays at the same rate across the forward estimates.

³ Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development (2012), Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002, p. 51; Metro Tasmania (2015), Annual Report 2014-15, p. 5.

Gaps

The Government's draft Transport Access Strategy clearly outlines the transport challenges facing low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians. Despite good efforts in recent years by Metro and other service providers, transport services in the state are still substantially characterized by:

- Limited hours and frequency of operations
- Limited geographic scope
- Limited integration in ticketing, physical location and timetables
- Limited affordability
- Limited eligibility.

Needs are particularly acute outside of Hobart and Launceston.

Nevertheless, the Tasmanian Government's per capita level of spending on public transport remains the lowest in the country at \$209.86 per person per year. Even the Northern Territory spends more, at \$231.75 per person per year.⁴ We appreciate that until the Transport Access Strategy is finalized and bus contracts are renegotiated on the strength of its recommendations and action plan, massive injections of funding are not yet needed. We are concerned, however, that the forward estimates give little sign of preparing for the work ahead. We urge the Government to begin to plan the process of bringing transport funding to \$300 per person per annum, in order to deliver on the promises offered up by the draft Strategy.

[Read more in the TasCOSS 2016 Budget Priorities Submission: Transport](#)

⁴ Tasmania's 2016-17 spending: passenger transport: \$3.573m; metropolitan general access services: \$38.942m; non-metropolitan general access services: \$7.626m; rural and special needs bus services: \$23.72m; student-only passenger services: \$25.646m; Transport Access Scheme: \$4.518m; Pensioner Air Travel Subsidy: \$10k; Metro Bus Fleet Initiative: \$4.5m. Total: \$108.535m; population as of September 2015: 517,183; per capita: \$209.86. Northern Territory spending on passenger transport in 2016-17: \$56.66m; population as of September 2015: 244,484; per capita: \$231.753. Northern Territory (2016), Budget 2016-17, Budget Paper 3, p. 217; ABS 3101.0, Australian Demographic Statistics, Table 4.



2016/17 State Budget Analysis: Health

TasCOSS provided advice to the State government to assist it achieve its election commitment:

Tasmania has the healthiest population by 2025

Analysis

The Hodgman Government came into office in 2014 on the vision of making Tasmania the healthiest population within 11 years. This is a laudable goal but one which requires significant commitment by the Government, given that Tasmania has some of the poorest health outcomes of all the Australian states, and glaring health inequities based largely on socio-economic factors. Such entrenched health issues require strong promotion, prevention and early intervention approaches.

The Tasmanian Government continues to focus its available health dollars on infrastructure and acute care and the preventative health and public health portfolios continue to languish without adequate funding. This short-term focus on the acute-end of the service system will not lighten the burden of disease for Tasmanians or the financial burden on the State.

The Federal Government's cessation of several National Partnership Agreements and withdrawal of funding for health continues to be felt across the State health portfolio. As the Federal Government continues to abdicate its responsibilities in health, the Tasmanian Government is increasingly having to fund the shortfall just to keep current services afloat.

In its Budget Priorities Statement TasCOSS recommended an allocation of 5% of the Tasmanian Health Budget to Preventative Health Initiatives and a move toward a Health in All Policies approach. Health Promotion and prevention initiatives in Tasmania are historically underfunded and the Federal Government's cessation of the *National Partnership of Preventative Health*, which resulted in a loss of \$2-3Million per annum to Tasmania over the projected life of the partnership, was a heavy blow. The Government's response to the sector's advocacy was disappointing. Not only are there no extra funds for Preventative Health initiatives in 2016-17 but the percentage allocated to Preventative Health in the forward estimates will actually drop from 1.99% this year to only 1.39% in 2018/19. As a percentage, this is even lower than the very low percentage of the total Australian health budget spent on population and public health services—1.7%. In contrast countries such as New Zealand and Canada spend more than 5% of their health budgets on preventative health⁵.

To quote the Health Minister in his Foreword to the Healthy Tasmanian consultation draft, *"keeping ourselves healthier for longer ... is critical to the sustainability of our health system"*. With nine years to

⁵ Australian Health Care Reform Alliance (2015) Policy Position Paper 3, Canberra, p2-3

go to 2025, TasCOSS is disappointed not to see any real evidence of the Government's commitment to preventative health in this budget.

Initiatives

There is additional funding in the Budget of \$29.5Million over four years (\$8 million in 2016/17) to further the One Health System initiative. Directed towards highest priority items in the White Paper and Clinical Services Profile implementation plan. This includes consolidation of clinical services, consolidation of all maternity services to single site in the North-West, refocusing the Mersey Community Hospital to sub-acute services and establishing it as an elective surgery centre, reconfiguration of other existing services.

There is also more funding for infrastructure—\$3.7Million for the redevelopment of the Royal Hobart Hospital pharmacy/pharmaceutical production facility.

The Budget includes an additional \$1.4Million per annum for the Emergency Departments of the Royal Hobart Hospital (RHH) and the Launceston General Hospital. The 'Patients First' funding includes Clinical Initiative Nurses to actively monitor and provide advice to patients and develop care plans in consultation with Emergency Department doctors, continuation of Psychiatric Emergency Nurses at RHH (Federal Funding has ceased), implementing Extended Care Paramedics and a First Intervention Vehicle for the Southern Region, all designed to reduce Emergency Department admissions.

There is \$500k per annum over the forward estimates to continue to support healthy choices in schools with a focus on lower socio-economic areas. It includes school canteen accreditation, school gardens, breakfast clubs, and drug and relationship education.

Gaps

Preventative Health

A commitment of \$650k per annum over the forward estimates for *Healthy Tasmania* - the Tasmanian Government's Preventative Health Strategy due for release in mid-2016. The focus of this funding will be on smoking and obesity prevention. This small investment in preventative health (less than 2% of the total health budget) is accompanied by a \$4Million cut to the public health budget due to the cessation of the Federal Government's *National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health*.

Community and Aged Care Services

There has been a decrease in funding for community and aged care services from \$200Million in 2015/16 to \$194Million in 2016/17. This \$6Million reduction is due to the cessation of the *National Partnership Agreement on improving health services in Tasmania—Schedule D—Better Access to Palliative care*, Adult Public Dental Services and Rural Primary Health Services Program.

Health in All Policies

The State Government has disregarded calls by the sector for a Health in All Policies framework.

[Read more in the TasCOSS 2016 Budget Priorities Submission: Health](#)



2016/17 State Budget Analysis: Community Services

TasCOSS provided advice to the State Government to assist it to work towards the following outcome:
Community service organisations maximise client outcomes.

Analysis

The budget met all its commitments to the projects funded in last year's post-election budget and the Government's commitment to fund the Equal Remuneration Order supplementation. It also continues to provide indexation of 2.25% on DHHS-funded grants.

In addition to the large investment in affordable housing, the Budget also contained some welcome community sector initiatives that represented new investment (that is, not recycled announcements). And it is worth noting that this Budget includes all the investments made to implement the Family Violence Action Plan, announced in August 2015.

However, the Government ignored a significant request which came from the sector—for support to deal with the huge reform programs and structural changes the sector is dealing with.

The Tasmanian community sector is a significant part of the Tasmanian economy. Employing around 10,000 workers, the sector represents just under 4% of the Tasmanian workforce. The sector is undergoing significant changes in service delivery models as well as facing increasing demand and higher expectations of services. Parts of the sector are being opened up to full marketisation and services are reporting significant problems with maintaining viability and a loss of skilled staff due to funding uncertainty; they are also struggling with concerns around the management of cash flow, debt management and client relationship management. The transition from block funding to fee-for-service is potentially disastrous for not-for-profit organisations whose funders have prevented them from building up cash reserves.

Similar periods of transition in industries such as primary industry or manufacturing have attracted Government support or transition packages. The risk for Government, and the community, of withholding transitional support are significant. There is a real risk that organisations will fold, leaving clients without service.

TasCOSS requested funds for a *Strategic Partnership Fund* for the sector, to be managed by DHHS.

Initiatives

Twenty million dollars have been allocated for the redesign of the Child Protection system (over four years). This is the first stage of the redesign of services for children and young people at risk, called *Strong Families, Safe Kids*. The Department of Education will receive a quarter of these funds (\$5 million). The funds include \$3.6Million to refocus intake services into an Advice and Referral Service which it is hoped will provide early access and integrated support to children and families. They also include \$8.5Million to support the establishment of child safety teams. In addition, there is one-off

funding of \$550k allocated to improve the Child Protection Information System—it is hoped this will improve data integration.

The North West is to get \$6Million over two years to build a supported youth accommodation facility in Devonport, with specialist support services. The housing will be able to provide housing for 25 young people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness and it will include accommodation options suitable for young people who are living with a disability.

An important item in the budget is additional funding of \$3Million over the next four years to support the *Rethink Mental Health Plan 2015-2025* and the government's strategies for suicide prevention (including the *Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2016-2020*, the *Youth Suicide Prevention Plan for Tasmania 2016-2020* and the *Suicide Prevention Workforce Development and Training Plan for Tasmania 2016-2020*). The money is to be prioritized for primary health and peer workforce initiatives, and to implement the Safe Wards model in public mental health services. While there are gaps in what we would like to see, it is a positive to see funds allocated to the *Rethink* strategy.

The struggle faced by rural families has been acknowledged—an additional \$135k has gone to the Rural Financial Counselling Service over the next three years, and Rural Alive and Well is to receive \$569k extra funding in 2016-17 for outreach services.

Neighbourhood Houses get a further injection of funds, translating as \$30k for each House over a two year period (\$990k over two years across all the Houses). However, this is funding is one-off.

Gaps

TasCOSS is disappointed that the Government has made no provision to support the sector in this period of intense change. In this budget round TasCOSS called for a *Strategic Partnership Fund*, to be managed by DHHS. The Fund would provide organisations with resources for legal and accounting advice to develop partnership agreements, contracts or business plans. It was suggested that this partnership fund be similar to the resource-sharing funding program offered to local government to help councils identify cost savings. However, no funds were allocated for this or any similar initiative.

There is a lack of investment in preventative health across the budget, and this is also clear in the allocations to mental health initiatives. More money is needed for mental health promotion, illness prevention and early intervention initiatives that focus on mental health and wellbeing.

This financial year is the last for the Joined Up Services initiative. Although this initial work was intended to inform the roll-out of a Joined Up Services support system, there is no allocation in the budget of funds for the implementation of the findings of the project. The Budget papers state the work is to be absorbed within current allocations.

There has been a reduction in funding for the Quality and Safety team within DHHS so their performance measures have been adjusted—this means, they will be doing less reviews. Given that for some organisations this is the only Quality accreditation process they are involved with, it signals a reduced commitment by Government to continuous service improvement within the organisations from which it contracts services.

There are 52 children on the waiting list for the Family Violence Counselling and Support Service Children and Young Persons Program⁶.

For more information, please refer to [TasCOSS's 2016/17 Budget Priorities Statement: Community Services](#)

⁶ Budget Estimates Committee B, Wednesday 8th June 2016,
<<http://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/ParliamentSearch/isysquery/6b5d6c37-ecfb-4294-a4e2-6b312692dcc2/1/doc/>>



2016/17 State Budget Analysis: Housing

TasCOSS provided advice to the State Government to assist it to work towards the following outcome:

All Tasmanians have access to affordable, appropriate, secure housing.

Analysis

TasCOSS welcomes the Government's budget announcement of an additional \$60Million over three years to implement initiatives in the Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan. As the Government has acknowledged, secure, appropriate, affordable housing is vital to economic participation, social engagement and community wellbeing, and housing affordability is a crucial issue for low- and middle-income Tasmanians. The scale of the problem is substantial: Housing Tasmania's research has indicated that the state needs an average of 656 new affordable homes per year through to 2031 to meet Tasmanians' need for affordable housing in the current and long terms.⁷

As has been clear in recent years, the thrust of the Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan is to spread the task of provision of affordable housing over the public (Housing Tasmania), community (Better Housing Futures) and private housing sectors, including both rental and ownership. On the one hand, in the absence of massive investment in the public housing sector, such an approach appears necessary to meet existing and future levels of demand for affordable housing. On the other hand, this approach will lead to a smaller percentage of total affordable housing being owned and managed by Housing Tasmania, as well as a smaller total number of Housing Tasmania properties.

Initiatives

The Government has described this year's tranche of the \$60Million as only part of a total investment in 2016-17 of \$178.6Million, which includes existing capital funds of \$12.7Million.

The Budget attempts to address all sectors of the housing system—public, private, rental and ownership—through a variety of measures, some of which include:

Public and community housing:

- \$3.3Million of Housing Fund to support NRAS Stage 4

Private ownership:

- First Home Builders grant doubled to \$20k until June 2017; backdated to January 2016 so that those who have already applied for the previous limit of \$10k can receive the full amount.
- An additional \$6.6Million to HomeShare for 2016-17 to 2018-19, with \$2.8Million in 2017-17.

⁷ Housing Tasmania (2015), Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025, p. 12.

Private rental:

- \$500k for Youth Head Leases—\$10k apiece for 50 homes
- \$700k for partnerships between Housing Connect and private landlords
- \$2.4Million for Rapid Rehousing under the Family Violence Action Plan

Crisis accommodation:

- Supported accommodation for homeless men and their children.
- Continued development of a supported accommodation facility for youth in the NW (\$6Million allocated this year).

Gaps

Boosting the supply of affordable housing in the private market will be vital to overcoming Tasmania's affordable housing shortage. However, Tasmania appears to remain the only state in Australia that has no mechanism in state or local level land use planning regulatory frameworks to encourage the development of affordable housing.⁸ In the absence of a uniformly applicable high-level planning policy directive, affordable housing is likely to continue to be a low priority for developers, particularly since the demise of NRAS.

TasCOSS continues to advocate for the development, under the Tasmanian Resource Management and Planning System (RMPS), of a State Policy on Affordable Housing as an efficient, cost-effective mechanism within the state's land use planning system for encouraging the development of affordable housing. To date, the Tasmanian planning system's State Policies have focused on land use planning and environmental management and protection. However, there is nothing in their charter that prevents their application to social policy-related issues—see, for instance, the proposed State Policy on Healthy Spaces and Places championed by the Heart Foundation.

A State Policy on Affordable Housing under the RMPS would be:

- Proactive and front-end-loaded, leading State Government agencies and local governments to think through housing-related planning issues at the outset when considering new development projects or changes to planning schemes.
- Easy and cost-effective to comply with, changing the way in which spaces and places are designed and built in the first place, rather than imposing retrofitting requirements.
- Equitable, ensuring that affordable housing is considered in all new developments in Tasmania, rather than being treated as a luxury.
- Economical, with substantial potential savings for housing-related budgets.

For more details, read TasCOSS's [2016 State Budget Priorities Submission: Housing](#)

⁸ Gurrán, Nicole (2008) *Affordable Housing National Leading Practice Guide and Tool Kit*.

<http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/D3B288EA-6BDA-49C3-AA4E-E96CD35CDF49/0/AHNationalGuideandKitv2.pdf>;
http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/schemes/vpps/16_SPPF.pdf