



Tasmanian Council of Social Service Inc.

TasCOSS 2021/22 State Budget Analysis



**INTEGRITY
COMPASSION
INFLUENCE**

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Overview

State budgets lay out a government's priorities. During the 2021 State Election campaign the Premier promised us a government of conviction and compassion and made it his priority to ensure Tasmanians — no matter where they live, their circumstances or background — will have the opportunity to benefit from our growing state. The Premier will say the 2021/22 State Budget delivers against that promise and, insofar as it commits the funds needed to deliver its election promises, it delivers few surprises.

The Premier is right in saying the state is benefiting from a remarkable post-COVID economic and jobs recovery, however the language of opportunity rings hollow for the thousands of Tasmanians let down by our historical and current failures as a state to ensure adequate incomes for all, accessible physical and mental health care, an affordable home, and access to education and training opportunities to name but a few. Without these foundations, opportunities can be impossible to grasp.

The good news is Tasmanians and their communities know the solutions. Hundreds of Tasmanians told TasCOSS they need good physical and mental health, a place to call home, to be able to afford the basics, to feel safe, heard and valued, to learn for life and know they are not alone. Tasmanians have told us having all of these things in place gives them hope for the future. We call this the Good Life Framework (see Appendix A).

TasCOSS's budget analysis therefore assesses how well the budget delivers against these metrics. In doing so, it also models a new approach to crafting the budget, one which recognises that budgets are fundamentally about people, not portfolios. We also assess the Tasmanian Government on how well it delivers on the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council (PESRAC) Final Report recommendations, all of which it committed to enacting.¹

There's a lot in this budget to like, but even with the significant funds committed to health, housing and other areas, the lives of thousands of Tasmanians will be just as hard tomorrow as they were today. As you'll read in our comprehensive budget analysis, we still have a lot to do to ensure that every Tasmanian has what they need now to live a good life and have hope for the future.

¹ https://www.pesrac.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/283196/Final_Report_WCAG2.pdf

A Place to Call Home

Tasmania's long-acknowledged housing shortage is not getting any better. The priority waiting list for housing has risen to over 4,240 as at July 2021 compared to 3,425 in July 2020, with longer wait times for those applicants to be housed — 70.1 weeks as at July 2021 versus 60.9 weeks in July 2020. At the same time, housing affordability is deteriorating with skyrocketing house prices feeding into higher and increasingly unaffordable rents, leaving thousands of Tasmanian households living in housing stress.²

This is clearly no time for business as usual. What is needed is urgent action across housing and homelessness systems so that every available lever is pulled to create more affordable, safe and secure homes for all Tasmanians.

Significant Budget Initiatives:

The budget includes a range of measures to boost housing supply, increase homelessness support and address housing affordability, including:

- \$315m for social and affordable housing and homelessness initiatives, bringing the total investment to \$615m, including:
 - \$280m to deliver an additional 2,000 homes.
 - \$6m towards the two new \$20m supported accommodation facilities for older Tasmanians in the North and North-West of the state.
 - \$15.3m for youth housing and homelessness: U-16 Lighthouse Project, modular youth housing for 16-24 year olds and Youth Foyer models.
 - \$2.1m ongoing funding for the Housing Assistance and Support Initiative (HASI) that supports Tasmanians living with mental illness.
 - \$11m to fund Safe Spaces for the coming year.
 - Extending the capacity of women's shelters.
 - Additional 20 properties under rapid rehousing program.
- Buyers/homeowners:
 - \$10m to Headworks Holiday as incentives to develop vacant residential land.
 - Additional \$10m into HomeShare to support Tasmanians on low incomes to buy their own home.
 - \$2.5m secondary dwelling incentive program.
 - \$30,000 boost to First Home Owners Grant.
 - Land tax relief.
- \$2m to develop a long-term Tasmanian Housing Strategy.
- \$3.45m for reviews of Tasmania's land use strategies.

PESRAC Recommendation:

- **#32:** The Tasmanian Government should develop a comprehensive Tasmanian Housing Strategy and drive practical actions to deliver more sustainable housing market outcomes across Tasmania for all Tasmanians.

Analysis:

This budget will contribute to delivering much-needed housing stock in the future but will still not deliver the amount of social and affordable housing estimated to be required to meet demand — 1,000 homes per year for the next

² sheltermtas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Shelter-Tas-2021-22-Budget-Submission_final.pdf

ten-years. In contrast, this budget plans for 3,500 social houses over the next six-years.³ Until more homes are built, Tasmanians with no place to call home are being turned away from shelters at alarming rates, including Tasmanians aged 16-25 who make up approximately one-third of Tasmania's social housing waitlist.⁴

PESRAC recommended the Tasmanian Government ensure more sustainable housing market outcomes for all Tasmanians. So long as this means a housing market that meets the needs of all Tasmanians now and into the future.

TasCOSS endorses this recommendation and welcomes the Tasmanian Government's commitment to develop a long-term Tasmanian Housing Strategy that explores all levers available to create such a housing system.

To help achieve a sustainable housing system that works for all, TasCOSS and Shelter Tasmania have called on the Tasmanian Government to improve housing stock, affordability and security through:

- An affordable housing target of 10% of all Tasmanian dwellings to be affordable, social rental housing (currently 6.2%).
- Delivering 1,000 additional dwellings per year over the next decade.
- Better regulation of the short stay accommodation market to prevent more homes being removed from the long-term private rental market.
- Innovative, affordable, rental options such as shop-top accommodation, infill housing and retrofitting vacant offices.
- A review and modernisation of the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997* and reforms to ensure tenants are not evicted into homelessness.
- A housing strategy that prioritises the delivery of more social and affordable housing.⁵

³ ahuri.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0027/29439/PES-306-Developing-an-investment-pathway-for-social-housing.pdf

⁴ ynot.org.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021-03/YNOT%202021%20Child%20and%20Youth%20Wellbeing%20Strategy%20Discussion%20Paper%20FINAL.pdf

⁵ shelertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Shelter-Tas-2021-22-Budget-Submission_final.pdf

A Healthy Mind and Body

Tasmania has some of the worst health outcomes in the country. Despite spending over 30% of the budget on health, there has been little or no improvement in overall health outcomes in recent years and, on some measures, we are even going backwards. Part of the problem is that most health and mental health spending is directed to the tertiary and acute end of the system with not nearly enough dedicated to health promotion and prevention or ensuring that care is accessible, affordable, timely and appropriate. And until relatively recently, consumer voices in health have not had the opportunity to provide input to ensure the health system meets those community needs.

Significant Budget Initiatives:

The budget includes a range of measures to improve health outcomes including:

- \$10.7 billion over four-years, an increase of \$900m on the previous year.
- An additional \$600m to meet demand and ability to respond to COVID-19.
- \$196.4m over four-years for 30,000 elective surgeries.
- \$20m for prevention and early intervention, to empower Tasmanians to improve their own health and wellbeing including:
 - \$4.5m to trial three Tasmanian Community Health and Wellbeing Networks with Health Consumers Tasmania.
 - \$10m for the next *Healthy Tasmania Five-Year Strategic Plan*.
- \$20m for private hospitals to ease demand on public hospitals.
- \$15.7m over four-years to implement the Health Workforce 2040 Strategy.
- \$5m for 20,000 additional public dental appointments.
- \$52m for in-home and community delivered palliative and community health care.
- \$75,000 per year for the next four-years to provide Tasmanian women with no cost access to surgical terminations.

In mental health:

- Over \$100m for mental wellbeing and mental health supports and services, including:
 - \$50m for state mental health services, including funding towards the CAMHS reform project.
 - \$2.2m for community mental health services to address increasing demand.
 - \$1.9m towards the implementation Tasmania's Peer Workforce Strategy and a Youth Peer Worker model.
 - \$7.8m to continue and expand new mental health services put in place in response to the pandemic, including MHCT's #checkin campaign and the 1800 'A Tasmanian Lifeline' phone service.
 - \$8.5m to establish Hospital in the Home in the North-West of Tasmania.
 - \$5.1m to establish an Emergency Co-response model in Southern Tasmania.
 - \$2.1m for the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) to assist people living with mental ill-health to recover in the community.

PESRAC Recommendations:

- **#26-29:** Provide clear communication and guidance in relation to the Tasmanian Government's COVID-19 planning and response.

- **#30:** Fund and implement Rethink Mental Health and reforms to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service; fund and implement a range of community-based mental health and wellbeing initiatives.

Analysis:

We welcome the significant investment in the physical and mental health and wellbeing of Tasmanians in this budget, including the announcement in July of \$600m to meet current demand for services and the ability to respond to COVID-19 in the future. We also welcome the updated *Tasmania Statement* that acknowledges the impact of poverty and climate change on the health and wellbeing of current and future generations and look forward to seeing practical outcomes delivered including through the Premier's Health and Wellbeing Advisory Council.

We particularly welcome the focus on prevention and early intervention in mental health and the whole-of-population approach that is evident in several commitments. In our assessment, the Tasmanian Government has begun to deliver on its commitment to implement PESRAC's recommendations on mental health. Regarding PESRAC recommendations on COVID-19 communications, the Tasmanian Government has provided clear communication and guidance in relation to the Tasmanian Government's COVID-19 planning and response. We would however welcome more targeted and accessible communication, specifically reaching and engaging priority population groups and involving community services and groups who provide support to Tasmanians who are disproportionately impacted by the effects of COVID-19.

With so many initiatives in the health sector, there is a risk of overlap as well as disconnection. TasCOSS and other key stakeholders including Health Consumers Tasmania recommend the Tasmanian Government ensures it coordinates the key health initiatives, particularly the Premier's Health and Wellbeing Council, the *Healthy Tasmania Five-Year Plan*, *Our Healthcare Future*, the Statewide Clinical Senate, and the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy*.

We also note that the Tasmanian Government's goal of Tasmania being the healthiest population in the country by 2025 is now unrealistic.⁶ Good governments set achievable outcomes with measurable targets against which communities can assess their performance and success. TasCOSS therefore calls on the Tasmanian Government to engage with key stakeholders to develop achievable and measurable goals for improved health outcomes.

⁶ dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/policy/premiers_health_and_wellbeing_advisory_council.

Being Able to Afford the Basics

Tasmania's unemployment rate has improved significantly during our COVID-19 recovery. However, the state still has about 35,000 Tasmanians looking for a job or for more work with thousands more in insecure employment. For the 120,000 Tasmanians — over 20% of our state's population — living below the poverty line, the ability to afford the basics is a constant challenge. We need to be creating more jobs and supporting Tasmanians to overcome barriers in order to take up those jobs.

We know that after the cost of keeping a roof over their heads, Tasmanians prioritise their energy bills which are the highest in the country. In short, this means they pay a great price for keeping their homes healthy and liveable. As a result, thousands of Tasmanians experience 'energy poverty', are in energy debt and/or on hardship payment plans with their retailer. Initiatives that reduce energy costs are therefore needed urgently.

Tasmania is the most digitally disadvantaged state in the country and is consistently at the bottom of the Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII). As the first state to see the full rollout of the *nbn*, Tasmania should be performing much better. This lack of access to the basics required to engage in a digitised society points to the need for much greater investment in telecommunications affordability and digital skills.

Tasmanians living on low incomes tell us that they prioritise rent and power over all other expenses. As a result, they often do not have enough money for adequate, nutritious food. They also tell us that they skip meals or eat poorly, with only a minority seeking food from emergency food relief providers. Recent University of Tasmania research suggests only 5% of food-insecure Tasmanians use emergency food relief and one-in-four Tasmanians experienced food insecurity in the first half of 2020.⁷ Concerningly, in May 2021 further research found that one-in-five Tasmanians were still experiencing food insecurity, raising the question of whether running out of food is the new normal in Tasmania.⁸

The following sections outline budget initiatives which address different areas of Tasmanians being able to afford the basics they need to live a good life — jobs, energy, digital inclusion, and food security.

⁷ blogs.utas.edu.au/isc/files/2020/06/15_-Food-security.pdf

⁸ blogs.utas.edu.au/isc/files/2021/06/TTP4-Food-Security_Final_v3.pdf

Jobs

Significant Budget Initiatives:

- 28,000 jobs supported through \$5.7 billion infrastructure investment.
- \$2m Job Ready Fund to help job seekers gain essential tools they need to get a job, including White Card licensing, boots, protective clothing or tools.
- \$10.6m to establish new Jobs Hubs in regional communities — Burnie, Brighton, Huonville and St Helens, and expand the coverage of the Northern Employment and Business Hub.
- \$6.5m over two-years for the Tasmanian Employer Bonus to incentivise employers to take on a long-term unemployed job seekers.
- \$1.5m Jobs Tasmania Partnership Fund for partnerships between the Tasmanian Government and the non-government sector.
- \$1.3m for a two-year pilot Youth Connectors program to operate in conjunction with existing hubs in Sorell, Glenorchy and the George Town Launchpad Hub, focusing on young Tasmanians seeking jobs, training and apprenticeships in their local area.

PESRAC Recommendations:

- **#17:** The Tasmanian Government should shift the relative priority in skills funding to:
 - The forms of training that provide the most direct route into a job for unemployed and under-employed Tasmanians, rather than solely to nationally accredited VET qualifications; and
 - Industry-endorsed skill sets, micro-credentials and short courses for unemployed or under-employed Tasmanians linked to industries or occupations with workforce shortages.
- **#21-25:** Establish Jobs Tasmania Local Networks.

Analysis:

While the Tasmanian Government's job creation agenda is centred on building infrastructure, there is also increased focus on fostering partnerships between the government and non-government sector, as identified in the PESRAC recommendations. Through these partnerships, funding initiatives and local networks, local communities and business will be supported to work together to address and remove barriers to employment, training and workforce participation, such as skills and transport.

Energy

Significant Budget Initiatives:

- \$12m to support concession customers with a \$125 COVID-19 Recovery Winter Energy Supplement.
- \$30m Tasmanian Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme (TEELS).
- \$2m boost to the NILS Energy Saver Loan and Subsidy Scheme.
- \$10m Solar Power Sports Club no-interest loan scheme.
- \$5m Renewable Energy Schools program.
- \$735m investment into Tasmania's renewable energy and hydrogen initiatives.

PESRAC Recommendation:

- **#32:** The Tasmanian Government should develop a comprehensive Tasmanian Housing Strategy ... that encompasses “sustainable housing — energy and water efficiency.”

Analysis:

The budget acknowledges the struggle for households on low incomes in affording their energy bills by providing a \$125 rebate for customers on a concession. It also acknowledges the need to support customers to reduce their energy costs by providing additional funding for NILS and the reintroduction of the TEELS program. However, while acknowledging investment in energy efficiency as a way to reduce bills, these measures are poorly targeted. Tasmanians on low incomes who need this support the most have little ability to take on additional debt or make loan repayments and those in rental housing are unable to make changes to their properties.

There are a large number of Tasmanian households in need of energy efficiency upgrades, providing not just cost of living relief but also healthier home environments. This budget is a lost opportunity for a bold investment in initiatives that extend the benefits of energy efficiency upgrades to Tasmanians on low incomes, regardless of whether they are in public housing, community housing, private rentals or owner-occupied homes.

The PESRAC report was light on recommendations for Tasmanians struggling with household energy bills and the budget response is disappointingly commensurate. We would welcome future expansion of supports for energy efficiency strategies which are more widely and equitably accessible, allowing all Tasmanians to live in healthy homes.

Digital Inclusion

Significant Budget Initiatives:

- \$4.3m to develop a digital Service Tasmania portal for easy-to-use access to government services.
- \$2.2m additional funding for *Digital Ready for Business* program, Enterprize innovation hubs and Project Springboard pilot.
- \$350,000 additional funding for *Digital Ready for Daily Life* program.
- \$300,000 towards a \$1.1m project to transition nine regional school sites to high-speed optical fibre.
- \$1m for telecommunications infrastructure upgrades on King Island.

PESRAC Recommendations:

- **#33, 34:** Address digital infrastructure gaps, set KPIs to address the digital divide within 2-5 years, engage local communities to address digital inclusion at local level; and expand digital access through existing facilities.

Analysis:

Improving digital skills through additional funding to *Digital Ready for Daily Life* is welcomed and we'll be looking to ensure this funding is directed to community-based digital literacy initiatives, as the evidence is strong that those in need of digital support are more likely to turn to local, trusted connections. However, we are disappointed that yet another state budget has come and gone without the level of investment in the digital access and skills needed for all Tasmanians to participate and make the most of opportunities in education, employment and their communities.

Investment in digital inclusion at a community level is dwarfed by investment in digitising government and business services in this budget, leaving many Tasmanians excluded from our community.

There was also little in the budget to improve digital affordability with an opportunity missed to provide government school students with devices and data where needed or support low income households to ease their cost of living and digital access through a telecommunications rebate or concessions. We would greatly encourage the Tasmanian Government to swiftly set KPIs on closing the digital divide to track the much-needed progress in this space

The PESRAC recommendations on digital inclusion were welcome but, in our view, the budget did not deliver.

Food Security

Significant Budget Initiatives:

- \$3m towards Emergency Food Relief and Food Security, including the delivery of Tasmania's first Food Security Strategy.
- \$1.4m over two-years to extend School Lunch Program pilot to 30 schools.
- \$540,000 over three-years to support Grans Van, Loui's Van and Mission Beat.

PESRAC Recommendation:

- **#31:** Ensure the Food Security Strategy expands the school lunch program, adopts a place-based approach to food security, links to the agricultural and hospitality industries; and is scalable to support any increase in demand for emergency food relief.

Analysis:

TasCOSS welcomes the delivery of the *Tasmanian Food Security Strategy 2021-24* in response to food insecurity. As the strategy notes, it is the "start of a conversation" because bolstering emergency food relief can only ever be a partial solution to food insecurity. Not only do we need to mobilise all elements of the food system to ensure that all Tasmanians have access to and can utilise affordable, nutritious food, we need to continue to advocate for adequate incomes so that poverty is never a reason that Tasmanians go hungry. We therefore welcome the acknowledgement that people with a lived experience of food insecurity must be involved in developing solutions.

We are concerned that funding for the School Lunch Program falls far short of what it has been calculated to cost. An underfunded pilot is simply setting up for failure. We urge the Tasmanian Government to reconsider its funding commitment to this important link in the food security chain.

This step combined with action to embed the whole food system in the Food Security Strategy would see the Tasmanian Government more fully deliver on the PESRAC recommendation.

Feeling Safe

We know that many Tasmanians feel unsafe inside and outside the home and that for those who need access to justice as a result, financial and other barriers can put justice out of reach.

TasCOSS believes that everyone has a right to feel safe in their own homes and communities. Such feelings of safety are particularly lacking for people experiencing the justice system which is short on therapeutic and culturally appropriate approaches to rehabilitation.

Significant Budget Initiatives:

The budget includes a range of measures to improve safety and access to justice, including:

- \$9.4m for 50 additional police officers to boost frontline services.
- \$4m grants program to fund CCTV in our rural and regional areas.
- \$5.1m over two-years to pilot an Emergency Mental Health Co-response Team model.
- \$100m for the implementation of the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy*.
- \$5m over four-years to support new stable permanent family placements where children and young people can belong and thrive.
- \$1.74m over four-years to extend supports for Informal Kinship Carers.
- \$2m 'Sure Start' initiative to provide children and young people who are in out-of-home care with priority access to government services, supports and concessions.
- \$10m to progress the recommendations of the U16 Youth Homelessness Taskforce.
- \$8.8m support for the legal assistance sector, shared with Tasmanian Legal Aid, Women's Legal Services (Hobart, Launceston and the North-West), Community Legal Centres, Tenants' Union of Tasmania, Tasmanian Refugee Legal Service; and Prisoners Legal Service.
- \$2.5m to reduce reoffending and increase rehabilitation through partnerships with Red Cross, Connect 42, Dress for Success, and therapeutic staff within the prison.
- \$2.4m for electronic monitoring of high-risk family violence perpetrators.
- \$1.4m for the Safe at Home Family Violence Service System.

PESRAC Recommendation:

- **#35:** The Tasmanian Government and its agencies should actively seek out and fund community-led, place-based recovery activities with priority given to activities with the objective of primary prevention of, and early intervention in, areas such as family or community violence and drug and alcohol misuse.

Analysis:

While there are initiatives to reduce reoffending and increase rehabilitative opportunities in the corrections system, the budget continues to have a disproportionate focus on punitive measures such as increased policing and building correctional facilities. Greater investment is needed to address the underlying issues faced by Tasmanians engaged in our justice system and support victims of crime and their families. The significant investment in the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* is an example of the whole-of-government approach needed to address vulnerability and disadvantage and funding of community services to support those at risk.

TasCOSS welcomes the Tasmanian Government's allocation of an additional \$8.8m over four-years to support the legal assistance sector, on top of the funding already committed under the National Legal Assistance Partnership. This will help to deliver important free or low cost legal services to Tasmanians. We are yet to see how this funding

will be allocated across seven organisations and we strongly encourage the Tasmanian Government to ensure the allocation is transparent and decided in consultation with these services.

Additional therapeutic staff to provide increased drug and alcohol intervention and therapeutic support in our prisons is also positive. We recommend these services be funded on an ongoing basis, beyond the current two-year allocation.

The \$100m to implement the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* is a significant investment to support children, young people and their families. The timelines, governance framework, reporting and outcomes measurement will be critical to the strategy's impact and success. The strategy could be improved by stronger accountability through child impact assessments to ensure an understanding of how policies, laws and government impacts on children and young people, or legislated commitments to ensure services and supports are delivered for children and young people.

TasCOSS is aware the Tasmanian Government is currently facilitating place-based recovery consultations and we hope and expect that the activities that emerge will be in line with the PESRAC recommendation. The budget commitments provide more investment in the areas of family, domestic and sexual violence but our members tell us much more needs to be done both to address the level of need for victim survivors but more importantly in the crucial work of prevention. Our assessment is the budget partially delivers on the PESRAC recommendations.

Learning for Life

All Tasmanians should be able to learn what they need to thrive across their lives. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted just how critical learning is to how we as individuals and a society adapt, grow and face new challenges. And it's not just in moments of crisis that we need to learn. The effects of the pandemic will be felt for a long time to come, exacerbating educational priorities which existed pre-pandemic.

Tasmania starts from a low educational base with low proportions of Tasmanians meeting the levels of literacy and numeracy needed for today's complex and increasingly technological world. Tasmania has consistently trailed well behind the rest of the country in assessments of student outcomes, but learning is not just about academics. There are other skills and knowledge people need to set them up for a good life, including basic life skills, relationship skills and cultural knowledge — including the knowledge of Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

Significant Budget Initiatives:

The budget includes a range of measures to ensure Tasmanians can access and engage with learning opportunities across their life, including:

- \$100m for the implementation of the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy*.
- \$28m funding for ongoing construction of new Child and Family Learning Centres (CFLC) and \$3.82m to a Support and Wellbeing team in CFLCs, providing free access to speech pathologists, psychologists and social workers.
- Continued rollout of the *Working Together* initiative to support early learning.
- \$14m for continued implementation of a needs-based funding model for students with disability.
- Establishment of a Literacy Advisory Panel.
- Increasing numbers of literacy coaches in schools.
- \$1.4m for School Lunch Pilot expansion.
- \$6m additional funding over four-years for trauma support for school students.
- Capital works investments for schools.
- \$98.6m in new funding for the TasTAFE system, including 100 more teachers and new infrastructure and facilities with increased access for rural and regional students.
 - \$45m for facilities upgrades and transition fund.
 - \$10m virtual TasTAFE campus.
 - \$4m for TasTAFE and Libraries Tasmania to expand TasTAFE access in rural and regional sites.

PESRAC Recommendation:

- #11-12: Finalise, fund, and implement the Year 9-12 project.
- #13-15: Re-establish TasTAFE as a Government Business Enterprise (GBE) — fund transition arrangements including redundancies and career transition support.

Analysis:

The *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* is a welcome and long overdue attempt to deal with barriers to learning with a preventative, holistic approach. In 2017, the Hodgman Government set a target to be at or above the national standard in every single NAPLAN measurement and meet national benchmarks in reading, writing, maths and science by 2020. We have not reached this target.

This holistic model of the learner is evident in the expansion of support and wellbeing teams into CFLCs and the expansion of trauma support and training for teaching staff. We know a holistic approach reaps returns for individual wellbeing, learning outcomes and the state. We would welcome its expansion across all areas of the education system.

We also welcome the expansion of the School Lunch Pilot which is a recognition of the critical importance of access to material basics such as food in maintaining engagement with learning. However, we note that the amount set aside in the budget is only a quarter of that requested by the Tasmanian School Canteen Association to fully cover the cost of the expansion. The *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* names the B4 coalition as a key partner with priority actions in the first 100 days, but the budget contains no additional funding to support this important work.

The changes to TasTAFE announced in response to the PESRAC recommendations are significant, as is the funding attached. We would like to see the re-established TasTAFE maintain or extend the organisation's community service obligations to ensure it is focused on catering to the needs of all learners, especially those with literacy challenges or without internet access and the skills to use digital devices. Funds to expand virtual and other access to TasTAFE in rural and regional sites are welcome, but to be meaningful they need to be complemented by additional actions to improve digital infrastructure, affordability, and ability in rural and regional areas where we know significant digital exclusion exists — as discussed above in 'Being Able to Afford the Basics'.

This budget provides some good investments in Tasmanian learners and delivers on the PESRAC recommendations in education and we look forward to the expansion of such investments to equitably meet the needs of all Tasmanian learners.

Getting Where you Need to Go

Transport is an enabler of other essential aspects of life, such as work or education. Lack of access to transport is distributed inequitably across our community with communities under-served in access to services and opportunities such as health, employment and education, often also lack a range of mobility options.⁹ For example not all of the Metro Tasmania bus fleet and bus stops meet accessibility standards.¹⁰

Demand for not-for-profit transport alternatives has been increasing, yet funding models have not allowed these services to keep up with demand.¹¹ This presents both a significant challenge and an opportunity for governments to adopt and fund community-led transport solutions as well as more frequent and accessible public transport.

Significant Budget Initiatives:

The budget includes a range of measures to address transport issues across the state, including:

- \$81.5m over four-years into new buses and supporting infrastructure.
 - \$20m over four-years to deliver additional school buses and commuter buses.
 - \$10m to upgrade bus stops to all-access (DDA compliant) and all-weather facilities.
- \$31.5m over four-years for common ticketing across public transport.
- \$6m over four-years for cycling infrastructure.
- \$1.4m for Community Transport Services Tasmania (CTST) to continue to support Tasmanians to access care.
- \$600,000 Electric Vehicle ChargeSmart Grants for EV charging stations.
- \$500,000 for a Community Transport (Car and Coach) Fund.
- Measures to enable quarterly payment of vehicle registration.

Analysis:

The budget allocates at least \$1.4bn to roads and bridges which provides benefits to those who have access to public or private transport. Alternatives to private and petrol transport are important given the need to deal with transport emissions which account for a significant share of our state's carbon emissions.¹²

The budget contains additional investment in new buses and infrastructure, but this is predominantly in urban areas and is a small proportion of transport spending — only 6% of that spent on roads and bridges. However, it is a welcome start in catching up on decades of underinvestment. We encourage further progress on diversifying Tasmania's public transport offering by investing in innovative, flexible and accessible public transport alternatives.

The new common ticketing system across public transport is a welcome step towards a modern, accessible public transport system but should be accompanied by an alignment of metropolitan and non-metropolitan fares. As they currently stand, fares are significantly higher for those in rural Tasmania — those most isolated. The common ticketing funding also seems to fall short of what is likely to be needed to implement such a significant IT and infrastructure change.

⁹ For example, some Tasmanian communities' proportion of carless households are triple that of the national average. ABS 2016 Census Quickstats.

¹⁰ See Metro Annual Report, metrotas.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Metro-Tasmanian-Annual-Report-2019-20-Low-Resolution.pdf p. 7.

¹¹ See CTST Annual Report 2019/20, ctst.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Community-Transport-Annual-Report-2019-2020.pdf

¹² dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/climatechange/climate_change_in_tasmania/tasmanias_emissions.

We welcome additional funding for CTST through the Department of Health which will help to meet need in the short-term but community transport initiatives require more investment particularly in the longer term. The expansion of Area Connect services tied to the Jobs Hubs package is a good example of such an investment. The one-off community car and coach fund could be another and we look forward to its evaluation to determine if ongoing funding is merited.

Funding to upgrade the accessibility of bus stops is welcome and long overdue but there is no recognition of the need, or funding, to ensure Tasmania meets its obligations under the national Accessible Transport Standards by the end of 2022.

Finally, the change to enable quarterly payments of vehicle registration is a welcome cost of living initiative that TasCOSS and NILS have long called for. We look forward to working with the Tasmanian Government on its commitment to investigate more frequent car registration payments, such as monthly or fortnightly, to make these bill payments even more affordable.

Feeling Valued, Included and Heard

All Tasmanians want and deserve respect and dignity and have a right to meaningful participation in this state's economic and cultural life. However, we know there are barriers to participation that are deeply rooted in our society's systems, resulting from entrenched stigma, prejudice and discrimination.

These need to be addressed by a combination of prevention in the form of education and awareness, proactive policies to promote inclusion, early intervention, an end to legal discrimination such as for older people and LGBTIQ+ Tasmanians; and embedding the voices of Tasmanians in all decisions that affect their lives.

Significant Budget Initiatives:

The budget includes a range of measures to promote inclusion and equality amongst diverse parts of Tasmanian communities, including:

- \$200,000 to support steps towards 'Reconciliation' with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community.
- Diversity Action Plan and other initiatives to boost women's employment in traditionally male-dominated industries.
- \$125,000 for review of the *Active Ageing Strategy 2017-22*.
- \$175,000 for over 60 Men's Sheds, including funding for mental health and wellbeing initiatives.
- \$1.75m Carers Action Plan.
 - Kinship care review and support; and
 - Small grants program.
- \$80,000 per year to provide free sanitary items in Tasmanian Government schools.
- \$210,000 for LGBTIQ+ grants to increase acceptance of diversity, access to services and participation for LGBTIQ+ Tasmanians.
- \$450,000 over two-years to Working It Out to create safe and inclusive school environments for LGBTIQ+ students, staff and families.
- \$474,000 to support newly arrived and established migrant communities.
- \$5.7m to Neighbourhood Houses network and community facilities (see 'Knowing You're Not Alone').
- \$1.2m to establish a Tasmanian Disability Services Commissioner.
- \$100,000 to make recreational fishing amenities easier to access for those with mobility issues.
- \$3m to double Ticket to Play initiative.

PESRAC Recommendation:

- **#35:** The Tasmanian Government and its agencies should actively seek out and fund community-led, place-based recovery activities, with priority given to activities with the objective of primary prevention of, and early intervention in, areas such as family or community violence and drug and alcohol misuse.

Analysis:

The budget contains a range of welcome commitments in this domain. We strongly welcome the additional funding to support LGBTIQ+ inclusion in schools and increased funding LGBTIQ+ community grants. PESRAC acknowledged the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on this community, which already faces high levels of discrimination, exclusion and disadvantage.¹³

¹³ pesrac.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/250441/Interim_Report.pdf, p. 26.

We also welcome the funding for an *Active Ageing Strategy*. Older Tasmanians experience poorer health outcomes than their younger peers and this strategy represents an important step towards addressing those inequities. Initiatives that support informal family and friend carers are an important recognition of the fundamental but undervalued role carers play in our communities and in our economy. Given this recognition, we are disappointed the budget did not provide more funded support for carers under 25 years of age, who make up almost 12% of Tasmania's informal carers.¹⁴

Initiatives to boost women's employment in traditionally male-dominated industries are welcome. Doubling funding for the Ticket to Play initiative will help more Tasmanian children participate in sport and recreation.

New funding to support progress on 'Reconciliation' and continued funding for the Tasmanian Aboriginal community including for the important work of Aboriginal Heritage Officers and Aboriginal Liaison Officers in community services is necessary but falls well short of what could be considered a meaningful investment in this significant and critical undertaking. The \$200,000 in this budget represents just 1.2% of the \$17m dedicated to the same efforts in the Victorian State Budget this financial year. We also note that the budget refers to 'Reconciliation' and does not mention truth telling or the pathway to Treaty, which Professor Kate Warner's report will address.¹⁵ TasCOSS sincerely hopes that this change in language does not reflect a backward step in the Tasmanian Government's commitment to truth telling and Treaty, which the Tasmanian Aboriginal community has called for. We are also concerned that funds from the previous year's budget appear to be unspent, despite these funds being crucial for activities such as Closing the Gap.¹⁶ We encourage the deepening and expansion of these investments both financially and structurally.

The establishment of the first Tasmanian Disability Services Commissioner is valuable in name but there is concern the level of funding will restrict effectiveness with comparable Commissioner roles in other jurisdictions receiving up to four times the amount allocated in this budget. Also lacking is adequate funding to meet the needs of Tasmanians with disability in education, housing, transport and advocacy — the absence of core funding for Disability Voices Tasmania is particularly disappointing.

Otherwise, initiatives in this and other domains initiate action on PESRAC's recommendation #35.

¹⁴ carerstas.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/MEDIA-RELEASE.270821.Tasmanian-Budget.pdf

¹⁵ premier.tas.gov.au/site_resources_2015/additional_releases/official_opening_of_the_50th_parliament_of_tasmania/official_opening_of_the_50th_parliament_of_tasmania

¹⁶ treasury.tas.gov.au/Documents/2021-22-Budget-Paper-No-2-Volume-1.pdf, p. 56.

Knowing You're Not Alone

All Tasmanians want and need to feel connected and supported in ways which work for them. They need to know they're not alone. Three factors are key to achieving this:

- Tasmanians have the support they need to build healthy connections inside and outside the home,
- Communities have the support they need to create strong, inclusive, local connections; and
- Tasmanians can depend on person-centred, place-based community services industry and other service support to overcome adversity.

The COVID-19 crisis highlighted why this is so important — people and communities experienced the damaging effects of isolation and inability to access services and supports they needed. The community services industry was and remains at the forefront of support for Tasmanians, yet support for the industry has been marked by underfunding and short-term agreements that make it difficult and, at times, impossible to meet the needs of the people and communities we serve.

Significant Budget Initiatives:

The budget includes a range of measures to improve the ability of communities and community services to better support all Tasmanians, including:

- \$5.7m to Neighbourhood Houses network and community facilities, including:
 - \$2.8m to employ new Family and Community Support workers.
 - \$400,000 to Neighbourhood House Tasmania to improve its capacity to support the House Network.
 - \$2m to extend the Neighbourhood House Capital Improvement Program.
 - \$500,000 for a new purpose-built facility for Kentish House.
- \$3.3m funding for Community Services Industry workforce, including:
 - Workforce Ready Team,
 - Workforce Development Fund,
 - Industry recruitment campaign; and
 - Community Services Industry Scholarship Fund.
- \$2.2m to the community legal assistance sector.
- \$300,000 to Volunteering Tasmania to establish a Youth Volunteer Army.
- \$175,000 towards a grants program for Men's Sheds.

PESRAC Recommendations:

- **#35:** The Tasmanian Government and its agencies should actively seek out and fund community-led, place-based recovery activities, with priority given to activities with the objective of primary prevention of, and early intervention in, areas such as family or community violence and drug and alcohol misuse.
- **#36:** The Tasmanian Government should establish an ongoing scholarship funding pool to financially support leadership training for individuals that have demonstrated involvement in their local community.
- **#43:** Ensure community service funding is long-term with clear deliverables and outcomes, designed to deliver flexible and adaptable service provision and requires appropriate transparency and accountability.

Analysis:

Many of the health and wellbeing initiatives above and elsewhere in the budget will contribute to connecting Tasmanians, overcoming loneliness and COVID-19 isolation and making our communities stronger. TasCOSS

congratulates the Tasmanian Government for recognising the central role of the community services industry in contributing to this through its support for building the industry's workforce.

The funding committed to Volunteering Tasmania to encourage a new generation of life-long volunteers is a small but welcome recognition of the critically important work of volunteers in communities and community services across the state. Similarly, the investment in the Neighbourhood House network is welcome recognition of the important role they have in connecting and supporting local communities as well as improving health and wellbeing outcomes for Tasmanians. Increased funding allocated to the community legal assistance sector is also essential to helping Tasmanians to access justice on a more equitable basis (see 'Feeling Safe'). The community sector scholarship fund is welcome but serves a slightly different purpose than the scholarship put forward in PESRAC recommendation #36. As such the budget is positive step in supporting action under PESRAC recommendations #35-36.

The budget is mixed in terms of delivering on PESRAC recommendation #43 with some community service organisations still experiencing uncertainty regarding funding and many yet to move to a co-designed, outcomes-based funding model with support to deliver services flexibly.¹⁷

¹⁷ tascoss.org.au/joint-statement-of-state-election-priorities/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=joint-statement-of-state-election-priorities.

Hope for the Future

TasCOSS recognises that one of the most significant ways the Tasmanian Government can provide Tasmanians with a sense of confidence in their future is to take strong leadership on addressing the climate crisis. While as a state we consistently outperform our neighbours on net carbon emissions, we are not taking all the action we have capacity and responsibility to take.

This is particularly the case given the impacts of a rapidly changing climate are not felt equally by all. Tasmania is facing unpredictable impacts from increasingly frequent and severe extreme weather events. Our state is set to endure more severe flooding events in the colder months and lengthening drought and bushfire seasons in the warmer ones. Incidences of heat waves, cold snaps and storm-force wind events are also becoming more frequent and the sea level continues to rise.

Tasmanians on low incomes are more likely to either be underinsured or completely uninsured in terms of their home, contents, healthcare and income protection. They are more likely to live in areas with increased risk of bushfires, floods, coastal erosion and insect-borne disease. They are also less able to afford necessary things such as home modifications (such as those for flood- and fire-proofing), increased use of energy for heating, cooling and/or filtration and rising food prices.¹⁸

Significant Budget Initiatives:

The budget includes a range of measures to improve Tasmania's mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, including:

- \$15m to establish a new agency — Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania — to guide climate action and the opportunities it presents for jobs, investment, renewable energy and emissions reduction.
- \$10m over four-years for the *Climate Change Action Plan 2021-26*.
- Finalise the consultation on the new climate change act and target — introduce to Parliament this year (2021).
- \$600,000 for Charge Smart Grants program and a two-year Stamp Duty waiver for the purchase of new and second-hand Electric Vehicles.
- \$250,000 for a new Carbon Farming Advice Pilot Program.
- \$10m for initiatives to build our circular economy and support waste and resource recovery, including a Container Refund Scheme, Food Organics Garden Organics (FOGO) reprocessing capacity, commercial composting; and phasing out single-use plastics.
- \$15m Local Community Facilities fund to improve the facilities and infrastructure of community associations and sporting clubs.

PESRAC Recommendations:

- **#38:** The Tasmanian Government should develop a sustainability vision and strategy for Tasmania, with ambitious goals, and concrete targets and actions.
- **#39:** The strategy should immediately prioritise specific frameworks for:
 - Decarbonising the economy,
 - Water resource allocation, security and quality,
 - Adoption of circular economy principles; and

¹⁸ [dpac.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/577417/TasCOSS - Submission Action Plan.pdf](https://dpac.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/577417/TasCOSS_-_Submission_Action_Plan.pdf)

- Ensuring a consistent and coordinated government approach to sustainability.
- **#40:** The strategy should have a strong focus on environmental considerations and include wider aspects of sustainability including social factors, while ensuring decisions account for the interests of future generations.
- **#41:** The strategy should be focussed on Tasmanian priorities but be aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- **#42:** The Tasmanian Government should strongly promote the idea that all Tasmanians are responsible for our environmental performance and have a part to play in achieving the strategy. Everyone is responsible and everyone should contribute through their actions.

Analysis:

Tasmania is leading the nation and the world on key climate change measures. We can generate 100% of our electricity needs from renewable sources — with a target to achieve 200% — and we have already achieved a net zero emissions target. We see these achievements as a platform to build on, not an endpoint.

The Tasmanian Government acknowledged in the *Tasmania Statement* that climate change impacts on the health and wellbeing of current and future Tasmanians. The creation of a new unit (Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania) to provide a whole-of-government focus on Tasmania's advantageous position and the opportunities that taking climate action can provide is a welcome initiative.

The development of a second *Climate Change Action Plan* and the funding for practical actions to reduce emissions and build climate change resilience is also welcome. In this next iteration, we will be seeking greater investment in household energy efficiency initiatives, food security, disaster resilience, ensuring Tasmanians can access adequate insurance, active and public transport, community resilience building and increased involvement of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community in land management practices.

We also welcome the Tasmanian Government's consideration of the recommendations from the independent review of the *Climate Change (State Action) Act* and look forward to further community engagement on adopting more ambitious targets. These should capitalise on our low carbon economy and focus on climate justice for those communities most at risk of climate impacts.

The budget also includes several initiatives to support and strengthen regional communities through funding for economic, tourism, education and training, infrastructure and local organisation programs and projects. While a standalone "sustainability strategy", as called for in PESRAC recommendations #38-42, has not specifically been announced, the budget includes multiple measures that address elements of the recommendations. We look forward to the Tasmanian Government's more comprehensive and formal response to these PESRAC recommendations. In particular, the accompanying targets and measures determined in consultation with communities to ensure a sustainability vision and strategy for Tasmania delivers a good life for future generations.

'A GOOD LIFE' IN TASMANIA

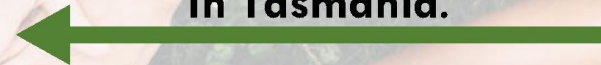
EVERY TASMANIAN DESERVES A GOOD LIFE—
THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO MORE THAN SPEND
EACH DAY JUST GETTING BY.

A Healthy Mind and Body 	A Place to Call Home 	Being Able to Afford the Basics 
Feeling Safe 	Learning for Life 	Getting Where You Need to Go 
Feeling Valued, Included and Heard 	Knowing You're not Alone 	Hope for the Future 

But what does a good life look like for Tasmanians on low incomes? What are the basics of a good life, and what makes a good life hard to achieve?

To find out, TasCOSS engaged 338 people across the state, combining these with results from similar processes undertaken by other organisations.

Taken together, our community highlighted nine key elements of 'a good life' in Tasmania.





A HEALTHY MIND AND BODY

One phrase emerged again and again: “Health is everything.” Respondents emphasised the value of good health and health care that treats the whole person.

“If you have good mental health, anything is possible.”

But Tasmanian health outcomes are poor overall and Tasmanians on low incomes struggle to get primary medical, dental and mental health care.



A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Participants spoke of the pleasure that they take in their homes and the security that a stable home brings. But they also spoke of the anxiety associated with watching rents and house prices go up, the stress of trying to find an appropriate place in a tight housing market, and the stresses on families as people are crowded together.

“I feel a level of fear now, in my mid-forties, that I have never felt before - I feel like I’m priced out of the market.”

Tasmanians on low incomes face exceptional difficulties in finding either a home to buy or a secure, affordable rental. The supply of social housing has not kept up with demand and the number of homeless Tasmanians has grown.



KNOWING YOU’RE NOT ALONE

Most participants in the Good Life consultations felt that relationships, both intimate and social, were crucial to their wellbeing and to their ability to thrive. Being connected, participants suggested, requires three things: people who persevere; a strong, caring community; and help from the pros when more support is required than friends and family or the general community can give.

“Knowing someone who believes in you [is necessary] to flourish.”

“With so many people in the world, no one should have to be alone.”

Combining strengthened social connection with other support initiatives can lead to a virtuous spiral that addresses multiple issues simultaneously.



LEARNING FOR LIFE

Tasmanians told us a good, broad-ranging education leads to a better life across the board: literacy, numeracy, digital competence, and life skills ranging from cooking to budgeting to effective communication. All people of all ages deserve an equal chance at an education that takes their needs into account.

“Hard as it was to improve our education in our 30s, we are now seeing the benefit of having done so and wish young people could only understand how important education is to quality of life.”

Tasmanians need to be supported to understand what education is right for them across the broad range of options on offer in the Tasmanian educational system.



FEELING VALUED, INCLUDED, AND HEARD

Good Life consultations were filled with pain at being considered to be worth less than other Tasmanians. Respondents described feeling looked down on, left out, invisible, and unheard.

“I wish...that others would understand disability a little bit more, rather than just discriminating against us and not including me and my family in the community.”

“If we want to be more innovative and inclusive, we need to open [decision-making] to people from all backgrounds.”

Behind these experiences lie attitudes of individuals and structural inequalities like racism, ableism, and sexism.



BEING ABLE TO AFFORD THE BASICS

Financial stress was the one of the biggest barriers to a good life, making it harder to cope with other stressors.

“Financial stress leads to major anxiety. It’s mentally draining. There’s no need for luxuries, but just no stress.”

Tasmanians face sweeping increases in the cost of living with rising prices significantly outstripping increases in benefits and allowances. Thousands of Tasmanians struggle to get into employment that would lift their incomes above subsistence levels.



FEELING SAFE

Fear has no place in a good life. While women, children, older Tasmanians, and Tasmanians with disability are particularly vulnerable to feeling unsafe, everyone deserves to feel safe – even people caught up in the justice system, which is short on therapeutic and culturally appropriate approaches to rehabilitation.

“Safety underpins everything else. If you’re not safe, you don’t have a healthy mind – you’re always worried, always stressed. If you don’t feel safe at home because of violence, your home is worthless. If you don’t feel safe at school, you can’t get an education.”



GETTING WHERE YOU NEED TO GO

Having your own transport equates to freedom. Tasmanians pointed out it can be deeply frustrating to struggle to get to employment, education, health and support services, shops, socialising, and Tasmania’s natural beauty.

“[I need] reliable, affordable access to supermarkets, playgrounds.”

Getting where you need to go extends beyond transport: the built environment can act as a significant barrier to Tasmanians with limited mobility or disability.



HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Tasmanians want support which is future-oriented, taking whole-of-life approaches. Three key areas emerged around **looking ahead**:

Across life stages. A longer-term vision in relation to two main groups living through periods of dramatic life changes: young people and older people.

A changing economy. Even prior to COVID-19, participants, particularly those from regions of industrial downturn, are worried about the future of work.

“What worries me most: lack of employment opportunities for my daughter. It’s bad enough now; I hate to think what it will be like in 15-20 years.”

Response to climate change. Climate change is now a significant concern for older and younger Tasmanians alike.