Social Exclusion

Why it's important

Social exclusion means not having the opportunity to fully participate in community life. People who are socially excluded may be denied education, skills, meaningful work, access to services, good relationships and the ability to have a say on issues that matter to them. This places them at risk of poor health and wellbeing. Social exclusion is strongly tied to other social determinants of health.
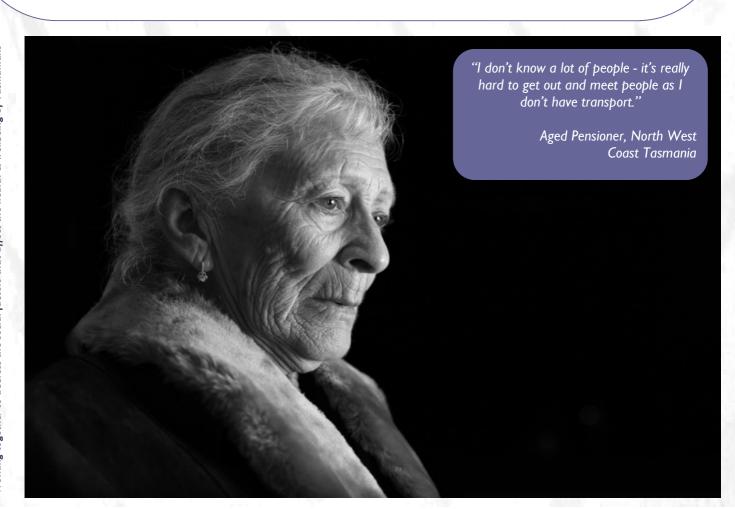
Factors that contribute to social exclusion include:
• denial of participation in civil society, such as through inequitable laws and regulations. Discrimination may be based on race, gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity, disability or social status
• denial of social goods and services, such as adequate housing, income security, language services, transport and health care
• denial of the opportunity to be actively involved in society (such as in social and cultural activities) due to low income, physical isolation or disability
• denial of sufficient economic resources to meet basic needs
• denial of the ability to participate in paid work (e.g. due to caring responsibilities).

Many aspects of our society marginalise people. People who may be more at risk of social exclusion include older people living alone; people with mental illness; Aboriginal people; gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people; people with a disability; refugees; women who have been subjected to domestic violence; and people experiencing addiction.

Social exclusion is a significant risk factor for health and wellbeing. People who are socially excluded are:
• more likely to experience stress, depression and poor mental health; and to commit suicide
• at increased risk of chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardio-vascular and respiratory diseases
• more likely to die at a younger age.

The Social Determinants of Health
Working together to address the social factors that affect the health & wellbeing of Tasmanians

"I don't know a lot of people - it's really hard to get out and meet people as I don't have transport."

Aged Pensioner, North West Coast Tasmania

Why is *social exclusion* an issue for the health of Tasmanians?

Many Tasmanians are on low incomes, experience poverty and financial hardship	Around one third of Tasmanians receive income support payments.[1] In 2014, 15% of Tasmanians lived below the poverty line (50% of median household income which equates to a disposable income of less than $400 per week for a single adult).[2] Demand for emergency relief has increased significantly in recent years. In 2009-2010, more than 25,000 Tasmanians accessed emergency relief.[3]
Many Tasmanians are homeless or experience housing stress	In 2011, there were almost 1,600 homeless people in Tasmania.[4] In Tasmania, almost ¼ of those on low incomes experience housing stress (where housing costs exceed 30% of disposable income).[5]
Many Tasmanians are unemployed and have low education levels	In March 2016, almost 7% of Tasmanians were unemployed, second only to South Australia and more than the National average.[6] Tasmania has a school retention rate through to Year 12 of 68% compared with 84% for Australia as a whole.[7] Half of all adults in Tasmania have poor literacy skills.[8]
Many Tasmanians are physically isolated and have poorer health outcomes	Ninety eight per cent (98%) of Tasmania's population falls within the 'inner regional' or 'outer regional' categories, 1.5% is 'remote' and 0.5% 'very remote' – a very different pattern from almost all other states and territories. On average, people who live in regional (rural) and remote areas are more likely to engage in behaviours associated with poorer health outcomes, such as smoking and physical inactivity.[9] Tasmanians in small rural communities have difficulty accessing transport and the services they need.[10]
Many Tasmanians are socially excluded because of who they are	There are about 74,000 people in Tasmania who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness or who are frail.[11] While this role can provide tremendous rewards, many carers also report challenges associated with their own health, employment and participation in society. Around ¼ of Tasmanians have some degree of disability.[11] Tasmanian's Anti-Discrimination Commission received 139 complaints relating to discrimination in the workplace in 2014-15; 28 of which were on the basis of disability.[12]
Social exclusion impacts mental health	People who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) have significantly poorer mental health and higher rates of suicide than other Australians.[13]

References & Resources

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2010, *Tasmanian State and Regional Indicators,* 1307.6: abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1307.6.
2. Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) 2014, *Poverty in Australia*: acoss.org.au/poverty-2.
3. Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) (Herzfeld M) 2010, *The Intersection of Emergency Food Relief and Food Security*.
4. Shelter Tasmania, Accessed May 2016, *Homelessness in Tas - Facts:* sheltertas.org.au/housing-in-tasmania/homelessness/some-facts.
5. Shelter Tasmania 2015, *So important to ease housing stress:* sheltertas.org.au/the-mercury-talking-point-so-important-to-ease-housing-stress.
6. Department of Treasury & Finance, Accessed May 2016, *Labour Force (ABS Cat No 6202.0):* treasury.tas.gov.au/domino/dtf/dtf.nsf/LookupFiles/Labour-Force.pdf/$file/Labour-Force.pdf.
7. ABS 2015, *4221.0 Schools Australia:* abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4221.02015?OpenDocument.
8. ABS 2008, *4228.0 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, Summary Results 2006:* abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/1307.6Feature+Article1Jun+2008.
9. Department of Health & Human Services 2013, *State of Public Health Report:* dhhs.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/132263/State_of_Public_Health_2013_LR.pdf.
10. Adams D 2009, *A Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania:* dpac.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/109616/Social_Inclusion_Strategy_Report.pdf.
11. ABS 2014, *4430.0 - Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, Tasmania, 2012,* Table 33: abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4430.0.
12. Banks R, *Anti-Discrimination Commissioner Annual Report, 2014-15:* equalopportunity.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/334780/oadc_annualreport2014-15.pdf.
13. National LGBTI Alliance (Rosenstreich G) 2013, *LGBTI People Mental Health & Suicide:* beyondblue.org.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/bw0258-lgbti-mental-health-and-suicide-2013-2nd-edition.pdf?sfvrsn=2.

Communities

- Identify community strengths and how these can be built on, rather than focusing on problems and weaknesses.

- Use existing community resources to help address social exclusion in the community - e.g. schools, the knowledge and skills of older people, Learning & Information Network Centres (LINCS), on-line access centres and community houses.

- Establish social enterprise programs to create employment in local areas.

- Speak out about social exclusion (write letters to politicians, become part of lobby groups or write to the media).

- Implement community-based programs that seek to enhance confidence and self-esteem.

- Create safe and welcoming communities that do not tolerate discrimination, and that are built for all ages and abilities.

- Celebrate migrant and refugee communities and their cultures.

- Ensure that not only those who have the loudest voices are heard.

- Enable participation for people who have disabilities and those who are physically isolated.

- Establish community gardens, community meal sharing programs, community arts programs and other opportunities for community members from all walks of life to get to know each other.

- Find out more about the arts and how it can enhance social inclusion in your community: *Putting people in the picture? The role of the arts in social inclusion:* minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/bitstream/ handle/11343/34370/66889_00002321_01_barraket_arts_social_inclusion_1.pdf?sequence=1.

Individuals

- Challenge your thoughts and behaviours in relation to discrimination.

- Become a volunteer for literacy, community transport, shared meals, gardening, community arts or befriending programs.

- Get to know your neighbours and people in the community who may be lonely.

- Speak out about social exclusion (write letters to politicians, become part of lobby groups or write to the media).

- Support people to have a voice, either through formal advocacy programs, or informally by providing peer support and friendship.

- Participate in capacity building programs in local communities to build skills and share resources.

Workplaces (Managers, Workers, Volunteers) & Service Providers

- Provide outreach services, so instead of expecting those who are socially excluded to come to you, travel to them.

- Ensure that people from non-English speaking backgrounds and those with disabilities are able to access services.

- Develop workplace policies that will ensure that discrimination does not occur. Ensure all staff are aware of such policies. Invest in staff training such as the Beyond Blue's *Heads Up* program: headsup.org.au.

- Develop community and health information resources that recognise the low literacy levels in Tasmania and the need for culture-based literacy.

- Apply principles from *Asset Based Community Development,* which focus on strengths rather than weaknesses within communities.

- When employing people, do not discriminate with regard to place of residence.

- Recognise that not everyone is able to work. Provide programs that ensure that those who are not in the paid workforce do not become socially isolated and suffer poor mental health.

- Recognise that some people are at increased risk of social exclusion and respond appropriately to differing needs.

- Support emergency relief workers to provide responses to the long-term needs of clients.

- Work in partnership with other organisations to provide comprehensive responses to complex needs.

- Provide free or subsidised services for people on low incomes.

- Provide flexible work environments for people who have caring responsibilities.

Politicians & Governments

- Implement the recommendations of the *Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania* and its associated reports and recommendations.

- Increase income support payments to a level sufficient to provide recipients with a basic acceptable standard of living.

- Ensure all Tasmanians have access to appropriate housing.

- Make it easier for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market to obtain and keep work - e.g. by widening the availability of jobs suitable for single parents, carers and people with mental and physical health problems.

- Act on the recommendations of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner: humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination.

- Provide meaningful support for social enterprise programs.

- Support the establishment of local and sustainable food supply systems in Tasmania.

- Welcome and support refugees and migrants.

- Recognise and value Tasmania's ageing population and make the most of their knowledge and skills.

- Listen to Tasmanian Aboriginal people and work together to improve Aboriginal health and wellbeing.

- Increase investment in mental health promotion and prevention programs. Provide adequate support for people experiencing poor mental health.

- Listen to the voices of people with disabilities and their Carers and provide them with appropriate support services and opportunities to make meaningful contributions to Tasmanian communities.

SDoHAN
Tasmania's Social Determinants of Health Advocacy Network

Australian
HEALTH
PROMOTION
Association

TasCOSS