



Tasmanian Council of Social Service

TasCOSS Budget Priorities Statement

Resilience, Participation, Health & Wellbeing

25 October 2013

About TasCOSS

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

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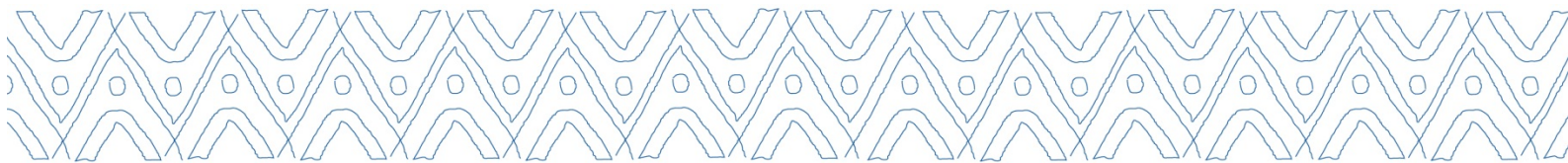
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Introduction

The Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) is pleased to submit this Budget Priorities Statement to the 2014-15 State Budget process.

TasCOSS is the peak body for the Tasmanian non-government community services sector and represents the interests of its members, the broader community services sector and the low-income, disadvantaged and vulnerable Tasmanians that the sector serves and supports.

This submission represents the priority issues and areas of need that have been identified through consultation with our members and the sector in Tasmania's three regions, and through TasCOSS policy research and analysis processes.

As the 2014-15 State Budget will be the first in the next term of government in Tasmania, TasCOSS believes it is vital that a positive and achievable vision is set in place for the next four years. We therefore present this submission as such a vision with three key outcomes for all Tasmanians:

- Resilience
- Participation
- Health and wellbeing

TasCOSS believes that these outcomes, for individuals and communities, underpin a good quality of life and should be possible to achieve in an affluent country like Australia.

Resilience

For individuals as well as communities, resilience is crucial to taking up opportunities, adapting to change and bouncing back from setbacks.

The concept of resilience brings together self-confidence, flexibility, resourcefulness, persistence and optimism. It can be fostered through life skills-building, through confidence-building, through learning to engage in self-care and through strong family and/or social connections.

Resilience is a crucial component of genuine empowerment.

Participation

Participation in all aspects of life - in social life, in economic activity, in learning, in political affairs - is both an end and a means to individual and community health, wellbeing and resilience. All of these areas of participation are interrelated; none can be addressed in isolation.

Fostering participation is not just the job of government. For example, it is increasingly recognised that cultural issues - including a persistent under-valuing of education by many Tasmanian families - play an important role in discouraging educational participation in the state.

Nevertheless, government direction has the ability to address entrenched attitudes in the community as well as among service providers and to set new narratives for the state.

Health and wellbeing

The health and wellbeing of individuals and communities are key objectives for a

thriving society and thriving economy. Enjoying health and wellbeing enables individuals to live full lives, to actively contribute to their communities, and to enjoy the full benefits of life in a free and democratic society.

While health status can be measured to a large extent, wellbeing is a more subjective state determined by individuals for themselves. However, there are various factors – tangible and intangible – that contribute to wellbeing in our society including enjoying optimum health, having an adequate income, a safe and secure home, positive relationships, support when you need it and opportunities for social and economic participation.

Health and wellbeing underpin not only good quality of life for individuals and communities, but also the strength of the economy. They affect participation in economic activities, including workforce participation, as well as income and spending capacity and productivity.

TasCOSS believes that the government must actively support and promote individual and community health and wellbeing, in the interests of a fair and thriving society and economy.

Governments can and must develop and maintain the foundations on which resilience, participation and health and wellbeing are based. But Government cannot achieve this alone. To improve the resilience, participation and health and wellbeing of individuals and communities, it is crucial to facilitate effective, efficient and connected community service organisations that can build local

partnerships and services with individuals, families, businesses and communities.

In order to create a sustainable and thriving Tasmania, TasCOSS believes that achieving the outcomes – resilience, participation and health and wellbeing - is a key role of Tasmania's next government over its four-year term. The priorities for realising these outcomes are detailed in this submission.

Summary of recommendations

Housing

Recommendation 1

Relieve Housing Tasmania of its historical debt to the Commonwealth Government by moving repayment of the debt to the Finance General budget for at least the next four years.

Recommendation 2

Replace all PureHeat heaters in Housing Tasmania properties over four years.

Recommendation 3

Maintain funding at current levels to the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) to permit the continued construction of new affordable housing properties across the state.

Recommendation 4

Expand the HomeShare and Streets Ahead schemes to support low-income Tasmanians into home ownership, possibly through adoption of some variation of the West Australian Keystart model.

Employment

Recommendation 5

Appoint a Minister for Employment to head a Tasmanian Office of Employment to focus on employment issues and to strategically drive employment opportunities in the state.

Recommendation 6

Develop and fund workplace-based programs that prepare unemployed Tasmanians for employment by providing opportunities for workplace experience

through internship, mentorship and/or volunteering programs.

Recommendation 7

Provide funding for more 'stepping stone' vocational courses (Certificates 1-3) in a variety of settings, including community-based settings such as neighbourhood or community houses, training cafes and other enterprises that integrate training and study with work experience, such as Studentworks in Launceston.

Recommendation 8

Allocate funding to non-government organisations to provide specialised employment support for people who experience ongoing barriers to finding and maintaining work – including long-term unemployed; people living with mental illness, other health problems or disability; new arrivals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and single parents.

Education

Recommendation 9

Fund the development, in collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders, of:

1. A broad-based coalition/network dedicated to promoting a fundamental shift in attitudes towards the value of lifelong learning in the Tasmanian community.
2. A broad-scale, multi-year public campaign designed to encourage the valuing of education in Tasmania, for example a "Learn for Your Life" campaign.

Recommendation 10

Fund the creation of Pathway Planner-type positions in all public primary schools to encourage children to explore and

form educational and vocational aspirations.

Recommendation 11

Extend Pathway Planning to Year 7 students in public high schools and increase the number of planner hours available to each student to encourage at-risk students to maintain vocational and educational aspirations across the transition from primary to the early years of high school, as well as to stay motivated and focused across their high school years.

Recommendation 12

Provide funding for more support in schools for vulnerable students, including additional positions for psychologists, social workers, guidance officers and teachers' aides.

Recommendation 13

Provide additional funding for engagement programs within schools and for alternative education programs.

Transport

Recommendation 14

Fund the development, establishment and ongoing maintenance of a one-stop transport website for the state.

Recommendation 15

With the Commonwealth Government, fund Community Transport Services Tasmania (CTST) to employ and support 10 full-time coordinators for their volunteer transport services.

Recommendation 16

Increase funding for Tasmanian bus industry infrastructure and planning.

Affordable essentials

Recommendation 17

Provide funding for a community-based 'disconnection crisis intervention service' to assist and support low-income households facing imminent disconnection from electricity supply due to the inability to pay.

Recommendation 18

Fund Sustainable Living Tasmania to provide energy-efficiency advice to 3,000 low-income public and private renters annually.

Recommendation 19

Address the unregulated and inequitable situation of tenants in relation to household water supply by:

- Introducing a concession for eligible tenants to assist with water usage charges passed on by property owners.
- Regulating the procedure by which tenants are charged for water use by property owners and their agents.

Recommendation 20

Provide funding for a utilities consumer advocacy project to ensure that low-income and vulnerable residential consumers' interests are represented in policy and regulatory activities associated with the provision of essential energy and water and sewerage services in Tasmania.

Protections for Vulnerable Tasmanians

Recommendation 21

Recommit current levels of funding for the *Protecting Older Tasmanians from Abuse* strategy for the next four years and provide additional funding for:

1. the Tasmanian Elder Abuse Helpline.

2. the *Elder Abuse Is Not Okay* public education campaign (television advertisements and other promotional material).
3. COTA Tasmania's financial elder abuse peer education program *You're Worth It*.

Recommendation 22

Introduce a \$1 bet limit on poker machines to reduce the impact of gambling problems on low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians.

Recommendation 23

Establish and fund individual advocacy services for Tasmanian children and young people under the care of the State.

Recommendation 24

Provide additional funding to fully implement the *Mental Health Act 2012*, including for:

- the Mental Health Tribunal
- the Mental Health Tribunal Representation Scheme
- mental health advocacy services
- Legal Aid.

Recommendation 25

Provide establishment and recurrent funding for a state-wide peak consumer organisation to actively represent the interests of Tasmanians with a disability.

Recommendation 26

Fund the establishment of a Community and Disability Services Commissioner to provide consumers of community and disability services with an avenue for redress for complaints about community sector service providers, and to ensure that the sector continues to deliver consistently high-quality services.

Spatial Planning

Recommendation 27

Fund the development and implementation of a Tasmanian State Policy on Affordable Housing.

Government and community engagement

Recommendation 28

Adequately fund the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the *Government's Community Engagement Framework* across all government agencies, and provide funding for training, as well as communications and promotion of the *Framework*.

Sector development

Recommendation 29

State and Commonwealth Governments to continue to negotiate to provide adequate funding beyond the 2015/16 forward estimates to meet community service organisations' increased wage obligations over the duration of the nine annual instalments stipulated by the Equal Remuneration Order for State funded, Commonwealth funded and Commonwealth-State Agreement funded programs.

Recommendation 30

The State Government to hold an open dialogue with the community sector to agree a renewed model of government funding for purchasing community services and allocating grants for delivering community services across government departments that recognises the full costs of operation, management and leadership, compliance, service delivery and innovation, replacing the

currently unclear and inadequate indexation formula.

Recommendation 31

The State Government ensures that the implementation of the Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act is appropriately resourced, including:

- That the community and voluntary sectors are funded to meet any increased costs associated with the Act; and
- That registration for volunteers is available at no cost.

Recommendation 32

That the State Government holds an open dialogue with the community services sector and other stakeholders to identify social outcomes it plans to invest in and considers funding for projects that achieve these outcomes through collective impact strategies.

Recommendation 33

That the State Government participates in developing agreed principles that underpin all multi-party partnerships and competitive tendering processes for community services in Tasmania. Such principles would acknowledge the importance of maintaining a diversity of organisational size and effective service choice for consumers.

Secondly, that independent brokering agents are resourced to facilitate partnership development and undertake some of the networking, tender writing and contract scrutiny on behalf of range of smaller to medium sized services.

Thirdly, government service agreements should specifically include resourcing for networking and partnership building to acknowledge that such work is integral to

effective service delivery for organisations of all sizes.

Recommendation 34

Expand investment in workforce development for building the cross-sector skills sets, qualifications, peer learning and resources needed to increase and retain effective professional and non-professional paid staff and volunteers across community services who can address the changing trends within service delivery and ensure that service delivery remains effective for our communities.

Recommendation 35

Provide access to data and funding for a regular cross-community sector environmental scan of the shape, scope, challenges and trends within the Tasmanian community sector workforce, in order to inform future strategic and operational workforce planning, investment and policies and to consider the impacts of workforce development initiatives.

Recommendation 36

Government to fund the development of the proposed Portable Long Service Leave (PLSL) scheme and draft legislation being developed by Workplace Standards Tasmania PLSL Working Group.

Recommendation 37

State Government to resource a working group in partnership with the not-for-profit sector to examine the impacts and costs of multiple reporting requirements across State and Commonwealth funding and compliance bodies, such as ACNC, ATO, ASIC and ORIC, with a view to streamlining these reporting requirements for Tasmanian not for profit organisations.

Recommendation 38

Government to review TasCOSS's forthcoming evaluation of the community sector's shared service and bulk purchasing needs with a view to being one of a number of seed funding partners to create further efficiencies for the sector.

Housing and housing affordability

Access to housing has emerged more strongly than ever in TasCOSS consultations as one of the most pressing issues facing low-income, disadvantaged and vulnerable Tasmanians.

Secure, appropriate and affordable housing is a fundamental social determinant of health, of participation and of resilience, with insecure housing linked to poor educational, employment and mental and physical health outcomes.

With the drop in Tasmania's housing affordability in recent years, housing stress in the State is high, due not only to higher property prices and construction costs, but also to a lack of supply of affordable private rental properties and a dwindling stock of public housing.

Notably, the affordability of housing options is not limited to the purchase or rental cost of a property. Sharp increases in the cost of essential services - in particular electricity and water - have left many Tasmanians struggling to keep owned or rented dwellings adequately heated and free of damp, as well as to pay high bills incurred through inefficient appliances, lack of insulation or leaky plumbing systems. The spiralling cost of insurance premiums is also emerging as a key issue in housing affordability.

Recommendation 1

Relieve Housing Tasmania of its historical debt to the Commonwealth Government by moving repayment of the debt to the

Finance General budget for at least the next four years.

Rationale:

Housing Tasmania struggles under its historical and continuing debt to the Commonwealth Government, currently at \$202.8 million. Annual repayments of principal and interest eat up a little over \$16 million a year, almost half of annual Commonwealth funding to the State for housing, and will continue to do so until 2042.

As a consequence of the need to service this debt, while also meeting ongoing costs, Housing Tasmania has accrued a substantial maintenance backlog - likely to stand after the latest stock transfer to community housing providers at around \$60 million - and has also been selling off properties at a rate of around 75 per year.

This situation leaves Housing Tasmania tenants in poorly maintained properties; leads to ongoing deterioration of properties due the inability to address maintenance issues promptly; and is leading to a reduction of public housing stock at precisely the moment when the need for such stock is rising.

Over the last 15-20 years, the Tasmanian Government has paid back all of its other debts, leaving the Housing Tasmania loan as the only significant exception to the government's debt-free status. The choice to prioritise other loans has stemmed at least in part from the fact that the terms and conditions of the housing debts are comparatively favourable.

TasCOSS understands the logic for not retiring in full a comparatively favourable debt. However, given that the decisions

to repay other loans in preference to the housing loan and to leave the housing loan in place have occurred as part of overall budget management, this debt should now be approached in the context of the whole State Budget.

TasCOSS strongly argues that Finance General take over the payments of principal and interest on this debt. We note that this situation is not without precedent; for instance, Finance General has appropriated an amount each year to pay principal and interest to Tascorp on behalf of Tasracing P/L.

Such a move will free up Commonwealth housing funding for better uses—in the first instance, for overcoming Housing Tasmania's maintenance backlog, which, in the absence of debt repayments, could be wiped out in four years. It is estimated that once the backlog has been addressed, the agency will be able to meet all future maintenance requirements from rental income, putting the agency on a self-sustaining footing.

Estimated cost: \$16 million per annum, for a total of \$64 million over four years.

Responsible Department: Department of Health & Human Services

Recommendation 2

Replace all PureHeat heaters in Housing Tasmania properties over four years.

Rationale:

Some 7,500 Housing Tasmania properties are still heated with high-wattage PureHeat electric heaters. TasCOSS and Shelter Tasmania consultations have indicated that these energy-intensive heaters can be ruinously expensive to run.

As a consequence, tenants are left in the position of having to ration heating, leaving houses cold and mouldy, and affecting family and social life.

Housing Tasmania estimates that each heater costs around \$4,000 to replace with a good-quality heat pump, taking into account the costs of changing fuse boxes, and so on. A phased replacement of all these heaters over four years would leave present and future Housing Tasmania tenants significantly better off, as well as saving Housing Tasmania money in maintenance of mould-damaged properties.

Estimated cost: \$7.5 million per annum, for a total of \$30 million over four years.

Responsible Department: Department of Health & Human Services

Recommendation 3

Maintain funding at current levels to the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) to permit the continued construction of new affordable housing properties across the state.

Rationale:

As noted by Shelter Tasmania, NRAS is a triple winner for Tasmania: it stimulates investment in new home construction, provides employment and increases housing supply for low-middle income earners. Moreover, it takes the pressure off the private market and provides the community housing sector with an economically viable means of growth.

The Tasmanian Government's commitment since 2008 of \$40 million to the National Rental Affordability Scheme has already resulted in the delivery of 496

homes in Tasmania with a further 1,100 projected for completion by 2016. This is a significant accomplishment that should be built on through a continued commitment to the scheme.

The Tasmanian Government should lobby the Commonwealth to deliver an additional 50,000 NRAS allocations following the completion of Round 5 after 2015, and should continue to support the program at current levels.

Priority properties for construction should include:

- Small clusters of single-bedroom housing in areas other than inner Hobart.
- A small-cluster model of single-bedroom housing specifically for migrants and refugees.
- A culturally appropriate housing option for elderly Aboriginal people in the north of the state.
- New universal design properties in existing areas of social housing, permitting older people to downsize into disability-friendly accommodation without leaving their neighbourhoods and losing access to friends, medical providers and other services with which they are familiar.

Estimated cost: \$20 million per annum, for a total of \$80 million over four years.

Responsible Department: Department of Health & Human Services

Recommendation 4

Expand the HomeShare and Streets Ahead schemes to support low-income Tasmanians into home ownership, possibly through adoption of some variation of the West Australian Keystart model.

Rationale:

The security of home ownership is one of the best sustainers of resilience but home loans are out of reach for many low-income Tasmanians. The successful HomeShare and Streets Ahead schemes deserve continuing support and expansion, whether simply in their existing forms or through the adoption of some of the loan mechanisms provided by the West Australian low-deposit Keystart Home Loan Scheme,¹ recommended by economist Saul Eslake and Shelter Tasmania as a valid, safe option for low-income buyers.

Estimated cost: Uncosted

Responsible Department: Department of Health & Human Services

¹ See: <http://www.keystart.com.au/>

Employment

Unemployment in Tasmania is not only on the rise but is also becoming seriously entrenched. Tasmania has the longest duration of unemployment of all states and territories, as well as the highest proportion of both long-term (over 52 weeks) and very long-term (over 104 weeks) unemployed.²

The labour force participation rate in Tasmania is also unenviable, standing at around 60% in recent years, compared to a national rate of around 65%.³

Behind these statistics are people - Tasmanian women and men, young and old, skilled and unskilled - who are locked out of the labour market, many of whom survive on inadequate Federal Government income support payments.

In August 2013, an estimated 21,500 Tasmanian people were unemployed and looking for work, the highest number since 1999. Close to 4,300 Tasmanians have been unemployed for over a year, of these, more than half have been unemployed for over two years.⁴

A clear priority emerging from our state-wide consultations was employment. For those able and willing to work, employment was seen as the key to health and wellbeing, participation and resilience. Sustainable, secure and rewarding work has clear benefits not only for individuals but also for communities and for the State's economy.

² ABS 6921.0, Labour Force: Detailed. June 2013.

³ DEEWR Trends: The Tasmanian Labour Market Review, August 2013.

⁴ DEEWR Trends: The Tasmanian Labour Market Review, August 2013.

While the Federal Government has responsibility for many labour market programs, employment services and for providing income support payments to job-seekers, the State Government also has a central role to play in addressing unemployment.

Recommendation 5

Appoint a Minister for Employment to head a Tasmanian Office of Employment to focus on employment issues and to strategically drive employment opportunities in the State.

Rationale:

Unemployment, as a serious and growing problem in Tasmania, must be tackled strategically. Almost all other Australian states and territories have a minister for employment with the responsibility to create and improve employment opportunities.

TasCOSS believes it is time to reinstate a minister for employment in Tasmania and to create a supporting Office of Employment (or a similar work unit) to undertake research, analysis, strategic and long-term planning, and program development with the goal to substantially increase employment opportunities in the state.

The Minister and Office of Employment would work with all stakeholders on both the labour demand and supply sides, including other government departments, schools, colleges, Skills Tasmania, TasTAFE, the University of Tasmania, the business and community services sectors, and communities to develop the readiness of Tasmanians to participate in a growing

workforce, and to create more employment opportunities.

Estimated cost: *No cost – this could be achieved by restructuring within an existing department to create an Office of Employment or a labour and employment work unit.*

Responsible Departments: *Department of Economic Development, Tourism & the Arts and/or Department of Premier & Cabinet*

Recommendation 6

Develop and fund workplace-based programs that prepare unemployed Tasmanians for employment by providing opportunities for workplace experience through internship, mentorship and/or volunteering programs.

Rationale:

A significant number of unemployed Tasmanians face a major barrier to employment due to their lack of workforce experience. While they may have the necessary qualifications or skills, they are unable to get a job because they haven't had a job or the experience that an industry requires. This cycle of exclusion can be broken through programs that provide opportunities for workplace-based internships, mentorships with workers and/or volunteers.

Opportunities to participate in the workforce, even for a limited period, have the potential to equip job-seekers not only with experience, but also with the contacts, networks and confidence necessary to get a job in the future.

Funding could be provided to deliver these programs through existing community service organisations.

Estimated cost: *Uncosted – would depend on the scope of the programs and the avenues through which they would be provided.*

Responsible Department: *Department of Economic Development, Tourism & the Arts*

Recommendation 7

Provide funding for more 'stepping stone' vocational courses (Certificates 1-3) in a variety of settings, including community-based settings such as neighbourhood or community houses, training cafes and other enterprises that integrate training and study with work experience, such as Studentworks in Launceston.

Rationale:

Access to training courses, particularly 'stepping stone' or entry-level courses, is often limited to those in school or already in the workforce, and to those with the confidence to enrol in a training institution. Entry-level courses have been offered in some neighbourhood centres for a number of years and these have been successful in increasing access to training for many who would not have enrolled in institution-based training.

Many attending our state-wide consultations, particularly in the North and North-West, believed the extension of access to 'stepping stone' vocational courses in their regions would provide vital opportunities to many job-seekers – and pre-job-seekers – to participate in training and to better equip themselves with skills

and confidence for their eventual entry into the workforce.

Estimated cost: *Uncosted*

Responsible Department(s): *Department of Education, TasTAFE and Skills Tasmania*

Recommendation 8

Allocate funding to non-government organisations to provide specialised employment support for people who experience ongoing barriers to finding and maintaining work – including long-term unemployed; people living with mental illness, other health problems or disability; new arrivals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and single parents.

Rationale:

Many disadvantaged job-seekers experience barriers not only to becoming work-ready, but also to both gaining and maintaining employment. Too often we have heard that much sought-after and valued employment can be derailed in the first 12 months without adequate support.

Under the program recommended here, specialist employment support workers (such as mental health, drug and alcohol, youth, refugee or migrant support workers) located in community organisations are available on request from an employee or employer to provide workplace support to assist the employee to maintain their job, or to the employer to develop strategies to maintain employment.

The support workers would provide information and advice to employers about the particular barriers faced by

vulnerable employees, and support and equip both employee and employer to manage employment in a positive and sensitive manner.

Estimated cost: *Uncosted*

Responsible Department: *Department of Economic Development, Tourism & the Arts and the Social Inclusion Unit, Department of Premier & Cabinet*

Education

Tasmania's low educational retention, completion and attainment rates are a matter of perennial concern. Low education levels have negative implications for future health and wellbeing; limit people's ability to participate in future education and in the workforce; and make people less resilient to shocks in their personal and working lives.

Across the board, TasCOSS consultations and academic and government studies have identified low educational levels as key factors holding back not only low-income, disadvantaged and vulnerable Tasmanians themselves, but the state as a whole. A cultural shift in attitudes towards education, as well as a wider range of options for students at risk of disengagement or already disengaged, will be vital to addressing this pressing issue.

Recommendation 9

Fund the development, in collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders, of:

- A broad-based coalition/network dedicated to promoting a fundamental shift in attitudes towards the value of lifelong learning in the Tasmanian community.
- A broad-scale, multi-year public campaign designed to encourage the valuing of education in Tasmania, for example a "Learn for Your Life" campaign.

Rationale:

Cultural issues, in particular family educational attitudes and aspirations,

play a substantial—although not all-determining—role in Tasmania's low educational retention, completion and attainment rates. While the most commonly cited example of a cultural block to educational retention is the Year 10 leaver's culture, which inhibits continuing to Years 11 and 12, cultural factors can lead to a devaluing of education as early as the late primary years.

TasCOSS consultations have revealed extensive enthusiasm for a broadly inclusive project aimed at turning around the chronic undervaluing of education and learning in general prevalent among deeply disengaged families and communities. The concept of such a campaign has already been raised by a range of individuals and organisations, from University of Tasmania researchers to members of the business community.

Such a campaign should be spearheaded by the Department of Premier & Cabinet to give it the highest possible priority and visibility and to ensure that all government agencies can have input.

Such a campaign requires at least two components:

1. The creation of a broad-based coalition/network dedicated to promoting cultural change. The 26TEN network and members program offers a good example of how the collective efforts of government, business and the community efforts can be harnessed to raise awareness and promote a change in attitudes towards learning. A new network should bring together champions from the full spectrum of the Tasmanian

community, including from the community sector, schools, LINC, TAFE and Registered Training Organisations, the AEU and other education stakeholders, the University of Tasmania and the business sector.

2. A public campaign. Turning around deeply entrenched attitudes will require a strong, steady, multi-modal, multi-year campaign, whose approach should be determined through the coalition/network to ensure appropriate content and tone. One possible approach would be a “Learn for Your Life” campaign, which could be directed at all ages; could encompass all stages of learning, from early childhood (Launching into Learning) to adulthood (from 26Ten to university); could highlight all types of learning, from academic to vocational training; and could draw on stories from the community of successful lifelong learning across different generations within families.

Estimated cost:

1. Coalition/network: \$430,000 per annum (comparable cost for the 26TEN network)
2. Public campaign: Uncosted

Responsible Department: Department of Premier & Cabinet

Recommendation 10

Fund the creation of Pathway Planner-type positions in all public primary schools to encourage children to explore and form educational and vocational aspirations.

TasCOSS consultations suggest the importance of encouraging children to develop and maintain aspirations to undercutting the cultural devaluing of education visible in many parts of the community, which can begin to manifest as early as primary school.

All Tasmanian public primary schools should have at least one Pathway Planner-type position dedicated to helping students explore vocational aspirations and understand what educational path will further these hopes and dreams. These positions should be rolled out immediately in all public primary schools that have a high concentration of low-income and disadvantaged students, and should be expanded to all public primary schools over time, with a position-student ratio sufficient to permit at least quarterly meetings with each student.

Estimated cost: Uncosted

Responsible Department: Department of Education

Recommendation 11

Extend Pathway Planning to Year 7 students in public high schools and increase the number of planner hours available to each student to encourage at-risk students to maintain vocational and educational aspirations across the transition from primary to the early years of high school, as well as to stay motivated and focused across their high school years.

Rationale:

TasCOSS consultations have indicated that supporting the transition between primary and secondary schooling is vital—

particularly for at-risk students—to ensuring that aspirations are maintained and that pathways for achievement of goals are clear.

Extending Pathway Planning to Year 7 students is one obvious way of addressing this need. Across the high school years, planner-student ratios should be sufficient to permit at least monthly meetings with each student to ensure that they remain focused and goal-oriented. This suggests the need for a strong increase in the number of Pathway Planner positions across the state.

Estimated cost: Uncosted

Responsible Department: Department of Education

Recommendation 12

Provide funding for more support in schools for vulnerable students, including additional positions for psychologists, social workers, guidance officers, and teachers' aides.

Rationale:

Psychologists, social workers, guidance officers and teachers' aides are critical for the support of vulnerable, disadvantaged and traumatised students, including those with disabilities, recent arrivals, those who have experienced family violence and those who experience bullying and exclusion.

TasCOSS consultations suggest that the number of these support positions across the state is inadequate, resulting in massive caseloads and a focus on crisis management rather than prevention and integration.

In particular, the Department should employ eight more school psychologists to fulfil the Government's 2010 election promise of an additional 12 such positions.

Estimated cost: Uncosted

Responsible Department: Department of Education

Recommendation 13

Provide additional funding for engagement programs within schools and for alternative education programs.

Rationale:

Tasmania has an ongoing and apparently increasing problem with students who are disengaged and/or excluded from schools. TasCOSS member organisations report that many primary school-aged children who present to their services have been limited by schools to part-time attendance or are regularly suspended as a result of behavioural issues.

While TasCOSS recognises that dealing with disruptive influences in schools can be a difficult issue, the exclusion of children, especially of very young children, is not an effective behaviour management strategy in the long term and has the potential to lay the foundation for total disengagement from school and from all forms of education for life. Furthermore, exclusion from school, either through self-exclusion or suspension, shifts problems from schools to parents, who often have little capacity to manage, and/or to under-resourced community service organisations.

TasCOSS believes that this must be urgently addressed with funding for engagement and support programs.

More programs must be introduced – and those that are working (such as Big Picture schools) extended – to address the problems of disengagement and exclusion. Programs need to involve schools, parents (who may also need support) and communities, including community service organisations such as neighbourhood houses and community centres.

There is also a pressing need for alternative education opportunities for students unable to function in traditional school environments. Such programs might include community-based programs for young parents who have left the formal education system and for young offenders. The most effective of such programs appear to be those which have some linkage to the formal education system, permitting young people to remain engaged/re-engage with the mainstream at some stage, and which have a clear plan for what happens to young people after they finish with the program. The Studentworks and Training Options and Opportunities for Learning (TOOL) programs are examples of successful programs of this kind. However, most of these programs suffer from chronic funding shortfalls and marginalisation from mainstream education.

Estimated cost: *Uncosted*

Responsible Department(s): *Department of Education, Department of Health & Human Services, Department of Justice*

Transport

The ability to get where you need to go has again emerged in TasCOSS consultations as a key issue for transport-disadvantaged Tasmanians—people who do not own or operate a vehicle due to factors such as age, disability, ill health or financial constraints.

Lack of transport remains a key barrier to people taking up and continuing with education, training and employment, as well as limiting access to medical and social services, healthy food and other necessary supplies, and social contact.

The pressures on existing transport services are only likely to intensify with the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, which is likely to lead to a sharp increase in demand for disability-accessible transport.

Recommendation 14

Fund the development, establishment and ongoing maintenance of a one-stop transport website for the state.

Rationale:

Both the general Tasmanian public and visitors to the state badly need a comprehensive, up-to-date, easily accessible source of information about the full range of transport options available in the state. Other states have successfully developed one-stop-shop websites that serve the needs of locals and tourists alike (see, for example, Brisbane's Translink, <http://translink.com.au> and NSW's country transport website, <http://www.countrytransport.131500.com.au>).

Funding should be allocated for the development, establishment and ongoing maintenance of a website, potentially accessed through the Service Tasmania website, that will enable users to enter points of departure/destination across the state and receive a summary of the full range of transport options available, including for-profit and not-for-profit providers (including timetables and route maps), car pooling/sharing options, and walking and cycle routes.

Estimated cost: \$50,000 to develop and launch, plus ongoing maintenance costs.

Responsible Department: Department of Premier & Cabinet

Recommendation 15

With the Commonwealth Government, fund Community Transport Services Tasmania (CTST) to employ and support 10 full-time coordinators for their volunteer transport services.

Rationale:

CTST, as the largest provider of not-for-profit door-to-door transport services in the state, plays a key role in meeting the needs of older and disabled Tasmanians currently providing transport to 2,460 clients state-wide, with a total of 91,151 trips in 2012-2013 through use of volunteer drivers and funding through HACC.

However, current HACC funding is not sufficient to employ coordinators full-time; at the moment, coordinators are on duty for the most part only on weekday mornings. As a consequence, clients who need short-notice assistance in the afternoons or early the following day are not able to access it, and those needing

assistance over the weekend are not able to book transport after Friday morning.

Furthermore, because such needs remain invisible, CTST faces constraints in its ability to engage in forward planning for allocation of resources—a serious problem in a context where the service’s client list continues to grow rapidly with 993 new clients registered in 2012-2013.

As noted above, this situation is likely to intensify with the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, which is likely to lead to a sharp increase in demand.

Estimated cost: \$43,600 in 2014-15 (this represents the State Government’s 20% share of HACCC funding for CTST in 2014-15 – from a total of \$218,000). (Plus appropriate increments for cost increases over the forward estimates)

Responsible Department: Department of Health & Human Services

Recommendation 16

Increase funding for Tasmanian bus industry infrastructure and planning.

Rationale:

Within Tasmania’s urban and non-urban areas, bus services are the most important transport alternative to the private vehicle, both for transport-disadvantaged Tasmanians and for the general population.

The Tasmanian bus industry requires additional funding to:

- Replace buses to meet Disability Discrimination Act requirements. People in northern suburbs of Launceston, for example, often have to wait through several scheduled

buses before an accessible bus arrives. Metro representatives say that it is difficult to see how existing funding will enable them to meet the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport requirement of 90% of general access services provided by accessible buses by 2017.

- Provide better shelters at bus stops. At the moment, a funding stream is not provided for bus-stop infrastructure, making it impossible for the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport requirement of 90% of bus stops being fully accessible by 2017 to be met.
- Provide better passenger information (for instance, schedules for Launceston and Burnie showing times of accessible buses).
- Pursue and better implement integrated ticketing and fares between all general access operators.

Estimated cost: Uncosted

Responsible Department: Department of Infrastructure, Energy & Resources

Affordable essentials

Low-income households in Tasmania continue to struggle to afford to pay for essentials such as electricity, gas, water, telecommunications, transport and food. Many people living on Commonwealth Government income support payments, and particularly those living on the Newstart Allowance, spend almost all of their income on essentials. Others with irregular, insecure or very low-paid work also struggle to cover the basics.

Some households, unable to meet the costs of debt and ongoing electricity usage, are disconnected and live without electricity.

A major concern of TasCOSS is the inability of Tasmanian consumers of essential utilities – energy and water and sewerage services – to have a voice in the significant changes being made to the provision of these services in Tasmania. These changes, involving prices, metering, service levels, the introduction of retail competition for electricity supply, among other issues, have had and will continue to have a major impact on consumers. Yet there is no State Government support for consumers of these services to have their voices heard.

Recommendation 17

Provide funding for a community-based 'disconnection crisis intervention service' to assist and support low-income households facing imminent disconnection from electricity supply due to the inability to pay.

Rationale:

TasCOSS is increasingly concerned about the apparent inability of many low-income households to afford the electricity they need to adequately heat their homes. Our member organisations consistently identify electricity bills as a major financial stress on the low-income household budgets and regularly tell us of seeing clients who have been disconnected, some for long periods of time.

Once disconnected, Aurora requires an upfront payment of one third of the outstanding debt before reconnection will be arranged. Figures from Aurora Energy indicate that only around 34% of disconnected customers were reconnected within a seven-day period in the last quarter of 2012-13.⁵

In addition, many Tasmanian households carry very high levels of electricity debt. For an 18-month period in 2010 to 2012, Aurora stopped all residential disconnections while their new 'customer care and billing' system was installed and tested. In this period it appears that no alternative debt management measures were put into place with the consequence that many low-income households accumulated very high levels of debt. In June 2013, over 500 Tasmanian households had a debt to Aurora of more than \$2,500.

These large debts put a major strain on already stretched household budgets and, with the need to also pay for continuing usage, leave many households vulnerable to long-term disconnection

⁵ Aurora Energy retail performance report to Australian Energy Regulator 2012-13.

and its attendant hardship and serious health and safety risks.

While we know that retailers are required to provide Hardship Programs for customers experiencing serious payment difficulties, these programs do not provide adequate assistance to customers with long-term financial difficulties.

TasCOSS would like to see a portion of the dividends resulting from the substantial profits enjoyed by Tasmania's electricity companies in 2012-13 directed to assisting Tasmanians who have been or are in danger of being disconnected.

Funds would be used to directly assist households facing imminent disconnection for inability to pay. At-risk customers would be referred by electricity retailers to trained community service workers (located in existing services) who would provide assistance and support through case management-style intervention.

This would involve crisis and financial counselling; assistance with debt management; energy-efficiency advice and retrofitting; referral to appropriate assistance (for instance to NILS for help with purchasing a more affordable heating appliance); and hands-on education on household energy use.

The aim of the service would be to avoid disconnection and, through a variety of strategies, to enable more affordable electricity use for the household over the long term.

If funding is committed to this project, TasCOSS is prepared to facilitate, in consultation with appropriate community services sector organisations, energy retailers, consumers and the Government,

the development of an efficient and effective service model, to be located within existing services to achieve the proposed outcome of preventing disconnection and the hardship associated with it.

Estimated cost: *Uncosted (cost would depend on the service model developed and the geographical scope of the service).*

Responsible Department: *Department of Infrastructure, Energy & Resources and/or Social Inclusion Unit, Department of Premier & Cabinet*

Recommendation 18

Fund Sustainable Living Tasmania to provide energy-efficiency advice to 3,000 low-income public and private renters annually.

Rationale:

Healthy housing—defined as both sound and affordable to heat/cool—is a necessity for maintaining good physical and mental health. People in unhealthy housing are more likely to suffer from respiratory conditions as well as bacterial and viral infections.

Sustainable Living Tasmania has delivered two highly successful energy-efficiency advice and upgrade programs to Housing Tasmania tenants (the Energy Champions program, funded by DHHS, which has already assisted some 2,000 households over 12 months) and low-income private rental tenants (the Power Savings for Tenants program, funded by the Climate Change Office, which has already assisted some 800 households over two years).

Housing Tasmania research indicates that participants in the Energy Champions program are saving around \$230 per annum through draught-proofing, efficient lights, hot water systems upgrades, and behavioural changes, with concomitant reductions in dampness and mould. Power Savings for Tenants program monitoring reports indicate that participants were saving around 10% of the average electricity bill.

Consultations with Sustainable Living Tasmania indicate that thanks to the training of assessors already made possible by these programs, SLT now has the capacity to handle up to 3,000 packages per annum, at \$800 per household.

TasCOSS suggests prioritising:

- *New Housing Tasmania tenants.* Consultations with Housing Tasmania indicate that providing all new tenants—currently running at around 1,000 per annum—with advice comparatively early after arriving in a property (around the six-week mark) has the potential not only to save tenants money, but also to save Housing Tasmania money in maintenance, as mould problems are less likely to develop or to get out of control.
- *New purchasers of HT properties under the HomeShare and Streets Ahead programs.* Energy-efficiency advice would provide an additional incentive to shift to home ownership.
- *Low-income private renters.* This group faces particular disadvantage, since they often cannot make necessary energy-saving changes to the properties they inhabit. Demand for assistance in this group is likely to be

high: the Power Savings for Tenants program has already engaged in significant groundwork to promote the program among low-income private rental tenants and referral agencies across the state, leading to more requests than could be filled in the last year.

Estimated cost: \$2.4 million per annum, for a total of \$9.6 million over four years.

Responsible Departments: Department of Health & Human Services, Climate Change Office, Department of Premier & Cabinet

Recommendation 19

Address the unregulated and inequitable situation of tenants in relation to household water supply by:

- Introducing a concession for eligible tenants to assist with water usage charges passed on by property owners.
- Regulating the procedure by which tenants are charged for water use by property owners and their agents.

Rationale:

The *Residential Tenancy Act 1997* allows property owners to pass on to tenants 'a water consumption charge' providing that the rental property is equipped with a water meter. The extension of the use of water meters throughout Tasmania in recent years – and increasing water prices – have seen an increase in the costs of water for tenants and in the numbers of tenants affected.

Currently the water and sewerage services concession is available only to eligible property owners for their principal

place of residence. Tenants living on low incomes remain ineligible for concessions.

Tenants in private rental accommodation, particularly those who live on low incomes, are among the most vulnerable Tasmanians. TasCOSS believes that the State Government must extend eligibility for a part-concession (applicable to charges based on metered usage) to tenants holding an appropriate concession card.

TasCOSS notes that the South Australian Government provides a 25% concession on water bills to tenants (with both a minimum and maximum annual cap).

TasCOSS is also concerned that there are no protocols or protections for tenants around the right of property owners to pass on to them metered usage charges for water. Property owners are not obliged to provide a copy of the water bill to tenants as evidence of their liability, or to provide a receipt for payments. Owners are not required to collect payment in any particular fashion or for any specified period (months, quarters or years). The unregulated nature of this right leaves tenants in a vulnerable position.

TasCOSS believes that the State Government must urgently regulate this exchange with set protocols requiring the provision to the tenant of a copy of each bill for which the tenant is partially liable, as well as a receipt for all payments made. The protocol should also stipulate the frequency of water usage payments which should be quarterly.

Estimated cost: \$855,000 in 2014-15, then \$3.113 million over the following three years.

Responsible Department: Department of Treasury & Finance

Recommendation 20

Provide funding for a utilities consumer advocacy project to ensure that low-income and vulnerable residential consumers' interests are represented in policy and regulatory activities associated with the provision of essential energy and water and sewerage services in Tasmania.

Rationale:

There is currently no Tasmanian Government support for consumer advocacy activities in essential services in spite of there being a clear asymmetry of resources, information and technical knowledge between the various stakeholders in these policy and regulatory arenas. Consumers are the least well-equipped to participate.

With major State Government-initiated reforms under way to the electricity supply industry, and with the water and sewerage services system restructuring in recent years, TasCOSS believes that the State Government should be enabling consumer voices to be heard in these reform processes.

TasCOSS receives funding from the Consumer Advocacy Panel for an Energy Research and Advocacy Project which supports the employment of a part-time (0.4 EFT) consumer advocate to work on energy issues relating to national energy laws and rules, regulation and the National Electricity Market.

This position, which focuses on the interests of low-income and vulnerable residential consumers, represents the sole

advocacy activity on behalf of residential energy consumers in Tasmania in a very dynamic and complex policy arena. Changes in national energy consumer advocacy arrangements may put this funding at risk in coming years.

Policy and structural reform, as well as ongoing regulatory processes in energy and water and sewerage in Tasmania have involved, and continue to involve, public consultation. The absence of support for consumer advocacy has meant that the interests of small consumers have been seriously under-represented in these processes.

Most other Australian states and territories support consumer advocacy in essential services, particularly for low-income and vulnerable consumers. We urge the Tasmanian Government to do the same.

TasCOSS would be interested in hosting a consumer advocacy project of this kind and would be prepared to develop a detailed submission for funding.

***Estimated cost:** \$98,000 per annum for employment of 1 FTE advocate plus travel, IT, office and other project costs (with appropriate increments for cost increases over the forward estimates)*

***Responsible Department:** Department of Infrastructure, Energy & Resources*

Protections for vulnerable Tasmanians

Assisting all Tasmanians to maximise their health and wellbeing, participation and resilience requires that particular protections are put in place – and adequately maintained – for the most vulnerable Tasmanians, and particularly for children and others vulnerable to neglect, physical and emotional abuse, and to harmful addiction.

The following recommendations relate to currently urgent imperatives for improved protections for vulnerable Tasmanians. There are obviously other areas where protections exist or are needed and TasCOSS will be identifying these as budget priorities over the term of the next government.

TasCOSS strongly believes that protection of society's most vulnerable people is a measure of a government's commitment to social justice and equity, and should therefore be prioritised by the Tasmanian Government.

Elder abuse prevention

Recommendation 21

Recommit current levels of funding for the *Protecting Older Tasmanians from Abuse* strategy for the next four years and provide additional funding for:

- The Tasmanian Elder Abuse Helpline
- The *Elder Abuse Is Not Okay* public education campaign (television advertisements and other promotional material)
- COTA Tasmania's financial elder abuse peer education program *You're Worth It*.

Rationale:

TasCOSS has been a strong advocate for an elder abuse prevention strategy in Tasmania for many years, and acknowledges the excellent foundation work that has been done under the three-year *Protecting Older Tasmanians from Abuse* strategy, in spite of the reduction in funding made available to that strategy. Given this laudable beginning, TasCOSS argues strongly for the continuation of funding for the strategy beyond its initial three-year period.

The number of calls received by the Tasmanian Elder Abuse Helpline has exceeded expectations, and data collected from callers clearly demonstrates that the *Elder Abuse Is Not Okay* television and print campaign has been successful in raising awareness and linking people to assistance.⁶ This public awareness raising and education must continue to be funded to ensure that the elder abuse prevention messages reach as widely as possible in the Tasmanian community.

The calls to the Helpline have confirmed that, while more than one form of abuse is typically present, financial elder abuse is one of the most common forms of abuse experienced by older Tasmanians.⁷ The award-winning financial elder abuse peer education project, *You're Worth It*, established by COTA under a Tasmanian Community Fund grant, has

⁶ 53% of callers found out about the Helpline through the *Elder Abuse Is Not Okay* television ads – *Ten-month report of the Tasmanian Elder Abuse and Referral Helpline from 23 August 2012 – 30 June 2013*, Advocacy Tasmania, July 2013

⁷ *Ten-month report of the Tasmanian Elder Abuse and Referral Helpline from 23 August 2012 – 30 June 2013*, Advocacy Tasmania, July 2013

demonstrated its value as an effective mechanism for providing information and support to older Tasmanians. Having delivered information sessions to more than 500 older Tasmanians, evaluation of the project has highlighted its success in actively preventing financial elder abuse in Tasmania.⁸

Ongoing and additional funding for the very successful components of the strategy would allow the messages and support to be extended across the Tasmanian community. TasCOSS strongly recommends that the State Government continue to fund the strategy, with additional funds provided for these important elements.

Estimated Cost:

Continued funding of the Protecting Older Tasmanians from Abuse strategy at current levels (with appropriate increments for cost increases over the forward estimates), plus:

1. *An additional \$20,000 for the operation of the Tasmanian Elder Abuse Helpline (total funds \$140,000 per annum)*
2. *An additional \$20,000 for Elder Abuse Is Not Okay TV advertisements (total funds \$80,000)
Additional funds of \$15,000 for supplementary promotional material*
3. *Additional funds of \$100,000 over three years to incorporate the COTA peer education program into the funded strategy.*

Responsible Department(s): *Department of Health & Human Services*

Gambling

Recommendation 22

Introduce a \$1 bet limit on poker machines to reduce the impact of gambling problems on low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians.

Rationale

Poker machines, problem gambling, and socio-economic disadvantage go hand in hand. Players who use poker machines weekly make up between 75 and 80 per cent of all people with gambling problems, and an estimated 83 per cent of total gambling expenditure by moderate risk/problem gamblers in Tasmania is on poker machines.⁹

Meanwhile, poker machines in Tasmania are more concentrated in communities of relative socio-economic disadvantage, player losses per person are higher in these areas and, overall, moderate risk/problem gambling is also highest in these areas.¹⁰

Imposing a \$1 bet limit on poker machines would make a substantial contribution to reducing the impact of gambling problems on low-income and disadvantaged Tasmanians.

Existing measures to help reduce gambling problems are not enough: even in an establishment that carefully follows the *Responsible Gambling Mandatory Code of Practice*, a person with gambling problems who comes to a venue with cash in hand can still lose thousands of dollars in a single night, and a DHHS study revealed that 60 per cent of self-excluded

⁸ Pg 15, *You're Worth It Pilot Project Report*, COTA Tasmania March 2013

⁹ Productivity Commission 2010, Chapter 5.26.
¹⁰ SEIS 2008, Vol. 1, p. 5.

gamblers breached the restriction in 2010.¹¹

The Tasmanian Government should support a \$1 bet limit on poker machines and should begin to actively budget for the decrease in revenues that this might cause. This decrease will be offset by a reduction in costs to government associated with gambling problems, in particular in the health and justice systems.

Estimated cost: *No cost*

Responsible Department(s): *Department of Treasury & Finance*

Advocacy for children in State care

Recommendation 23

Establish and fund individual advocacy services for Tasmanian children and young people under the care of the State.

Rationale:

Children in the care of the State, whether in child protection, out-of-home care, or the youth justice system, are amongst the most vulnerable members of the Tasmanian community.

Providing the highest possible quality of care, support and protection to these children is of the utmost importance in ensuring that they achieve positive outcomes both now and in their future lives.

Individual advocacy support is an essential part of that care and protection. It can ensure that children are able to have their voices heard, raise issues that are adversely affecting their lives and have those issues resolved, thereby alleviating some of the challenges faced by those children in care.

Currently, there are significant gaps in provision of advocacy services for children in this state. The most serious gap is the lack of advocacy services for children and young people in the child protection/out-of-home care system, and in the associated services that they may encounter while involved with that system.

Individual advocacy services and support, as distinct from legal representation and support within court processes, are about providing children and young people with an independent, disinterested person who can support them to speak up for themselves, make sure their opinions and wishes are heard, support them to raise and resolve problems and complaints, and provide them with information about rights, responsibilities and processes.

Individual advocacy services are funded and provided to cohorts of consumers regarded as vulnerable within many other service systems in Tasmania – including mental health, disability, dementia care, home and community care, and alcohol and drug services.

It is broadly recognised that those accessing such services may experience particular vulnerabilities and may need an independent avenue of support to help them to understand and assert their rights, negotiate service systems, raise issues of concern or make formal complaints,

¹¹ Gambling Support Program, "Research report: Investigating the use and effectiveness of the Tasmanian Gambling (Self) Exclusion Program."

and/or communicate their wishes and decisions.

TasCOSS recommends the establishment of a formal, state-wide Children's Visitors Program to ensure that all children under the care of the State are connected to an independent advocate who will regularly engage with them about their experiences, concerns, views and wishes.

Typically this kind of program also fulfils a monitoring function whereby trained, independent visitors are proactively and regularly looking at the circumstances of each child in that system.

Other jurisdictions have established such programs within Children's Commissions or associated with Children's Guardians' offices. TasCOSS notes the evaluation undertaken of a pilot Children's Visitors Scheme in Tasmania in 2010 and its recommendation to establish such a scheme on a permanent basis and have it located in the Commissioner for Children's office.¹²

Estimated cost: *Uncosted, dependent on location in government*

Responsible Department(s): *Department of Health & Human Services*

Funding the *Mental Health Act 2012*

Recommendation 24

Provide additional funding to fully implement the *Mental Health Act 2012*, including for:

- The Mental Health Tribunal
- The Mental Health Tribunal Representation Scheme
- Mental health advocacy services
- Legal Aid.

Rationale

TasCOSS welcomes the *Mental Health Act 2012* which has a strong human rights basis and offers a substantial increase in protections for vulnerable Tasmanians. TasCOSS acknowledges the funding that was provided for some aspects of its implementation in the 2013-14 State Budget.

However, the changes and improvements introduced in the new Act will require considerable additional funding for full implementation, particularly in relation to the expected expansion of the Mental Health Tribunal and associated legal and advocacy support.

It is conservatively estimated that the *Mental Health Act 2012* will result in a trebling of the Mental Health Tribunal's work due to the increase in hearings, monitoring and reporting activities that are required under the new legislation. While the Tribunal received an additional \$500,000 in the 2013-14 State Budget, further funding of a similar magnitude will be required to meet this much higher and ongoing demand.

In light of the anticipated significant increase in Tribunal hearings, the Mental Health Tribunal Representation Scheme,

¹² <http://www.childcomm.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Childrens-Visitors-12-Month-Evaluation-Final-Report.pdf>, pg 6

coordinated by Advocacy Tasmania, will experience an equivalent increase in demand. This service, involving trained volunteer representatives, empowers clients to actively participate in decisions about their health care and treatment.

It was acknowledged by DHHS in 2010 that in order to meet the demand for mental health advocacy services at that time, four full-time equivalent positions were required across the state. Funding is currently provided for only 1.8 full-time equivalent positions for advocacy support statewide.

Factoring in an increase in demand since 2010 and the anticipated additional demand resulting from the implementation of the *Mental Health Act 2012*, a minimum of a further 2.2 full-time equivalent mental health advocacy positions are required. Given the significant vulnerability of the client group in need of these services, TasCOSS regards this additional funding as urgent.

Similarly, additional funding is required by the Legal Aid Commission to meet its representation requirements that will arise as a result of the *Mental Health Act 2012*.

Estimated cost: *Additional funding for 2014-15, and for each year across the forward estimates (with appropriate increments for cost increases over the forward estimates):*

- \$500,000 for the Mental Health Tribunal
- \$100,000 for the Mental Health Tribunal Representation Scheme
- \$270,000 for advocacy services
- \$150,000 for Legal Aid.

Responsible Department(s): *Department of Health & Human Services*

Disability advocacy and consumer representation

Recommendation 25

Provide establishment and recurrent funding for a state-wide peak consumer organisation to actively represent the interests of Tasmanians with a disability.

Rationale

A serious gap in Tasmania's disability sector is the absence of a well-resourced peak body to represent the interests of Tasmanians with a disability. With major changes under way in the provision of disability services, it is imperative that consumers of those services are represented in policy development, service evaluation, quality improvement and future planning.

The existence of a well-resourced consumer body in this area would ensure that Government is well-informed of the opinions, needs and interests of Tasmanians living with disability, and that people with a disability have a clear and genuine voice in decisions that affect their lives.

The greater individual choice and control over services and support promised by the NDIS could be enhanced if consumers are not only well-organised and well-represented, but also have capacity-building opportunities provided by a peak body. Indeed, all other Australian states fund disability consumer organisations, and TasCOSS believes that Tasmania should join them.

The costs outlined below are based on the funding provided for the establishment of an equivalent organisation in the mental health sector. The figure includes an additional \$20,000

to fund sitting fees and related costs for substantial consumer involvement in policy development and organisational development processes.

Estimated cost: \$75,000 establishment costs, and \$170,000 per annum recurrent funding (with appropriate increments for cost increases over the forward estimates)

Responsible Department(s): Department of Health & Human Services

A Community and Disability Services Commissioner

Recommendation 26

Fund the establishment of a Community and Disability Services Commissioner to provide consumers of community and disability services with an avenue for redress for complaints about community sector service providers, and to ensure that the sector continues to deliver consistently high-quality services.

Rationale

Increasingly community service organisations deliver services that have very significant impacts on consumers. It is therefore critical that high service quality is maintained and that consumers of these services have access to a complaints mechanism when things go wrong.

With services delivered by State Government agencies, consumers have recourse to the Tasmanian Ombudsman where they believe there has been a breakdown in service quality. Energy consumers have similar recourse to the Energy Ombudsman.

However, there is no parallel system of grievance investigation/resolution that applies to the non-government community services sector. The powers and resources of the Ombudsman generally, and the Health Complaints Commissioner specifically, do not permit the oversight of this crucially important sector.

Benefits of establishing a Community and Disability Services Commissioner in Tasmania would flow not only to consumers who would have an opportunity to have their complaints independently investigated and resolved, but also to community and disability service organisations which would benefit from being open to independent and constructive outside scrutiny from a properly constituted, independent consumer complaints body.

The Tasmanian community would also benefit, with increased trust and confidence in the community services sector and its ability to deliver consistently high-quality services.

Estimated cost: \$500,000 per annum (with appropriate increments for cost increases over the forward estimates)

Responsible Department(s): Departments of Justice and Health & Human Services

Spatial Planning

Many of the factors contributing to health, wellbeing, participation and resilience can be addressed by good planning in relation to land use, transport and services infrastructure, and urban design. All these areas often are grouped under the term “spatial planning”, an umbrella term for all planning that involves physical space.

Spatial planning that is mindful of issues of social inclusion can, among other things:

- Encourage the construction and creation of affordable housing options for all ages and needs in convenient, sustainable locations.
- Create opportunities for healthy activities for people of all ages, physical abilities and levels of socio-economic advantage.
- Create the infrastructure for public and community transport options, as well as healthy options such as walking and cycling.
- Create peaceful places where people of all ages, physical abilities and levels of socio-economic advantage can de-stress and relax.
- Help people and communities to connect through spaces for social and community activity.
- Bring services closer to people.
- Help socially excluded Tasmanians access employment.
- Help ensure that socially excluded Tasmanians can manage the financial and logistical impacts of climate change.
- Help ensure the liveability of all Tasmanian towns and neighbourhoods.
- Facilitate and encourage the activities of community service organisations.¹³

TasCOSS supports additional resourcing for the Tasmanian Planning Commission

¹³ See TasCOSS (2011) *Social Inclusion Principles for Spatial Planning in Tasmania*, www.tascoss.org.au

and other planning bodies to encourage the steady development of strategic spatial planning across the state.

Recommendation 27

Fund the development and implementation of a Tasmanian State Policy on Affordable Housing.

Rationale:

Tasmania is the only state in Australia that has no mechanism in the spatial planning system to encourage the development of affordable housing. In the absence of a uniformly applicable high-level policy directive, affordable housing will continue to be a low priority for developers.

A State Policy on Affordable Housing would be an efficient, cost-effective mechanism for encouraging the development of affordable housing.¹⁴ It would provide the policy framework for the provision, design and implementation of spaces and places that have the potential to increase physical activity and boost food security for all Tasmanians. It would have long-lasting outcomes,

¹⁴ State Policies are a key but under-used and under-appreciated element of the Tasmanian Resource Management and Planning System (RMPS), the overarching planning and environment framework that promotes the sustainable development of Tasmania's resources. In essence, State Policies are strategic statements representing the Tasmanian government's high-level position on resource management and planning issues, applying equally to the activities of state and local government. They are statements of principle, rather than highly detailed operational documents; they seek to ensure a consistent and coordinated approach to key resource management and planning issues throughout the state. They are more durable than a small policy of the government of the day because they are required to go through a rigorous approvals process and require a statutory process to amend. To date, 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.

enhancing Tasmania's built environment over the longer term.

Such a policy would be:

- *Proactive* and front-end-loaded, leading State Government agencies and local governments to think through health-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.

Estimated cost: \$250,000

Responsible Department: Department of Justice

Government and community engagement

The way in which government agencies engage with communities has a profound impact on the nature and quality of community participation in decision-making.

The Department of Premier & Cabinet has developed a *Community Engagement Framework* to ensure best practice consultation is practised by Tasmanian Government agencies. TasCOSS believes that it is critical that the Framework is given the best opportunity to be well-implemented and monitored.

By providing communities with real opportunities to contribute knowledge, experience and information about their needs to public decision-making processes, it is more likely that people will feel that they have some influence or control over policies that directly affect them.

TasCOSS believes that genuine community engagement in decision-making is not only empowering, but also contributes directly to improved health and wellbeing, resilience and, obviously, to enhanced participation.

Recommendation 28

Adequately fund the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Government's *Community Engagement Framework* across all government agencies, and provide funding for training, as well as communications and promotion of the *Framework*.

Rationale:

The Department of Premier and Cabinet has devoted substantial thought and resources to the development of a *Community Engagement Framework* designed to help all Tasmanian Government agencies interact more effectively with the entire Tasmanian community. TasCOSS strongly supports this initiative and, in particular, its commitment to effective engagement with low-income, disadvantaged and vulnerable Tasmanians.

To translate this commitment into action, DPAC's Community Development Division should be adequately funded to:

- Train 50 public servants across government agencies in engagement techniques.
- Communicate and market the Framework to government agencies, and community service organisations, in particular peak bodies, in order to raise community awareness of best-practice engagement principles.

In addition, all agencies should receive adequate funding for their own implementation and monitoring plans.

Estimated cost: \$250,000 for promotion; individual agency costing.

Responsible Department: Department of Premier & Cabinet, all agencies

Sector Development

To improve the health and well-being, participation and resilience of communities, it is crucial to facilitate effective, efficient and connected community service organisations.

The current Partnership Agreement¹⁵ between the community sector, Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Premier and Cabinet provides a platform from which to build the elements needed to achieve this.

TasCOSS has the following recommendations for government action:

- Adequate funding for community services: recognising core, compliance and innovation costs.
- Building effective partnerships.
- Effective community service organisations (CSOs): developing skills and knowledge from the foundation level up to excellence and innovation.
- Efficient CSOs: streamlining reporting, sharing resources and harnessing the sector's purchasing power

Adequate funding for community services: recognising core, compliance and innovation costs

Given the need to attract and retain a quality community services workforce, community service organisations have welcomed the state, territory and Commonwealth governments'

commitment to cost-sharing to ensure adequate funding is made available to resource wage increases under the Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) made after the decision in the landmark Equal Pay Case.

Of equal importance in retaining both a quality workforce and quality service delivery is resourcing community service organisations' increasing running and compliance costs that are not reflected within recurrent and one-off purchasing and grant contracts.

Such costs include:

- Rising operational and core costs, including utilities and insurance;
- The rising costs of multiple reporting and compliance costs;
- The introduction of new compliance costs, such as those to be introduced under the proposed Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) legislation; and
- The development costs for Boards, leaders and staff to respond to changes in service delivery models and management practice.

In order to minimise the impact of these obligations on community service organisations' ability to continually deliver quality services to clients, and to support the sector in retaining a quality workforce, it is crucial for both State and Commonwealth Governments to adequately provide for both wage and core running cost increases.

¹⁵ Partnership Agreement between DHHS, DPaC and the Tasmanian Community Services Sector, 2012 to 2015. See: <http://www.tascoss.org.au/Portals/0/IDU/Partnership%20Agreement%20between%20DHHS%20DPAC%20and%20community%20sector%20in%20Tasmania.pdf>

Equal Remuneration Order: meeting State and Commonwealth obligations to fully fund increased salary provisions

Recommendation 29

State and Commonwealth Governments continue to negotiate to provide adequate funding beyond the 2015/16 forward estimates to meet community service organisations' increased wage obligations over the duration of the nine annual instalments stipulated by the Equal Remuneration Order for State funded, Commonwealth funded and Commonwealth-State Agreement funded programs.

Rationale:

On 1 February 2012, Fair Work Australia (now the Fair Work Commission – FWC) handed down its decision on the Equal Remuneration Case. The decision outlines percentage increases against the modern award of 19-41 per cent, with a 4 per cent loading, to be paid in nine equal instalments over eight years from 1 December 2012. This decision was confirmed through the issuing of the Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) by the former FWA on 22 June 2012.

In order to minimise the impact of these obligations on community service organisations' ability to continually deliver quality services to clients, and to support the sector in retaining a quality workforce, it is crucial for both State and Commonwealth Governments to adequately provide for these wage increases.

TasCOSS welcomes the State Government allocation in the 2013/14 State Budget of additional ERO supplementation funding of almost \$16.3 million over four years to community sector organisations on top of

\$30 million already committed in 2012/13.

As stated in the 2013/14 State Budget, with this additional supplementation, the Tasmanian Government has now committed \$58.3 million over the first five years of the ERO up to and including the financial year 2015/16, committing the State Government to "fully funding" its part of the wages costs for the first four years of the phasing-in period.

TasCOSS also welcomes Commonwealth legislation to secure funding to meet the costs of the Commonwealth Government's contribution to these pay rises and the State Government's announcement accepting the Commonwealth's offer regarding the federal contribution for Tasmania, totalling \$7.5 million over the same four-year period for direct services and for Commonwealth-State Agreements.

However, TasCOSS notes that:

- There is as yet, no detailed commitment beyond the forward estimates to 2015/16 to fully fund implementation of the ERO either from State or Commonwealth Governments for State funded services, Commonwealth funded services, or Commonwealth-State Agreement funded services.
- We are awaiting feedback on the impacts of the first of these payments, to understand better whether the salary census data and subsequent benchmarking formula has provided for a true reflection of increased wage costs for organisations.
- Current forecasts for payments made by DHHS have been based on a funding indexation rate of 2.25%. Given TasCOSS is calling for a review

of State Government funding models to recognise organisations' full core costs, (see Recommendation 30 below), it is vital that any remodelling is reflected in future community sector service purchasing or grant making, including wage supplements under the ERO.

Estimated cost:

- *State Government: \$58.3 million to 2015/16 and projected costs to 2019/20, including any agreed remodelling of current indexation rates.*
- *Commonwealth Government: costs to be confirmed between State and Commonwealth department partners for Commonwealth funded services and Commonwealth-State Agreement funded services to 2019/20.*

Responsible Department(s): *Department of Treasury & Finance, Department of Health & Human Services and Department of Premier & Cabinet (in partnership with the Commonwealth Department of Social Services and other relevant Commonwealth Departments)*

Recognising full costs of innovative service provision

Recommendation 30

The State Government to hold an open dialogue with the community sector to agree a renewed model of government funding for purchasing community services and allocating grants for delivering community services across government departments that recognises the full costs of operation, management and leadership, compliance, service delivery and innovation, replacing the

currently unclear and inadequate indexation formula.

Recommendation 31

The State Government ensures that the implementation of the Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act is appropriately resourced, including:

- That the community and voluntary sectors are funded to meet any increased costs associated with the Act; and
- That registration for volunteers is available at no cost.

Rationale:

The community services sector is experiencing a cumulative impact as a result of the current financial relationships between the State Government and the sector, increasing multiple compliance and reporting costs imposed by funders and new standards legislation, and the increased need to ensure organisations continuously develop and innovate to provide relevant and quality services that meet changing approaches to service delivery and an increased demand for services.

This range of overhead costs is now, individually and collectively, starting to "bite".

Increasing running and compliance costs

The TasCOSS Indexation Report¹⁶ indicated that a range of running costs (from power, rent, rates), to core equipment (such as vehicle operating costs), to insurance costs are rising at between 3 and 15 per cent per annum -

¹⁶ TasCOSS, 2012, What Impacts has Reduced Indexation had on DHHS Funded Community Service Organisations? Available at: <http://www.tascoss.org.au/Portals/0/IDU/Indexation%20project%20report%20v3.pdf>

considerably faster than the rate of indexed grant funding provided through State funding bodies.¹⁷

Despite undertaking a range of savings strategies, including exploring cheaper providers and shared service options, cutting costs from other non-frontline activities, such as workforce development and governance, 85 per cent of organisations within the research were finding it harder to meet core costs¹⁸.

Recent TasCOSS Regional Forums have highlighted the time and costs of meeting multiple reporting and quality compliance across State and Commonwealth funders and reporting agencies is causing replication of effort and detracting staff time from frontline delivery.

The introduction of new compliance obligations, such as those within the new Workplace Health and Safety laws and the potential costs for organisations needing to undertake background checks for both staff and volunteers proposed under the draft Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Bill 2013,¹⁹ is destined to increase organisations' compliance costs

¹⁷ There is no consistent level of indexation offered across State Government funding bodies. As an example of the range, for 2013/14, DHHS offered 2.25% indexation on community services grant funding, the Department of Premier and Cabinet did not index community services grant funding.

¹⁸ TasCOSS, 2012:15

¹⁹ For the Working with Vulnerable People Bill, a very significant consequence for organisations, paid employees and volunteers in the community and voluntary sectors will be the proposed cost of registration under the Working with Vulnerable People legislation. The Fact Sheets provided with the draft legislation suggest that the costs of registration for volunteers will be \$30-\$40, and for paid employees \$125-\$150. Costs of this magnitude are prohibitive and will represent a significant barrier to employment, volunteering and the viability of many organisations that provide critically important services to the Tasmanian community.

if careful planning for subsidised costs is not considered.

All other Australian states subsidise similar checking systems to the extent that registration for volunteers is free or available at a minimal fee, and paid employee registration is in the range of \$50-\$80. The proposed fees for registration in Tasmania are significantly higher than those in other states and are unaffordable for the majority of community and voluntary organisations and their paid staff and volunteers.

Need to engage in development and innovation to provide high quality services within communities

The increased need for community service organisations to respond to changes in service delivery, management and governance practices is putting a strain on training and development budgets that have already been cut due to the need to focus funding on frontline services.²⁰

However, these costs are essential if services are to develop and maintain good practices in governance and management and to innovate to better meet the needs of local communities.

Negotiating fairly funded State Government service purchasing

Community service organisations' overhead costs must be met in order for

²⁰ Survey and interview respondents in the TasCOSS Indexation research (2012) identified staffing and workforce issues as having been most significantly impacted by the reduction in indexation; 85% of survey respondents and all people interviewed reported they have already reduced staff training activities, some no longer providing any staff training or only the absolute minimum.

them to survive, grow, develop and offer effective and efficient service delivery, regardless of their size, location, or service focus area.

Current State Government service purchasing and grant-making deals with such costs in an inconsistent and inadequate manner; some departments apply a level of indexed funding, not based on a formal agreement, whilst others do not acknowledge indexation in funding at all.

None has undertaken a thorough and transparent review with the sector about the range of overhead costs and how these may be adequately met to ensure effective and efficient service delivery.

Under the principles of the current Partnership Agreement, it is the time to work more closely together, to acknowledge and recognise these pressures and negotiate a mutually sustainable approach to funding models.

Looking at international models such as the UK full cost recovery approach²¹ is a timely option, along with considering other models and formulae that might more adequately reflect overhead costs that can be built into purchasing and grant making right across State Government departments.

Estimated costs:

Recommendation 30: First year: resources needed for government and sector discussion and development of a new funding model for purchasing and grant making. The model to be costed in future years.

Recommendation 31: Compliance costs under the Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Bill to be confirmed, subject to the number of paid and unpaid persons estimated to engage in regulated activity and the level of State Government subsidy to be made available.

Responsible Department(s): Department of Treasury & Finance, Department of Premier & Cabinet, Department of Health & Human Services, Department of Education

²¹ See, for example:
<http://www.fundingcentral.org.uk/Page.aspx?SP=6238>

Building effective partnerships

Developing collaboratively agreed goals and promoting evidence-based and co-ordinated service delivery are key drivers for successful public investment in communities.

Shifts in service delivery models to those favouring consumer-driven care and personalised budgeting, such as those we see within aged care, HACC, NDIS and areas of housing, are all trends to be welcomed to ensure consumers have control in the services they purchase.

However, these trends demand that community service organisations are prepared for an increase in competitive tendering, a shift toward marketing their services to consumers and a shift away from grant-based funding to retrospective consumer invoicing. If organisations are not adequately prepared for these rapidly emerging trends, the sustainability of our sector to offer choice and diversity of service provision to consumers may be threatened.

The recently launched *Partnership Agreement: DHHS, DPAC and the Community Sector 2012-2015*²² provides the perfect platform from which to build shared goals and principles. The Partnership Agreement highlights the principles of evidence-based policy and practice and the common goal of the delivery of quality services and improved outcomes for Tasmanians – including planning based on the collection and analysis of data.

²² Partnership Agreement between DHHS, DPAC and the Community Services Sector, Tasmania, 2012 to 2015. Available from: http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/117440/PA_DHHS_DPAC_and_CS_v9_LR.pdf

Achieving collective impact in communities

Recommendation 32

That the State Government holds an open dialogue with the community services sector and other stakeholders to identify social outcomes it plans to invest in and considers funding for projects that achieve these outcomes through collective impact strategies.

Rationale:

International evidence is showing that successful efforts to make progress with complex social problems have five key elements and have been termed 'collective impact strategies':²³

- *A common agenda* – a common understanding of the problem being tackled and a shared vision for change, including shared outcomes.
- *Shared measurement* – a clear shared focus on performance management, collecting relevant data and measuring and reporting outcomes, rather than outputs, on an ongoing basis.
- *Mutually reinforcing activities* – a recognition that differing approaches may achieve the same outcomes, as long as they are tailored to consumer need and are co-ordinated through a joint plan of action.
- *Continuous communication* – consistent and open communication between partners funding and delivering impacts, with a focus on trust, not scrutiny.
- *Backbone support* – the need for a resourced, stand-alone organisation to

²³ Hanleybrown, F., Kania, J., and Kramer, M., 2012, Channelling Change: Making Collective Impact Work. Sanford Social Innovation Review http://www.fsg.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/PDF/Investing_in_Change_Webinar.pdf

convene and co-ordinate participating organisations, including measuring and reporting on ongoing impact.

This approach has been recognised and resourced in other states as the way forward in achieving the outcomes we need for our communities. For example, Queensland's Department for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services has supported and worked with the community sector to collaborate on outcomes, fund and support awareness raising needed and build the skills and infrastructure needed within the sector to deliver collective impact.

Tasmania has begun taking steps to develop the skills of government staff to understand and use data through the Stats Matters Program, and to improve performance management within DHHS.

TasCOSS has commenced the Social Outcomes Project to work with CSOs to develop skills in performance management and social outcomes measurement. Pockets of good practice are also developing, such as Burnie Council's collective impact project.

These steps must be built upon if we are to achieve real progress on deep-rooted social issues and engage in the depth of dialogue and resourcing of infrastructure and partnerships needed to move forward collaboratively.

Estimated cost: *To be developed as discussions develop. But future funding likely to include:*

- *Funding for a 'backbone organisation' to facilitate effective partnerships and infrastructure across community services organisations, government*

agencies and businesses to deliver the collaboratively agreed outcomes.

- *Training for capacity building of CSOs, government agencies and businesses involved.*
- *Funding for service delivery to collaboratively agreed outcomes.*

Responsible Department(s): *Department of Treasury & Finance, Department of Premier & Cabinet, Department of Health & Human Services, Department of Education, Department of Economic Development, Tourism & the Arts*

Building fair and diverse partnerships for delivery

Recommendation 33

That the State Government participates in developing agreed principles that underpin all multi-party partnerships and competitive tendering processes for community services in Tasmania. Such principles would acknowledge the importance of maintaining a diversity of organisational size and effective service choice for consumers.

Secondly, that independent brokering agents are resourced to facilitate partnership development and undertake some of the networking, tender writing and contract scrutiny on behalf of range of smaller to medium sized services.

Thirdly, government service agreements should specifically include resourcing for networking and partnership building to acknowledge that such work is integral to effective service delivery for organisations of all sizes.

Rationale:

The majority of community service organisations within Tasmania are small to medium in size, many providing niche supports in specialised areas. Roughly 40 per cent of DHHS-funded CSOs have an annual income under \$500,000 and 60 per cent under \$1 million.

The diversity of the Tasmanian community service sector provides a robust system that balances the economies of scale of large organisations with the strong community connections, often including broad volunteer bases, of small to medium organisations that can also be a highly cost-effective means to deliver services and build resilient, connected communities.

The delivery of services in a more coordinated manner through partnerships involving multiple organisations is becoming increasingly common and demanded by State and Commonwealth funding programs. The development of such partnerships requires an investment of time and resources by all participating organisations.

Smaller organisations tend to be structurally disadvantaged in their ability to invest in developing such partnerships, or to properly scrutinise them, due to their relative level of resourcing. They suffer similar difficulties in competitive tendering processes.

As a consequence, there is a risk of locking smaller organisations out of service contracts, or forcing them to accept contract conditions that are reasonable for larger organisations but may be detrimental to the viability of smaller organisations over time.

If such pressures lead to a reduction in smaller organisations, the robustness of the Tasmanian community service sector and the choice available to consumers may suffer. Therefore, their continued presence should be actively supported amidst the trends that are now shaping the sector.

This support can be provided firstly by developing agreed principles that underpin all multi-party partnerships and competitive tender processes in Tasmania. Such principles would acknowledge the importance of maintaining a diversity of organisational size to the provision of accessible and effective services.

Secondly, TasCOSS proposes the resourcing of independent partnership brokering agents who can facilitate partnership development and undertake some of the networking, tender writing and contract scrutiny on behalf of range of smaller services. Such agents could negotiate to ensure partnership agreements are developed in line with the agreed principles mentioned above.

Thirdly, government service agreements should specifically include resourcing for networking and partnership building to acknowledge that such work is integral to effective service delivery for organisations of all sizes.

Estimated Costs: *To be costed after further discussions.*

Relevant Departments: *Department of Treasury & Finance, Department of Premier & Cabinet, Department of Health & Human Services, Department of Education, Department of Economic Development, Tourism & the Arts*

Effective CSOs: developing skills and knowledge from the foundation level up to excellence and innovation

Using McGahan's²⁴ analysis of how industries evolve, consultations for the *Tasmanian Community Sector Workforce Development Plan 2012-2015*,²⁵ confirmed that the Tasmanian community services sector is experiencing both challenges in our "core activities" (ie how we deliver our services) and within our "core assets" (ie the knowledge and resources within our workforce that have been relied upon to ensure our industry is efficient and effective).

McGahan argues that under such conditions, our industry needs radical leadership and practice change to ensure sustainability and effectiveness.

The Community Sector Workforce Development Plan priorities 1 and 3 highlight the need for strategies to increase and retain a workforce within the community services sector that is able to transfer skills from one program area to another. It also highlights that the skills needed range from core workplace literacy skills to the governance, management and innovation needed to lead change and address change.

Workforce Development Plan, priority 2 highlights the need for the sector to have the workforce mapping and sector profiling needed for ongoing workforce

planning, not just in specialist sectors, but right across the community sector.

Cross-community sector workforce development: investing in the Tasmanian Community Sector Workforce Development Plan priorities

Recommendation 34

Expand investment in workforce development for building the cross-sector skills sets, qualifications, peer learning and resources needed to increase and retain effective professional and non-professional paid staff and volunteers across community services who can address the changing trends within service delivery and ensure that service delivery remains effective for our communities.

Rationale:

The Tasmanian Community Sector Workforce Development Plan, together with a number of sector specific workforce development plans, reinforce the need across the sector to invest in raising the skills of our paid and volunteer workers to ensure we increase and retain an effective workforce that can achieve outcomes within our communities and is able to transfer knowledge from one specialist program area to another.

The Plan calls for cross-sector investment, including:

Priority 1: increasing and retaining our current workforce:

- Including more activity within career promotion, improving career pathways with multiple entry points and enabling initiatives, such as Portable Long Service Leave

²⁴ McGahan, A.M., 2004, How Industries Evolve: principles for achieving and sustaining superior performance

²⁵ A Workforce for the Future: Tasmanian Community Services Sector. Workforce Development Plan 2012 to 2015. Available from TasCOSS website: <http://www.tascoss.org.au/Portals/0/IDU/Workforce%20Development%20Plan%202012-15.pdf>

arrangements (see Recommendation 35 below).

- Increasing professionalised management and leadership within the sector. This means ensuring our Boards and Managers have key foundation skills sets within governance and leadership, and have the adaptive management and specialist skills to address the changes currently happening in our sector, such as the trends towards:
 - transferring finances from organisations to consumers through consumer directed care and individualised budgeting, amplifying the importance of skills such as financial and risk management, service targeting and marketing and consumer engagement in all aspects of strategic and operational planning and delivery;
 - the tightening of public purse strings demanding enhanced income and revenue raising skills;
 - outcomes-based funding and reporting, demanding that organisations are able to articulate the differences they are making within communities to achieve outcomes, such as health and wellbeing, resilience and participation.

Priority 3: raising and updating skills in our current and future workforce:

- Identifying and agreeing core competencies and skills sets for cross-sector qualifications and integrating these into education and training for sector.
- Addressing core literacy skills in the workplace for paid workers and

volunteers and increasing employers' understanding of how to address core literacy skills.

- Increasing the number of Certificate IV qualified staff and meeting skills sets and qualifications pathways for a range of workers across our two-tiered workforce, including entry level qualifications, skills sets for non-professional and professional workers.

Furthermore, TasCOSS consultations have highlighted the need for promoting innovation within the sector through more practice sharing and peer learning (secondments, good practice seminars, more peer learning circles and communities of practice).

Peaks involved within the TasCOSS-convened Community Sector Workforce Development Round Table are collaboratively planning and progressing these actions.

Estimated costs: *To be costed to meet investment in infrastructure and innovation needs.*

Responsible Departments: *Skills Tasmania, Department of Premier & Cabinet, Department of Health & Human Services, Department of Education*

Regular cross-community sector workforce profiling

Recommendation 35

Provide access to data and funding for a regular cross-community sector environmental scan of the shape, scope, challenges and trends within the Tasmanian community sector workforce, in order to inform future strategic and operational workforce planning, investment and policies and to consider

the impacts of workforce development initiatives.

Rationale:

The collective 'stock of knowledge' about the shape, scope and challenges within the Tasmanian community sector workforce is at best patchy. Whilst there are pockets of rich data,²⁶ there is no systematic, regular collection of intelligence across the Tasmanian community sector to help our sector and government to:

- Understand the shape, scope and challenges of the sector and its workforce.
- Strategically plan for the workforce development needs across our sector that deliver modern service models and achieve effective outcomes for communities.
- Target investment where it may have the most effective impacts on communities and the workforce that serves it.
- Monitor and articulate the impacts of investments in the sector and its workforce.

The *Tasmanian Community Sector Workforce Development Plan 2012-2015*,²⁷ priority 2 has re-emphasised this need. Through the TasCOSS-convened Community Sector Workforce Development Round Table, TasCOSS has worked across the community services peak bodies to map currently available data and to begin to plan for a regular Tasmanian cross-sector workforce profile

²⁶ See, for example, the Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council's Workforce Survey: <http://atdc.org.au/2013/10/atdc-workforce-survey-2012-fact-sheets-now-available/>

²⁷ A Workforce for the Future: Tasmanian Community Services Sector. Workforce Development Plan 2012 to 2015. Working document available from TasCOSS and other participating peak bodies. To be launched in early 2013.

which draws together existing robust Tasmanian workforce data, works across specialist program areas to encourage consistency in workforce data collection and offers primary data to complete the picture for the whole Tasmanian community services sector. TasCOSS would welcome the role of facilitating a partnership between the Government and the sector to develop cross-community sector intelligence further.

Estimated costs: *To be costed with the Community Sector Workforce Development Round Table. But estimated range \$50,000 to \$150,000 biennially*

Responsible Departments: *Skills Tasmania, Department of Premier & Cabinet, Department of Health & Human Services, Department of Education*

Portable Long Service Leave

Recommendation 36

Government to fund the development of the proposed Portable Long Service Leave (PLSL) scheme and draft legislation being developed by Workplace Standards Tasmania PLSL Working Group.

Rationale:

Portable Long Service Leave is one strategy to address the retention of skills and knowledge right across the sector highlighted in the Community Sector Workforce Development Plan, priority 1.

At a practical level, long service leave is understood to:

- Provide an incentive for employees to remain with their employer.
- Create flexibility for skilled workers to move within the sector and between employers without loss of their Long

- Service Leave entitlement.
- Retain sector skills and experience.
- Facilitate potential career pathways for sector workers.
- Attract new workers.

In 2012, the Minister for Workplace Relations requested Workplace Standards investigate the feasibility of establishing PLSL arrangements for employees in the community services sector. Workplace Standards commenced a consultation process by holding a PLSL forum in August 2012 with representatives of peak bodies, industry associations and unions attending.

A second round of consultations was held in March 2014 with sector stakeholders. In May 2013, the Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) launched a discussion paper, *A Portable Long Service Leave Scheme for the Tasmanian Community Services Sector*.

The Minister for Workplace Relations endorsed the six recommendations within HACSU's discussion paper. This included that the State Government expedite the process of progressing a PLSL scheme by supporting and resourcing the establishment of a PLSL working group comprising representatives from unions, employers, state government and TasBuild.

It also included that the scheme provide long service leave entitlements as articulated within the *Long Service Leave Act 1976* (Tas) and subsequent amendments.

The PLSL working group has met and commenced the development of a proposal to the State Government. There are PLSL schemes from which good practice models can be drawn, including

an existing community services scheme in the ACT, which are laid out in the current Workplace Standards Options Paper.²⁸

Estimated costs: *Uncosted for 2014/15, subject to model being agreed*

Responsible Departments: *Workplace Standards Tasmania, Department of Justice*

²⁸ Workplace Standards Tasmania, 2013, Portable Long Service Leave for the Community Services Sector: Options Paper, August 2013

Efficient community sector organisations: streamlining reporting, sharing resources and harnessing the sector's purchasing power

Reducing red tape is an aspiration for organisations and government alike. While compliance to standards and quality improvement are essential for driving effective, efficient, innovative organisations and assuring the public purse of its investments, reporting needs to be kept to a minimum and needs to avoid replication. TasCOSS consultations with sector organisations have reinforced calls for:

- The core principle for this agenda should be improvement and innovation, not ticking boxes.
- The need to streamline reporting requirements across regulatory and funding agencies.

Reducing running costs is another shared aspiration for organisations and government. Sharing resources and harnessing the community sector's purchasing power are two strategies by which to achieve such efficiencies. It is crucial that investment in projects that achieve such efficiencies is based on evidence and meet the needs of our diverse Tasmanian community services sector.

Streamlining reporting

Recommendation 37

Fund a working group in partnership with the not-for-profit sector to examine the impacts and costs of multiple reporting requirements across State and Commonwealth funding and compliance bodies, such as ACNC, ATO, ASIC and

ORIC, with a view to streamlining these reporting requirements for Tasmanian not-for-profit organisations.

Rationale:

Not-for-profit organisations may exist as legal structures including incorporated associations and charities, all of which come with different reporting requirements from regulating bodies, such as the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC), the Australian Tax Office (ATO), the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission (ACNC), and the Office of Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC).

Additionally, many are likely to receive grants and contracts from a number of purchasers across State and Commonwealth Government Departments and indeed from private and philanthropic sources, all of which have additional reporting and compliance requirements.

The ACNC has been largely welcomed by the not-for-profit sector as a means to increase transparency for charities and to eventually reduce reporting requirements, or 'red tape' across Commonwealth²⁹ and, it has been hoped, State Government departments; the principle being, report once to ACNC and that data will be shared across relevant departments.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) conducted a Regulatory Impact Assessment, considering how additional reporting requested by the ACNC may duplicate existing reporting requirements

²⁹ See, for example, existing arrangements between reporting bodies:
http://www.acnc.gov.au/ACNC/About_ACNC/Redtape_redu/Other_regulators/ACNC/Edu/ACNC_regulators.aspx

for charities at a state level, with the intention of state governments using such information to consider how they might streamline reporting for not-for-profit organisations.³⁰

In South Australia, this has led to open dialogue between state government and the not-for-profit sector on how to streamline reporting and adjustments to legislation to facilitate such streamlining, culminating in an Exposure Draft seeking to harmonise South Australian reporting for charities.³¹

The ACT Government has announced its intention to change the ACT incorporated associations and charitable collection legislation to reduce duplication of reporting for ACT charities incorporated as associations in the ACT.³²

As yet, similar community consultation and discussions between State Government and the Tasmanian not for profit sector have been limited.

Estimated Costs: *Estimated costs for initial review: range \$10,000 to \$50,000*

Responsible Departments: *Department of Treasury & Finance, Department of Consumer Affairs & Fair Trading, Department of Premier & Cabinet, Department for Health & Human Services, Department of Education*

³⁰ Council of Australian Governments, 2012, Regulatory Impact Assessment of Potential Duplication of Governance and Reporting Standards for Charities

³¹ Please see:
<http://www.treasury.sa.gov.au/economy/charity-regulation>

³² See:
http://www.acnc.gov.au/ACNC/About_ACNC/Redtape_redu/ACNC/Report/Red_tape.aspx

Sharing resources and harnessing the sector's purchasing power

Recommendation 38

Review TasCOSS' forthcoming evaluation of the community sector's shared service and bulk purchasing needs with a view to being one of a number of seed funding partners to create further efficiencies for the sector.

Rationale:

Responding to the Hobart City Council Shared Accommodation Costs recommendations, the TasCOSS Sector Development Unit has been operating a trial shared services project with the aims of supporting organisations to reduce their accommodation costs and beginning to harness the sector's purchasing power by brokering sector discounts on core costs, such as insurance.

This successful project is currently reviewing future sector needs and priorities to inform capacity builders, government and the private sector where future investment in shared services and bulk purchasing may reap the greatest impacts in Tasmania.

Initial sector feedback has identified a number of 'categories' of need:

- Shared space for the co-location of community services, or community 'hubs', to reduce rent and related occupancy costs.
- Shared needs for core human resources, such as administration, financial management, human resource management, and event management.
- Shared needs for developmental human resources, such as marketing, fundraising and grant applications, partnership brokering, access to governance and management

innovation.

- Needs to harness the shared purchasing power of the sector to lower costs and tailor products and services to the community sector for products and services such as insurance, IT services, and telecommunications.

Priorities within each of these categories will be explored within TasCOSS's current shared services evaluation, to report by the end of January 2014. Options for meeting these needs may include a mix of public seed funding, private investment and community sector investment.

Estimated Costs: *Costings to be informed by TasCOSS Shared Services Evaluation Report. Funding elements to include Government and private seed funding costs, alongside community sector investment.*

Responsible Departments: *Department of Premier & Cabinet, Department of Health & Human Services, Department of Education, Department of Economic Development, Tourism & the Arts*

The TasCOSS Consultation Process

In developing this Budget Priorities Statement, TasCOSS Social Policy and Research and Sector Development Units consulted widely with the community services sector and with other key stakeholders.

TasCOSS Regional Forums were held in the North-West, North and South of the State, at which attendees were asked to identify issues affecting their clients, organisations and regions, currently and over the next several years, and to make recommendations for improvements and funding investments.

Community sector peak bodies were also consulted, both individually and collectively (through the Tasmanian Community Sector Peaks Network) as were the Community Sector Policy Network, and the Community Sector Workforce Development Round Table.

Invitations to provide input into our Budget submission were also made publicly through our fortnightly E-News over a period of several months and informal discussions were held about priorities with a range of other stakeholders, including a number of Tasmanian community sector leaders, as part of TasCOSS's member visits.

Existing sector priorities, established through recent sector consultations, such as the priorities identified within the Community Sector Workforce Development Plan, were also drawn upon to make recommendations for investment.

Information, options and recommendations were collated and analysed from these collective consultations and TasCOSS staff followed up with research, drawing up policy options and costings, and recommendations. Assistance and 'reality checking' was sought from a wide range of relevant stakeholders including government personnel, individual experts in specific fields, private sector, regulatory and non-government organisations.

This process ensures that our recommendations – and rationales – are well-grounded in consultation and thoroughly researched, and reflect the needs of low-income, vulnerable and disadvantaged Tasmanians as well as the needs of the community services sector.

