

Response to the Consultation Paper - Tasmania's Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy

TasCOSS welcomes this opportunity to respond to the draft consultation paper ('Consultation Paper') prepared by the Statewide Elder Abuse Prevention Advisory Committee ('SEAPAC') in relation to Tasmania's Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy.

TasCOSS supports the recommendations made by Council on the Ageing (COTA) Tasmania in relation to the Consultation Paper and the Strategy, as the peak body representing older Tasmanians.

A summary of our shared recommendations is as follows:

- TasCOSS is very supportive of the recommendation of a six-year strategy.¹ We also urge the Government to commit to six-year funding (appropriately indexed) to assist community sector organisations in their work to deliver the strategy (once finalised) and promote the identified guiding principles.² As the peak body for community services in Tasmania, we share concerns of many of our member organisations in relation to the difficulties created by short funding cycles. Lack of certainty around funding significantly impacts the ability of organisations to engage in long-term planning for programs and service delivery, as well as the ability to recruit and retain staff. TasCOSS firmly believes that increasing worker and organisational certainty through appropriate, long-term funding is a way to support our community workforce, as well as ensuring the ongoing stability of the industry. Longer-term funding cycles also allow organisations to develop multiyear projects with more comprehensive outcomes and greater impact, which in turn benefits the Tasmanian community as a whole.
- TasCOSS supports the recommended shift in language to promote empowerment of older Tasmanians. We note COTA have recommended using 'the abuse of older Tasmanians (elder abuse)', as well as including an explanation of why empowering language has been used at the start of the strategy.
- In relation to the Guiding Principles, we make the following recommendations:
 - We support the inclusion of 'empowerment of older Tasmanians' as a guiding principle – this principle could also include the importance of valuing older Tasmanians, as well as the need to implement strategies to include the voice of lived experience in policy design;
 - We support COTA's recommendation in relation to the 'health and wellbeing' principle and the need to replace 'shelter' with 'housing', to align with current terminology used in other Government strategies and promote the dignity and security of older Tasmanians;
 - We also support COTA's recommendation that under the principle 'participation and self-fulfillment', the phrase 'remain in the workforce' should be changed to 'participate in paid work', to more accurately capture the experience of older Tasmanians who may wish to move in and out of the paid workforce;

¹ Tasmanian Government, Communities Tasmania, Statewide Elder Abuse Prevention Advisory Committee, 'Tasmania's Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy: Consultation Paper – SEAPAC' (2022), 4.

² Ibid, 5.

- We recommend the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ Tasmanians and culturally and linguistically diverse Tasmanians in the ‘diversity and inclusion’ principle, as well as the need to ensure all consultation processes involving older Tasmanians are inclusive and reflective of the diversity of our community.
- TasCOSS recommends the strategy include the possibility of law reform to better protect the rights of older Tasmanians. We believe the definition of family violence in Tasmania is not sufficiently broad to adequately protect Tasmanian victim-survivors,³ highlighting that this term is more narrowly defined than in other Australian jurisdictions.⁴ TasCOSS believes this definition could significantly impact older Tasmanians, as it would not provide access to legal protections (such as Family Violence Orders) for people who are experiencing abuse in a non-intimate-partner setting – for example, an older Tasmanian who may be experiencing abuse in their family relationship with an adult child. We encourage the Government to include specific reference to the need to review this definition as part of the strategy, and recommend this is included in the ‘Safeguarding’ section.

³ The *Family Violence Act 2004* (Tas) s7 defines ‘family violence’ as follows:

family violence means –

(a) any of the following types of conduct committed by a person, directly or indirectly, against that person's spouse or partner:

(i) assault, including sexual assault;

(ii) threats, coercion, intimidation or verbal abuse;

(iii) abduction;

(iv) stalking and bullying within the meaning of section 192 of the Criminal Code ;

(v) attempting or threatening to commit conduct referred to in subparagraph (i) , (ii) , (iii) or (iv);

or

(b) any of the following:

(i) economic abuse;

(ii) emotional abuse or intimidation;

(iii) contravening an external family violence order, an interim FVO, an FVO or a PFVO; or

(c) any damage caused by a person, directly or indirectly, to any property –

(i) jointly owned by that person and his or her spouse or partner; or

(ii) owned by that person's spouse or partner; or

(iii) owned by an affected child.

⁴ For example, the Victorian legislation refers to violence committed against a ‘family member’ – the *Family Violence Act 2016* (Vic) s9 defines ‘family member’ as follows:

"family member", of a person, means—

(a) a domestic partner or former domestic partner of the person; or

(b) an intimate partner or former intimate partner of the person; or

(c) a relative of the person; or

(d) a child of a domestic partner or former domestic partner of the person; or

(e) a parent of a child of the person.