

RE: Draft Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy (TSPS) 2023-2027

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Draft Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy (TSPS) 2023-2027 ('the Draft Strategy').

The Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) is the peak body for the community services industry in lutruwita/Tasmania. Our Vision is of one lutruwita/Tasmania, free of poverty and inequality, where everyone has the same opportunity. Our Mission is to challenge and change the systems, behaviours and attitudes that create poverty, inequality and exclusion, to ensure all Tasmanians have equal opportunity to live a good life.

Our membership includes individuals and organisations active in the provision of community services to Tasmanians on low incomes or living in vulnerable circumstances. TasCOSS represents the interests of our members and their service users 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.

In our earlier submission,¹ TasCOSS highlighted the need for the Draft Strategy to respond to the particular needs of priority cohorts, including (but not limited to), Tasmanians with poor health or disabilities, and those in rural communities. We also echoed the recommendations of the Mental Health Council of Tasmania (MHCT), who highlighted the importance of the following:

- A whole of life, whole of person approach
- Prevention and early intervention initiatives for good physical and mental health, including improved health literacy
- Strengthening community connection
- Measuring progress
- Whole of government response
- Voice of lived experience

TasCOSS strongly supports the general vision, priority areas and actions of the strategy. We note many of the priority areas mirror the recommendations of the MHCT - for example, 'strengthen our communities' and 'improve the way we implement and evaluate'. We also strongly support the priority relating to workforce development and support, noting the need to support the community sector (including our member organisations) to continue delivering high-quality, compassionate and responsive services to

¹ TasCOSS, 'Submission to the Department of Health on the Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy' (July 2022).

Tasmanians in need, in an ever-changing and increasingly challenging environment. Consistent with TasCOSS' recommendations in relation to the voice of lived experience, the Draft Strategy also prioritises the knowledge and experiences of the Tasmanian community, particularly those with lived experience.²

TasCOSS also believes the action items outlined in the Draft Strategy are sufficiently detailed to enable effective progress towards the priorities for reform. We are particularly supportive of action items relating to the development of yearly implementation plans,³ as well as the use of these plans to ensure coordination across Government initiatives and programs.⁴

A further suggestion would be the inclusion of gambling harm as a risk factor for suicide in Tasmania. Recent reports confirm the need to address gambling-related harm to address suicide risk.⁵ Australian research also demonstrates the links between gambling and several different types of harm, including relationship difficulties, health problems and financial stress.⁶ Although gambling harm is not explicitly mentioned, gambling can clearly impact on many of the risk factors outlined in the Draft Strategy.⁷ TasCOSS strongly believes the provision and coordination of both support services and relevant Government initiatives to address gambling relating harm, as well as the need for gambling reform to address the risks currently presented to those impacted by gambling-related harms in the community, should also be addressed in the Draft Strategy.

² Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Directorate. Compassion and Connection: Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-2027 (Draft for public consultation), Tasmania, September 2022, 10.

³ For example, see *ibid*, 17 - Action 1.3: using yearly implementation plans to progress community-based activities that meet the needs of particular population groups in Tasmania – this may include the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, CALD communities, men, defence force personnel and veterans, and LGBTIQ+ communities.

⁴ *Ibid*, 25 - Action 5.4: - using yearly implementation plans to –

- connect action across all of the current and emerging Premier's priorities in Tasmania and mental health reform initiatives under Rethink 2020 – Tasmania's strategic plan for mental health
- work with the National Suicide Prevention Office and other jurisdictions to connect priorities under the National Suicide Prevention Strategy to the TSPS and implement the national outcomes framework for suicide prevention services and programs (when available)
- work with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) to ensure adequate data sharing across jurisdictions to inform national and statewide priorities
- work with the Australian Government and national service providers to review and improve Tasmanian access to nationally funded programs and services
- co-plan and co-deliver initiatives with Primary Health Tasmania.

⁵ Financial Counselling Australia and Suicide Prevention Australia, 'Gambling and Suicide Prevention: A Roadmap for Change' (January 2022).

⁶ See, for example, Browne, M, Langham, E, Rawat, V, Greer, N, Li, E, Rose, J, Rockloff, M, Donaldson, P, Thorne, H, Goodwin, B, Bryden, G & Best, T 2016, Assessing gambling-related harm in Victoria: a public health perspective, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.

⁷ Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Directorate. Compassion and Connection: Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-2027 (Draft for public consultation), Tasmania, September 2022, 11-12.