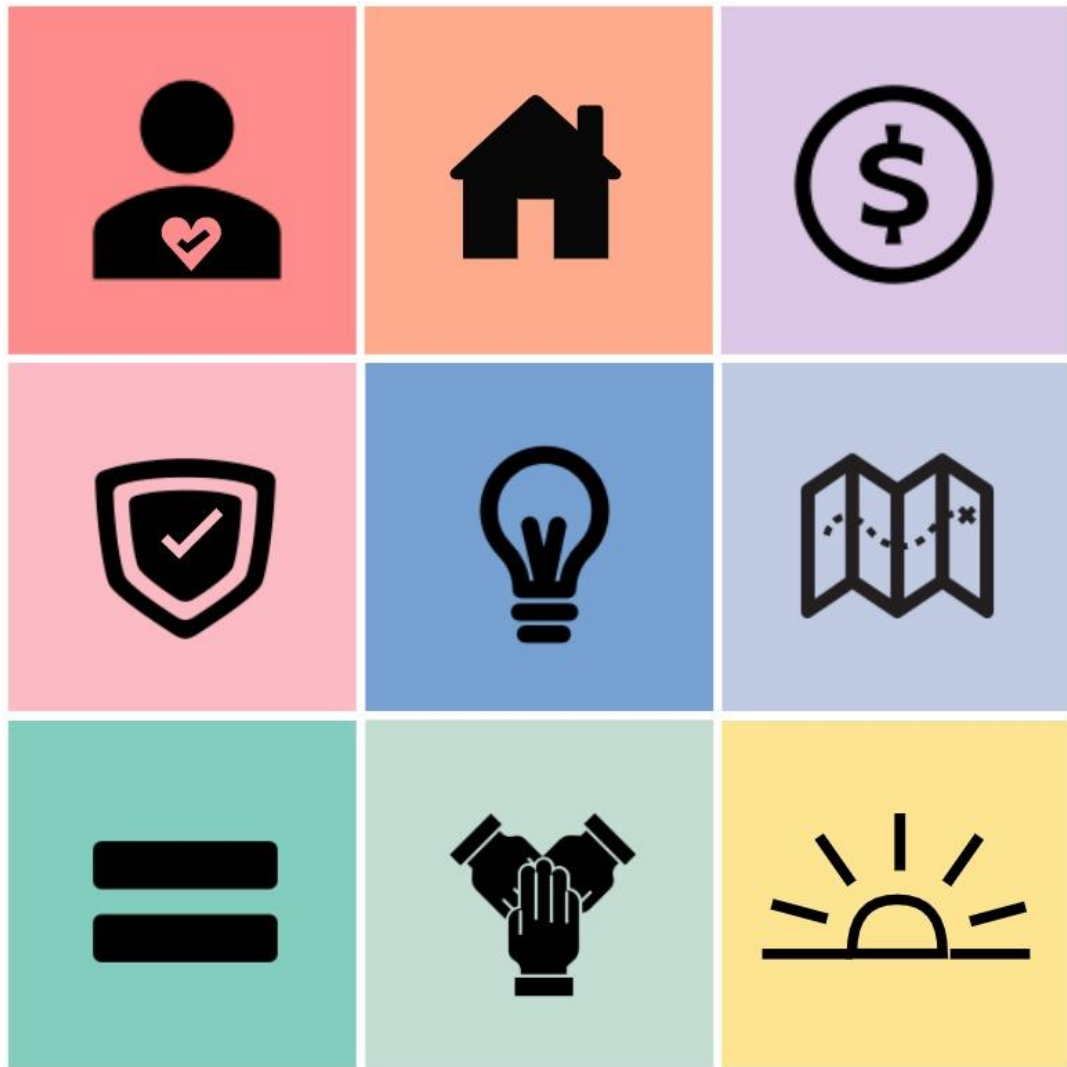


A Good Life: A Wellbeing Framework for Tasmania



What is “A Good Life”?

Every Tasmanian should have the opportunity for a good life — the opportunity to do more than spend each day just getting by. But with the rising cost of living and housing and health challenges increasing in Tasmania, what does a good life look like for Tasmanians on low incomes? What are the basics of a good life in the 21st century, and what makes a good life hard to achieve?

In 2018, the Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) conducted consultations around the question “What do you need for a good life?” in three southern Tasmanian communities (Kingston, Gagebrook and Dodges Ferry). These consultations were informed by the 2016-17 Voices of Our Regions consultations conducted by TasCOSS via face-to-face consultations in nine communities across the state (Smithton, Shorewell Park, Queenstown/Rosebery, George Town, Ravenswood, West Moonah, Geeveston, Clarendon Vale and New Norfolk), as well as an online statewide survey.

Together, [A Good Life](#) and *Voices of Our Regions* consultations gathered the views of 338 people across the state. We supplemented these voices with responses to surveys by other organisations targeting, for example, younger and older Tasmanians, Tasmanians living with mental health issues, Tasmanians with disability, as well as with concerns outlined in other Council of Social Service documents.

Taken together, they reveal nine domains of a good life in Tasmania. We have drawn on these voices to add descriptors to show what each domain includes. We encourage the adoption of this framework, including by developing indicators and targets, to help drive wellbeing outcomes for all Tasmanians.



A healthy mind and body

Goal: All Tasmanians have the support they need to live healthy lives.

Throughout our consultations, one phrase emerged again and again: ‘Health is everything.’ Respondents emphasised the value of good health and the importance of good health care that treats the whole person.

“We value our health above all else. Growing older is hard enough without ill health.”

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

But Tasmanian health outcomes are poor in relation to national averages and in recent years, Tasmanians on low incomes have increasingly struggled to get the primary medical, dental and mental health care they need. Residents of Tasmania’s most disadvantaged communities also face a range of challenges and barriers that make it harder for them to value, let alone take control of their own health.

Having support to live healthy lives means:

- All Tasmanians are supported to proactively prevent ill-health and to promote good health and wellbeing.
- All Tasmanians can get affordable, timely, person-centred, whole-of-life-oriented primary, secondary, allied and dental health care.
- All Tasmanians can get affordable, timely, person-centred, whole-of-life-oriented mental health care.



A place to call home

Goal: All Tasmanians have affordable, safe, appropriate housing.

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

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

“We shouldn’t have to be living with relatives.”

In recent years, Tasmanians on low incomes have faced exceptional difficulties in finding either a home to buy or a secure, affordable rental. The supply of social housing has not kept up with demand, resulting in ever-growing waitlists for social housing. Meanwhile, the number of homeless Tasmanians has grown.

Having affordable, safe, appropriate housing means:

- All Tasmanians have access to safe, appropriate, energy efficient and well-maintained homes regardless of their economic and social circumstances.
- Tasmania’s private rental market is affordable and fair to tenants on low incomes.
- All Tasmanians have access to safe accommodation in a crisis.
- Tasmania’s land use planning system and building codes promote the development of affordable, universal-design, socially connected, transit-oriented, energy efficient housing.



Being able to afford the basics

Goal: All Tasmanians can afford the basics of life.

Participants in [A Good Life](#) consultations described the corrosive effects of financial stress as the one of the biggest barriers to a good life. When the essentials are unaffordable, people said stress levels begin to rise, making it harder to cope with other stressors as well as to appreciate what you have. Respondents also spoke of the anxiety associated with insecure or casual employment.

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

“I feel safe in my community, but I don’t have financial stability due to contract work.”

In recent years, Tasmanians have faced sweeping increases in the cost of living, with rising prices significantly outstripping increases in incomes. Meanwhile, thousands of Tasmanians have struggled to get into employment that would lift their incomes above subsistence levels.

Being able to afford the basics means:

- No Tasmanian lives in poverty.
- More local jobs created for local people, and more local people trained for local jobs.
- All Tasmanians have access to affordable energy and water.
- All Tasmanians have access to affordable telecommunications.
- All Tasmanians can eat three healthy meals a day.
- All Tasmanians on low incomes receive adequate levels of concessions.
- All Tasmanians can afford items essential to their wellbeing.



Feeling safe

Goal: All Tasmanians live in safety, supported by a criminal justice system that promotes social justice.

Fear, respondents said, has no place in a good life. While Tasmania is a safe place overall, many Tasmanians feel unsafe inside and outside the home some or all of the time. Women, children, older Tasmanians and Tasmanians with disability are particularly vulnerable to feeling unsafe. Everyone deserves to feel safe – even people caught up in the justice system, which is short on therapeutic and culturally appropriate approaches to rehabilitation.

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

“You need to feel safe in order to connect.”

Feeling safe means:

- All Tasmanians live free from violence and abuse inside and outside the home at all stages of life.
- All Tasmanians have access to affordable, inclusive legal services and systems.
- Tasmania’s policing, courts and prisons are trauma-informed and focussed on prevention, diversion and rehabilitation.



Learning for life

Goal: All Tasmanians can learn what they need to thrive across their lives.

A good, broad-ranging education, Tasmanians told us, leads to a better life across the board. Literacy, numeracy, digital competence and life skills, ranging from cooking to budgeting to effective communication, lead to increased employment opportunities; better ability to look after your health; better relationships; and greater ability to make your income stretch as far as it can. All people of all ages deserve an equal chance to learn in ways that takes their needs into account.

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

“[Tasmania needs] more flexible learning options for children to cater for different learning styles.”

Lifelong learning includes formal education through:

- Early learning;
- Schools;
- University;
- Vocational education and training; and
- Training and activities by community sector organisations.

Significant lifelong learning also takes place in informal environments, including adult education, libraries, from peers, at home and in families.

Being able to learn to thrive across life means:

- All Tasmanians are supported to access education and training across their life course.
- Tasmanian education systems enact principles of inclusion, equity, affordability and accessibility.
- Tasmanian education environments and systems help all Tasmanians gain the academic, digital, practical and social skills, and confidence, to navigate:
 - Daily living;
 - Education and training;
 - Workplaces; and
 - Relationships.



Getting where you need to go

Goal: All Tasmanians can get where they need and want to go, when they need and want to.

In the modern world, having your own transport equates to freedom for many people. As many participants in [A Good Life](#) consultations pointed out, when you don't have a car and are reliant on public transport, it is a frustrating struggle to get to employment, education, health services, other supports, shops, socialising and Tasmania's natural beauty. Some people give up accessing some, or all, of these things as a consequence. But getting where you need to go extends beyond transport: the built environment can act as a significant barrier to Tasmanians with limited mobility or disability.

"[I need] reliable, affordable access to supermarkets and playgrounds."

"We have great fishing and beaches — if you can get to them — but I don't have a car."

"Only one of the three disability parking spots in [my town] actually accommodates a wheelchair user."

Being able to get where you need to go means:

- All Tasmanians can access timely, affordable alternatives to the private car.
- Driver licensing, vehicle registration and ownership are accessible and affordable for all Tasmanians.
- The Tasmanian built environment is accessible to all Tasmanians.



Feeling valued, included and heard

Goal: All Tasmanians are treated equally, inclusively and with respect and have a voice in decisions that affect them.

Many of the comments that emerged in [A Good Life](#) consultations were filled with pain at being considered to be worth less than other Tasmanians. Respondents described:

- *Feeling looked down on.* Stigma and prejudice, both subtle and overt, were common experiences for many respondents.
- *Feeling left out.* Many respondents described barriers to participation in life in Tasmania.
- *Feeling overlooked and unheard.* Respondents complained that they felt invisible to the people, organisations and bureaucracies that were making the decisions that would affect their lives. Some people felt anxious and powerless as a result; others felt frustrated that good ideas were being ignored.

“People look at us [residents of a broad-acre public housing estate] like we’re scum.”

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

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

Behind these experiences of stigma, discrimination and marginalisation lie the attitudes of individuals as well as structural inequalities, like racism and gender inequalities. These can take the form of material inequalities (i.e. levels of income or home ownership), inequalities in social outcomes (i.e. health, education levels, employment), inequalities in personal relationships (i.e. burden of care for children, disproportionate financial impacts of divorce), and can even drive violence.

Feeling valued, included and heard means:

- All Tasmanians live free of discrimination and stigma.
- Justice, rights, and respect for Tasmanian Aboriginal people.
- A Tasmania without legal and structural inequalities.
- All Tasmanians have a voice in decisions that affect them.



Knowing you're not alone

Goal: All Tasmanians can connect with and receive support from their community in ways that work for them.

Most participants in [A Good Life](#) consultations felt that relationships, both intimate and social, were crucial to their wellbeing and to their ability to thrive.

"Knowing someone who believes in you to flourish."

Respondents observed that material necessities and social relationships are often inseparable. Some people spoke of how people help each other out with tasks; some spoke of sharing items bought in bulk to lower costs. But some also pointed out that material comforts can lose their meaning without social connection: even if you have enough food, if you're lonely, you may not feel like eating.

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

Being connected, participants suggested, requires three things: people who persevere to build or maintain a connection; a strong, caring community; and help from the professionals when more support is required than friends and family or the general community can give.

"Learn to be kind to each other, be a good friend."

"The good community feel: we all come together when the going gets tough, we know where to go, who to talk to. All the community networking helps our family."

Combining strengthened social connection with other initiatives can lead to a virtuous spiral that addresses multiple issues simultaneously. For example, helping people build relationship skills while creating new social housing modes such as co-housing, can not only help address immediate personal and broader social issues (i.e. housing, family conflict), but also can help ward off social isolation as people age.

Knowing you're not alone means:

- All Tasmanians have the support they need to build healthy connections inside and outside the home.
- All Tasmanian communities are supported to create strong, inclusive, local connections.
- All Tasmanians can depend on person-centred, place-based community services.



Hope for the future

Goal: All Tasmanians can face the challenges of the future with confidence.

While the problems of the present were sometimes the most pressing, participants in [A Good Life](#) consultations were thinking in the long-term as well, and hoping for future-oriented, whole-of-life approaches to support individuals as well as to address problems facing Tasmania as a whole.

“We all need to be thinking of the future more.”

Three key areas emerged from our consultations:

Looking ahead over life stages

Participants emphasised the importance of a longer-term vision in relation to two groups living through periods of dramatic life changes: young people, as they transition through the crucial developmental stages from birth through to independence, and older people facing the challenges of age.

“Communities should be building supports for people ageing in place.”

Looking ahead to a changing economy

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, participants in TasCOSS consultations were already worried about the structure and diversity of Tasmania’s economy and future work opportunities.

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

Looking ahead to prevent and respond to climate change

As the evidence for the acceleration of global heating and of its emerging impacts builds, climate change and a healthy environment are now significant concerns for older and younger Tasmanians alike.

“[The most important thing for children] must be significant response to climate change as this is their future.”

Having hope for the future means:

- All Tasmanians are supported through life’s challenging transitions.
- All Tasmanians are supported through changes in Tasmania’s economy to secure stable work at liveable wages.
- All Tasmanians are supported to manage the impacts of climate change.
- All Tasmanians enjoy clean air and water, and healthy homes.