



**Industry Sustainability:  
A Proposal for a Strong  
Community Services  
Industry to Keep  
Tasmanians Safe and Well**

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**2024/25**

**TasCOSS BUDGET  
PRIORITIES STATEMENT**



***The Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS)  
is the peak body for Tasmania's community  
services industry.***

*Our Mission is to challenge and change the systems,  
behaviours and attitudes that create poverty,  
inequality and exclusion and to ensure all  
Tasmanians have equal opportunity to live a good life.*

*Our Vision is of one Tasmania, free of poverty and  
inequality where everyone has the same opportunity.*

*This Budget Priorities Statement reflects the  
expertise of our members, community groups, lived  
experience advocates and consumers, as well as  
research and analysis of actions and initiatives in  
Australia and other jurisdictions.*

*We would also like to acknowledge and thank the  
Workforce Coordination Project partners, the  
Community Services Industry Advisory Council, the  
Industry Development Steering Committee, and the  
Workforce Coalition for their contributions to this  
document.*



## Introduction

**In these times of uncertainty and challenge, we have a responsibility to build a strong community services industry that will serve the next generations of Tasmanians to keep them safe and well.**

The community services industry is central to building the resilience of Tasmanians and our communities to withstand various kinds of disruptions and crises. Its approximately 28,000 workers and 46,900 (formal) volunteers work hard to make sure that when Tasmanians call on them, they can provide appropriate, timely and effective support.

In recent years, around the country people have come together to respond to a global pandemic, catastrophic bushfires and floods and a housing and cost of living crisis. Now, we must also respond to the uncovering of horrific abuse at the hands of the very systems set up to support people in vulnerable situations — older people, people living with disability, and children placed in the care of institutions.

These concurrent challenges are placing enormous strain not just on individuals and their communities, but also on the service system that supports them.

Given the challenges, the work required to keep current and future generations of Tasmanians safe and well, and contributing socially and economically, will not be achieved with a business-as-usual approach. What is required is systems transformation, from governance all the way through to frontline service delivery.

We have been given a roadmap for action through the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (the 'Royal Commission into Aged Care') and disability reform,<sup>1</sup> the Independent Inquiry into the Tasmanian Department of Education's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings.

The findings and recommendations make clear the need for, in many cases, urgent reform of the way human services and social supports are designed, delivered, monitored and governed. The work to achieve this is multi-layered and will involve changes to organisational and governance cultures, attitudes, policies and practices, as well as investment in oversight, coordination, advocacy (including lived experience), and collection and dissemination of evidence and good practice. A sustained program of capacity-building is required to ensure community service organisations can meet this challenge.

Our ten year [Tasmanian Community Services Industry Plan \[2021-31\]](#) (Industry Plan) provides the framework to drive the reforms needed to respond to these findings. We propose a series of investments that build on work already underway to ensure our industry is positioned to keep Tasmanians safe and well, now and into the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Particularly the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability and the NDIS Review: Working Together to Deliver the NDIS.

## Summary of Investment Proposals

### 1. A sustainable industry keeping Tasmanians safe and well

- a. Invest in a sustainable industry by implementing an indexation formula for all community service organisations, which will result in more innovative and efficient services and better outcomes for Tasmanians. The proposed indexation formula consists of 70% Wage Price Index (WPI) and 30% Consumer Price Index (CPI), plus the superannuation guarantee (0.5%).
- b. Appoint an Industry Response Project Team to work in partnership with the Tasmanian Government over the short- to medium-term to facilitate effective and efficient engagement between the Government and the industry to respond to the Commission of Inquiry and other reforms in aged care and disability. The Industry Response Project Team will support community services organisations to be child-safe and able to ensure the rights, safety and wellbeing of all children, young people and adults accessing their services, and will also work closely with the Government on other industry-related issues, including funding reform and the development of an outcomes framework.

### 2. Workforce planning and development

- a. Recruit a Workforce Convenor to co-design with all sectors a sustainable whole-of-industry collaboration model that informs ongoing targeted demand, supply and/or bridging interventions to address critical workforce needs.
- b. Recruit two Social Services Sector Field Officers to drive local, place-based and tailored engagement to support employers to improve their recruitment and retention strategies, and to facilitate career guidance and training options for future and current workers.

### 3. Governance

- a. Provide ongoing funding to support the sustainable delivery of the *Gamechangers in Governance* course, in partnership with the University of Tasmania, to build the governance, integrity and risk management capacity of community and aspirational leaders in the community services industry.
- b. Fund the development of a governance peer learning network to support ongoing professional development and significantly contribute to the quality, risk management, integrity and leadership capacity of the industry.
- c. Support governance face-to-face learning events to facilitate the sharing of best practice on governance issues, as well as the creation of a *Gamechangers in Governance* alumni network to support ongoing learning and engagement.

### 4. Review of the Industry Plan

- a. Undertake an independent review and evaluation of the Industry Plan and governance structure to examine the priority pillars and governance structures to ensure the Industry Plan is fit-for-purpose to deliver the outcomes both the Tasmanian Government and community services industry agree are important.

## 1. A sustainable industry keeping Tasmanians safe and well (Industry Plan Priorities 3.2; 3.3)

### **Sustainable investment in an essential industry**

Investing in a sustainable industry will result in more innovative and efficient services and ultimately better outcomes for Tasmanians. We therefore welcome the Tasmanian Government's commitment to reviewing community services funding models to ensure they are fit-for-purpose.<sup>2</sup> This incorporates a review of indexation, a move to five year funding contracts, and the development of an outcomes framework that in time will inform purchasing decisions, contracts and reporting.

TasCOSS and our members believe the 2024/25 Tasmanian Budget should introduce a transparent indexation formula that informs subsequent state budgets, in line with other jurisdictions in Australia.

We propose an indexation formula for all community service organisations consisting of 70% Wage Price Index (WPI) and 30% Consumer Price Index (CPI), plus the superannuation guarantee (0.5%). Based on figures for the 2022/23 Financial Year, the indexation figure is 4.88%.

The implementation of a transparent indexation formula will give the industry more certainty about the funding it can expect as well as ensure funding is better matched to the actual costs of delivering services. This will mean organisations will be better placed to meet increasing demand as well as invest in productivity improvements, including staff development and technological upgrades — all of which will result in more timely and higher quality services for Tasmanians.

### **Keeping Tasmanians safe and well**

The recommendations of the Royal Commissions, Tasmanian inquiries and disability reform provide the Tasmanian Government and the Tasmanian community with roadmaps for action to ensure the rights, safety and wellbeing of children and adults in vulnerable circumstances.

We are pleased the Tasmanian Government has already taken steps to build its own capacity to make the changes required to ensure adults and children in its institutions are safe. Some of those changes involve how the Government engages with the community service organisations it funds, such as changing the way it commissions services, introducing longer contracts for community service organisations, and designing and working towards implementing an outcomes framework. For the community services industry, this will require significantly expanded capacity in workforce and governance (see sections below) as well as ongoing reform of the way social supports are designed, delivered, monitored, evaluated and reported.

To support the industry to achieve these outcomes, TasCOSS proposes the appointment of an Industry Response Project Team to work in partnership with the Tasmanian Government over the short- to medium-term to facilitate effective and efficient engagement between the Government and the industry, while each develop and implement responses to the Commission of Inquiry and other reforms in aged care and disability. The Industry Response Project Team will comprise of:

- A Project Lead to convene sector and subject matter experts to identify resources required to make community services organisations child-safe and able to ensure the rights, safety and wellbeing of all

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<sup>2</sup> This was also a recommendation of the [Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council \(PESRAC\) Final Report](#), March 2021, p. 71.

children, young people and adults accessing their services. The Project Lead will also work in partnership with the Government on other industry-related issues, including funding reform and the development of an outcomes framework.

- A Project Support Officer to provide technical and administrative support for the community services development work (as outlined above), as well as the workforce and governance projects.

**Proposed Investment: \$1,853,757 over five years**

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	TOTAL
<i>Industry Response Project Lead</i>	\$167,576	\$178,753	\$189,792	\$205,270	\$217,951	\$959,342
<i>Industry Response Project Support Officer</i>	\$156,241	\$166,659	\$176,949	\$191,373	\$203,192	\$894,415
	<b>\$323,817</b>	<b>\$345,412</b>	<b>\$366,741</b>	<b>\$396,644</b>	<b>\$421,143</b>	<b>\$1,853,757</b>

## 2. Workforce planning and development (Industry Plan Priority 2)

### **Workforce challenges**

Workforce remains one of the biggest challenges for the community services industry. According to the latest Australian Government White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities, population ageing and rising demand for quality care and support are two of the top five forces that will shape our economy and labour market in coming decades.

Low unemployment and a global workforce shortage are adding to these challenges. The community services industry is therefore operating in a highly competitive labour market. While skills and worker shortages are easing for some sectors, workforce needs in this industry are still expected to double over the next four decades.<sup>3</sup>

The workforce challenge in Tasmania will become more acute as a result of recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care, disability reform, the Tasmanian inquiries into child sexual abuse, and the Productivity Commission Report into Early Childhood Education and Care. In particular, the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings has called for:

*[...] a workforce strategy for the child and family welfare sector to pursue the following objectives:*

- b. An increase in staff numbers and retention.*
- c. Workplace conditions that make the sector a more attractive employer.*
- d. A reduction in unplanned staff vacancies.*
- e. Promoting staff wellbeing, at the individual and system levels, including by addressing the causes and effects of trauma and vicarious trauma.*
- f. A workforce equipped with the knowledge and skills to respond effectively to the needs of children and families.<sup>4</sup>*

To achieve the goal of a strong community services industry that can support Tasmanians to be safe and well, we need sustained investment to build a skilled and responsive workforce that can meet current and future demand, as well as comply with the letter and intent of the quality and safety standards rolling out from commissions and reviews.

### **Workforce Coordination Project**

In 2021, the Tasmanian Government committed \$3.3 million to the [Workforce Coordination Project](#), the first stage of the Industry Plan implementation aimed at addressing the industry's skills shortage.

The Workforce Coordination Project is a whole-of-industry response to:

- A projected shortage of 4,000 jobs within the community services industry by 2024; and
- The need to ensure the industry has the skilled and diverse workforce necessary for the delivery of flexible and responsive services that achieve positive client outcomes.

The project is delivered in partnership with TasCOSS on behalf of the social services sector, along with the Tasmanian peak bodies representing aged care, disability and education and care (childcare). The sector partners

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<sup>3</sup> [Working Future: The Australian White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities](#), Treasury, Australian Government, September 2023.

<sup>4</sup> For more information, see [Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Final Report](#), August 2023, Recommendation 9.10.

are Aged and Community Care Providers Association (ACCPA), National Disability Services (NDS) and Early Childhood Australia (ECA) — Tasmania Branch (contracted to Lady Gowrie Tasmania).

Key outcomes of the Workforce Coordination Project to date are:

- A strong commitment to continue to drive outcomes through cross-sector collaboration and partnerships with education and training providers and job and career service providers.
- An industry career website with interactive functionality to facilitate engagement and promotion: [www.workwithpurpose.au](http://www.workwithpurpose.au)
- A targeted workforce review tool for organisations to improve workforce planning and development capacity: [www.reviewyourworkforce.com.au](http://www.reviewyourworkforce.com.au)
- Successful employment outcomes for new trainers and assessors, with registered training organisations (RTOs) reporting they are now more likely to be able to fill vacant positions.

The project has demonstrated the value of cross-sector collaboration in delivering practical solutions to attract and retain staff. Another key learning has been the need for tailored workforce strategies for each sector that reflect their unique circumstances.

### **Next steps**

The Workforce Coordination Project is funded until December 2024. Without additional investment from the Government, the community services industry will be unable to address critical workforce shortages. This will significantly reduce the support the industry provides to Tasmanians in aged care, disability, early childhood learning and care, and other social services.

A mid-way external evaluation was undertaken to review the project and inform future investment. The sector partners as well as the project's governing body, the [Workforce Coalition](#), have welcomed its recommendations, which include:

- Continuation of the whole industry collaboration, including maintaining and refining existing interventions such as the *Work with Purpose* initiative and the Workforce Review Tool.
- Each Workforce Coordination Project peak body develops sector-specific workforce strategies and initiatives; and develops mechanisms to understand local workforce needs, and to navigate and connect employers, education and training providers, and jobseekers.

Project partners and the Workforce Coalition agree the strategic focus now needs to be twofold. Firstly, build on and strengthen sector-specific workforce initiatives. Secondly, in light of the successes of the Workforce Coordination Project, redefine a medium- to long-term whole-of-industry approach to workforce challenges, including in the context of the unfolding understanding by the industry of the workforce implications of the Royal Commissions, child sexual abuse inquiries and disability reform.



To achieve these outcomes we propose the following investments:

- a. Recruit a whole-of-industry Workforce Convenor for 18 months to:
  - o Maintain and adapt existing whole-of-industry actions that improve workforce outcomes, such as the *Work with Purpose* initiative and the Workforce Planning Review Tool;
  - o Review the Workforce Coordination Project to develop a sustainable collaboration model to identify shared interests, priorities, challenges and opportunities at a whole-of-industry level, particularly in the context of the workforce requirements driven by Royal Commissions, child sexual abuse inquiries and disability reform; and
  - o Develop a whole-of-industry workforce plan to develop and propose funding recommendations for demand, supply and/or bridging interventions that produce measurable impact.
- b. Recruit two Social Services Sector Field Officers to drive local, place-based and tailored engagement to support employers to improve their recruitment and retention strategies, and to facilitate career guidance and training options for future and current workers. A key function of these roles will be to work closely with the facilitators of existing initiatives, such as the Jobs Hub network. They will also inform workforce development needs in the aged care, disability, early childhood, and child and family welfare sectors. Each Field Officer will cover half of the state, noting the sector partners will seek separate funding for their own workforce initiatives.

**Proposed Investment: \$2,284,223 over six years\***

	2024/25 <sup>^</sup>	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	TOTAL
<i>Workforce Convenor Role</i>	\$123,548	\$304,555	\$24,364	--	--	--	\$452,467
<i>Social Services Field Officers</i>	\$208,502	\$365,181	\$379,788	\$394,979	\$410,779	\$172,527	\$1,931,756
	<b>\$332,050</b>	<b>\$669,736</b>	<b>\$404,152</b>	<b>\$394,979</b>	<b>\$410,779</b>	<b>\$172,527</b>	<b>\$2,284,223</b>

\* Costs inclusive of project running costs, including travel, accommodations, workshops, etc. A full breakdown is available on request.

<sup>^</sup> Current funding for the Workforce Coordination Project ceases in December 2024. The level of funding requested for 2024/25 is for six months from January 2025.

### 3. Governance (Industry Plan Priority 3.1)

The final report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings referred to a lack of strong governance arrangements as contributing to significant harm in the community.

The report refers to the important role that robust systems, structures and policies need to play in preventing and responding to child sexual abuse. While the report's scope was confined to institutional settings, we know that creating a child-safe Tasmania will require outstanding leadership across all sectors of the Tasmanian community, including within the community services industry.

Higher levels of governance skills will be needed to mitigate the significant risks highlighted by the Commission of Inquiry's Final Report, as well as to navigate the ongoing and deepening challenges of increasing regulatory requirements and the impact of economic and social disruptions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of climate change, such as bushfires and floods.

With 95% of boards of governance in Tasmania run by volunteers, combined with a lack of resources available to support improved governance practices and accountability, there is significant risk the community services industry will not be equipped to rise to these significant challenges.

#### **Gamechangers in Governance course**

The Tasmanian Government has recognised this need with initial funding under the Industry Plan priority area of Leading for Impact. This funding supported a pilot short course developed in collaboration and delivered in partnership with the University of Tasmania (UTAS).

[\*Gamechangers in Governance\*](#) is an accessible introduction to board governance of community service organisations. Over 2023, both UTAS and TasCOSS contributed significant in-kind support to the co-design of the pilot course, in recognition of the potential for positive impact on the Tasmanian community services industry.

The *Gamechangers in Governance* course is industry-led via an industry advisory committee, including lived experience advocate feedback, to ensure the course content and learning outcomes are fit-for-purpose and contemporary. The course is aimed at current and aspiring board/committee members and senior management. The co-design process highlighted the need for the course to be as accessible as possible across the industry. As such, the course is provided at low-cost to maximise reach and reduce a key barrier to participation.

The *Gamechangers in Governance* course strengthens governance in community services by:

- Building the governance and risk management capacity of community leaders and aspirational leaders;
- Providing high quality, accessible, timely and practical development opportunities, with a focus on evidence-informed governance in the current environment;
- Supporting and promoting diversity in boards and committees; and
- Developing longer-term strategies for learning and mentoring including alumni connections and learning networks.

The current funding from the Tasmanian Government only allows the *Gamechangers in Governance* course to run for an initial six months.

With a further investment from the Tasmanian Government, we will deepen and expand our core activities to ensure the community services industry is a well governed, viable industry.

Based on the significant demand received through the inaugural pilot course offering, TasCOSS proposes *Gamechangers in Governance* is offered annually. This initiative would be a flagship contribution to governance capacity-building for the community services industry.

Our investment proposal would also lead to an expanded pool of qualified and confident board members across the Tasmanian community services industry, ensuring boards are better able to manage risk, ensure quality and capably lead organisations through complex challenges. These investments will ultimately lead to improved community services and health, safety and wellbeing outcomes for Tasmanians.

### **Learning network**

Alongside the flagship *Gamechangers in Governance* course, TasCOSS proposes to establish and support a peer learning network for course participants and board members across the industry.

This network will create a learning environment to support ongoing professional development, capacity-building and information exchange around contemporary governance practices. The learning community will contribute significantly to the quality, risk management and leadership capacity of the industry.

### **Governance symposiums and events**

Throughout the *Gamechangers in Governance* course, TasCOSS proposes to design, manage and coordinate governance symposiums and events to provide opportunities for expert presentations, panel discussions, sharing of best practice on governance issues, and building of the alumni network for ongoing engagement and support.

### **Proposed Investment: \$426,357 over five years\***

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	TOTAL
<i>Gamechangers in Governance Course</i>	\$38,887	\$31,115	\$32,820	\$34,986	\$36,911	\$174,719
<i>Learning Network</i>	\$17,586	\$18,645	\$19,769	\$21,325	\$22,613	\$99,936
<i>Governance Symposiums and Events</i>	\$27,114	\$28,568	\$30,104	\$32,090	\$33,824	\$151,700
	<b>\$83,587</b>	<b>\$78,328</b>	<b>\$82,693</b>	<b>\$88,401</b>	<b>\$93,348</b>	<b>\$426,357</b>

\* Costs inclusive of course development, accreditation and network events. A full breakdown of cost components each year is available on request.

## 4. Evaluation of the Industry Plan

Like other industries, the community services industry is operating in a dynamic and fast-paced environment. It is important the industry remains responsive and adaptive to change at a strategic level and ready to contribute to change processes occurring in various sectors.

This is even more the case in the wake of the Commission of Inquiry's final report and the Independent Review of the Tasmanian State Service, both of which identified the need for greater accountability, transparency and engagement with the community.<sup>5</sup>

To that end, we seek an independent review and evaluation of the Industry Plan and governance structure at the three year points of the ten year plan. The first review would take place in 2024.

The external evaluation will guide priorities and direction over the next phase of the Industry Plan. It will capture quantitative data and qualitative information, as well as current and projected impacts of the project.

It would also examine the priority pillars and governance structures to ensure the Industry Plan is fit-for-purpose in delivering the outcomes both the Tasmanian Government and the community services industry agree are important.

**Proposed Investment: \$150,000 over 12 months**

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<sup>5</sup> The Commission of Inquiry made several recommendations relating to the need for greater transparency and accountability, which are recognised in the Tasmanian Government's response and proposed implementation plan for these recommendations. For more information, see [Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Final Report](#), August 2023, Volume 8: Chapter 22 — Monitoring reforms, Recommendation 22.1, pp. 304-305.

The final report of the recent Independent Review of the Tasmanian State Service also highlighted the importance of meaningful engagement with community organisations, noting there is "a great deal of untapped expertise and capacity in the community, which could lead to improved decision-making, policy development and service design, as well as a significantly increased level of community confidence and trust in government decision-making," and recommended the development of place-based and co-designed initiatives in Tasmania. For more information, see Watt, I (2021), [Independent Review of the Tasmanian State Service Final Report](#), Department of Premier and Cabinet, July, pp. 243-244.



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