

# PRIORITIES FOR TASMANIANS



We need government to reduce poverty and inequality in our society so that everyone can live a fulfilling life.

This election is an opportunity for political leaders to show that they will do this by committing to:

1. Income support to get through tough times
2. Real help to find employment
3. A secure, affordable home for everybody
4. Quality health and community services for all in need

# TASMANIANS NEED THE NEXT FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO DELIVER

## 1. INCOME SUPPORT FOR TOUGH TIMES

About 21,000 Tasmanians receive Newstart Allowance. At \$15,000 a year it is an income that plunges people into poverty and keeps them there. Newstart needs to provide an adequate income to support people as they battle an employment system and a job market that often works against them. 65% of people in the jobactive system are on the payment for 12 months or more, and one in five for five or more years.

Older Tasmanians, people with disability and people in living in the regional areas, can find it particularly hard to get work because of lack of suitable, or any, jobs.

**We call on the next Federal Government to raise the rate of Newstart by \$75 a week to ensure recipients can focus on looking for work rather than dealing with financial crisis.**

Newstart should be enough to cover the basics so that people can focus on getting a job. Similarly, the Youth Allowance payment for young people looking for work, studying or both, needs to be enough for young people to study and find employment without worrying about where their next meal will come from or how they will pay for rent. Raising the rate will get Newstart and Youth Allowance working. It will deliver the support people need to get through tough times and into suitable employment.

## 2. REAL HELP TO FIND EMPLOYMENT

We have the highest long term unemployment rate as a percentage of labour force of all states and territories. The average duration of unemployment is 69 weeks compared to 49.6 weeks nationally.

The employment services system is failing those Tasmanians looking for work and the businesses seeking to employ them.

Research by TasCOSS and the TCCI showed that the most disadvantaged jobseekers are not getting the support they need to transition into employment; there is a need for more individualised services for the most disadvantaged job seekers so they are better matched to jobs and pre-employment support; and employment services need to be more responsive to local labour market conditions.

TasCOSS seeks a commitment to funding a place-based employment services trial in Tasmania.

**TasCOSS proposes that Tasmania be a trial site for a place-based, regional labour market model. A local governance body would be established and after mapping the capitals in the community, they would commission the services required for both jobseekers and employers.**

## 3. A SECURE, AFFORDABLE HOME FOR EVERYBODY

Our housing system should make sure everyone has a secure, safe roof over their heads. Housing availability and affordability in Tasmania is at crisis point. Hobart is now the least affordable city in the country, Tasmania has 3,200 people on its public housing waiting list, yet every year we hand back \$15 million to the Commonwealth to repay a decades-old housing debt.

These funds would allow the State Government to take measures to increase the stock of affordable rental housing, provide more social housing and increase supported accommodation for those who need it, particularly young people, older Tasmanians and people fleeing family violence.

**We call on the next Federal Government to waive Tasmania's housing debt so that we can invest in affordable housing for all Tasmanians.**

## 4. QUALITY HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES FOR ALL IN NEED

### Home Care Packages

Tasmania currently leads Australia in the population ageing trend with the highest proportion of the population aged over 65 years and the highest median age of 42. In Tasmania nearly 2,000 people who have been approved for home care packages are yet to receive services and the wait time for older Tasmanians to receive home care packages is nearing six months.

Older people who are on the wait list might receive care through the Commonwealth Home Care Support Programme (CHSP), but this is not enough to meet the needs of people who qualify for the higher level of supports afforded by a home care package. While they wait, they miss out on the vital services that maintain their health and wellbeing. For some the wait is too long and they are forced to move into aged care facilities.

In the 2019/20 Budget, the Federal Government announced funding for 10,000 more home care packages nationally but this is not enough.

**We call on the next Federal Government to urgently fund the 2,000 home care packages for older Tasmanians who need them. Further, we call on the next Federal Government to invest in home care packages for an additional 100,000 home care packages nationally.**

### Dental Health

Two million Australians delay or miss out on dental care each year because of cost. More than 10% of Tasmanians report delaying or not seeing a dentist due to cost. Access is also an issue: Tasmania has the second-lowest rate of dentists in the country, after the Northern Territory. Oral health has an impact in many spheres of life. Because people avoid certain foods that are hard to eat, their nutrition can suffer. Oral health conditions can feed other health problems including diabetes and heart disease. It also impacts on people's quality of life and ability to earn an income – people avoid socialising due to bad teeth and report that their employment choices are limited.

**TasCOSS urges the next Federal Government to ensure dental care is affordable for all by, as a first step, doubling the number of adults able to use public dental services.**

### Equal Remuneration Order (ERO)

Every community needs quality health and community services – mental health support, disability services, aged care and so on. Yet these are under threat with the Federal Government announcing it will stop providing additional funding for the ERO that was designed to address the gender pay gap and maintain essential services to communities.



Since 2012 the ERO from the Fair Work Commission has helped to produce:

- a large reduction in the gender pay gap in the community sector (which is due to the community sector industry being highly feminised, and highly feminised industries are traditionally paid less than male-dominated industries for work of the same value);
- a sector that is seen as more valued and therefore more attractive to work in due to better wages; and
- better funding to improve the viability and sustainability of many organisations, ensuring communities receive the services they need.

**We want the next Federal Government to continue ERO payments, or raise the rate by the same amount of the base grants those organisations receive.**



TasCOSS is the peak body for Tasmania's community service industry. We challenge and change the systems, behaviours and attitudes that create poverty, inequality and exclusion.

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