



2025 Federal Election: *TasCOSS Priorities*

All Tasmanians should be able to live a good life, but the reality for most is that affording the basics, buying or renting a secure and healthy home, and fully participating in our digital economy are becoming further out of reach.

Tasmanians battling a cost of living crisis are becoming increasingly anxious about their future and demanding action. Addressing the barriers to living a good life and investing in individual and community wellbeing, will lift the capacity of our people to participate in and contribute meaningfully to our economy and society.

This federal election, the Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) is calling on all candidates and parties to commit to our priorities that, if enacted, will reduce poverty and inequality. The federal government must use its resources to address the hardship Tasmanians are facing and build a fairer and more sustainable future for all.



Raise the Rate of Income Support

Income support should be there to support people through the tough times, not keep them in a struggle for survival. Right now, Australia has one of the lowest unemployment payments amongst wealthy nations, forcing around one million Australians — including almost 26,000 Tasmanians — into poverty.

Tasmania has a higher proportion of people receiving income support payments (4.5% of population and 8.8% of labour force), compared to all other states (national average 3.5% and 6.3% respectively).

Every day, members of our community receiving income support payments — JobSeeker, Youth Allowance, Parenting Payment and related payments — are forced to make heartbreaking decisions between paying their rent or buying enough food and medicine. The Albanese Government's own advisory committee has recommended that we must do better.

Lifting all income support payments to the same level as the Pension rate would ensure members of our community going through tough times can live with dignity.

TasCOSS is calling for all income support payments to be raised to at least the Pension rate (\$82 a day) so everyone can afford the basics.



More Affordable Housing and Addressing Homelessness

Tasmania is experiencing a significant housing affordability crisis, which is characterised by rising rental prices, extremely low rental vacancy rates, high interest rates and a high proportion of properties exiting the long-term rental market to become short-stay accommodation.

For too many Tasmanians, a secure, healthy and affordable home is out of reach, especially for those living on low incomes. The supply of social housing has not kept pace with population growth and demand, leading to the social housing waiting list reaching record highs and significant adverse impacts — including living in inadequate, unhealthy, overcrowded or temporary housing conditions, and increasing rates of homelessness.

Tasmania's older housing stock is less energy efficient than new homes, forcing thousands of Tasmanians on low incomes to live in homes that are too expensive to maintain at a comfortable temperature. People who are already struggling to pay their energy bills cannot afford to heat or cool their home, making them sick.

TasCOSS is calling for housing to be made more affordable for people on low incomes:

- **Substantially invest in social housing to meet need with a clear pathway towards social housing comprising 10% of all housing stock.**
- **Increase investment in homelessness services by \$670m per year so that no one is turned away, plus additional funds to establish a Homelessness Prevention Transformation Fund for targeted prevention and early intervention for those at high or imminent risk of homelessness.**
- **Provide substantial funding to accelerate home energy efficiency upgrades for all low income housing and support state and territory governments to implement mandatory energy performance standards for rental properties.**



Close the Digital Divide

Access to adequate and affordable telecommunications, together with the skills and confidence to navigate digital services, are essential in our day-to-day lives. The digital economy does and will deliver huge social and economic benefits, but those benefits are not being equally shared, with one-in-four Tasmanians facing at least one barrier to digital inclusion and 54,000 Tasmanians highly digitally excluded.

Digitally excluded Tasmanians are less able to participate in our economy to find and maintain work; access education, health services and government services; maintain social connections; and find reliable information, especially in times of crisis.

According to the Australian Digital Inclusion Index, Tasmania is the most digitally disadvantaged state in the country. Tasmanians with low levels of income, education and employment, those living outside of Hobart and Launceston, older Tasmanians, Aboriginal Tasmanians and those living in public housing, experience higher rates of digital exclusion than the rest of the state's population.

Closing the digital divide requires a long-term investment in digital inclusion programs to support these priority groups and reduce barriers to inclusion, such as affordability and digital skills.

TasCOSS is calling for investments that will ensure more Tasmanians can benefit from the social, economic and productivity gains from being online:

- **Establish a regional infrastructure fund to support greater regional and rural access to reliable, high-speed internet and mobile phone coverage.**
- **Develop a low-cost broadband product for low income households and expand the School Student Broadband Initiative beyond school age to include other priority groups.**
- **Fund investment in digital skills programs to support priority groups at greater risk of being left behind, including people who have low literacy and numeracy skills.**
- **Fund initiatives to build awareness of scams, cyber security and artificial intelligence into community digital literacy programs.**





Quality Community Services to Help Tasmanians in Need

Until there is significant progress on removing the structural barriers that cause inequality, disadvantage, poverty and exclusion, the need for essential community services will continue to grow in Tasmania.

Government relies on community service organisations daily to deliver essential support for people experiencing poverty, distress and hardship. Community services provide shelter to people facing homelessness, legal support to women escaping violence, food relief for families doing it tough, counselling to help people surviving trauma, and care to improve our health and wellbeing. During times of crisis and disaster, community services are even more critical.

But right now, these essential services are forced to turn people away because they do not have the funding and resources they need to support everyone looking for help. The increased levels of financial stress in our communities have led to a rapid increase in the number of people turning to local community services organisations for urgent assistance. We must ensure these organisations have the resources required to support those in need of help.

To ensure Tasmanians do not miss out on these essential services, we need to overhaul the approach to funding community services.

TasCOSS is calling for greater investment in quality community services to help Tasmanians in need:

- **End the chronic under-funding of community service organisations by developing a better funding and grants management model to ensure their long-term viability and ability to meet need, in line with initiatives in the national [Not-for-Profit Sector Development Blueprint](#).**
- **Boost funding to emergency relief and essential crisis-response services such as family and domestic violence, community legal services, financial counselling, food and emergency relief, and homelessness services, so they are not forced to turn away anyone in distress.**
- **Ensure proper funding of peak bodies and advocacy organisations, as outlined in the national [Not-for-Profit Sector Development Blueprint](#).**





A Fairer Taxation System

To address the big challenges we face as a country — persistent inequality and poverty, gaps in essential services, an ageing population, worsening climate change and extreme weather events, as well as a housing crisis — we need a federal government that will show leadership and raise the required resources to address these challenges. We also need a fairer tax system that curbs growing wealth inequality in Australia.

Australia is the ninth-lowest taxing country among 40 OECD nations (raising 29.5% of GDP in tax compared with an average of 34.2%). Bold action is needed to shore up the revenue base to close gaps in funding essential services and income supports. This includes ensuring people and companies with the ability to pay their fair share of taxation actually do so.

A fairer tax system will provide the revenue needed to invest in essential services, raise income supports, increase the supply of social housing and close the digital divide, creating a more equitable and inclusive society.

TasCOSS is calling for a fairer tax system through the adoption of reforms that raise the public revenue needed to support services, safety nets and economic development:

- **Introduce reforms to halve the Capital Gains Tax discount for investment properties phased in over five years and limit negative gearing deductions to income from the same asset class for all new investment properties.**
- **Increase public revenue through more effectively levying taxes according to people's ability to pay, to fund investment in essential services, safety nets and supports for those most in need.**

About TasCOSS

TasCOSS's vision is for one Tasmania, free of poverty and inequality where everyone has the same opportunity. Our mission is two-fold: to act as the peak body for the community services industry in Tasmania; and to challenge and change the systems, attitudes and behaviours that create poverty, inequality and exclusion.

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.

The 2025 Federal Election: *TasCOSS Priorities* is informed by our research and analysis and reflects the expertise of our members, advocates and the lived experiences of Tasmanians.



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