



Supporting Children and Families to Stay Safe in Community through Prevention and Early Intervention

TasCOSS 2026/27 Pre-Budget Submission



About TasCOSS

The Tasmanian Council of Social Service's (TasCOSS) 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 together, 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.

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Summary of Investment Proposals

In the 2026/27 Tasmanian Budget, TasCOSS seeks a commitment from the Tasmanian Government to:

1. Continue funding for TasCOSS to work as a Change Lead organisation
Proposed Investment: \$670,000 over 24 months
2. Fund an investigation into an early intervention fund, as well as the development of how such a model could be designed and implemented to meet the needs of Tasmanian children, families and communities
Proposed Investment: \$200,000 over 12 months
3. Fund TasCOSS to design a best-practice model to provide early intervention support for children and families, delivered by community organisations
Proposed Investment: \$300,000 over 24 months
4. Fund prevention research and program development to support key issues impacting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people involved in, or at risk of becoming involved in, the child safety or legal systems
Proposed Investment: \$500,000 over 24 months
5. Provide funding to support TasCOSS to develop and implement specialist training in child-centred practice, including funding for three (3) in-person workshops to be delivered across the state.
Proposed Investment \$20,000 over 12 months

Supporting Children and Families to Stay Safe

TasCOSS welcomes the Tasmanian Government's commitment to extensive reforms to protect Tasmanian children from abuse. This includes working in collaboration with communities and organisations across the state to implement policy and legislative reform and embed evidence-based and trauma-informed practice to promote child safety and wellbeing.

The recently released *The Wellbeing Framework* sets a whole-of-government expectation that budget decisions will prioritise prevention, equity and evidence-informed investment,¹ as well as highlighting the importance of community organisations in promoting and maintaining wellbeing. TasCOSS's proposals support these objectives by embedding early intervention, strengthening collaboration and focussing on reforms which deliver measurable wellbeing outcomes for children and young people.

Investment in early intervention and child-centred practice reduces long-term fiscal risk, improves safety and wellbeing outcomes, aligns with wellbeing objectives (including Health, Governance and Place), and allows us to measure and demonstrate wellbeing returns.

The Importance of Prevention and Early Intervention

Several reports from Government and non-government agencies emphasise the importance of working closely with families during the first 1,000 days of a child's life,² recognising that strengthening a family's connection to community (and, if needed, linking them in with community-based supports) plays a crucial role in safeguarding children from further harm.

Prevention and early intervention work ranges from continuous care for parents before, during and after pregnancy, to timely support that prevents issues from escalating into crisis or tertiary responses. For children and young people, recent reports highlight an urgent need in Tasmania to expand early engagement with families, to help prevent involvement in the out-of-home care or criminal legal systems.

Investing early is not only compassionate, but also cost-effective, by addressing challenges before they become crises.³

¹ Tasmanian Government (2025), [Tasmania's Wellbeing Framework](#), Department of Premier and Cabinet.

² Tasmanian Government (2021), [It Takes a Tasmanian Village: Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy](#); Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (2021), [National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse \(2021-30\)](#).

³ For example, see Australian Human Rights Commission (2024), [Help Way Earlier! How Australia Can Transform Child Justice to Improve Safety and Wellbeing](#).

1. Continuation of Funding for TasCOSS to Work as a Change Lead Organisation

TasCOSS seeks funding to continue its role as a Change Lead organisation, working in partnership with the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) to advance reforms arising from the Commission of Inquiry.

TasCOSS, alongside other identified Change Lead organisations, is currently working alongside the Tasmanian Government to drive systemic, legislative, policy and cultural reforms arising from the Commission of Inquiry. This project provides an opportunity to ensure reforms are implemented effectively and in ways that reflect the realities, needs and experiences of the Tasmanian community.

Continuation of the project allows for ongoing collaboration regarding child safety and wellbeing reforms between TasCOSS, key community organisations and DPAC. It will also allow for the use of project funding to develop resources and materials for community-based organisations in the key areas of priority development, such as training and materials relating to child-centred practice, as outlined below.

We also strongly recommend the allocation of dedicated funding to all organisations already involved in the project (which currently includes DPAC, TasCOSS, Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania, Local Government Association of Tasmania, Sexual Assault Support Service and Laurel House) to engage in targeted partnership brokering to reflect on the project outcomes to-date, and to strategically re-establish the partnership to maximise the efficiency of the funding and resources allocated to the project.

Recommendation: Continue funding for TasCOSS to work as a Change Lead organisation.

Proposed Investment: \$670,000 over 24 months

2. Fund TasCOSS to Scope the Development of a Tasmanian Early Intervention Investment Fund

Research demonstrates the effectiveness of engaging with children and families as early as possible. Investing in work to support the redirection of funding towards prevention and early intervention is also likely to result in significant changes in demand for, and cost of, tertiary or crisis responses.

The Victorian Early Intervention Investment Framework (EIIF) demonstrates how another Australian jurisdiction is increasing investment in early intervention initiatives, as well as improving consistency of funding allocations and generating more meaningful evaluation of outcomes.⁴

⁴To date, the Victorian Government has invested \$2.7 billion through the EIIF, with more than \$3 billion in economic and financial benefits expected to be realised, suggesting structured evidence-based early

TasCOSS strongly supports the development of a Tasmanian framework modelled on the EIIF, to enhance investment in early intervention initiatives and reduce pressure on acute services over time. As demonstrated in Victoria, such a framework can link investment to measurable outcomes, support the use of clear indicators and avoided-cost analysis, embed consistent evaluation practices, encourage innovation and promote strong collaboration with the community services industry.⁵

We strongly recommend the development of this framework in collaboration with community organisations to ensure it meets the needs of communities and the organisations working alongside them. TasCOSS strongly recommends any such strategy, framework or accompanying materials are also developed in collaboration with Aboriginal organisations and leaders.⁶

We are seeking funding to conduct research into the development of how a similar scheme could operate efficiently and effectively in Tasmania.

Recommendation: Fund an investigation into an early intervention fund (similar to the EIIF), as well as the development of how such a model could be designed and implemented to meet the needs of Tasmanian children, families and communities.

Proposed Investment: \$200,000 over 12 months

3. Increased Initiatives for Community-Based Early Intervention

Alongside the investigation of how funding models can shift resources towards prevention and early intervention, the Tasmanian Government should fund the development and implementation of best-practice community-based programs to work with children and families at risk of involvement in the child safety or youth justice systems, as early as possible.

The following models from other jurisdictions demonstrate success in delivering early intervention outcomes for children and young people and merit consideration:

- **Kotahi te Whakaaro (Aotearoa/New Zealand):** a coordinated, multi-agency and co-located response for children and young people engaging in behaviour which could lead to police or statutory system involvement;⁷
- **Therapeutic support panel (ACT, Australia):** a community-based multidisciplinary panel to assess and respond to the needs of children and their families, who may be at risk of causing or experiencing harm;⁸ and

intervention investment can deliver both social and fiscal value. For more information, see Victorian Government (2024), [Early Intervention Investment Framework](#) and Australian Human Rights Commission (2023), *How Australia Can Invest in Children and Return More*.

⁵ Victorian Government, Department of Treasury and Finance (2022), [The Early Intervention Investment Framework: A Considered and Collaborative Approach to Support Early Intervention Investment](#).

⁶ For more information about the development of the Early Intervention Investment Framework Cultural Safety Framework in Victoria, see Victorian Government (2024), [Early Intervention Investment Framework Cultural Safety Framework](#).

⁷ For an overview/evaluation, see Malatest International (2024), [Fast-Track: Formative and Process Evaluation](#).

⁸ For information about the panel, see ACT Government, [Support for Children with Serious Harmful Behaviour](#) & Barker, J (2025), [Therapeutic Support Panel for Children and Young People 2025 Report](#).

- **Community-based family group conferencing (Hawai'i, Hawaii):** a restorative, culturally safe and independently facilitated conferencing model to engage families and children who are becoming involved in (or at risk of involvement with) child safety services.⁹

We recommend funding should be allocated to develop and deliver similar programs (as outlined above) to work with children and families in Tasmania, which utilise the expertise of existing community-based organisations (particularly Aboriginal community-controlled organisations who have been investigating and designing local best-practice models).¹⁰

Programs offering opportunities to address underlying issues impacting health and wellbeing should also be prioritised, including, but not limited to, housing and homelessness/tenancy support for children and young people, initiatives to support children and young people to remain in or re-engage with education, health supports (including targeted alcohol and other drug initiatives for children and young people), and increased resourcing for Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.

Recommendation: Fund TasCOSS to design a best-practice model to provide early intervention support for children and families, delivered by community organisations.

Proposed Investment: \$300,000 over 24 months

4. Prevention Research to Support Children and Young People

Academic-practice partnerships are a way of developing, collecting and sharing evidence-based best practice to explore and address complex issues. TasCOSS is calling for dedicated funding for specialist research initiatives to research and develop solutions to key issues impacting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

Using international models as an example (such as the Scottish Prevention Hub,¹¹ a partnership between Public Health Scotland, Scotland Police and academics at the University of Edinburgh), Tasmania could develop an academic-practice partnership to examine the social determinants of legal system involvement using a public health approach. This would be done through collaborative projects across various government agencies, as well as the development and implementation of targeted prevention initiatives to address specific issues.

A similar approach applied in Tasmania would support more informed decision-making, encourage the adoption of effective and scalable prevention models, promote stronger partnerships with the community services industry, and help ensure future investments are aligned with the areas of greatest need and impact. This partnership

⁹ Information about conferencing can be found at [EPIC 'Ohana](#).

¹⁰ For example, please see Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (2025), *Nukura: Weaving a Wise, Bold and Strong Basket to Safety Hold Aboriginal Children and their Families*.

¹¹ Information about the Scottish Prevention Hub can be found at [Scottish Prevention Hub: Edinburgh Futures Institute](#).

could also provide an opportunity to develop new and community-led methods of program evaluation, addressing present difficulties in meaningfully measuring the outcomes of prevention and early intervention initiatives.

Recommendation: Fund prevention research and program development to support key issues impacting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people involved in, or at risk of becoming involved in, the child safety or legal systems.

Proposed Investment: \$500,000 over 24 months

5. Develop and Implement Specialist Training

To support reform relating to children and young people, there is a need for specialist training to support community-based organisations to work in ways that are not only ‘child-friendly,’ but also child-centred — ensuring all organisations can work with and alongside children in ways that promote and respect their experiences, views, interests and rights.

Community-based organisations across Tasmania play an essential role in promoting children’s safety, participation and wellbeing. Supporting them with targeted training initiatives would build on existing capability and strengths within the industry and ensure organisations of all sizes have access to consistent, high quality training, professional learning and support.

TasCOSS recommends the Tasmanian Government invest in the development and delivery of specialist training and workforce development initiatives that build a shared baseline of child-centred and rights-promoting practice across all community organisations in Tasmania. This will ensure organisations working with children and families are supported to deliver consistent, contemporary and child-centred services aligned with best practice and emerging standards in child safety and wellbeing.

While some of the funding for the development and design of this training can be allocated through our Change Lead funding (if continued), we also seek additional dedicated funding to provide in-person information and training sessions on child-centred practice across the state.

Recommendation: Provide funding to support TasCOSS to develop and implement specialist training in child-centred practice, including funding for three (3) in-person workshops to be delivered across the state.

Proposed Investment: \$20,000 over 12 months



TasCOSS

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