



Neighbourhood Houses
Tasmania

CONNECTED, RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

DECEMBER 2021



SUBMISSION TO THE 2022-23 STATE BUDGET
COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROCESS

Tasmania Government Community Consultation Submission Cover Form

Connected, Resilient Communities

ABN 95 897 499 497

Organisation or Individual Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Inc

Contact Name Michael Bishop

Position in Organisation Chief Executive Officer

Telephone 03 6228 6515

Email ceo@nht.org.au

Indicative Department/s Department of Communities

Submission Description (no more than 100 words). This submission from Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania supports Government priorities primarily through the Department of Communities and builds resilient and literate communities. There are five key components:

1. Evaluation Community Care Advisor Pilot
2. Commissions for Declarations changes
3. Alternate strong Governance for the NE
4. Building resilience for Neighbourhood Houses role during COVID
5. Increasing reach of Neighbourhood Houses

Links to the Government's recommendations and programs 2021 Election Commitment, Neighbourhood House Strategic Framework, Neighbourhood Houses Protocol, Prevention of Elder Abuse; Family Violence Prevention strategy, PESRAC, Literate Tasmania

Other Comments

See attached proposal

Requested funding This proposal seeks funding for

Initiative/program title	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Connected Resilient Communities	\$1,195,000	\$190,000	\$0	\$0
Total funding	\$1,195,000	\$190,000		



Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania is the peak body representing 35 distinct Neighbourhood Houses which are run by individual community boards.

34 of the Houses are funded by the Tasmanian Government through the Department of Communities, and Dowsing Point is funded through the Australian Government Department of Defence.

The Neighbourhood House model strives to redress structural disadvantage. The network of Neighbourhood Houses has the largest and most diverse community service footprint of any non-government organisation in Tasmania.

Communities trust their local Neighbourhood House, and because there is no screening or waiting times people will often go to their local Neighbourhood House seeking advice on how to manage complex service systems for health, mental health, family violence, poverty, homelessness, and family support.

In the 2020-21 financial year over half a million occasions of service were provided through Neighbourhood Houses in Tasmania.

In response to the increasing social isolation and community fragmentation caused by the impacts of COVID, many Neighbourhood Houses began or increased their community outreach service offering and adapted to meet their local community's needs.

In 2020 the Tasmanian Liberal Government provided a one-off grant for each Neighbourhood House to assist in responding to COVID impacts to Tasmanian communities. These grants were not specifically tied to outcomes and were used in creative ways to enable community access to House resources even during lock-down. Neighbourhood Houses adapted to continue to support community members through phone, internet, referral, and essential face-to-face services, using appropriate risk-management measures for COVID such as physical distancing and hygiene measures.

Vital programs including food relief, meal delivery and collection, care packages, no-interest loan scheme (NILS) applications, computer and phone access, social support via phone, information sharing, and community connection continued during COVID restrictions, thanks to dedicated staff, boards and volunteers. Many Neighbourhood Houses set up physically distant, appointment-based internet use for Centrelink and MyGov purposes to assist community members to access online services. Online exercise programs, information sharing, including printed Public Health information for those without internet access, and community connections programs online and by phone kept people informed.

This business continuity capacity for the most part has been retained across Neighbourhood Houses.

A pre-election commitment to strengthen individual, family and community work across the state through the establishment of an innovative Community Care Advisor Pilot was realised in 2021, with the Tasmanian Liberal Government increasing their investment in Neighbourhood Houses.

More information about Neighbourhood Houses can be found at <https://www.nht.org.au/>



Summary of proposals in order of priority

1. The Tasmanian Government provide **\$120,000** to Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania to support the external evaluation over the two years (2022-24) of the Community Care Advisors Pilot. This request is within the standard 5% of the total Pilot budget. This need has arisen as the FTE went from 8 positions in the original proposal to 11 in an attempt to meet community expectations. A suitably skilled and experienced consultant has been engaged to undertake the external evaluation and their quote is \$160,000. The difference will be made from within existing funds.
2. Neighbourhood House Managers be supported by the Attorney General under section 12(2)(c) of the *Oaths Act 2001* to become Commissioners for Declaration at an approximate cost of **\$25,000**.
3. The Tasmanian Government provide **\$175,000** over 2 years to Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania to support the transition to a skills-based Board in the North East cluster (Fingal, Dorset and St Helens) as a potential model for other Neighbourhood House clusters. This project will also lead a state-wide review of the current outcomes reporting processes used by Neighbourhood Houses.
4. There is a need for Neighbourhood House services in the Midlands - Campbell Town, Longford and Ouse (satellites which could be managed by Fingal, Deloraine and Derwent Valley respectively), Smithton (Burnie could manage this service as a satellite) and Cygnet (satellite could be managed initially by West Winds). Nubeena also requires some discrete funding (managed by Dunalley). This proposal creates a community development and engagement officer role within Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania to build business cases for any future funding in these communities. A small amount of funding is also requested to support the communities in the process. Funds sought for this project are until December 2023 at **\$190,000**. This project will also include support for the revision of the Department of Communities Tasmania Neighbourhood House Program Strategic Framework 2018-2023.
5. The Tasmanian Government invest **\$850,000** in 2022 (34 Houses each receiving \$25,000) to continue to build Neighbourhood Houses' capacity in food relief and resilience (including facilitation and distribution) throughout Tasmania and provide an additional **\$25,000** to Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania to organise a community garden conference co-located with the annual Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Conference in September 2022. This project also includes a small amount of funding to assist Neighbourhood Houses to better support smoking cessation projects through the supply of nicotine replacement therapy.

Funds requested
2022 - \$1,195,000
2023 - \$190,000
Total - \$1,385,000



Connected

The Tasmanian Liberal Government has invested in the innovative model of Community Care Advisors Pilot. A co-design process was undertaken to develop the Pilot with expectations from Houses exceeding the budget. A total of 11 full-time-equivalent staff will be spread across the state in a generalised community, family and individual support model that reflects the Neighbourhood House role of supporting all community members who seek assistance. The pre-election commitment specifically committed the Pilot to an independent external evaluation. A targeted tender process has been used to recruit a suitably skilled and experienced evaluation consultant. Two exemplary tenders have been received and are currently under review.

- 1. The Tasmanian Government provide an additional \$120,000 to support the external evaluation over the two years of the Community Care Advisor Pilot – 2022-2024.**

After NSW and Victoria's experience of COVID outbreaks, the importance of high-quality place-based community responses has been accentuated. If Western Sydney had been able to harness trusted and integrated community organisations to disseminate information and dispel fears, then the outbreak may have been easier to contain. International evidence strongly suggests that well designed place-based programs like those that Neighbourhood Houses run, not only contribute to more inclusive communities and improved health and wellbeing outcomes, but over the long-term lead to significant government cost savings. Our Houses, through their core work of engaging the local community, see each day the gains individuals and families make through their place-based approaches to program design and delivery.

Place-based approaches

- are designed to meet the unique needs of locations
- engage stakeholders across all sectors in collaborative decision-making
- seize opportunities, particularly local skills, and resources
- evolve and adapt to new learning and stakeholder interests
- encourage collaborative action by crossing organisational borders and interests
- pull together assets and knowledge through shared ownership
- develop trusted local relationships and engage the difficult to engage community members
- attempt to change behaviour and norms in a location.¹

As Tasmanian communities responded to the need for safe social distancing, checking-in to assist with contact tracing and the anxiety and sometimes fear of being infected, many people isolated themselves. Access to Justice of the Peace and Commissioners for Declarations to witness signatures for Centrelink and other formal documents became more difficult. Neighbourhood House Managers, being fit and proper people, could be appointed as Commissioners for Declarations under Section 12(2)(c) of the *Oaths Act 2001*.

¹ Department of Health and Human Services, 2012, *Place-based approaches to health and wellbeing. Issues Paper*, Tasmanian Government, 12 December 2012, Version 1.0, pp. 13.



Neighbourhood House Managers are required to demonstrate an annual National Police Check as well as maintaining their Working with Vulnerable People clearance. This change will impact strongly on the connections made between communities and their Neighbourhood House.

2. Neighbourhood House Managers be supported by the Attorney General under section 12(2)(c) of the *Oaths Act 2001* to become Commissioners for Declaration. This has a minimal additional cost (estimated \$25,000) but significant impact.

The role of Neighbourhood Houses has changed during COVID to become both a producer of food (through community gardens) and meals (both in House and delivered) and an integral part of the emergency relief food distribution system. Models such as the Harvest Helpers in Deloraine assist farmers to collect produce and then distribute a portion to vulnerable community members at no or low cost. Similarly, the Scrubby Hill Farm Market Garden model in Geeveston produces food and is building a process to supplement low incomes. Houses like Clarendon Vale produce and distribute hundreds of meals each week.

Other community partners such as Loaves and Fishes use Neighbourhood Houses to distribute their contributions to community members in need. The social meals programs, including Eating with Friends, sees individuals cooking and sharing meals in each Neighbourhood House across the state (many hundreds each week) – this links community members and allows for trusted relationships to develop. This trust allows for advice and support to different public and community services.

Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania is involved in Tasmanian Government led food security working parties and is a member of the Tasmanian Food Coalition which is seeking to build access to affordable and healthy food for all Tasmanians.

In the 2020-2021 financial year the Tasmanian Liberal Government assisted Neighbourhood Houses to respond to the impacts of the COVID by providing one-off grants of \$25,000. Neighbourhood Houses across Tasmania used this funding to adapt their service offerings to outreach for isolated people who were unable to travel and in responding to hunger, poverty and homelessness.

More specifically the funds were used to

- Collect and distribute food
- Drive people to appointments
- Strengthen community gardens
- Transport community members to appointments
- Increase support for people living rough. and
- Create COVID safe education and social events.



3. The Tasmanian Liberal Government invest \$850,000 in 2022 to continue to maintain Neighbourhood Houses' role to build community resilience in terms of food production and distribution in Tasmania. This investment includes building House capacity to assist in smoking cessation programs currently being rolled out across the state and participate and promote in the current Family Violence Action plan². Additional assistance of \$25,000 is requested for Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania to organise a community garden conference co-located with the Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Conference in September 2022. It is important to realise that literacy and general support (including financial counselling) and other related services are integral to any food relief services provided by Neighbourhood Houses.

Resilient

Community resilience is a measure of the sustained ability of a community to utilise available resources to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations. Neighbourhood Houses across Tasmania build community resilience by working with all three tiers of government and their strong and abiding relationships and partnerships with other community services and agencies.

The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience states that "*community organisations are at the forefront of strengthening disaster resilience in Australia as it is to them that Australians often turn for support or advice*".

The Neighbourhood Houses in Geeveston, Fingal Valley and Dunalley have played significant roles in revitalising their local communities after disaster and fire. The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience emphasises community engagement and the importance of understanding the diversity, needs, strengths and vulnerabilities within communities.

Neighbourhood Houses engage with and understand the communities where they are located. This local knowledge is extremely valuable in emergency preparation, response, and recovery.

Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania is currently undertaking a project to build on the resilience of rural communities and has formed key partnerships to apply place-based strategies.

As Neighbourhood Houses have been able to successfully attract different streams of funding to increase the range and scope of their activities, so too have the compliance and

² Tasmanian Government's current Family Violence Action Plan, with a 3rd iteration and budget submission under development *Safe Homes, Families, Communities: Tasmania's action plan for family and sexual violence 2019-22 and the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022*



governance expectations grown. Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania is encouraging Houses to explore different and more contemporaneous models of governance.

One of the significant proposed governance changes is being worked on with Managers and Boards of the 3 Neighbourhood Houses in north-east Tasmania - Dorset, St Helens and Fingal.

These 3 houses and associated communities have shared different projects and are currently working as a Cluster to implement the Community Care Advisor Pilot. Like most Neighbourhood Houses they have an entrepreneurial approach and have strong connections to their communities and local government. This group is interested in standardising core processes and creating an overarching skills-based Board in a Company Limited by Guarantee with DGR status.

This innovation will ensure a sustainable social enterprise which includes

- succession planning
- strong community voices through local community advisory groups, and
- a community development leadership pathway.

This ambitious project requires support for legal fees, community consultation and board recruitment and training with AICD as well as an evaluation of the process.

4. The Tasmanian Government provide \$175,000 over two years to Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania to support the transition to a skills-based Board in the North East cluster (Fingal, Dorset and St Helens) as a model for other Neighbourhood House clusters.

Some Tasmanian communities are made more vulnerable by their lack of access to a Neighbourhood House and several communities across Tasmania have been working to develop local models as well as seeking government support.

The Department of Communities Tasmania Neighbourhood House Program Strategic Framework 2018-2023 has 4 Program Goals:

1. connect community
2. support people
3. create opportunity, and
4. local leadership.

The Tasmanian Government outcomes linked to Neighbourhood House funding are:

- Individuals reach their potential
- Families are strong and supportive
- Communities are safe, inclusive and resilient, and
- Tasmanians have good health and well being

There have been no new Houses for several years and rather than create organisations from scratch, we recommend a developmental approach using existing Houses to support communities and establish local community advisory groups to ensure that place and community focus is not lost. This establishment and developmental phase will be guided by clear outcomes of governance and links to the program goals. One of the deliverables of this



project over 2 years will be the creation of a "How to grow a Neighbourhood House in Tasmania" document.

A community development and engagement officer would liaise with the targeted community groups and complete a needs and gap analysis during the project to guide the communities to developing costs and benefits in time for the next state electoral cycle.

5. There is a need for Neighbourhood House services in the Midlands - Campbell Town, Longford and Ouse (satellites managed by Fingal, Deloraine and Derwent Valley respectively), Smithton (Burnie managed satellite) and Cygnet (satellite Managed by West Winds). Nubeena also requires some discrete funding (managed by Dunalley). This aspect of the bid is to create a community development and engagement officer role within NHT to build a case for future funding in this communities as well as develop contemporary governance models. A small amount of funding is also requested to support the process. Funds sought for this project until December 2023 is \$190,000.

In conclusion, Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania appreciates the opportunity to provide this Budget Submission on behalf of its Member organisations and looks forward to discussions with the Department of Communities about the recommendations we have raised.

Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania and our Members are committed to a better and fairer Tasmania for all and look forward to working with the Tasmanian Government into the future to achieve these aims.

For further information regarding this submission, please contact Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Chief Executive Officer Michael Bishop on 03 6228 6515 or 0427 575 400 or ceo@nht.org.au