



Neighbourhood Houses  
Tasmania

# FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING



Investing in Our 35 Neighbourhood House Communities

Budget Submission to the  
Tasmanian Government for  
the 2018/2019 State Budget



from Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Inc



DECEMBER 2017



*The staff and volunteers of the Network of Neighbourhood Houses acknowledge and pay respect to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community as the traditional and original owners and continuing custodians of this land. We acknowledge Elders - past and present.*



# From Surviving to Thriving

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## **Budget Submission to the Tasmanian Government 2018-2019 State Budget**

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**Neighbourhood Houses  
Tasmania**

## **Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania**

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## About Neighbourhood Houses

Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Inc. lodges this submission to the State Government budget process 2018-19 as the peak body for the 35 Neighbourhood Houses around the state. More information about the peak body can be found here: [About NHT and the Network of Houses](#)

There are 33 Neighbourhood Houses funded by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Disability & Community Services Division under the Neighbourhood House Program, and supported through Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania as their peak body. (Two member Houses are not DHHS-funded.) All Houses primarily engage in community development work in disadvantaged or socially isolated communities. Neighbourhood Houses are all separately incorporated community organisations governed by a local volunteer management committee.



## Summary of Recommendations:

### Core Funding for Houses and a sustainable and growing Network

#### **Funding to thrive, not just survive.**

**Recommendation 1:** That the government invest an extra \$45 687 per annum in each of the 33 DHHS Funded Neighbourhood Houses in Tasmania. This is the equivalent cost of employing a 0.5 SCHADS Level 5 position at each House and would enable each House to have the capacity to employ 2 FTE in every community

Annual cost \$1 507 688 in 2018-19 total cost (inc indexation & ERO) \$6 664 152 over four years.

Responsible Department: Department of Health and Human Services

#### **Funding to thrive, not just survive.**

**Recommendation 2:** Increase NHT capacity to:

- Improve support for community led governance
- Embed and coordinate reporting on outcomes across the Network of Neighbourhood Houses and
- Continue to support workforce development in the Houses

Cost estimate: 0.5 FTE (38 hours per fortnight) equals \$45 687 in 2018-19 with a total cost (including indexation & ERO) \$201 944 over four years.

Responsible Department: Department of Health and Human Services

### **Funding to thrive, not just survive.**

#### **Recommendation 3: Development of Category C into the Strategic Framework**

DHHS investigate, in conjunction with NHT and the Houses, how a Category C classification could be created and attached to the current Neighbourhood House Framework.

DHHS to then recurrently resource Phoenix House from King Island under the above Category C. If not feasible to create this then establish a community development fund to support their and other remote communities.

Annual cost \$120 000 per annum or \$480 000 over four years.

Responsible Department: Department of Health and Human Services

### **Funding to thrive, not just survive.**

**Recommendation 4:** There have been no new Neighbourhood Houses funded in any communities for over ten years. Recommend that DHHS undertake an analysis of community data to determine locations of need that fit to the NH Strategic Framework that have emerged over the past decade. DHHS can then investigate establishing two new Neighbourhood Houses with recurrent funding and infrastructure in the next four years.

Responsible Department: Department of Health and Human Services

## **Infrastructure and capital investment**

### **Infrastructure**

**Recommendation 5:** Provide capital funding of approximately \$500 000 to enable further development of the re-located Derwent Valley Neighbourhood House to make the premises fit-for-purpose to meet the needs of the Derwent Valley community.

Responsible Department: Department of Health and Human Services

### **Infrastructure**

**Recommendation 6:** Finish what has begun by providing a further \$3 million pool of infrastructure funds to finish this work. The \$6 million infrastructure spend over the last 4 years has seen improvements to many Neighbourhood Houses. Spread across 35 Houses, there remains considerable

work to be done to make all Houses 'fit-for-purpose'. The government invest in thorough analysis of the outcomes of the CIP project to determine which Neighbourhood Houses have unmet infrastructure needs to bring each House up to an equivalent standard to be fit-for-purpose. This analysis to determine the total infrastructure investment is needed, however NHT anticipates an investment of \$3 million at minimum will be required.

Responsible Department – State Growth

## Infrastructure

**Recommendation 7:** Create a fund for Neighbourhood Houses to purchase community vehicles or subsidise local transport solutions. Learning from the past Cars For Communities Grants, the Dept of State Growth could work with the network to create a one – off fund to enable Houses and communities to either purchase or renew community vehicles, or subsidise transport options. Will your government invest in assisting Neighbourhood Houses to maintain and create connections for community members through the provision of informal community transport services?

Cost: \$990 000 over four years, allowing for \$30 000 per House to fund flexible transport options

Responsible Department – State Growth

## The Big Issues – Education, Employment and Health and Wellbeing.

### Education

**Recommendation 8:** Enable local schools to partner with community organisations to better engage children, young people and their families at risk of disengaging from education. The Department of Education needs to foster a culture with their Principals and senior staff, with an expectation to develop outreach programs, build community partnerships and develop solutions that work in their local areas. Then each school needs increased dedicated community outreach resources of both finances and staff, which will allow for actioning adaptive, targeted responses, solutions and partnerships to meet the particular local needs and issues of students as they present themselves within a school and community.

Responsible Department: Department of Education

### Education

**Recommendation 9:** Competitive tendering funding rounds for subsidised training has disadvantaged Houses and not provided what our communities need. Skills Tas to work with NHT and Houses and RTOs (TasTAFE and Private) to develop a training funding model that will give certainty and increased

opportunity for community members to take up training pathways through Houses. Options may include training funds specifically quarantined for the Neighbourhood House sector to sustain partnerships with RTOs that lead people to engage in further training and employment opportunities and increase workforce participation.

Responsible Department: State Growth

## Employment

**Recommendation 10:** That the Tasmanian State Government develop a taskforce with key representatives from all sectors to develop a united submission to the Federal Government for wholesale reform of the Employment Services System which could be trialled in Tasmania.

Responsible Department: State Growth

## Health and Wellbeing

**Recommendation 11:** Houses have demonstrated the role that community gardens and food coops/fruit and vegie boxes can play to encourage healthy eating and improve access to affordable fruit and vegies (where people buy/contribute NOT emergency relief). Will your government further invest in community-based solutions like this that work?

Cost estimate: \$10 000 per House per annum for four years to fund food solutions sustainably in communities , equating to \$1.2 million over four years.

Responsible Department: Department of Health and Human Services

## Health and Wellbeing

**Recommendation 12:** Family support that works with families in an early preventative way has been missing from investments by current and previous government reforms of child protection. Houses have demonstrated positive outcomes for families through the 2016 report on the Thriving Communities Healthy Families pilot project. To respond to families with an early intervention approach, we recommend the provision of funding for a Healthy Families Worker for at least 1 day per week in each House. For each House at SCHADS Level 5 for 4 years this equals \$87 037, with a total over 4 years for 33 Houses of \$2 872 229.

Responsible Department: Department of Health and Human Services

## What Houses achieve for their communities

Neighbourhood Houses are places where local people work together to solve local problems, promoting change by the community for the community, using the community development approach that is known to be effective. As a network the Houses form the largest community development infrastructure in Tasmania, with the most regionally diverse footprint of any non-government community service organisation in the state. Each individual House is an independent entity, run under a community governance model.

Highlights from our [2016-17 Report on Activity and Outcomes](#) show:

- 779,592 contacts were made by community members with all Houses(492 contacts/week/House)
- Volunteers contributed 266,904 hours across the State over the year
- It means there are 168 hours of volunteering per week in each House – or 4.4 FTE's per House
- Core staff in Houses are paid at SCHADS levels 5-7. If volunteers were paid at SCHADS Level 1, Neighbourhood House volunteers contributed \$6.6 million of value to Tasmanian communities in 2016-17
- Each House worked with an average of 39 partner organisations during 2016-17



Activity data is a useful and important part of the picture. More significant are the outcomes that Houses are achieving and the stories of positive change for individuals and communities. Each person who connects with a House has their own story. For many people the House is an important part of their journey from a point of crisis to a place of renewed confidence, skills and opportunities. For many this in turn is repaid to the community through future involvement in helping others at the House or in the wider community. Houses collectively received 11,643 survey responses against a range of measures during 2016-17. An amazing 9,071 or 83.4% were positive responses. The results of our headline measures are shown on the next page.

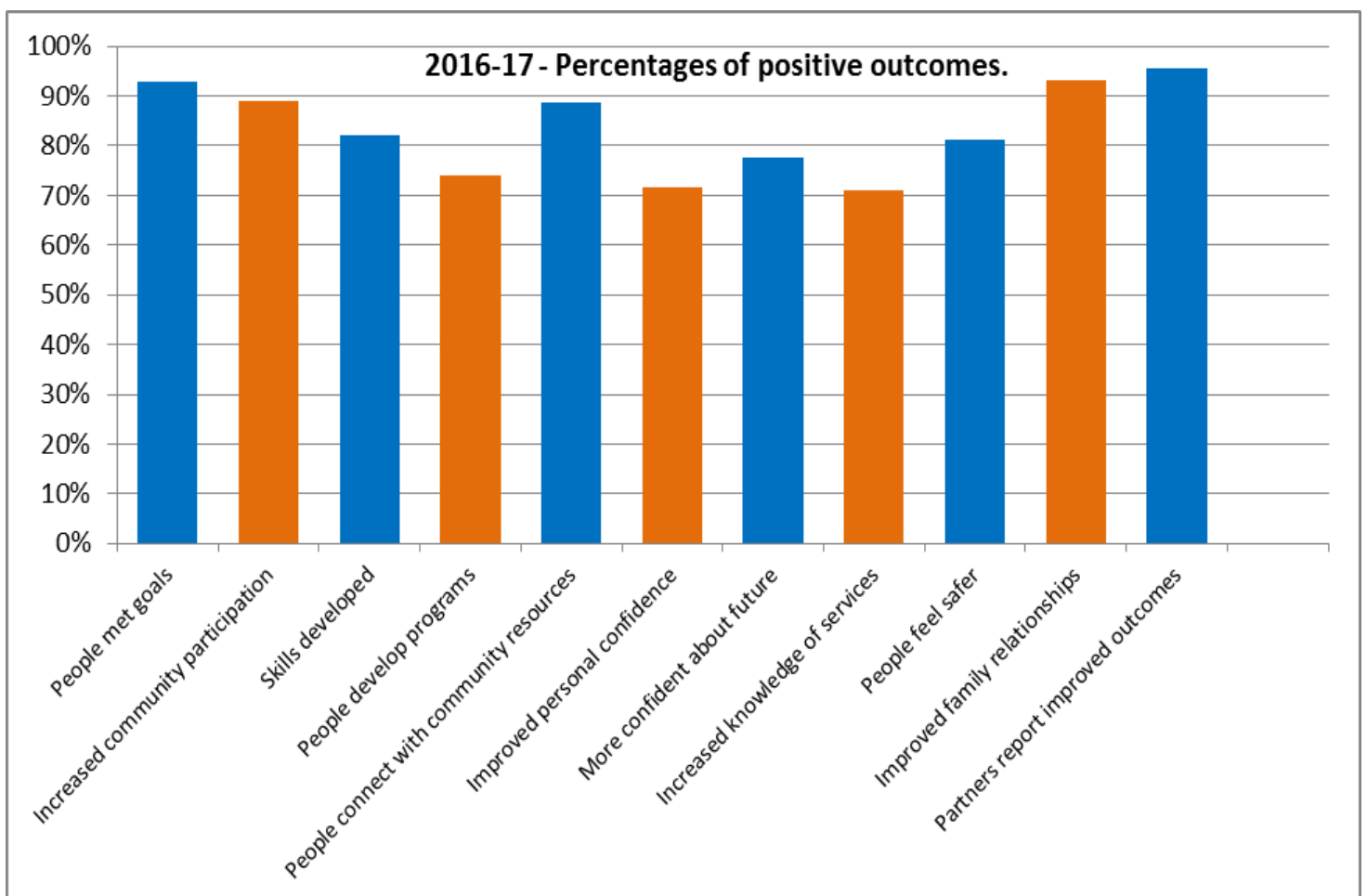
The report on Activity and Outcomes also includes stories and case studies, quotes and observations that showcase the stories of individuals and groups who have gained assistance from Houses.

The power of Neighbourhood Houses is in acceptance, a warm welcome, a sense of inclusion, a smiling face, someone to talk to, and getting involved at the person's own pace. See our [Promotional Video](#) to understand what truly happens through Houses.

The range of activities happening in Houses across Tasmania everyday are staggering in their diversity and impact:

- Driver Mentoring for people needing to get their learner driver hours up before trying for their license
- Literacy programs built around everyday needs – cooking for your family, accessing Centrelink on line, reading to your kids
- Playgroups and parenting peer support programs

- Building social connections through Community Lunches, Eating with Friends, community gardens and sheds, community food coop programs
- Youth programs that reach out to students disengaged from education, such as the Bike Collective at Risdon Vale
- Learning to grow and cook your own vegies while making friends and support networks through our community gardens
- Health programs such as the Get Active Program, or Yoga run by a local instructor, or arts classes and exhibitions – all enabling people to be more active and engaged
- Cooking and eating healthy food – Houses are leaders in practically enabling better health and nutrition in our communities
- Support to get on the phone and reach out for help. It may be accessing NILS loans, financial counselling or seeking support around family violence, housing, parenting support or relationship counselling.
- Providing public access computers. and training in how to use them - such essential infrastructure for people who need to access Centrelink, Jobactive services etc
- Developing intervention programs in partnerships with schools, police and youth justice programs that engage parents and children and young people at risk
- Partnering with RTOs to utilise the practical volunteering roles at Houses to enable people into employment pathways that are particular to that community
- Creating social enterprises that enable people to build their self-confidence and skills in a safe and familiar workplace before launching into open employment
- Lots of fun and laughter



Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania and our member Houses believe that solutions to challenging problems lie in community development approaches, enabling people to develop local solutions to their local problems. We call on the Government to continue the work it has begun in supporting the Neighbourhood House Network and invest deeply in our community development approach to resolving Tasmania's more entrenched issues.

## **Core Funding for Houses and a sustainable and growing Network**

### **Recommendation 1: Neighbourhood Houses need to thrive not just survive**

Extra recurrent funding is essential to Neighbourhood House communities. NHT has repeatedly and clearly articulated the need for this funding. An additional \$46766 will mean each House has the capacity to employ another 0.5FTE worker which will make a massive difference to what each House achieves for their community. It will also prevent unemployment in communities as non recurrent funding ends in June 2018.

NHT has conducted analysis on the income and expenditure costs of member Houses from both rural and urban locations. The fixed costs of electricity, insurance, phone, repairs, cleaning etc consume an average of 23% of the total grant. That's \$37 490 of the \$163 000 of core funding for a Category A House spent on fixed costs.

Analysis of current Award wages shows that in 2016-17 to employ a full time coordinator at SCHADS level 6 and a part time worker (for admin/finance/project roles) on Level 4 costs 73% of Houses' core recurrent funding.

This means that despite funding rises over the last 8 years, the staffing capacity of Houses has not been able to shift beyond 1.5 FTE. While most Houses obtain other grant funding for specific activities, obtaining such funding requires considerable resources.

Houses from Geeveston to Georgetown, Zeehan to St Helens, have been under great pressure and our advocacy is at times quite desperate. Data demonstrating the outcomes that are achieved for individuals and communities through the work of Houses are available and included in this submission. Without an adequately resourced "on-the-ground" trusted presence these outcomes will not continue to be achieved. People will not have skills and training opportunities through Houses, families will not feel as safe, people will not meet their goals, connect with community and feel confident about their futures.

There are many pressure-points placing an increased demand on Houses. Houses are experiencing more critical incidents and lockdowns than we have ever seen. NHT, with its Members, has developed guides and tools to help staff and volunteers deal with increasing levels of community violence, aggressive behaviour and drug affected community members.

All these increasing demands are also increasing the risks to health and wellbeing of the few paid staff across the network.

Houses require the capacity to employ 2 FTE to enable staff, volunteers and users of the House to feel safe at all times. Houses cannot continue to offer a warm and welcoming environment if they do not feel safe. Unemployment rates continue to be challenging in many areas, as well as disengagement of children from school. Cost of living pressures continue to place significant demands on House resources and programs.

Recently the Select Committee Report into Child and Family Centres tabled that the operational funding for 12 CFCs was approximately \$6 million. This is more than the total funding by DHHS to the 33 Neighbourhood Houses! The CFCs target group is families with children 0-5 years, while Neighbourhood Houses are working with all age groups and families, indeed the whole community. The work of the CFCs is valuable to communities, but so is the work of Neighbourhood Houses, and there is obvious inequity in the operational funding.

The government must be aware that without increased **recurrent funding** all 33 DHHS funded Neighbourhood Houses face a drop of operational funding of \$25 000 for 18-19 as opposed to 17-18. This is due to two one off grants of \$10 000 and \$15000 to each House. This was welcome funding on top of current core operational funds, but the reality is on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018 Houses budgets will shrink by \$25 000.

The urgent need to move beyond survival funding for the Neighbourhood House network articulated in our 2014-15 submission was acknowledged by the current Government when it came to office. The Government delivered on its election promise to provide an extra \$25 000 per annum for two years in all DHHS-funded Neighbourhood Houses. Then \$15 000 a year for two years was offered for the following two years.

This was not the recurrent funding the Network was seeking, however NHT and the network of Houses is grateful for this investment and the vote of confidence in their work at what was a difficult budget time for the Government.

At the media launch of this initiative prior to that election, attended by Premier Will Hodgman, it was publicly acknowledged that due to a difficult budget circumstance this amount could not, in the short term, be offered recurrently. The suggestion was that it was up to NHT and the network of Houses to show what could be achieved through this investment. Government was looking for the network to “prove” this was money well spent, and when the Tasmanian economy rebounded, that the funding should be made recurrent and increased to what Houses were actually requesting.

We are confident, as you can see from the Outcomes reporting data above, that our network has created real community impact with these funds. We now look to the Government to meet the need for extra recurrent funding now that the State Budget has rebounded.

This is why the core funding of Houses must rise and be recurrent so that Houses and their communities can move beyond just surviving to really thriving.

## **Funding to thrive, not just survive**

**Recommendation 1:** That the government invest an extra \$45 687 per annum in each of the 33 DHHS Funded Neighbourhood Houses in Tasmania. This is the equivalent cost of employing a 0.5 SCHADS Level 5 position at each House and would enable each House to have the capacity to employ 2 FTE in every community

Annual cost \$1 507 688 in 2018-19 total cost (inc indexation & ERO) \$6 664 152 over four years.

Responsible Department: Department of Health and Human Services

## **Recommendation 2: Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Staffing Capacity**

The Neighbourhood House Network of Tasmania's 10 year Vision aspires to have a peak organisation with on-going capacity to:

1. Strengthen the capacity of Neighbourhood Houses to meet their community's needs;
2. Build a strong, recognised and trusted reputation for the Neighbourhood House Network; and
3. Be a supportive, innovative and well governed organisation that meets members' needs.

NHT is a high performing peak body, achieving results that enable 35 Neighbourhood Houses across Tasmania to do what they do best – to use a community development approach to support local communities in ways that make a real difference in people's lives.

Current DHHS core funding supports 2.2 FTE staff to support the network with peak body functions including: communications, resources, guidance on governance, policy and procedures, skills development, coordination of projects, advocacy on funding and , and maintaining an integrated Network. This core funding also covers the operational functions of NHT: finance and budgeting, administration, reporting, our own governance and asset management.

Additional non-recurrent funding previously received:

- Development and implementation of outcomes reporting in Houses, now expended
- Workforce development funding, now expended
- Everyday Literacy for Local Communities

Supporting Houses with governance is a growing need as volunteer members of committees of management are faced with ever more complex service, regulatory and legislative environments.

Core funding for NHT as a peak has been static in real terms since 2010, which does not reflect the growth of the organisation and the networks' increased activity. It is challenging to know where and how to reduce the effort given the resources available to NHT.

## **Funding to thrive, not just survive.**

### **Recommendation 2: Increase NHT capacity to:**

- Improve support for community led governance
- Embed and coordinate reporting on outcomes across the Network of Neighbourhood Houses and
- Continue to support workforce development in the Houses

Cost estimate: 0.5 FTE (38 hours per fortnight) equals \$45 687 in 2018-19 with a total cost (inc indexation & ERO) \$201 944 over four years.

**Responsible Department: Department of Health and Human Services**

## **Recommendation 3: King Island – special circumstances**

Phoenix House on King Island is an associate member of NHT. Phoenix House plays a pivotal role in bringing their community together. They have worked to the Neighbourhood House Strategic Framework and are committed to a community development approach. King Island, due to its physical isolation and remoteness, is a much different community than any other in Tasmania and deserves special consideration.

The Board and Network were gratified by the first time recognition of Phoenix House when it was included in the allocation of additional one-off funding granted to Houses during 2016-17.

Phoenix House does not fit the current categories Neighbourhood House framework and has unique demographic challenges. To their credit, Phoenix House has aligned their work with our Neighbourhood House model, and though not required, have engaged in our outcomes reporting framework. It is time for the government to create a third category (C -very remote) in the Neighbourhood House Strategic Framework. Our network is committed to the current Needs Based framework and its current structure.

Currently the Strategic Framework specifies that any new Neighbourhood House funds should be directed to a community that fits the Category A needs based criteria, so it would be a government decision to prioritise King Island over other communities that might fit Category A.

If it is not possible to establish a 'very remote' category while maintaining the integrity of the current framework, another solution could be to create a regional community development program of funds to support organisations like King Island that are committed to community development. Such a commitment would provide a preventive approach to health for the remote community of King Island. We propose that a model of funding be developed to enable recognition of Phoenix House as a community development based organisation operating in a remote location.

## **Funding to thrive, not just survive.**

### **Recommendation 3: Development of Category C into the Strategic Framework**

**DHHS investigate, in conjunction with NHT and the Houses, how a Category C classification could be created and attached to the current Neighbourhood House Framework.**

DHHS then recurrently resource Phoenix House from King Island under the above Category C. If not feasible to create this then establish a community development fund to support their and other remote communities.

*Annual cost \$120 000 per annum or \$480 000 over four years.*

**Responsible Department: Department of Health and Human Services**

#### **Recommendation 4: Growing the Neighbourhood House Network**

**There have been no new Neighbourhood Houses funded in any communities for over ten years despite many communities contacting NHT and Government seeking funding for a House in their community.** Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania calls for funding to be established and investigations begin to identify and work with two communities over the next four years. These must be assessed independently using the criteria established in the DHHS Strategic Framework for Neighbourhood Houses.

There has been no systematic analysis of the unmet need of communities according to the criteria for many years. DHHS would need to examine the demographics of communities that are interested and meet the need criteria to determine the two locations.

NHT would assist in speaking to interested communities, and has done so over the last ten years, but there has been no funding available to communities.

The community development approach to support people in local communities has demonstrated positive benefits. All communities deserve to benefit from support for their community development needs, activities and opportunities.

#### **Funding to thrive, not just survive.**

**Recommendation 4: There have been no new Neighbourhood Houses funded in any communities for over ten years. Recommend that DHHS undertake an analysis of community data to determine locations of need that fit to the NH Strategic Framework that have emerged over the past decade. DHHS can then investigate establishing two new Neighbourhood Houses with recurrent funding and infrastructure in the next four years.**

**Responsible Department: Department of Health and Human Services**

#### **Recommendation 5: Derwent Valley Infrastructure and capital investment**

With welcome funding support from Government of \$325 000, the Derwent Valley Neighbourhood House has recently relocated to new premises due to an untenable situation in their previous location. The new premises are small and need further development to be fit-for-purpose and enable the continuation of some programs and activities previously underway in and for the community.

The recent opening of a newly constructed House at Rocherlea has shown how important the design and amenity of a House are as a facilitating factor in meeting community need, and how such an investment can help to further invigorate local community development activities. An infrastructure commitment for Derwent Valley Community House would make a great fit-for-purpose Neighbourhood House on the new site to finally give that community the building it deserves.

## **Infrastructure**

**Recommendation 5: Provide capital funding of approximately \$500 000 to enable further development of the re-located Derwent Valley Neighbourhood House to make the premises fit-for-purpose to meet the needs of the Derwent Valley community.**

**Responsible Department: Department of Health and Human Services**

## **Recommendation 6: Houses for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – continuing refurbishment**

Over the last three years the current and previous governments have invested \$6 million across the DHHS-funded Neighbourhood House network. This investment has focussed on raising the Houses to a fit-for-purpose state after years of underinvestment.

Prior to this the State Government spent \$3-4 million on each of 9 Child and Family Centres across the state, for a presumed total infrastructure cost of around \$27 million.

Highlighting the infrastructure funding disparity between CFC's and Houses is not intended to disparage the work of the CFC's but to emphasise the under-investment in Neighbourhood House communities over many years.

Excluding the \$1.7 million investment in NSCC Rocherlea which was granted in the last budget, for which the network is incredibly grateful, \$6 million will have been spent across the 33 sites Neighbourhood Houses operate from. Given that planning and consultancy/architects fees have consumed around \$500 000 of the allocations it has resulted in \$166 000 being spent on average per House.

Impacting on the use of these funds is that any changes to footprints has triggered requirements under the recently revised Building Code of Australia around disability access. This has meant that many of the renovations have required between \$80 000 and \$100 000 on new disabled and ambulant access toilet blocks. The disability access created is a great outcome but these required investments have left precious little left over to create as many new kitchens, new multi-purpose rooms and offices that all had hoped for.

A raft of regional builders have benefited through the government investment in House infrastructure as these have been relatively small contracts located in some of our most disadvantaged and socially isolated rural communities.

Further investment will provide greater local economic stimulus into the regions (a good thing in itself) in addition to the community benefit via better fit-for-purpose Neighbourhood Houses.

## **Infrastructure:**

**Recommendation 6:** Finish what has begun by providing a further \$3 million pool of infrastructure funds to finish this work. The \$6 million infrastructure spend over the last 4 years has seen improvements to many Neighbourhood Houses. Spread across 35 Houses, there remains considerable work to be done to make all Houses 'fit-for-purpose'. The government invest in thorough analysis of the outcomes of the CIP project to determine which Neighbourhood Houses have unmet infrastructure needs to bring each House up to an equivalent standard to be fit-for-purpose. This analysis to determine the total infrastructure investment is needed, however NHT anticipates an investment of \$3 million at minimum will be required.

**Responsible Department – State Growth**

## **Recommendation 7: Improving access to opportunity and connection**

The lack of accessible transport is a significant issue for people in many communities, limiting their ability to access education, health and support services and to participate in recreational and social activities.

Houses have shown that they have the local knowledge, connections and support to link healthy eating with healthy activities. Houses connect local families and children to local physical health and wellbeing activities, such as membership of sporting clubs, accessing playgrounds, beaches, bush camps as well as negotiating concession rates for children and families to participate in outdoor play. Connecting healthy eating programs with physical activities, play and outdoor exercise is essential in assisting children to learn group rules, assisting social cohesion and forming an essential basis for a healthy lifestyle and lifelong learning.

Neighbourhood Houses can create healthy and varied activities in local areas and provide safe transport for families and children. Will your government invest in assisting Neighbourhood Houses to create connections to services, and opportunities for health promoting physical activity groups in local areas through the provision of transport services, such as 15 seater buses, that connect Houses to activities? Some Houses have benefited from Cars for Communities grant in the past, but some have not, and have no transport directly available through the House. An investment of \$30 000 per House as a one off cost over four years to fund flexible transport options which may involve vehicle purchase or creating a travel subsidy regime. This would reduce barriers to what Houses are offering for many people, as well as open other opportunities for local people to attend other activities and programs.

## Infrastructure

**Recommendation 7:** Create a fund for Neighbourhood Houses to purchase community vehicles or subsidise local transport solutions. Learning from the past Cars For Communities Grants, the Dept of State Growth could work with the network to create a one – off fund to enable Houses and communities to either purchase or renew community vehicles, or subsidise transport options. Will your government work with and invest in assisting Neighbourhood Houses to maintain and create connections for community members through the provision of informal community transport services?

**Cost:** \$990 000 over four years, allowing for \$30 000 per House to fund flexible transport options

**Responsible Department – State Growth**

## **The Big Issues – Education, Employment and Health and Wellbeing**

At the Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania State Conference in 2014, 30 communities were represented by a broad mix of volunteers, committee members and paid staff from Neighbourhood Houses – over 120 people from all over Tasmania. The two days were spent identifying the key issues of concern common across the 30 communities represented, and prioritising them. The four issues that all agreed needed the attention of government, community and business were:

- Education;
- Employment;
- Health & Wellbeing; and
- Cost of Living.

These four issues have been areas of concern for communities and Governments for a long time, but unfortunately there seems to have been little structural progress made on any of them.

*We have chosen to focus this Submission on the three issues of: Education, Employment, and Health and Wellbeing.*

### **Education – Engagement through the Houses**

#### **Recommendation 8: Strengthening partnerships between schools and their local community**

Many Houses across the network provide support to engage students disengaging from school at various times. This support is sometimes ad-hoc, is unfunded at Neighbourhood Houses, and while may well work, often occurs without engagement or proactive leadership from the school and its leadership team. Schools, students, staff and the wider community could benefit from leadership teams within schools forming intentional partnerships with community groups and organisations, such as Neighbourhood Houses. This occurs already in some communities; however partnerships should not be reliant on the personality or philosophy of the individual principal. We call on the government to commit funding and human resources for schools to further engage with their local community. We strongly recommend a review of the way schools work with their local the community. The development of community partnerships should be an integral part of the role, and not left to the individual choice or interests of school leadership.

The intentional development of relationships between schools and Houses will help provide a safety net for children having difficulty engaging with the school system. A coordinated community approach will help prevent children falling through the cracks. Schools that can partner better with their local communities, and work in a more coordinated, complimentary and collaborative effort will see improved outcomes for the children that struggle the most.

We recommend a state wide approach to connect Houses and schools by developing a formal partnership between NHT and the Department of Education facilitating collaboration on the issue of disengaged, suspended and truant students.

We recommend an allocated budget at each school to support real and meaningful impact through this activity.

Houses want to see high levels of community involvement and engagement with local education provision. When issues arise, such as young people disengaging from the education system, there should not be a one-size-fits-all solution but rather options that can vary by location according to what will work best in each community.

The approach advocated in this recommendation will enable schools and community groups to partner at the local level to re-engage and support students currently, or at risk of becoming disengaged.

## **Education**

**Recommendation 8: Enable local schools to partner with community organisations to better engage children, young people and their families at risk of disengaging from education. The Department of Education needs to foster a culture with their Principals and senior staff, with an expectation to develop outreach programs, build community partnerships and develop solutions that work in their local areas. Then each school needs increased dedicated community outreach resources of both finances and staff, which will allow for actioning adaptive, targeted responses, solutions and partnerships to meet the particular local needs and issues of students as they present themselves within a school and community.**

**Responsible Department: Department of Education**

## **Recommendation 9: Reinvigorate the funding of training**

Education is the number one issue of concern to Neighbourhood Houses and their local communities. Houses consistently provide pathways for people moving from unemployment or other challenging circumstances, into volunteering, training and education, and into employment. Dedicated funding will enable Houses to respond to the training needs of volunteers and community members as pathways to employment

Competitive tendering funding of training has disadvantaged Houses and not provided what our communities need at the time when they need it. Skills Tasmania needs to work with NHT and Houses and RTOs (TasTAFE and Private) to develop a training funding model that will give certainty and opportunity for community members to take up training pathways through Houses.

Options may include quarantining a pool of training funds specifically for the Neighbourhood House sector to sustain partnerships with RTOs that lead people to engage in further training and employment opportunities and increase workforce participation.

## Education

**Recommendation 9:** Competitive tendering funding rounds for subsidised training has disadvantaged Houses and not provided what our communities need. Skills Tas to work with NHT and Houses and RTOs (TasTAFE and Private) to develop a training funding model that will give certainty and increased opportunity for community members to take up training pathways through Houses. Options may include training funds specifically quarantined for the Neighbourhood House sector to sustain partnerships with RTOs that lead people to engage in further training and employment opportunities and increase workforce participation.

**Responsible Department:** State Growth

## Employment – Re-imagine the Employment Services System

### Recommendation 10:

While the provision of employment services agencies (ESA's) is a Federal responsibility, the problems with this system have significantly affected people in Tasmania. Action must be taken by State and Federal Governments to address what communities, employers and individuals tell us over and over again – the employment services system is not working. We are not suggesting tweaking the system of employment support but to be blunt – we suggest that abandoning it and starting again is the preferred option, using Tasmania as a trial site to develop locally based employment solutions and responses.

### **Employment:**

**Recommendation 10:** That the Tasmanian State Government develop a taskforce with key representatives from all sectors to develop a united submission to the Federal Government for wholesale reform of the Employment Services System which could be trialled in Tasmania

**Responsible Department:** State Growth

## Case Study: Huon Valley Works

The State Government last year provided \$250 000 to the Geeveston Community Centre to pilot their local employment solution. Huon Valley Works has been developed by the Huon Valley community through the leadership of Geeveston Community Centre. The community recognised the many issues associated with unemployment identified above, and chose to take control and find local solutions. The Hub uses a labour hire model and works with local employers to link various local part time job opportunities from different employers, to create more sustainable employment opportunities for individuals. This solution assists to meet the needs of employers with short term and/or part time employment opportunities. In many ways Huon Valley Works is a simple concept - it brings together the old CES jobs board concept, with all the jobs in a regional community listed in one place that's accessible to job seekers. Access to information about available jobs is not

fragmented across different job service agencies. There is one place for the employer and potential employee to go to. It also adds an ethical labour hire component, by bringing together the various part time jobs and linking them together into a more sustainable job for someone. The value-add is that the Hub is connected to the Neighbourhood House which will mean people will have the supportive environment of the House if life issues come up that might be a risk to their new job, for instance education. It also means that those people that may not be quite job ready can get involved in the House and build their skills and confidence before moving onto Huon Valley Works.

During 2016-17 180 active job seekers engaged with HVW, who collaborated with 30 partner organisations to support, up-skill and place these job seekers into work. Seventy nine percent of job-seekers were employed as a result. In the week ending December 3<sup>rd</sup>, this social enterprise employed 17 FTE over 39 staff.

This is an example of the great solutions that Houses and their communities are creating that could be considered in a reimagined Employment Services system.

## Health and wellbeing through Houses

### Recommendation 11: Supporting local community-based food hubs

Community-based food hubs have a successful history of improving food access to communities in areas of disadvantage. They also act as a space for the community to come together and make positive connections to the wider world.

For example, volunteer participants have received accredited training and skills development at the Burnie Community House and TasTAFE Burnie. The participants actively work in the market garden and produce shopfront. Informal learning also takes place at Burnie Community House by offering programs, workshops and activities centred on healthy lifestyle and food choices.

The above example demonstrate how Neighbourhood Houses, through their local partnerships and community development focus, can deliver local innovations that address health and well-being issues through improved access to affordable nutritious food. We ask the State Government to take the opportunity and seek to develop and resource more community responses through the Neighbourhood House network.

Community based food solutions are known to have multiple benefits across a range of health and wellbeing indicators, from social inclusion to access to healthy food, and improved exercise. It's time Tasmania got boldly behind these local solutions.

### **Health and Wellbeing:**

**Recommendation 11: Houses have shown the role that community gardens and food coops/fruit and vegie boxes can play to encourage healthy eating and improve access to affordable fruit and vegies (where people buy/contribute NOT emergency relief). Will your government further invest in community-based solutions like this that work?**

**Cost estimate: \$10 000 per House per annum for four years to fund food solutions sustainably in communities equating to \$1.2 million over four years.**

**Responsible Department: Department of Health and Human Services**

### **Recommendation 12: Grassroots family support through local community**

Family support that works with families in a preventative way has been missing from current and previous government reforms of child protection. Houses have demonstrated positive outcomes for families through the 2016 report on the Thriving Communities Healthy Families pilot project which was run from Houses and wound up in 2015. The program aimed to engage hard to engage families and provide trusted support and connections to prevent escalating social and family issues. The Thriving Communities program is informed by international best practice and if scaled up has the potential to improve long term health and wellbeing, stronger communities and reduce cost pressures on health systems.

The evaluation of the Thriving Communities pilot has provided an evidence base to show that significant health and well-being outcomes were achieved for families, and that the integration of local support service systems was improved, meaning less duplication, more focussed delivery, leverage of resources between services and providers, and improved wrap-around supports.

The Thriving Communities Healthy Families project demonstrated successes that align with the Tasmanian Government's goal to make Tasmania the healthiest population in Australia by 2025. The place-based networks that were created through the Thriving Communities Healthy Families Project span all tiers of Government with key project partners including local councils, Child and Family Centres, schools, and the business communities of the local areas involved in the Project. The capacity of Healthy Families Workers to reach directly into those communities where we most wish to see health changes is a great alignment with the Tasmanian Ministerial Health Council's direction.

### **Health and Wellbeing:**

**Recommendation 12: Family support that works with families in an early preventative way has been missing from investments by current and previous government reforms of child protection. Houses have demonstrated positive outcomes for families through the 2016 report on the Thriving Communities Healthy Families pilot project. To respond to families with an early intervention approach, we recommend the provision of funding for a Healthy Families Worker for at least 1 day per week in each House. For each House at SCHADS Level 5 for 4 years this equals \$87 037, with a total over 4 years for 33 Houses of \$2 872 229.**

**Responsible Department: Department of Health and Human Services**

*Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania looks forward to continuing our partnership with the Government, and continuing to develop and promote the community development approaches to supporting our local communities. Thank you for your deep consideration of these recommendations and initiatives.*



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