

December 2018

# THRIVING TASMANIA

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investing in community solutions

**Budget Priority Statement  
to the  
Tasmanian Government for  
the 2019-20 State Budget.**

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**from Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Inc**

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**Neighbourhood Houses  
Tasmania**

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## About Neighbourhood Houses





Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Inc. lodges this submission to the State Government budget process 2019-20 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 34 Neighbourhood Houses funded by the Department of Communities Tasmania (DoC) under the Neighbourhood House Program, and supported through Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania as their peak body. (One additional member House is not DoC funded). All Houses primarily engage in community development work in disadvantaged or socially isolated communities. Neighbourhood Houses are all independently incorporated community organisations governed by a local volunteer Board of Management.

## 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 proven 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 2017-18 Report on Activity and Outcomes show:

-  781,879 contacts were made by community members across all Houses, equating to an average of 494 contacts per week per House
-  1767 people volunteered across the network
-  This equates to 160 hours of volunteering per week per House – or 4.2 FTE's per House
-  Each House worked with an average of 42 partner organisations during 2017-18

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.

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. This engagement is the starting point to pathways and opportunities that we know changes lives and builds better communities, whether it's through our community lunches, adult education groups, exercise programs, playgroups or community sheds. Or whether the pathway is into our partnerships with RTOs, our employment creating social enterprises, our governing committees and onto employment. See our [Promotional Video](#) to understand what truly happens through Houses.

## Two part submission

**Part One:** The needs of the network of Houses

**Part Two:** The big issues facing our communities

## Speaking on the issues that affect our communities

Our network of 35 Houses consult their community 20 times on average per year to seek feedback on the issues facing their community and the community's ideas on what the House can do to create a better Tasmania. Our managers, volunteers and staff are on the front line hearing and seeking to respond to the issues of their communities. Our committees' are all people who live or work in these 35 communities, which are either low socio economic or regionally isolated communities. Our advocacy comes from those local perspectives of the critical issues facing Tasmania, and we seek through this submission to give voice to their common concerns and, more importantly, their ideas for solutions government should invest in.

## Summary of Recommendations:

### **1) Supporting a sustainable and growing Network**

#### Recommendation:

Increase the core funding to Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Inc

### **2) Infrastructure and capital investment for a community's future**

#### Recommendation:

Infrastructure and capital investment for Derwent Valley Community House

### **3) Neighbourhood Houses Core funding and Equal Remuneration Order (ERO)**

#### Recommendation:

An ERO component to be added to House funding commitment

### **4) Mental Health**

#### Recommendation:

Create a strong, responsive community based mental health support system

### **5) Transport**

#### Recommendation:

Fund accessible, flexible community transport options

### **6) Education and pathways to employment through engagement with Houses**

#### Recommendation:

Reinvigorate funding for training

### **7) Local job investment**

#### Recommendation:

Invest in local community enterprise and create jobs

### **8) Housing**

#### Recommendation:

Support increased home ownership options

## Detail of Recommendations: Part 1

### 1) Supporting a sustainable and growing Network

#### Recommendation:

#### Increase the core funding to Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Inc

The ten year vision of Tasmania's Neighbourhood House network aspires to have a peak body 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.

Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania (NHT) is a small and 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.

The State Government heard NHT and the network's advocacy (and pleas) in our last Budget Submission that called for increased funding for 33 funded Neighbourhood Houses, generously raising each House's recurrent funding by \$45 000 per House. This was a fantastic, much celebrated outcome for our members.

NHT has sought increased recurrent funding for itself in last year's (and previous) budget submissions but we did not receive increased core funding at that time. NHT has in fact not received an increase in core funding since 2010 and is currently in desperate need of funds so it can continue to do its work in supporting a sustainable and growing network.

In 2018-19 NHT's staffing capacity for its peak body work was in danger of dropping by approximately .5 FTE, however the Department of Communities Tasmania generously provided a one off \$30 000 grant so we were able to at least maintain our Peak Body staffing at 2.2 FTE.

This arrangement will end in June 2019, after which time NHT will be forced to drop staffing by .5 FTE down to 1.7 FTE.

Current peak body core funding only supports 1.7 FTE staff, which is grossly inadequate for a peak body working to support the entire network of 35 Houses. NHT's peak body functions

include: communications, resources, guidance on governance, policy and procedures, skills development, coordination of projects, representation of the network on state government consultations and reference groups, developing submissions to relevant inquiries, as well as working to enhance the connections and networking between the Houses themselves, and national representation on the Australian Neighbourhood & Centres Association (ANHCA).

NHT also organises and supports 16 regional meetings of our members each year, and provides a heavily subsidised annual conference as professional development for our House staff, volunteers and Boards. The core funding also covers the operational functions of NHT including finance and budgeting, administration, reporting, our own state wide governance, and state-wide travel to individually support Houses as well attend their regional meetings.

Supporting Houses with governance training is a growing need as volunteer members of Boards are faced with ever more complex service, regulatory and legislative environments. NHT staff have been conducting face to face governance training for our members Boards, as well as developing induction resource kits for House managers and volunteers. In all our work NHT seeks to create tools and templates to help resource our members and build capacity.

NHT has, and will continue, to play the key role in enabling and coordinating the Outcomes Reporting by our members to the Department of Communities Tasmania. Continued effort and work is required by NHT to further embed and develop the process into the future. Supporting Houses through this reporting process takes a considerable amount of NHT staff time.

Core funding for NHT as a peak body has been static in real terms since 2010, which does not reflect the growth in demand and expectation on the organisation nor the networks' increased activity. While in the last decade our members' recurrent funding has risen, NHT's has not, apart from the usual indexation and ERO supplements paid to all organisations. Our network is achieving great things for Tasmania and its communities, and as their work expands so do their demands and need for support from their peak body.

Bluntly, without additional funds, NHT will be reducing core staffing hours from June 30 2019 and this will significantly decrease our capacity to provide support to our members and will negatively impact the network's collective work.

The need for extra funding for NHT was acknowledged by the additional one off allocation of \$30 000 by the Department of Communities Tasmania in 2018-19. However a commitment of increased ongoing core funding is now required to ensure that NHT is sustainable into the future, and that the network of 35 Neighbourhood Houses gets the resourced and responsive peak body they need and deserve.

**Recommendation:**

**Increase NHT core funding to enable NHT to:**

- continue its support for community led governance
- continue to develop the resources, tools and templates that our Members need to sustain their community development work
- embed and coordinate reporting on outcomes across the network of Neighbourhood Houses
- continue to represent the network in policy and consultations with government and other agencies

**Cost estimate: Based on maintaining 0.5 FTE (38 hours per fortnight) needed minimum funds of \$45 687 in 2019-20 with a total cost (including indexation and ERO) \$201 944 over four years.**

**Responsible Department: Communities Tasmania**

## **2) Infrastructure and capital investment for a community's future**

**Recommendation:**

### **Infrastructure and capital investment for Derwent Valley Community House**

With funding support from government the Derwent Valley Community House has recently partially relocated to new premises. The move is due to an untenable landlord situation in their previous location at the old Willow Court site. The new premises are small, and the understood intention has always been that further investment would be made to enable these new premises to be suitably developed for the House and its community's long term needs. This would allow the House to fully relocate its programs to the new premises and leave Willow Court permanently.

Vital investment is needed now to enable the development of the new premises into a fully functional Neighbourhood House for the Derwent Valley. Currently the House is forced to operate across the two sites which is causing a number of issues, including:

- draining for staff and volunteers of the House, with time and resources having to be divided across both sites
- the cost of running 2 sites is crippling the House budget, especially amenities costs
- staff have little time to meet and plan, which is disrupting the continuity of programs and activities



- it is confusing for the Derwent Valley community, with people thinking programs have stopped
- participation numbers have dropped as a result of the uncertainty
- existing MOUs with organisations such as WISE Employment and Community Connections require a staff member to be present in the Willow Court premises, further reducing location flexibility

The recent opening of a purpose built Neighbourhood House at Rocherlea has demonstrated how important the design and amenities 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.

The government has provided for a \$2 million infrastructure fund for the whole House network over four years. The minimum completion cost of the new Blair Street site in New Norfolk is estimated at \$500 - 600 000. If this cost is taken from the \$2 million infrastructure fund then it would greatly disadvantage the funds available for renovations across the rest of the network of 34 Houses.

NHT and the House network call for an urgent priority allocation to occur ASAP to develop the Blair Street site to make it a great fit-for-purpose Neighbourhood House that would finally give the Derwent Valley community the building it deserves. Such an approach proved highly successful for Rocherlea, and that decision was advocated for, and fully supported by, the whole House network.

This priority allocation to Derwent Valley would then enable the \$2 million infrastructure fund to meet its objective of enabling improvements across the whole House network on a more equitable basis.

**Recommendation:**

**Provide immediate capital funding of \$500 000 - \$600 000 to enable further development of the Blair Street site in New Norfolk, making the premises fit-for-purpose to meet the needs of the Derwent Valley community. This would allow the Derwent Valley Community House to fully relocate, and return to a sustainable operation.**

**Responsible Department: Communities Tasmania**

### 3) Neighbourhood Houses Core funding and Equal Remuneration Order (ERO)

#### Recommendation:

#### An ERO component to be added to House funding commitment

The State Government has strongly supported the network of Neighbourhood Houses and agreed for the need to provide extra funding to enable Houses to achieve equivalent staffing of two FTE. This was calculated at \$45 000 per House commencing in 2018-19.

However, the Department of Communities Tasmania only forecast indexation in the forward years and has NOT, as all expected, added an ERO component in 2019-20. Without adding ERO for 2019-20 this immediately defeats the purpose of the extra funding which was to provide sustainable funding to set safe staffing levels at Houses. Over the forward years, the lack of ERO will compound via indexation. This means that the current Funding Agreements issued by the Department of Communities Tasmania will be invalidated as they have embedded the two FTE staffing as an aim of the funding. This will create shortfalls in House budgets and see Houses struggle to maintain staff levels at 2 FTE.

ERO rises are embedded in the SCHCADS Award so they have to be paid.

#### Recommendation:

**The \$45 000 per House should be included in the CORE funding calculations in 2019-20, as was the intent of the election commitment by the Liberal State Government. The total amount of indexation and ERO should be calculated on this total CORE funding amount in 19-20.**

**Responsible Department: Communities Tasmania**

## Detail of Recommendations: Part 2

### Issues that affect our communities and the solutions to invest in

#### 4) Mental Health

##### Recommendation:

##### Create a strong, responsive community based mental health support system

Mental illness in the community and the appalling lack of local, appropriate support for people is a critical concern for staff and volunteers in Neighbourhood Houses. The current mental health system is fragmented between State, Commonwealth and local government and requires a collaborative approach, one that creates a strong seamless system of support. Acute bed focus is important, but we urgently need better access to responsive community based mental health services across Tasmania, that prevent people from getting to the stage of requiring acute level supports.

Houses have an open door policy, and as such staff and volunteers in Houses play a vital role of welcome, support, and non-judgemental engagement with people from a variety of backgrounds, socio-economic needs and status, and people at different stages of a journey towards recovery, or taking up new opportunities. Houses are currently seeing a significant increase in people attending who are experiencing mental health issues, and House staff and volunteers do not have access to a referral system capable of providing skilled and responsive resources at the community level to assist these community members. There is a severe lack of professional services and support for Houses to call on or refer people to.

Neighbourhood House staff and volunteers are not trained mental health professionals, and are not looking to become experts in this field. Providing professional mental health services is not the role of the House, but they can and do provide the space for people to feel safe, welcome and supported to access the services they need. Houses play a vital role in enabling and supporting people to connect with others in their community, develop skills, find purpose and gain confidence. All of this is critical to maintaining and improving the wellbeing of people living with mental health issues.

House staff and managers are seeking a clear pathway to services and capacity in the health system, enabling referrals to appropriate professional support. It is the experience of House managers, staff and volunteers that Crisis Assessment Teams are often unavailable due either to the lack of proximity of Houses to services (CAT teams being metropolitan based), or a lack of capacity because the team is already busy with other call outs. This is a problem at the severe end of the mental illness spectrum. Other people may not be at such an extreme point of mental illness, and will benefit significantly if they are able to obtain the

mental health support they need when they need it. House communities do not have access to reputable professional services to which they can refer people because the services simply do not exist or those that do have no capacity to provide support.

Neighbourhood Houses operate on a skeleton staff of up to two full time staff, who are not mental health professionals. Many programs happen due to the support and effort of volunteers. Houses are a community hub that facilitates activities and programs. Houses are not about service provision or specific mental health support. Houses welcome people who require such support to attend activities and programs when accompanied by the additional support that they require, but Houses are not funded to provide mental health services. We do not want them to do mental health service delivery – we want the appropriate service to be there and accessible when it is needed so the House can play its role in being the safe, supportive place that connects the person to purpose that is so important to wellbeing.

Neighbourhood Houses need to know that there are community based mental health supports in place for community members, so that they can assist to connect people with the support they need, especially when someone is progressing into crisis. We need suitable responses at all levels but at present they are just not there when people need them, and House staff and volunteers are having to manage situations that they, quite simply, shouldn't. There is growing concern about the safety of staff, volunteers and community members due to the increase of volatile situations in House settings.

As an integral part of this support system there needs to be a clear referral and information system that House staff and volunteers can access to assist community members in need.

This referral and information system needs to provide clear guidance for family, friends and supporters of an individual, such as House staff, on where to get relevant information and assistance for someone they are concerned about. It needs to provide advice to family and community members, who don't necessarily know what service to ask for when they first make contact, with experienced staff on the phone who can help determine an appropriate response and then connect people to that service.

However, an advice line without access to the proper resources and services is useless.

**Recommendation:**

**State government to create a strong, responsive community based mental health support system that provides face to face support by professionally trained staff at a local level.**

**Community members can connect with the support system as they progress into crisis, or as they come out of crisis and back into the community. It provides support and resources at a level that prevents someone sliding into crisis in the first place.**

**Recommendation:**

**As an integral part of this support system there is a clear referral and information system that House staff and volunteers can access to assist community members in need.**

**The referral and information system provides clear guidance for family, friends and supporters of an individual, such as House staff, on where to get relevant information and assistance for someone they are concerned about. It provides advice to family and community members, who don't necessarily know what service to ask for when they first make contact, with experienced staff on the phone who can help determine an appropriate response and then connect people to that service.**

**An advice line without access to the proper resources and services is useless.**

**Responsible Department: Health**

## **5) Transport**

### Recommendation:

#### **Fund accessible, flexible community transport options**

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

Houses are experts in engaging the most vulnerable members of their low income and isolated communities across the state – people who are potentially disconnected, unemployed, dealing with mental illness, isolated and lonely. For many people, Houses play a vital role in bridging the gap back into community participation by providing opportunities to build confidence through healthy relationships, emotional support and practical assistance. It is often access to transport that is a barrier to joining the many activities and services on offer for people with limited resources and support.

Neighbourhood Houses create and support a variety of connections with activities and services in local areas and look to be able to provide safe transport options for families, children and individuals to access these opportunities.

We call on the government to invest in communities to continue and to create connections to services, to social opportunities to reduce isolation, and opportunities such as health promoting physical activity through the provision of transport services, such as 15 seater buses. Many Houses and community groups have previously benefited from Cars for Communities grants and have made great use of these for their communities. However cost of replacement of these vehicles is not possible for groups. As community vehicles the

whole point of them is to provide access and Houses and other groups run them on a cost recovery basis, running at break even or at a small loss. Maintenance costs are often donated or reduced. They do not accumulate enough capital to replace the vehicles when that becomes necessary through wear and tear. Many communities and Houses have wanted to access funds to replace vehicles but have not been able to source any.

Tasmania is a decentralised state with many isolated rural and regional communities where transport is critical. Many in government may point to some sort of centralised system of community provided vehicles. We call for the exact opposite as previous attempts for such systems has not met community needs. Trust communities to make decisions and work together. Recreate an ongoing grants pool and watch what community groups and Houses can achieve through such trust.

An investment of \$2 million over four years to fund flexible transport options. This would reduce barriers to participation for many people, as well as open up opportunities for local people and groups to attend other activities and programs.

NHT supports the intent of the government's Transport Access Strategy and its recognition of transport disadvantage in Tasmania. Due to the location of Houses in largely regional and outlying areas transport disadvantage is a very real issue for many in those communities, including young people, people with disability and single parents. It limits people's ability to access education and training, employment, essential services, recreation and social networks. Public transport fares are unaffordable for many people, if indeed a service is even available. Concessions are not available to people on low incomes (only available to students, seniors and concession card holders) which leaves many who are financially disadvantaged having to pay full fare.

People who live in regional and outlying areas may be forced into car ownership through a lack of alternative transport options. For low income households this is likely to result in a higher proportion of spending on transport, meaning they have less money available for other household purposes. Low income households are also likely to be more vulnerable to increases in costs associated with car use, including rising fuel prices. Further, they are more likely to own cheaper, older vehicles that are less efficient and require regular maintenance.

People who start and finish work outside of the traditional Monday to Friday 8:00am-6:00pm timeframe, such as hospitality and food industry workers, some retail employees, shift workers, agriculture and aquaculture industry employees, are likely to have difficulty using public transport to commute to work. For these groups, and those who use public transport to access social and recreational events, the provision of services across all days of the week and a wide span of hours is important.

Tasmania has a relatively disconnected system of public transport through its public service (Metro) and subsidised regional transport providers. The government needs to be bold and

choose to massively increase its investment in the public transport system, to provide better opportunity and quality of life in our communities.

The recent employment transport solution created in Derwent Valley through the TasCOSS/TCCI employment partnership, operating through the work of our Derwent Valley Community House and Community Transport Services Tasmania is the sort of innovation that must be learnt from and built on.

There needs to be innovative approaches to transport provision created in partnership with communities to enable transport disadvantaged members of the community to overcome transport barriers.

**Recommendation:**

**Create a fund to purchase community vehicles. Learning from the past “Cars for Communities” Grants, the Department of State Growth could create a permanent grant fund to enable community organisations to either purchase or renew community vehicles.**

**Cost: \$2 million to fund flexible transport options over four years**

**Recommendation:**

**The state government significantly increases investment in current public transport provision and also invests in partnerships with community to develop innovative approaches to public transport provision to overcome transport barriers which are a key barrier to employment and quality of life for so many people on low incomes in Tasmania.**

**Responsible Department: State Growth**

## **6) Education and pathways to employment through engagement with Houses**

**Recommendation:**

**Reinvigorate funding for training**

Education and training is a major 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 onto employment. Dedicated funding will enable Houses to respond to the training needs of volunteers and community members as pathways to employment.

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

Some of the issues and barriers created by the existing funding model include:

- 🏠 Competitive funding rounds do not work for the sector. Uncertainty causes people to disengage and the timeframes for the eventual funding rubber to hit the road means that people get lost during the process.
- 🏠 For example NHT and the Houses have had a great partnership with RTO Avidity Training but Houses, NHT and Avidity have virtually given up as the way government delivers training funding **does not work in our sector**.
- 🏠 We're tired of having to remake the same arguments across 20 communities each funding round, and maybe only 4 or 5 communities get funded, if that.
- 🏠 the time it takes for individual Houses to create a project that fits the funding guidelines and addresses community needs (remembering that Houses work from a Community Development model) doesn't always fit into funding round timelines.
- 🏠 the traditional classroom scenario does not work for many people but supportive House environments have proven successful.

Houses are often too time and staff poor to be able to dedicate time and effort into developing partnerships outside of their immediate circle of activity (such as with local schools, council, child and family centres.) The development of partnerships does not necessarily coincide with funding rounds, nor do Houses necessarily know what is required of a partnership for VET purposes. Partnerships between Houses and other organisations need time, and often support, to develop. We need partners and the training sector to see the opportunity to work through Houses, and for that to be resourced and supported appropriately.




Employers keep saying that they need people with work readiness, and Houses and the mechanisms of engagement they have (the community gardens, the community kitchens etc) are the perfect place for people to engage in developing these soft skills and the data is there to prove it. Training to create work readiness has been resourced in the past but we have been unable to keep it funded.

Options may include creating and quarantining a pool of training funds specifically for the Neighbourhood House sector to sustain partnerships with RTOs that lead people to engage in training and employment opportunities and increase workforce participation. In no ways should this decrease the current pool of training funds of Skills Tasmania but should be a new investment by the Government.



We believe there is a good opportunity to leverage off the existing government investment in 35 Houses in 35 low income or regional communities that has already proven to engage people in purposeful training and activity that leads to job readiness. We need flexible, guaranteed funding available for training and partners willing to stay the course.

Network data 2017-18 shows:

-  2,901 people participate per week in skills and knowledge development
-  87% people report an increase in skills
-  87% people report an increase in confidence

It is nonsensical that the House network, with the geographical footprint in regional and low income communities that it has, is not valued enough as a legitimate stepping stone for people to gain work ready skills and move along the pathway into employment to have a workable way to access training funds.

**Recommendation:**

**Skills Tasmania 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 in a responsive, local and timely manner. Options should 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**

## **7) Local job investment**

**Recommendation:**

**Invest in local community enterprises and create local jobs**

Tasmania has a long standing issue around workforce participation. As noted above, employers are asking for more work ready employees and, while we might expect that the Federal employment services system would assist unemployed people to become work ready, the reality (as we are all well aware), is that it is not. It is a positive step that the State Government has heard the calls from NHT and other organisations to establish a taskforce and seek to trial a “new” system in Tasmania.

However other steps can be taken to support job seekers such as using social enterprise that prioritize employment as a means to enable people to enter the workforce in a supported environment. From there many “graduate” to being picked up by the open employment system. Neighbourhood Houses in Tasmania have been creating small and large social enterprises focused on job creation and pathways. Recent House-based social enterprises, like Hilltop run by Burnie Community House, WaterBridge Cooperative at Jordan River Services Inc and Huon Valley Works at Geeveston Community Centre, enable people to get the work readiness skills such as turning up on time, working in a team, taking direction and communication skills. In addition, non-accredited and accredited training in social enterprise workplaces further increases work readiness for the industry areas that need employment and actually creates workforce for Tasmania.

Social enterprises also create roles and engagement for people that may not be able to transition into the mainstream workforce due to personal barriers facing them. The Disability Employment Network has for years provided gainful employment for many people with disabilities, and has provided great service to the Tasmanian Government through contracts. These government contracts have enabled workplaces to exist for many people with disabilities, who have in turn learned skills that have helped them to transition to open employment. Importantly these Government contracts have also enabled workplaces for people for whom open employment may not be possible. It seems tragic that many of these enterprises very existence is threatened by the withdrawal of government contracts under a competitive tendering model.

The Victorian Government had developed a clear [Social Procurement Framework](#) to guide government purchases.

Surely the buying power of the Tasmanian Government could be brought to bear by adopting a 1% social enterprise target for procurement by its Departments/Divisions as well as weighting for social enterprises and Tasmanian family/community owned business. A contract that is small to a Government Department may be the base income that makes or breaks the sustainability of a social enterprise or small business in Tasmania.

Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania supports the current Community Innovation and Investment Project that is a collaborative approach to addressing employment issues at a community level. Several Houses are an integral part of this partnership between TasCOSS, TCCI, and the Tasmanian Government in developing and trialling employment solutions in local communities through relationship building, conversations and decision making, including in the regional areas of St Helens, Sorell and the Derwent Valley.

We congratulate the government on investing in this community led approach and our network is proud that the place based community development approach we have taken over the last three decades is now recognised by Government, business and the community sector as the game changer for Tasmania.

TasCOSS and NHT have a long history working together to hear the voices of Tasmanians and their communities. As organisations we are committed to representing their issues and backing community generated solutions to the “wicked problems” facing Tasmania, and to trust in communities to develop innovation. We are, as organisations, not content to accept the “tweaking” of programs only. We support each others call for major changes to the way we address the challenges of Tasmania. We believe that the role of government needs to continue to shift to work in partnership with and invest in local communities and that those solutions are lead and developed with communities.”

On that basis NHT is supportive of the TasCOSS BPS *Unlocking Our Potential* which calls for a strategic investment in the supports Tasmanians need to help them participate – in work and in community life. It aims to get local people into the sort of local jobs that will be available through the infrastructure and industry growth areas. The five areas of investment it calls for are:

- 1 Innovative demand-based transport systems
- 2 Targeted training in skills and work readiness
- 3 Adult literacy support
- 4 Access to essential services
- 5 Community leadership

**Recommendation:**

**The State government continues, and increases, its support of local economies.**

**That State Procurement purchases products and services locally, and that extra weight is given to tenders from social enterprises and Tasmanian community and family based businesses. Consideration should be given to a target of, for example, 1% for social enterprise procurement in Departments of the Government.**

**Responsible Department: Treasury/State Growth**

**Recommendation:**

**Over the next four years the State government supports the TasCOSS BPS “Unlocking our Potential” which seeks to build on, learn from and expand out of the recent community lead approaches to employment solutions in regional communities in Sorrel, Derwent Valley and St Helens.**

**Responsible Department: Treasury/State Growth**

## 8) Housing

### Recommendation:

- i) Increase social and affordable housing
- ii) Support increased home ownership options for low income Tasmanians

NHT and the network of Houses support the need for more social and affordable housing schemes so people can access affordable rental properties and have security in their long term living arrangements. Tasmania needs multiple options, from more affordable rental accommodation, regulation changes on short stay accommodation, and innovative ways to open up ownership options for people.

Hobart has recently secured the title of most unaffordable capital city in the country according to the Rental Affordability Index, affecting median households on an average wage, showing that it is not just people on low incomes that are struggling with housing affordability. While tourism is great for the economy it should not occur at the expense of residents trying to live a life, pay the bills and raise families.

Government policy should support rental housing being owned by purpose driven organisations, which are preferably not for profit and certainly not individual investors, so as to remove conflict of interest. The investor model destabilises housing security for people living in the housing.

There needs to be cost effective homes, with proper insulation, heating, security, etc available at affordable prices.

There is an international small house movement which demonstrates that small land spaces can be utilized to maximum advantage in providing housing options.

Housing co-operatives are intentional communities, and in many parts of the world, including Australia, are proving highly effective and successful in providing housing options for varying ages and demographics. Common Equity NSW for example, provides and develops affordable housing and currently has over 500 properties. In some cities around the world co-operative housing makes up 40% of the rental market.

Co-operatives do not suit all who need the support of social housing, but for those that they do, co-ops result in greater levels of social capital and housing quality and stability (Crabtree, L et al 2018 *Articulating value in cooperative housing: International and methodological review*).

Co-operatives contribute to diversity in ownership models, which strengthens an economy (UK Ownership Commission 2012). State housing funding should continue to support the growth of social housing rental co-operatives.

Tasmania needs more co-operatives as an option, and effective models should be explored.

Renting should not be the only affordable housing option. It is time to get creative about how people can buy into the property market that, in the current environment with escalating prices, is locking more and more people out. This is not an issue just affecting marginalized communities or unemployed individuals. The housing issue is far more wide reaching than that in its impacts as the Tasmanian community is witnessing.

People on low to middle incomes need to be supported into being able to buy their own home if that's their preferred option, rather than be stuck in the perpetual loop of paying rent. The public housing properties made available for purchase through the government's Streets Ahead Program need to meet a minimum standard in quality so that people are not purchasing 'lemons' which are going to create prohibitive maintenance or improvement costs. Structural issues might be identified by a building inspection, but what about issues such as lack of insulation, expensive and inefficient heating systems, poor ventilation causing mold.

One great example is KeyStart Home Loans run by the WA Housing Authority, which provide low-deposit home loans (with no lenders mortgage insurance or no ongoing monthly loan fees) to people who cannot meet the deposit requirements of private lenders but can afford monthly repayments. The Housing Authority uses any surplus funds from KeyStart to fulfil its social housing objectives, providing a win-win for the state.

We recognise the fact that, along with the Streets Ahead program, the government also supports HomeShare. However, we are concerned that HomeShare is not keeping pace with the current escalation in property prices, given that the example in their information brochure quotes \$190,000 as a house starting price, which is a highly unlikely find in the current environment! More and more people are not able to meet the criteria to take advantage of this program because their incomes cannot stretch to meet actual loan repayment levels. Applicants need to be able to provide 70% of the house purchase price and meet bank eligibility to borrow the money.

**Recommendation:**

**The state government supports innovative ways to create affordable housing options that are available for rent or purchase by those on a low income. This includes investing in models such as co-operatives and tiny houses.**

**The state government ensures that any public housing made available for purchase is of a fit standard that does not trap purchasers into improvement nightmares.**

The state government provides low interest loans to low income families at 2% under the variable home loan rate offered by the big commercial banks, thereby enabling more people to purchase their own home.

The state government ensures that criteria for programs such as Streets Ahead and HomeStart accurately reflect the current environment for purchasing a house and adapt these schemes accordingly to ensure people on low incomes are not again shut out of the market in increasing numbers.

**Responsible Department: Communities Tasmania**

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