

SUBMISSION

Anglicare Tasmania

Submission to the Tasmanian State
Government 2018-19 Budget
Community Consultation

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Working for a just Tasmania

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Introduction

Anglicare Tasmania welcomes the opportunity to participate in the State Budget Community Consultation process for 2018-19.

Anglicare Tasmania's budget priorities have come from recent research recommendations and consultations with Tasmanians in need and the Anglicare staff who work with them to deliver positive futures.

Anglicare encourages the State Government to invest in resources, systems and services that will enable Tasmanians to participate fully in shaping their own future.

We believe that State Government can make sound investments in the Tasmanian people and strong Tasmanian communities by prioritising:

- *affordable housing that provides a secure and stable base for Tasmanian families to flourish;*
- *systems and services that support families, children and young people to overcome barriers in their lives and participate in developing their own positive futures; and*
- *the removal of poker machines from hotels and clubs in Tasmania.*

Such investments will lead to longer term savings on the more expensive intensive critical and crisis support and are key to creating a Tasmania based on equity and social justice.

Creating a positive future for Tasmanian people, families and communities requires purposeful cross-government investment and strategies. With this in mind, Anglicare's State Budget submission addresses responsibilities across a number of State Government departments. A key message is for government departments to work holistically to design and invest in policies and programs that enable positive futures for our most vulnerable Tasmanians.

This submission recommends:

Affordable and appropriate housing for all

Recommendation 1: Building on the strategic thinking that has developed the Affordable Housing Strategy, the State Government should urgently increase the level of investment in initiatives to quickly stimulate development of more affordable housing for rent and purchase.

Recommendation 2: That affordable housing be a more specific priority of the current reforms to the Tasmanian planning scheme. This should include setting a target for the percentage of affordable housing for all new developments and redevelopments, and policies that encourage short-term accommodation properties to be freed up for long-term rental, particularly in areas of high rental need.

Recommendation 3: That the State Government urgently increase investment in homelessness services.

Supporting our children and young people

Recommendation 4: That the State Government make the wellbeing of children and young people a priority, non-partisan issue coordinated by DPAC.

Recommendation 5: That the State Government expand existing specialist adolescent services to provide a complete suite of drug and alcohol, mental health, education, trauma and supported accommodation services for teenagers.

Recommendation 6: That, in consultation with the sector, the State Government develop good practice guidelines relevant to all service providers working with unaccompanied children under 16 years of age and develop specific medium- and long-term accommodation options.

Removing poker machines from hotels and clubs

Recommendation 7: That on the expiration of the Deed between Federal Hotels and the State Government in June 2023, poker machines be removed from hotels and clubs.

Recommendation 8: That any new Deed for gambling in Tasmania introduce a four per cent Community Support Levy (CSL) on the annual gross profit of poker machines in Tasmania's casinos to replace the levy previously derived from poker machines in hotels and clubs.

Recommendation 9: That existing community education and counselling continue at current levels until there is evidence that the prevalence and impact of gambling problems has decreased significantly.

About Anglicare Tasmania

Anglicare is the largest community service organisation in Tasmania with offices in Hobart, Glenorchy, Sorell, Launceston, St Helens, Devonport, Burnie and Zeehan, delivering a range of programs across the state. Anglicare's services include emergency relief and crisis services, accommodation support, mental health services, acquired injury, disability and aged care services, alcohol and other drug services, and family support. In addition, the Social Action and Research Centre (SARC) conducts research, policy and advocacy work with a focus on issues affecting Tasmanians on low incomes.

Anglicare Tasmania is committed to achieving social justice for all Tasmanians. It is our mission to speak out against poverty and injustice and offer decision-makers alternative solutions to help build a more just society. We provide opportunities for people in need to reach their full potential through our services, staff, research and advocacy. Anglicare's work is guided by a set of values which include these beliefs:

- *that each person is valuable and deserves to be treated with respect and dignity;*
- *that each person has the capacity to make and to bear the responsibility for choices and decisions about their life;*
- *that support should be available to all who need it; and*
- *that every person can live life abundantly.*

Housing

Anglicare delivers a range of housing services including Housing Connect (assistance with crisis accommodation, bond and rent for private rentals and applications for public or community housing); long-term communal or independent housing for people on a low income including some options for age-specific cohorts; and crisis accommodation for males aged 13 to 20. Every year, we analyse the rental market across Tasmania and we have also conducted in-depth research into youth homelessness and the particular accommodation challenges for people with mental ill health.

Families & children

Anglicare delivers a number of services focused on supporting children, young people and families. These include a school readiness program, various parenting support programs, parent and adolescent mediation and counselling, reunification support for children in out-of-home care, relationship education, and youth support programs. Childhood exposure to family violence, physical and sexual abuse and violence is common amongst young people seeking assistance from Anglicare. Our services for women, men and children experiencing family violence are complemented by early intervention therapeutic services that support positive family functioning and child development. Anglicare is also the backbone organisation of the Communities for Children collective impact project in Launceston and the Tamar Valley.

Gambling

Anglicare has twenty years' experience in providing services to people in Tasmania who experience harm from gambling. In collaboration with Relationships Australia, Anglicare is funded to provide the Gamblers Help program that offers counselling for individuals and their families, as well as exclusions from gambling, group support, community education, community development and professional support to gambling venues. We also provide financial counselling funded by the Federal Government.

1. Affordable and appropriate housing for all

Why does Anglicare think this a priority issue?

Affordable and secure housing provides an essential foundation for a decent life through better outcomes in health, education, employment and early childhood development (Productivity Commission 2016). However, Tasmanians are facing both increasing house sale prices and increasing private rental prices at the same time as a shortfall of public and social housing.

Tasmania has Australia's highest proportion of low income households (.id consulting 2017), with weekly median household income \$338 less than national (ABS 2016). Both the minimum wage and Newstart benefits have failed to keep pace with the rising costs of living (Whiteford & Redmond 2016). At the same time, median rental prices have increased across Tasmania in recent years, with one-bedroom rentals suffering the hardest increases recently (Tenants' Union of Tasmania 2017). In the past 12 months, Hobart rents have increased by 14 per cent and Launceston rents by 9 per cent (Shelter Tasmania 2017). Ten per cent of households in Tasmania are in housing stress¹ (ABS 2016) and low income Tasmanians are at increasing risk of extreme housing stress, which will restrict their ability to heat their home, access health care and provide opportunities for their children.

The tough financial and supply situation also leaves Tasmanians vulnerable to homelessness; housing affordability is the main cause of homelessness in Tasmania (AIHW 2016). There were 2,962 applicants waiting for public housing in June 2017, with priority applicants having to wait an average of 49 weeks (DHHS 2017a). In any one night, 1500 Tasmanians are homeless, a fifth of whom are children, and in 2015-16, homelessness services assisted almost 8,000 people, an increase of 20 per cent over the previous two years (ABS 2011; AIHW 2016). Too many Tasmanians are forced to suffer a series of inadequate, short-term situations while waiting for affordable and appropriate accommodation, resulting in lowered health, wellbeing, education and employment outcomes for thousands of families.

Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy provides an excellent strategic plan that aims to address housing affordability and homelessness. However, unless the strategy is provided with sufficient funds, it will fail to deliver the meaningful, lasting or urgent outcomes that are needed.

¹ Housing stress describes a household in the lowest 40% of Australia's household income that spends more than 30% of its income on rent or mortgage payments. 'Extreme rental stress' is defined as spending at least 50% of a household's income on rent.

Anglicare recommendations for affordable and appropriate housing for all

Key State Government Departments: *Department of Health and Human Services*

Recommendation 1: Building on the strategic thinking that has developed the Affordable Housing Strategy, the State Government should urgently increase the level of investment in initiatives to quickly stimulate development of more affordable housing for rent and purchase.

Estimated costs: Allocate the \$60 million windfall from 2016-17 property conveyance duty plus a matched or increased amount from 2017-18 as an immediate injection of funding towards affordable housing initiatives. Determine a percentage to be derived from the property conveyancing duty as an ongoing source of funding specifically for affordable housing initiatives.

From 2018-19, allocate repayment of the historical Commonwealth housing debt to Finance General to allow the entire Commonwealth housing funding to be spent on public and social housing initiatives.

Recommendation 2: That affordable housing be a more specific priority of the current reforms to the Tasmanian planning scheme. This should include setting a target for the percentage of affordable housing for all new developments and redevelopments, and policies that encourage short-term accommodation properties to be freed up for long-term rental, particularly in areas of high rental need.

Estimated costs: Not costed

Recommendation 3: That the State Government urgently increase investment in homelessness services.

Estimated costs: Not costed

Recommendation 1:

Building on the strategic thinking that has developed the Affordable Housing Strategy, the State Government should urgently increase the level of investment in initiatives to quickly stimulate development of more affordable housing for rent and purchase.

Rationale for change

1. With the housing boom, the State Government has received a huge increase in conveyance duty (stamp duty) receipts.

In 2016-17, the State Government received \$246 million in property conveyance duty receipts (previously known as stamp duty), up from \$191 received the previous year, an increase of \$60 million (Tasmanian Government 2017, p. 90). This \$60 million windfall should be allocated to the urgent housing needs in Tasmania across social, public and private rentals and house purchasing.

Actions arising from the Affordable Housing Strategy are limited by the budget allocated to it. With just \$73.5 million allocated over four years, the strategy aims to house 1,600 vulnerable households through the building of 900 new homes in four years (DHHS 2015). These targets fall well short of the actual need identified in the Strategy for 2,392 new homes to be built each year until 2031, of which 690 must be for low income households (DHHS 2015).

So far, 447 new households have been assisted and 216 new homes built in this term of government (DHHS 2017b). At the current average rate of assistance provided, with just seven quarters left until the Strategy's June 2019 deadline, only 874 new households will be assisted and 447 new builds will be completed. Every target for the Strategy is relying on progress to increase substantially in the last two years of its implementation (DHHS 2017b).

Tasmanian economist Saul Eslake noted the Government has benefited from both an increase in property transactions and higher property prices, and recommended that the Government invest in infrastructure projects (Humphries 2017). Anglicare supports this call for investment but urges for it to be specifically allocated to investment in housing. The boom in the housing market has failed to serve a broad range of households and cannot be relied upon now to fill the gap between the Government's targets for assistance and the actual need identified in the Affordable Housing Strategy.

This follows the policy of using windfall gains that the State Government followed when Government electricity businesses earned higher than expected profits and \$125 was allocated to all Aurora Energy account holders with a Pensioner Concession Card or Commonwealth Seniors Health Card. The Minister for Energy said, "In line with our Tasmania-first approach, we believe that higher than expected returns from our energy

businesses should be returned to the pockets of Tasmanians, rather than retained by the Government” (Barnett 2017). Anglicare argues that the windfall in stamp duty should similarly be returned to the pockets of Tasmanians by being used to urgently create more affordable housing.

A further source of funding should be accessed by the Government allocating the housing debt to Finance General to allow the entire Commonwealth housing funding to be invested in addressing the need in public and social housing, rather than in servicing a historic debt.

Increasing the financial investment in Strategy initiatives such as Streets Ahead, which offers Housing Tasmania tenants \$13,000 towards a house deposit, mortgage insurance premium and legal costs to buy their Housing Tasmania rental property, and Homeshare, where Housing Tasmania tenants are assisted by the Director of Housing with the cost of buying a house, would expand their reach. So far, these two initiatives have helped 174 households (Hansard 7 June 2017, Jacquie Petrusma).

Anglicare also urges greater investment could be made in Youth Head Leases program. A pool of 50 homes leased by community organisations and sub-leased to young people started in 2017 as part of the Affordable Housing Action Plan. With around a quarter of people on the Housing register being young people, rapidly increasing investment in this program would significantly reduce competition in the market place (Petrusma 2017).

2. The severity of housing affordability in Tasmania is preventing people from a wide range of financial backgrounds from accessing affordable home ownership and rentals, which has increased pressure for people who are solely reliant on low paid casual work, pensions and benefits.

With rental vacancy rates in Hobart below 2 per cent, Launceston at 3 percent and the north-west below 4% (REIT 2017), it is difficult for many Tasmanian families to find an affordable rental property. Housing Connect staff, clients and real estate agents say that competition for rental properties has increased dramatically in recent years. Anglicare clients tell us they are competing against 30 to 40 other prospective tenants each time they apply for a rental property.

It is difficult in these circumstances for our clients to secure a tenancy due to reasons such as lack of references (for example, clients who have fled family violence), having nowhere to leave their children when making an inspection or having to disclose the amount and source of their income. Properties that our clients are able to afford are instead going to waged families who are saving up the deposit for purchasing a home.

Recommendation 2:

That affordable housing be a more specific priority of the current reforms to the Tasmanian planning scheme. This should include setting a target for the percentage of affordable housing for all new developments and redevelopments, and policies that encourage short-term accommodation properties to be freed up for long-term rental, particularly in areas of high rental need.

Rationale for change

1. All political parties and levels of government agree there is a need to provide more affordable housing.

Affordable housing is a policy initiative that is politically popular. When the Liberal's Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025 was announced, Labor welcomed the strategy and the Greens said it was a 'reasonable start' (Richards 2015). Specifically, the Greens support "continued government and community sector investment in sustainable social and affordable housing as well as a competitive private rental market that protects tenants' rights" (Tasmanian Greens 2014).

The Liberals, through their reform of Tasmania's planning scheme, are committed to using the planning scheme to increase supply of affordable housing, both private and public (Department of Justice 2017, p. 15). However, it is not clear how the strategies listed in the consultation draft will ensure increased supply.

As part of the New Housing Incentive Package, announced in the 2017 State budget, the Government plans to establish a working group jointly led by Housing Tasmania and Treasury to conduct a review to determine what land may be suitable for repurposing for housing to increase supply. (Gutwein & Barnett 2017). This approach is supported by the ALP (Tasmanian Labor 2017) and is a targeted strategy that could reap valuable results for vulnerable Tasmanians.

2. While the impact of the rapid rise in the short-term accommodation market is still being assessed, thousands of Tasmanians are waiting in inadequate circumstances for a long-term housing solution.

There is sufficient evidence that the short-term accommodation market is booming at the expense of people seeking long-term housing (Anglicare Tasmania 2017).

While supportive of the New Housing Incentive Package, Anglicare urges for it to go further and set affordable housing targets as well as initiatives to retain or replace properties in the private rental market that may otherwise go to the short-term accommodation market.

Housing initiatives by local councils should also be supported by the State Government, such as the recent proposals from Hobart City Council to free up council-owned land and buildings for affordable housing, as well as their plans to address the impact that short-term accommodation market is having on availability of long-term rentals (Howard 2017).

Recommendation 3:

That the state government urgently increase investment in homelessness services.

Rationale for change

1. The number of homeless Tasmanians is unacceptable.

Despite consecutive governments making housing a priority, 3,000 Tasmanians are stuck on a lengthy waiting list for public and social housing and 1,500 Tasmanians are homeless. For families without secure affordable housing, the struggle to survive in inadequate, short-term accommodation affects their family's employment, health and wellbeing and their children's education.

In his State of the State address in March 2017, the Premier said "our economy is strong... retail trade has boomed... our unemployment rate is now below 6 per cent for the first time since 2011, and there are over 4,300 more people in jobs than there were when the election was held" (DPaC 2017). However, the strength of Tasmania's economy is clearly not benefiting everyone.

2. A third of all people seeking help from homelessness services are under 24 years of age.

Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy rightly points to the shift into independence when moving out of the family home or Out-of-Home Care being a key risk pathway into homelessness. Government policies that invest in secure and affordable housing options for young people will help set them up for independent life and reduce homelessness. Using the duty receipt windfall, the government could continue support to young people in Out-of-Home Care to age 21 and expand funding for Youth Head Leases, which make it easier for people under 25 years old to rent at an affordable price.

2. Supporting our children and young people

Why does Anglicare think this a priority issue?

The wellbeing of Tasmania's children and young people is everybody's business. Every child deserves a safe home and a good education, but they also deserve more: they deserve nurturing care that supports their aspirations.

However, there is a gap in leadership on the wellbeing of children in Tasmania. Current State Government policies isolate responses to different departments and services, resulting in a fragmented approach that lacks a strategic and cohesive framework to plan, monitor and hold accountable the wide range of departments and agencies that play a part in the wellbeing of Tasmania's children. This leaves vulnerable children and young people at risk of missing out on the care they need to survive, let alone flourish.

In Tasmania in 2015-16, there were 342 unaccompanied children aged 10 to 17 who presented to Specialist Homelessness Services (Robinson 2017). Over the same period, 284 children were admitted to Care and Protection Orders in Tasmania (AIHW 2017). Tasmanian children on orders are up to five times as likely to be below the national minimum standards on NAPLAN testing for literacy and numeracy, five times as likely to be exempted from schooling and four times as likely to be excluded (DoE 2011).

Anglicare's research and service experience has identified gaps in strategy, education, care and specialist services for Tasmania's children and young people. Improving leadership and service provision would provide proper support for all our children and young people.

Anglicare recommendations for supporting our children and young people

Key State Government Departments: *Department of Premier and Cabinet, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Education*

Recommendation 4: That the State Government make the wellbeing of children and young people a priority, non-partisan issue coordinated by DPAC.

Estimated Costs: Not costed

Recommendation 5: That the State Government expand existing specialist adolescent services to provide a complete suite of drug and alcohol, mental health, education, trauma and supported accommodation services for teenagers.

Estimated Costs: Not costed

Recommendation 6: That, in consultation with the sector, the State Government develop good practice guidelines relevant to all service providers working with unaccompanied children under 16 years of age and develop specific medium and long term accommodation options.

Estimated Costs: Not costed

Recommendation 4:

That the wellbeing of children and young people should be a priority, non-partisan issue coordinated by DPAC.

Rationale for change

The current siloing of policy and service responses is not in the best interests of children and young people.

As identified by child welfare expert Professor Maria Harries, the fragmentation of children's services results in "dedicated Child Protection Services often becom[ing] the default service for all concerns about children regardless of the level of risk to the child... and that managing the associated burden of escalating reports is unsustainable and dangerous for children, families and the workforce" (DHHS 2016, p. 3).

Central agency leadership would reduce the likelihood of gaps in strategy and support for vulnerable children and young people. Through DPAC, senior bureaucrats and politicians would be the driving force to make children and young people a priority policy issue, joining up current collaborative work undertaken as part of the child protection redesign and the Strong Families Strategy.

The wellbeing framework that is being developed by the Department of Health and Human Services should also be brought under DPAC to ensure it guides all departments with their work with children. DPAC should ensure the framework takes an ecological approach (across children, youth, families and communities) and operates within a public health model (across universal prevention and early intervention programs through to tertiary and crisis support).

The value of central agency leadership and coordination has already been demonstrated in the establishment of whole-of-government responses to family violence and violence against women. There is significant complementarity between these existing initiatives and DPAC also prioritising the wellbeing of Tasmania's children and young people.

Further, like the approach on family violence, an interdepartmental steering group that is required to meet frequently to identify issues of concern and review policies, strategies and

specific cases would ensure the wellbeing of children and young people is a daily priority in Tasmania.

Political cycles and partisan approaches preclude or disrupt the progress and efficacy of medium and long-term policy approaches and program initiatives.

While every new government wants to make its mark, we cannot afford to have policies and practices about the wellbeing of children change every four years. A tri-partisan approach similar to that for addressing family violence, with DPAC taking a lead role, should hold all departments to account for how their strategies, policies and programs will work to achieve wellbeing for children and young people, making it easier to identify gaps in policy or service delivery.

NB: For a more detailed discussion, see also Attachment One: *Potential DPAC Oversight of Child Wellbeing - SARC paper Sept 2017*

Recommendation 5:

That existing specialist adolescent services be expanded to provide a complete suite of drug and alcohol, mental health, education, trauma and medium and long-term supported accommodation services for teenagers.

Rationale for change:

Current services are inadequate for vulnerable teens.

Anglicare services and research have identified significant gaps in services available for children and young people, particularly those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged. Despite the recently released Youth at Risk Strategy identifying the need for strong communities and families, early intervention, coordinated interventions and intensive interventions to improve outcomes for young people, the strategy lacks a cohesive approach and specific initiatives.

Anglicare has identified the following as high priorities across the State for highly vulnerable young people both with and without Care and Protection Orders:

Specialist services

- *Trauma-specific mental health services with capacity for assertive outreach and engagement*
- *Residential mental health recovery services*
- *Residential drug detoxification and rehabilitation services for under-18s*

Educational services

- *Increased capacity and diversity of alternative education options*
- *Greater support for foster carers and schools to meet the educational needs of students impacted by trauma*

Care services

- *Intensive family reconnection services for older, unaccompanied children*
- *Medium and long-term therapeutic supported accommodation for under 16 year olds*
- *Innovation in out-of-home care placement options for older children*
- *Extension of out-of-home care support to 21 years of age*
- *Long-term, therapeutic, mobile case coordination and case work*

Anglicare is particularly concerned that Tasmania's Child Safety Service is under financial pressure to 'deal' with children and young people they consider to be at 'lesser' risk by not invoking Care and Protection Orders and, rather, allowing these children to remain at risk either in their family homes or moving through short-term accommodation options such as couch surfing with friends or specialist homelessness services.

We know that, compared to out-of-home care options, homelessness services are cheaper for the State and considerable 'savings' can be found for the Child Safety Service, although with poorer outcomes for the children. As Maria Harries explains, if child protection services "are not provided before families reach a crisis point, the levels of demand within the statutory system will continue to increase, be more costly and there will continue to be poor outcomes for vulnerable children and families" (DHHS 2016, p. 3).

Vulnerable teens are missing out on the State's obligations to provide statutory care and protection

Many vulnerable teens in Tasmania are missing out on adequate care because of the age at which they come to the attention of the State.

If a child under 10 years of age is identified as needing State care, the Child Safety Service is more likely to respond in a manner that sees the child both protected and supported. However, children aged 10 years and above are anecdotally considered 'too old' for the child protection system – for example, it has been argued that age rather than level of risk determines the threshold for a Child Safety Service response (CYS 2012, p. 59) – and 'too young' for the Specialist Housing Services system, which has been designed for adults transitioning back to independence.

Recommendation 6:

That, in consultation with the sector, the State Government develop good practice guidelines relevant to all service providers working with unaccompanied children under 16 years of age.

Rationale for change:

Unaccompanied children under 16 are highly vulnerable and have specific development needs.

The Child Safety Service is at capacity and is unlikely to respond to the needs of 'older' children. Further, services such as education, drug and alcohol, mental health etc. assume young people receive support either through a case worker or family, which makes accessing a service and maintaining access more achievable. However, vulnerable children under 16 who are not on care orders and are forced to rely on short-term accommodation options, including specialist homelessness services, are unlikely to have a reliable support person.

Ideally, the Government would solve this gap with appropriate intensive therapeutic services for children between 10 and 16 years of age. Services should have family reunification as a priority for this cohort where appropriate, but if reunification is not possible children under 16 currently have limited options for receiving care or protection.

For example, while Tasmanian Specialist Homelessness Services accept children from age 13 they do not have the resources or practice guidelines to support the specific service delivery needs of this young age cohort. These services are often faced with the choice of turning away vulnerable unaccompanied children or trying to find a solution within their often already over-stretched service. If they are able to offer shelter, their one-worker model restricts the support younger children can receive.

Good practice guidelines, along with appropriate funding, would ensure that children who do need to rely on specialist services receive appropriate care.

There are gaps and ambiguity in responses by service providers.

Tasmania's services are failing our vulnerable children and young people, forcing them to seek intermittent and inadequate help from services either focused on young adults or providing services to children with lower, non-trauma-specific needs who are more likely to have a support person.

While stable accommodation is "an absolutely critical factor for young people in the TYSS [Targeted Youth Support Services] program", TYSS "does not have the power to remove young people from unsafe environments" (CYS 2012, pp. 59, 61). This leaves the service in the

difficult position of working with children they know to be in unsafe environments and having no ability to offer them safe accommodation.

Other states have attempted to grapple directly with the issue of who has responsibility for responding to unaccompanied children. For example, in 2015 NSW created the Homeless Youth Assistance Program (HYAP). It is the only supported accommodation program for under 16s in Australia. Its service delivery framework is to “reconnect unaccompanied children and young people 12 to 15 years of age with their families or wider support networks, or facilitate transitions to more appropriate long-term supported accommodation” (FACS 2016, p. 3). In recognising that some children are unable to return home, HYAP places into a policy and practice context the specific needs of unaccompanied under 16s.

Tasmanian government and non-government service providers need clarity about who has responsibility for children who are not on Care and Protection Orders.

3. Removing poker machines from our communities

Why does Anglicare think this a priority issue?

Poker machines are designed to addict, easily accessible and targeted at low socio-economic areas. Poker machines are currently available in 100 venues (including the two casinos) located in all but five Local Government Areas. According to the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission, approximately 6,000 to 10,000 Tasmanians are harmed by their gambling, the vast majority of them being harmed by poker machines (TLGC 2016). Current harm minimisation measures allow individuals to lose nearly half their weekly income in an hour (TLGC 2016; ABS 2017). The Tasmanian community want change and see the expiration of the current license as providing our best opportunity.

Anglicare has provided Gamblers Help services for individuals and their families affected by gambling since poker machines were rolled out into hotels and clubs in 1997. Our services include personal or family counselling and group support, self-exclusion orders from gambling areas, financial counselling and community education.

Poker machines cause harm to individuals, their families and communities. The Productivity Commission estimates five to ten people are affected by every person who has a gambling problem (Productivity Commission 1999). The impact of gambling problems on individuals, their families and communities is well-documented: problems include family breakdown, depression, financial hardship, health problems, legal problems and work issues (Productivity Commission 2010; ACIL Allen Consulting et al. 2015; Anglicare Tasmania 2005, 2014).

Recommendations for removing poker machines from our communities

Key State Government Departments: *Department of Treasury and Finance*

Recommendation 7: That on the expiration of the Deed between Federal Hotels and the State Government in June 2023, poker machines be removed from hotels and clubs.

Estimated Costs: This recommendation will result in a decrease in annual taxation and fees of no more than \$30 million a year that would no longer be collected from poker machines located in hotels and clubs. This will be offset by an expected significant reduction of social costs to the State from harm caused by poker machines, which is currently estimated to be \$50-\$140 million per year. Some additional taxation may be collected from poker machines in the two casinos.

Recommendation 8: That any new Deed for gambling in Tasmania introduce a four per cent Community Support Levy (CSL) on the annual gross profit of poker machines in Tasmania's casinos to replace the levy previously derived from poker machines in hotels and clubs.

Estimated Costs: Based on current expenditure on poker machines in casinos, a 4% levy would collect at least \$3 million per year. This is expected to be an underestimate as there may be an increase in expenditure in the two casinos once all poker machines are removed from hotels and clubs.

Recommendation 9: That existing community education and counselling continue at current levels until there is evidence that the prevalence and impact of gambling problems has decreased significantly.

Estimated costs: No cost to government as these services are funded from the Community Support Levy (CSL).

Recommendation 7:

That poker machines are removed from Tasmanian hotels and clubs at the end of the current licence period.

Rationale for change

Poker machines are not ordinary consumer products.

One in 6 people who regularly use a poker machine are likely to develop a problem with gambling (Productivity Commission 2010, p. 5.25).

Poker machines are concentrated in areas that have low socio-economic status (The Allen Consulting Group 2011, vol. 2, p. 5) and gambling losses and levels of harm in these areas are significantly higher than areas with higher socio-economic status (The Allen Consulting Group 2011, vol. 2, p. 118).

The harmful impacts of gambling are widespread. They affect an individual's health, family, relationships and work, which in turn impacts on government-funded health care and the State's economic productivity. For every person who is harmed by their own gambling, seven other people are affected (Productivity Commission 1999, p. 7.1).

Harm minimisation measures for poker machines are not effective.

People who are harmed by poker machines say that existing Government-endorsed 'harm minimisation' measures are not effective. They say that counselling and self-exclusion are

important but only reach a small proportion of people harmed by gambling and only after people have suffered significant and often lifelong harm.

Effective harm minimisation measures need to reduce expenditure (Productivity Commission 2010, vol. 1, p. 3). The only time expenditure on poker machines dropped significantly in Tasmania was following the introduction of the smoking ban. However, this measure was not about reducing harm caused by poker machines and expenditure soon bounced back to pre-ban levels (TLGC 2005, 2006, 2007). At current bet limits and spin speeds, someone earning the average weekly wage in Tasmania can lose nearly half their weekly wage in an hour of poker machine use (TLGC 2016; ABS 2017).

Tasmanians lose more per capita from non-casino venues than people in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Finland because we have higher bet limits and maximum payouts. Some US states permit poker machines only in casinos while eight states and two of Canada's 13 provinces do not permit poker machines anywhere (Gaming Technologies Association 2016, pp. 22-24).

Other international gambling policy approaches include restricting bet limits and payouts for machines located in communities. For example, machines permitted in hotels and clubs in the United Kingdom have a maximum £1 bet (AUD\$1.70) and maximum £100 payout (AUD\$170) (Gaming Technologies Association 2016, pp. 32-34). These are significantly lower than the rates permitted by the Tasmanian Government.

The Tasmanian community support change that genuinely reduces harm.

All publicly released polls have consistently shown the community does not believe we benefit from having poker machines in hotels and clubs and wants them reduced in number or completely removed from communities (SACES 2008; EMRS 2009; Anglicare Tasmania 2015).

Community Voice on Pokies Reform, of which Anglicare is a founding member, continues to grow. Starting with 15 member organisations, it has now reached 58 members.

Removing poker machines would successfully reduce the negative impacts of gambling.

Poker machines are designed to help people 'zone out' so they can 'escape'; people easily lose track of time and the money they have spent (Productivity Commission 2010, p. 11.16). Vulnerable Tasmanians have easy access to poker machines because the machines are concentrated in lower socio-economic areas (The Allen Consulting Group 2011, vol. 2, p. 5).

Western Australia is the only Australian State that restricts poker machines to its casino.

Although Tasmanians and Western Australians spend approximately the same amount of money on gaming per capita, at around \$700 annually (Queensland Government's Statistician's Office 2016, p. 5), the prevalence of gambling harm is lower in Western Australia than in Tasmania (Productivity Commission 2010). This is because about a third of

what Western Australians spend on gambling “present few direct problems” such as Lotto, Instant Lottery and Minor Gaming (Productivity Commission 1999, p. 6.52). In contrast, the majority of money spent on gaming in Tasmania is lost to poker machines, which are acknowledged as being a more harmful mode of gambling, with just ten per cent being spent on the more benign forms of gambling (Anglicare Tasmania 2017).

The most effective way to reduce harm caused to Tasmanians by poker machines would be to limit access to the machines by only having them in the casinos and by requiring the machines in casinos to have strong consumer protections applied to them.

Removing poker machines aligns with and supports a range of other policy initiatives.

All three State political parties support a preventative health approach. For example, in 2015, the ALP wrote in their submission to the Delivering Safe and Sustainable Clinical Services Green Paper that “it is clear that a [health] prevention agenda requires cross sectoral, multilevel interventions” to support the “many positive changes that individuals and families can make, but if the environment in which they exist – where they work, live and play, interact and experience life – is not conducive to good health, the impact of individual behaviours may be severely limited” (ALP 2015, p. 5).

Anglicare argues that the easy accessibility of poker machines in communities is creating environments that are not conducive to good health.

Tasmania has the second highest rate of suicide in Australia, with about 70 people per year taking their own lives, twice the State’s annual road toll (Tasmanian Liberals 2015). The Tasmanian Liberal Government has placed suicide prevention as one of its priority areas in its “change for a brighter future” manifesto, recognising that every life lost to suicide comes at a huge personal cost to families, friends and communities (Tasmanian Liberals 2015). The Government’s aim is to fund targeted and proactive suicide prevention strategies.

Studies have found that the rate of suicide ideation is higher among people harmed by gambling than the broader community, with almost one in three people harmed by gambling having considered suicide (DoJ Victoria 2009). Anglicare believes the impact that gambling has on suicide ideation should be an important element of strategies for suicide prevention.

All Tasmanian parties also support supportive community places. For example, the Liberal Government sees men’s sheds as providing a safe and supportive environment to “get men talking and improve their wellbeing, health, and mental health” and neighbourhood houses as providing localised support to those who need it (Tasmanian Liberals 2015) and the Tasmanian Greens increased support to the houses when they had ministerial responsibility for them.

However, the Tasmanian Audit Office noted the limited opening hours offered by these facilities, particularly compared to poker machine venues, which restrict their value as a safe 'third place'² (Tasmanian Audit Office 2017, p. 33).

Poker machines damage the State's economy.

The harm caused by poker machines costs individuals, their families, communities, businesses and the State Government millions of dollars every year³ (The Allen Consulting Group 2011, vol. 1, p 136).

Only a very small select group of businesses has benefitted, with the wealth they enjoy coming at the expense of harm caused to others. Seventy-five businesses from around the State recently called for the removal of poker machines from their local communities.

Removing poker machines from hotels and clubs is likely to provide increases in Gross State Product and employment across the Tasmanian economy (Mangan 2017).

According to the ex-chair of the Gaming Commission, Peter Hoult, "I think it is unfortunate that EGMs exist in Tasmania. The benefits... largely fall to the people who own them and not to the Tasmanian community. I think the tax revenues raised are actually non-events [and] is within Treasury's daily estimate range of getting it right or wrong... I think if we went back in history and knew what we know now, we would not do it [introduce poker machines to hotels and clubs]" (Hansard 11 August 2017, Peter Hoult, p. 5).

There is a clear opportunity for change with no sovereign risk for the State.

The expiration of the Deed between the State of Tasmania and Federal Hotels on 30 June 2018 with optional rolling terms to 30 June 2023 provides an opportunity for this policy to be implemented without breaching any license agreement.

² A 'third place' is somewhere other than a person's home or place of employment.

³ Between \$50 and \$144 million (at a moderate application of gambling problem prevalence rates).

Recommendation 8 & 9

That any new Deed for gambling in Tasmania introduce a four percent Community Support Levy on the annual gross profit of poker machines in Tasmania's casinos to replace the levy previously derived from poker machines in hotels and clubs.

That existing community education and counselling continue at current levels until there is evidence that the prevalence and impact of gambling problems has decreased significantly.

Rationale for change

While poker machines remain in casinos, gambling support services will need to be maintained and funded

The Community Support Levy (CSL) is currently collected as a 4% levy only on poker machines in hotels and clubs. With the removal of poker machines from these venues and their restriction to casinos only, it is reasonable to then apply the same 4% levy to the machines in casinos.

Based on current expenditure on poker machines in casinos, a 4% levy applied would collect approximately \$3 million per year, which is comparable to and readily able to replace the CSL currently collected from hotels and clubs. This is likely to be an underestimate, as it would be anticipated that with the removal of poker machines from hotels and clubs, the expenditure on those remaining in casinos may increase.

Restricting access to poker machines to casinos only is intended to significantly decrease gambling-related problems experienced by Tasmanian people. However, as gambling problems are often residual and the poker machines remaining in casinos will continue to generate gambling problems, current levels of support services must be maintained in the first instance, and a decrease considered once evidence of a decreased need is evidenced over time.

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