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Response to the recommendations made in the Parliament of Tasmania: Legislative Council Government Administration Committee “B” report on Disability Services in Tasmania 31 May 2022

Tasmanian Government Response

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List of Abbreviations

In this document:

‘Accessible Island’ is Accessible Island: Tasmania’s Disability Framework for Action 2018-2021

‘ADS’ is Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-2031

‘DSA’ is the *Disability Services Act 2011*

‘DCT’ is the Department of Communities Tasmania

‘DoE’ is the Department of Education

‘DoH’ is the Department of Health

‘DPAC’ is the Department of Premier and Cabinet

‘DRMM’ is the Disability Reform Ministers Meeting

‘NDIS’ is the National Disability Insurance Scheme

‘NDIA’ is the National Disability Insurance Agency

‘UN CPRD’ is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Executive Summary

The Tasmanian Government thanks the Honourable members of the Legislative Council Government Administration Committee “B” for the Inquiry on Disability Services in Tasmania (the Inquiry) with the following Terms of Reference:

To inquire into and report upon the Tasmanian Government’s responsibilities under its co-arrangement with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) to provide support for people with disabilities with particular reference to:

- 1. Consideration and management of the State based costs of long-term care and support for people who are not eligible for the NDIS;*
- 2. The range of support services available to Tasmanians who are not on, or eligible for the NDIS;*
- 3. Funding for organisations that service those not eligible for the NDIS;*
- 4. Workforce development and training opportunities for the disability support sector, including allied health; and*
- 5. Any other matters incidental thereto.*

This document provides the Tasmanian Government’s response to recommendations made in the Inquiry report which was tabled on 31 May 2022. Recommendations made by the Legislative Council Committee through this inquiry are welcome and add value to the Tasmanian Government’s thinking about investment in, and resourcing of disability supports and services across government.

Of the recommendations made, seven are supported wholly, nine are supported in principle and two are not supported. For those supported in principle the Tasmanian Government acknowledges that, while there is focused work in these areas, more could be done to achieve better outcomes for people with disability. For the two recommendations not supported in this response, it is noted that work is progressing nationally and the Tasmanian Government awaits the outcome of national consultation and reform before attempting to address localised solutions.

For Tasmanians with disability, and the sector that supports them, there has been considerable change over the last decade. Changes include the introduction of the NDIS, increased quality and safeguarding regulation, a large increase of providers of support (increasing choice of services to NDIS participants) and a rapidly growing workforce.

On 10 December 2018, the Commonwealth and Tasmanian Governments entered into a Bilateral Agreement on the NDIS to commence full scheme on 1 July 2019. This agreement reflects both Governments’ shared responsibility for the NDIS. In 2021-22, Tasmania committed \$264.1 million towards the NDIS.

The NDIS fourth quarterly report for 2021-2022 (30 June 2022) provides detail of the number of participants now active in the NDIS and the number of providers registered to provide services in Tasmania and active in the last quarter (that is having made a claim for providing a service to an NDIS participant).

At 30 June 2022 there were:

- 12 104 active NDIS participants
- 191 children accessing Early Childhood Approach (ECA)
- 7 696 NDIS participants receiving supports for the first time
- 535 active providers
- 36 providers active for the first time in this quarter.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) defines disability as 'any limitation, restriction or impairment which restricts everyday activities and has lasted, or is likely to last for at least six months'.

People with disability represent an estimated 26.8 per cent of the Tasmanian population according to SDAC 2018 data. The 2018 SDAC was designed to provide reliable estimates at a national and state level for each of the funding states (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia).

SDAC estimated 140 100 people in Tasmania have a disability. SDAC data estimated approximately 74 700 people aged 0-64 years and 60 000 aged over 65 years with reported disability. An estimated 23 800 people from birth to 64 years of age reported a profound or severe core activity limitation, that is a limitation in communication, mobility and/or self-care activities.

The ABS 2021 Census data identifies that in Tasmania, 38 023 people identified a need for assistance with core activities, that is needs assistance in one or more of the three core activity areas of self-care, mobility and communication because of a long-term health condition (lasting six months or more), a disability (lasting six months or more), or old age.

The *Disability Services Act 2011* (DSA) provides the framework for funding service providers, researchers and individuals with disability and for the approval and conduct of restrictive practices. It specifically related to specialist disability services either funded or provided by the Tasmanian Government, however, an amendment in 2018 broadened the definition of 'funded provider' to include Tasmanian providers registered with the NDIS. The DSA is supported by the Disability Services Regulations 2015 which are aligned with the National Standards for Disability Services.

Since the DSA was operationalised in 2012 there has been significant change in the delivery of specialist disability services. The *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* (NDIS Act) has since been legislated and the NDIS has been fully operational in Tasmania since 1 July 2019. These changes have moved responsibility for the delivery of most disability services from states and territories to the Australian Government. This in turn has altered the funding regime in Tasmania from a largely block-funded approach for disability services to individual funding that provides people with choice and control over the support and care they need to help achieve their goals and aspirations. Consequently, large portions of the DSA are no longer relevant and other parts of the Act require revision to align with and complement both national and state quality and safeguarding arrangements.

In 2021 the Tasmanian Government commenced a review of the *Disability Services Act 2011* (DSA). This includes establishment of a Tasmanian Disability Commissioner to promote the safety, health and wellbeing of people with disability. Feedback received from people with disability, their families and carers; service providers; advocates and services that support people with disability; Tasmanian Government agencies; independent statutory authorities; and the broader Tasmanian community is currently being considered by the Tasmanian Government and will feed into further analysis on how the DSA needs to change. The goal is to have a draft Disability Bill ready for further consultation by the end of 2022. Further information about the DSA review can be found on the Department of Communities Tasmania website [here](#).

The Tasmanian Government is committed to supporting the rights of people with disability as set out in Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 (ADS) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). This commitment seeks to improve the lives of people with disability and their families and carers and provide leadership for a community-wide

shift in attitudes. It includes the one in four Tasmanians who report that they have disability and is not restricted only to those who are NDIS participants.

Tasmania has shown leadership in supporting this commitment through its Accessible Island: Tasmania's Disability Framework for Action 2018-2021 (Accessible Island) and Tasmanian Government departments' Disability Action Plans (DAPs). In most other parts of Australia, commitments are included in disability-related legislation. Until now, inclusion and accessibility have been included in the Principles in the DSA but they have not been the Act's core purpose.

As part of the DSA review consultation process, the Tasmanian Government heard a desire to have legislation with a stronger human rights focus and that embeds best practice in terms of inclusion, drives action and removes barriers to mainstream supports.

Another avenue for strengthening human rights and transformative equality for Tasmanians with disability is through the creation of a Tasmanian Disability Commissioner. The Tasmanian Government has committed \$1.6 million over four years for the creation of a first Disability Commissioner. The Disability Commissioner is a newly created role and will be central to the Tasmanian Government's commitment to ensuring that Tasmanians with disability have the same right of access to services as all Tasmanians and to give effect to obligations under the UN CRPD and the Australian Disability Strategy.

The Disability Commissioner will provide a voice for all people with disability in Tasmania about matters that are important to them and has a broad remit with a focus on inclusion, advocacy and rights.

The Commissioner's role will provide an independent oversight body for investigating and resolving complaints and promoting the rights of people with disability. The Commissioner will also have influence at executive level on legislation, policies and programs.

The initiating role will be responsible to the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet for an interim period until a legislative framework to give effect to the Commissioner is in place. Until that time the role will be supported by Authorised Officer powers included in the DSA.

In addition to these important commitments to the disability sector, the Tasmanian Government announced in February 2022 a Machinery of Government change to better align services to meet the ongoing needs of the Tasmanian community. Shared capabilities are being realigned to strengthen strategic outcomes for population groups through the establishment of the Community Participation and Priorities Division within the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC), bringing together policy and program delivery for the community and disability sectors. This will take effect in October 2022.

Response to recommendations

TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER ITS CO-ARRANGEMENT WITH THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS) TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

1. Roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined and communicated by governments to assist participants, carers and service providers to navigate systems.

RESPONSE: *SUPPORT*

Intensive work is being undertaken nationally to ensure that the responsibility between the NDIS and mainstream services is clearly defined, well understood, and people with disability receive streamlined services and supports that meet their needs.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has attempted to provide clarity for participants, families, carers and providers through plain English guidelines available on the NDIS website. The 'Would we fund it' guidelines can be found at [Would we fund it / NDIS](#). The guidelines provide examples of commonly requested items, explain how 'reasonable and necessary' decisions are made about those items, explain the responsibility of 'mainstream' services and provide case examples.

Further national work is underway through the Disability Reform Ministers' Meeting (DRMM). At the June 2022 meeting, the DRMM agreed to bring forward a review of the NDIS from 2023 to 2022. Building a stronger, more effective NDIS is the focus of this review. Ministers have committed to consultation and co-design approaches to provide further clarity on roles and responsibilities and assist participants, carers and service providers to navigate state, territory and Australian Government systems. In addition, the DRMM has a strong focus on the interface between NDIS and mainstream services, with the aim of streamlining service delivery responsibility and providing clear direction for the NDIS, state and territory governments and people with disability.

The need to clarify roles and responsibilities was also raised through the DSA review consultation process. Feedback included a suggestion to publish a plain English explanation of "Principles to Determine the Responsibilities of the NDIS and other Service Systems - The Applied Principles and Tables of Support (APTOS)" which outlines the delineation between Tasmanian and Australian Government services. This is currently being considered in the context of the NDIS review and DSA review.

2. A priority should be to improve engagement and support for people living with a disability currently not accessing NDIS in rural and remote areas.

RESPONSE: *SUPPORT*

Tasmania has the highest proportion of residents living outside a capital city compared to other states and territories across Australia.¹ Living in rural and remote areas of Tasmania can be challenging, where access to services can often be more difficult and the choice and range of service delivery limited.

¹ Location: Census, 2021 | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)

Through the *Disability Services Act 2011* (DSA) review consultation process, Communities Tasmania heard that thin markets in rural and remote regions impact people with disability in terms of choice of service provider, timeliness and quality of service. It is recognised that more work is needed to understand supply and demand issues for people with disability in rural and remote regions.

Market gaps in the NDIS exist where there is a gap between the needs of participants and the services available in the market. This can occur in a particular location, for a particular service type, or for certain cohorts of participants. Often, thin markets are driven by difficulties in servicing a client's need or their location.

Market gaps are present across Australia and are not unique to a particular region, with the most severe and extreme gaps occurring in rural and remote areas and for more complex services. Gaps occur across all service types, but are especially common among capacity building supports, which help participants' independence and skills to reach their long-term goals. Market gaps obstruct the core principles of the NDIS: that is, to ensure participants receive the services that they need, to provide choice and control over those services, and for the Scheme to act as an early intervention investment.

Tasmania has been the focus of thin market intervention led by the NDIA in the Waratah Wynyard Region. This intervention focused delivering a different model of commissioning of allied health services to the region, where it was identified that NDIS participants could not access allied health, had limited choice in provider, or were required to travel long distances to access a provider.

The Tasmanian Government Community Services Industry Workforce Plan recognises the particular challenges of rural and remote regions and proposes place-based solutions and approaches to address workforce and training matters. In addition, the Tasmanian Government has worked collaboratively with the University of Tasmania to offer an expanded range of allied health courses in recognition of the allied health workforce and public health needs of Tasmanians.

Tasmanian Government agencies recognise that delivery of services in rural and remote regions can be difficult. There are challenges to recruit and retain a skilled and qualified workforce and to ensure services are inclusive and accessible for people with disability. Access and inclusion are a key focus of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 (ADS) released on 3 December 2021. Outcome areas in the ADS set out where governments at all levels working with the community and business, and people with disability should focus to deliver the necessary changes.

Targeted Action Plans (TAPs) under the ADS drive action, with an initial focus on employment, community attitudes, early childhood, safety and emergency management. These plans include practical and focussed initiatives to support better outcomes in these areas with annual reporting on progress on the actions.

The Tasmanian Government is currently planning for the next iteration of Accessible Island: Tasmania's Disability Framework for Action 2018-21 (Accessible Island). The ADS will provide the overarching framework for the next iteration of Accessible Island and consideration will be given on how to best reflect and incorporate the TAPs. This will include the number of actions and reporting mechanisms within Accessible Island to deliver meaningful outcomes. Accessible Island will take into account outcomes from the DSA review consultation, including establishment of a Disability Services Commissioner and the scope to integrate new and continuing actions from the Disability Justice Plan 2017-2020. Accessible Island has driven Disability Action Plans (DAPs) across Tasmanian Government agencies.

The Department of Education

The Department of Education (DoE) supports Tasmanian Government schools to build inclusive school communities focused on ensuring all students with disability are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of school life. Students with disability are supported to access, participate and engage in education on the same basis as other students. The health and wellbeing of students with disability is supported so that they feel safe, included and engaged in learning.

To achieve this, in 2020 DoE implemented a new Educational Adjustments funding model for students with disability in Tasmanian Government schools. This new approach supports inclusive practice in schools and aligns this support to the educational adjustments teachers make in the classroom to assist students with disability access, participate and engage in quality learning programs.

Other relevant DoE initiatives include:

- funding of minor works access programs to ensure school sites and buildings are accessible for people with disability to engage in inclusive learning programs;
- access to professional support staff (since 2014, the Department has supported the employment of an extra 120.05 Full Time Equivalent professional support staff which includes school psychologists, social workers, speech and language pathologists and school nurses;
- as part of the 2021 Election commitment, the Tasmanian Government provides free access to speech and language pathologists, social workers and school psychologists in Child and Family Learning Centres (CFLCs) - funding of \$3.8 million has been allocated over four years including \$1.08 million in 2022-2023; and
- a permanent relief pool of professional support staff was approved in October 2021, resulting in an additional 12 FTE practitioners working with children and young people in Tasmanian Government schools.

The Department of Health

The Department of Health (DoH) is also embedding inclusivity and accessibility into health strategies and programs related to the disability sector which are under development. This includes the next Disability Action Plan (Accessible Island), Our Healthcare Future and our 10-year Digital Health Strategy. Through these initiatives, DoH will work to ensure all Tasmanians have timely access to health supports and services.

DoH has undertaken activities to support people with a disability in the COVID-19 pandemic, including those living in rural and remote areas. Key initiatives include:

- running accessible rural vaccination opportunities where there is evidence of demand requiring additional support for Primary Care;
- home delivery of Rapid Antigen Tests; and
- distributing vaccination information to key stakeholder organisations and individuals.

These activities were implemented by the Tasmanian Disability Emergency Operations Centre (DEOC) which was established to lead and coordinate operational responses to increase support for people with disability, and the Tasmanian Vaccination Emergency Operations Centre (TVEOC), established to deliver the safe and effective rollout of COVID-19 vaccines to all Tasmanians.

In addition, DoH Tasmanian Home and Community Care (TAS HACC) continues to provide support across urban, regional and remote areas in Tasmania. Service provision is often challenging in regional and remote areas and increasing access in these areas can be difficult due to broader market factors, such as additional cost of travel (both time and transport costs) for mainstream service providers. The TAS HACC Program funds a state-wide range of basic core support services targeted at younger people (people aged less than 65 years and First Nations people aged less than 50 years) who live in the Tasmanian community and whose capacity for independent living is at risk due to an acute health event, moderate or mild functional impairment or deterioration of an ongoing condition.

While TAS HACC does not provide support for those requiring the highest levels of care, or residential care not funded by the NDIS or aged care, it can fund advocacy for people seeking to test their eligibility to the NDIS. TAS HACC also works with HACC providers to encourage HACC consumers to test their NDIS eligibility.

Tasmanian Government agencies will continue to deliver the best possible inclusive and accessible services to people living in rural and remote locations and focus actions through Disability Action Plans and reporting outcomes annually through the reporting framework of Accessible Island.

3. The Tasmanian Government needs to ensure the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) addresses barriers specific to Tasmania.

RESPONSE: **SUPPORT**

The Tasmanian Government continues to liaise with the NDIA via the Disability Reform Ministers' Meeting (DRMM) and the NDIS Executive Steering Group, where senior NDIA and Tasmanian Government officials participate and act to escalate barriers specific to Tasmania.

Through these mechanisms the NDIA has worked to address barriers specific to Tasmania. For example, the NDIA initiated a market intervention trial in the North West (Waratah/Wynyard local government area) acknowledging that allied health supports in this area are particularly difficult to access for NDIS participants. The NDIA engaged three providers of allied health (one Tasmanian based and two interstate based), specifically Occupational Therapy and Speech Therapy, to deliver NDIS supports to participants. Technology was used, and in some cases provided to participants, to engage and ensure continued service delivery. Evaluation of this trial is currently being undertaken by the NDIA.

The Tasmanian Government will continue to advocate for Tasmanians with disability both in the NDIS and through the design and review of other service systems for people with disability such as Information, Linkage and Capacity Building (ILC) supports and National Disability Advocacy Framework (NDAF).

4. The Tasmanian Government ensure there is capacity within the public service for disability policy across government departments.

RESPONSE: **SUPPORT**

The Department of Communities Tasmania (DCT) and the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) have staff dedicated to the development, maintenance and consultation of disability policy, including policy related to:

- the *Disability Services Act 2011* (DSA),

- review(s) of the DSA,
- NDIS policy,
- advocacy policy,
- Australia's Disability Strategy, and
- Accessible Island: Tasmania's Disability Framework for Action.

Community and Disability Services (CDS), currently within DCT, provides policy and program direction, funding and advice to the community sector and educates, advises and administers authorisation processes on the use of restrictive practices.

In 2018, KP Health undertook a review of Disability Services in the context of transition to the NDIS and provided recommendations to Government on the size and focus of a Disability Policy function post 1 July 2019. All recommendations were adopted, and the Disability Policy team increased the full-time equivalent staff capacity as recommended.

As a result of current Machinery of Government changes, Community and Disability Services will transition from DCT to DPAC on 1 October 2022, joining the newly established Community Participation and Priorities (CPP) Division. It is anticipated that this move will bring together policy teams across a number of priority population groups, reduce potential duplication of work and streamline Tasmania's representation in Commonwealth forums.

The CPP Division of DPAC is currently planning for the next iteration of Accessible Island and consultation will commence later in 2022. This will include consultation with Disability Action Plan (DAP) convenors from each Tasmanian Government agency, Premier's Disability Advisory Council members, Minister's Disability Consultative Group members and feedback from the disability and community sector.

Each Tasmanian Government department develops a DAP, placing a disability policy lens over the services they provide, or plan to provide, with a focus on access and inclusion, consultation and collaboration and improving employment outcomes in the State Service for people with disability. Once a year, Government departments submit a progress report to the Premier's Disability Advisory Council (PDAC). Agency DAPs can be found on the Communities Tasmania website: [Communities Tasmania - Accessible Island: Tasmania's Disability Framework for Action 2018-2021 \(DFA\)](#).

Communities Tasmania has staff dedicated to the development, maintenance and consultation of disability policy.

The Tasmanian Government continues to support and promote capacity and provision of disability policy across government departments.

5. The Tasmanian Government mainstream services must develop formal agreements to ensure continuity of care with NDIS and non-NDIS service providers.

RESPONSE: *SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE*

The Tasmanian Government is committed to the continuity of care for people with disability who require ongoing support but are not eligible for the NDIS. In the context of the NDIS, continuity of care is defined as the provision of continuing supports "for clients of Commonwealth or

Tasmanian specialist disability programs who are found to be ineligible for the NDIS, to assist them to achieve similar outcomes.”²

Mainstream services, such as health and education, continue to provide the supports they have always provided outside of the NDIS. For example, the Department of Health (DoH) continues to fund the TAS HACC Program, which funds a state-wide range of basic core support services targeted at younger people (people aged less than 65 years and First Nations people aged less than 50 years) who live in the Tasmanian community and whose capacity for independent living is at risk due to an acute health event, moderate or mild functional impairment or deterioration of an ongoing condition.

The Department of Education (DoE) continues to provide supports for all early learners and students with disability, regardless of NDIS eligibility, within inclusive education programs.

An agreement was reached with the Commonwealth in 2018 for continuity of care for people with disability over 65 years of age at the time of transition to full scheme NDIS. The Commonwealth has contracted disability service providers to continue disability supports for people with disability over 65 years.

For some younger people with disability the Tasmanian Government continues to fund support where the person, because of residency status or age, is not funded by the NDIS. For example, the NDIS may not fund home and living supports for a child under 18 years who does not live in their family home. The Tasmanian Government funds accommodation and service providers to deliver these supports in a continuity of care arrangement. In these cases, the NDIS may fund other disability related supports, such as equipment, therapy supports and after school community participation supports.

In July 2022 Disability Reform Ministers agreed the need to restore the NDIS to its original objectives to improve outcomes for people with disability, their families and carers. All Disability Ministers “agreed an approach will be taken to Health and other Ministers to support the safe and timely hospital discharge of people eligible for the NDIS. The approach includes assessment and plan review timelines, recognising that participants may need an interim plan with reasonable and necessary accommodation and additional support if needed in the short to medium term. Ministers will seek agreement from Health Ministers to support NDIA actions including installing dedicated NDIA hospital discharge planners in each state and territory, working with hospital discharge teams, with delegation and flexibility to resolve issues.” This work will achieve streamlined hospital discharge processes for NDIS participants and deliver uninterrupted care across programs, practitioners and services.

DoE is committed to working collaboratively with the NDIA and State Government agencies to support families to access the NDIS, where eligible. A suite of resources has been developed and made available to families and schools to support collaborative approaches where NDIS providers seek to intersect with schools to deliver supports.

Further understanding of current service gaps and barriers is required to fully understand the need for continuity of care agreements with providers of disability services. This is an area of focus that the Tasmanian Government is committed to achieving through collaboration with the Australian Government and will be enhanced through the establishment of the Disability Commissioner.

² Bilateral Agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and the State of Tasmania on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

TERM OF REFERENCE 1: CONSIDERATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE STATE BASED COSTS OF LONG-TERM CARE AND SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THE NDIS

6. The Tasmania Government has an obligation to provide appropriate and accessible housing for people living with a disability and should urgently address current shortages.

RESPONSE: *SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE*

Disability housing is often misinterpreted as only relating to persons with mobility impairments. The Department of Communities Tasmania (DCT) recognises that disability arises in varied forms, including mobility, mental health/psychosocial, and vision impairment, each with a range of requirements to be met. DCT offers a variety of disability housing options to meet these needs.

Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) is intended as a specialist solution to support a small proportion of NDIS participants. These participants have a very high need for constant or immediate support and/or extreme or complete functional impairment in a core area (self-care, mobility or self-management). There are 225 SDA properties state-wide, managed by specialist disability providers. SDA housing is designed with accessible features to accommodate extreme functional impairment or very high support needs.

Non-SDA properties are also available to NDIS participants who do not require specialised homes or have extremely high support needs. There are 62 non-SDA properties state-wide, managed by specialist disability providers. For non-NDIS participants with disability, other accessible social housing stock is available.

The State Budget of 2018-19 committed \$20 million over three years under the Affordable Housing Strategy for new supply of disability specific housing.

To deliver this commitment, Tasmania's Affordable Housing Action Plan 2019-2023 (Action Plan 2) sets a target to provide at least 70 new homes to suitable applicants from the Housing Register who are NDIS participants.

The Tasmanian Government is working to address shortages in disability accessible housing. In terms of new stock, at least 150 new social housing builds completed under Action Plan 2 are designed specifically to be disability accessible (Platinum level), while 28.7 per cent of all new social houses have met either Gold Level and above of the Liveable Housing Design Guidelines (LHDG), or the Australian Standards, AS1428 and AS4299 at 31 March 2022. In addition, a further 38.8 per cent of social housing 'met design requirements', suggesting that the percentage of new houses built to be disability accessible may actually exceed 28.7 per cent.

At 31 March 2022, there have been 44 NDIS participants housed in new social housing under Action Plan 2.

At 31 March 2022, there were 1 569 applicants on the Housing Register living with disability. Just over one third of applicants (35.6 per cent) on the Housing Register are living with a disability. In accordance with the Housing Assessment Prioritisation System (HAPS) these individuals are categorised as priority applicants. When considering only priority applicants (those assessed with highest or standard priority needs) the percentage of applicants living with disability reduces to less than thirty per cent (29.8 per cent).

In addition to Specialist Disability Accommodation, the Tasmanian Government provides Supported Accommodation Facilities (SAFs) for older Tasmanians. This accommodation is essential to support older Tasmanians with low to moderate independent living skills, particularly given that the NDIS does not support people aged 65 or over. SAFs have been introduced in Tasmania in partnership with Wintringham. There is currently one site available in Hobart which can accommodate 52 people (formerly homeless men and women aged 50+). More SAFs are being completed in the South under Action Plan 2 and two new facilities are to be built in the North and North-West of the State as an election commitment under the State Budget 2021-22. The program will commence in 2023-24, with expected completion in 2026-27.

While the construction of long-term dwellings takes time, movable residential premises can be provided in certain circumstances. These modular units are suitable as backyard dwellings and can be provided, for example, to accommodate someone providing daily living support to a person with disability or an older relative living on the property. This initiative can enable people with disability and older people to remain in their current home and can reduce demand for other forms of housing assistance.

It should be noted that the Homes Tasmania Bill 2022 and Homes Tasmania (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2022 was tabled in the Parliament of Tasmania in August 2022, delivering on the commitment made by the Tasmanian Government in February 2022 to create a dedicated housing authority, to be called Homes Tasmania. Homes Tasmania reflects the importance of having not just a roof, but a place to call home. It also reflects the broader role that the authority will play in building liveable communities and ensuring the wellbeing of those in need of housing and homelessness services, including those living with disability.

7. The Tasmanian Government must collect data in relation to the number of amputees in Tasmania to understand the prosthetic supports required.

RESPONSE: *SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE*

The Tasmanian Government continues to provide an Orthotic Prosthetic Service through the Tasmanian Department of Health (DoH). Orthotic Prosthetic Services Tasmania (OPST) is a state-wide service with facilities in Burnie, Launceston and Hobart, providing inpatient and outpatient support.

Data collection is undertaken regionally via OPST and a Tasmanian Lower Limb Amputation Program. However, while data collection provides valuable information in terms of service delivery, this data does not cover prosthetic supports provided in the private sector.

DoH supports in-principle efforts to improve data collection surrounding prostheses and amputations, however further work is needed around resourcing this activity and how current arrangements can be best leveraged to produce meaningful outcomes for the Tasmanian community.

8. The Tasmanian Government must work with the NDIA to address the disparity between Tasmania's high rate of psychosocial disability and low participation rates of people receiving NDIS supports.

RESPONSE: *SUPPORT*

Nationally (as at 30 June 2022) there were 56 559 NDIS participants identifying as having psychosocial disability as their primary disability, representing 11 per cent of all NDIS participants.

In Tasmania there were 1 038 NDIS participants identifying as having psychosocial disability as their primary disability, representing 9 per cent of all NDIS participants in Tasmania. The representation of psychosocial disability in NDIS participation in Tasmania is slightly lower than the national percentage.

Tasmanian officials have advocated to the Commonwealth to focus on this population of potential participants and address the specific barriers of entry to the NDIS for people with psychosocial disability.

The Psychosocial Disability Recovery-Oriented Framework (Recovery Framework) has been developed to ensure the NDIS is more responsive to participants living with psychosocial disability, their families and carers. This Framework is informed by research, submissions, consultations, articles, reports and policy documents, both nationally and internationally and also by the experiences of participants and their families and carers, service providers and state and territory governments.

The Department of Health (DoH) and the THS is committed to supporting Tasmanians with psychosocial disability to test their access to the NDIS. This includes current patients and clients with the State-wide Mental Health Service who can receive advice from THS staff about the eligibility and access process.

TERM OF REFERENCE 2: THE RANGE OF SUPPORT SERVICES AVAILABLE TO TASMANIANS WHO ARE NOT ON, OR ELIGIBLE FOR, THE NDIS

9. The Tasmanian Government must ensure appropriate disability policies are applied across all government mainstream services.

RESPONSE: *SUPPORT*

Tasmania's disability strategy, Accessible Island: Tasmania's Disability Framework for Action 2018-2021 (Accessible Island), is based on a rights-based, social model of disability. This approach recognises that all Australian governments are bound to recognise the rights of people with disability as set out in the UN CRPD.

It also acknowledges that many challenges faced by people with disability are not due to the functional limitations of individuals but rather by the failure of society to meet their needs.

Three principles underpin Accessible Island:

- Ensuring access to and inclusion for government services, infrastructure and communications;
- Collaboration and consultation – agencies will share expertise and collaborate in planning and development of services, infrastructure and communications; and
- Improving employment outcomes in the State Service.

Consultation and development of the next iteration of Accessible Island is underway. This will reflect the priorities of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 (ADS). This will take into account outcomes from the consultation on the review of the *Disability Services Act 2011* (DSA), including the establishment of a Disability Services Commissioner, and the scope to integrate new and continuing actions from the Disability Justice Plan 2017-2020. It will also be informed by the findings of the most recent report by the Premier's Disability Advisory Council (PDAC) on the implementation of Accessible Island.

As a universal service provider, the Department of Health (DoH) is committed to ensuring all Tasmanians, including those with disability, have equitable access to public health services delivered by the Tasmanian Health Service (THS). DoH strives to ensure that all people with disability have equitable access to high quality, person-centred health care services delivered by DoH and the THS. DoH is also committed to supporting people with disability to be empowered to engage in their health, wellbeing and health care needs. This commitment is reflected in DoH's Health Facility Design Principles which require that universal design is incorporated into capital works projects to ensure its health facilities are accessible to people, regardless of age, disability and other factors.

Across DoH's health services, resources are in place for staff, patients and their families/carers to guide communication and support effective engagement and care giving for patients and service users who have additional communication needs.

At a service level, DoH is supporting the healthcare needs of people with disability through a variety of ways, including delivering staff training and strengthening our health care service provision and planning approaches.

Key health activities include:

- Employing Complex Care Coordinators, who work out of the major hospitals in the South (Royal Hobart Hospital) and North (Launceston General Hospital) to develop and promote effective partnerships between the THS and external community service providers to coordinate and provide high-quality care for patients with complex care requirements. Complex Care Coordinators are Allied Health Professionals who advocate for patients at risk of long stay to enable seamless navigation through the health network, and support the involvement and education of patients, families/carers and other key stakeholders to ensure optimal patient flow.
- Improving services through the training of clinical and other departmental staff to increase awareness of disability and NDIS services. The THS regularly organises the NDIS Communication and Engagement team to present on NDIS services, access and more specific information about psychosocial disability (such as training on autism in dentistry services, mental health first aid and training to better connect with people).
- Implementing an overarching Paediatric Model of Care for publicly funded health services across Tasmania as part of the Improving Children's Health and Therapy Through Appropriate Services (iCHAT TAS) Project which aims to improve equity of access and enhance outcomes of care for children who are not supported by the NDIS.
- Working in partnership with Primary Health Tasmania (PHT) to improve the health outcomes for people with intellectual disability, including when they come to hospital. A key outcome of this two-year work will be to build and strengthen networks for people with intellectual disability and the people who support them.
- The Tasmanian Government is also embedding inclusivity and accessibility into a number of health strategies and programs related to the disability sector which are under development. This includes the next Accessible Island, Our Healthcare Future and our 10-year Digital Health Strategy.

Through these initiatives, Tasmania will work to ensure all Tasmanians have timely access to health supports and services.

The Department of Communities Tasmania (DCT) takes a leadership role in ensuring accessibility and inclusion across all government and mainstream services (subject to legislation). DCT has recently undertaken a review of the *Disability Services Act 2011* (DSA). The purpose of the DSA review is to deliver a contemporary Disability Act that will strengthen the role of the Tasmanian Government in supporting Tasmanians with disability and to support the delivery of high quality and safe services for people with disability. A consultation with stakeholders was undertaken between October 2021 and April 2022.

Included in the review is a commitment to establish the first Disability Commissioner in Tasmania. The role of Disability Commissioner will:

1. deliver continuous improvement in delivery of supports and services for people with disability;
2. act as an independent body;
3. provide a free and confidential complaints resolution process; and

4. help ensure people with disability, and their families, receive the inclusive and accessible supports and services they need, including those supported through mainstream services.

Feedback through the consultation process suggests that the Disability Commissioner would:

- educate and support service providers to have a culture that promotes the importance of supporting peoples' rights and the importance of supporting people with disability to make a complaint;
- be inclusive of all people with disability, not just NDIS participants or those under 65;
- be truly accessible to the disability community and have robust mechanisms for consultation and engagement;
- focus on inclusion - and should be working on leading improvements in service, complaints mechanisms, culture and transparency across all service systems such as education and transport;
- investigate some of the barriers that relate to State policies and legislation that might be stopping people with disabilities from participating in society;
- focus on addressing violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation across services and have the capacity to initiate their own investigations;
- assist people with disability to understand how they can make a complaint and support the prevention of abuse; and
- be a person with lived experience of disability or have staff or advisors who do.

The Tasmanian Government will advertise the Disability Commissioner role nationally and seek to recruit by the end of 2022.

10. An urgent increased investment is needed across multiple areas of government mainstream service areas to adequately meet the needs of people living with disability.

RESPONSE: *SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE*

There is in-principle support for investment to better meet the needs of people with disability across mainstream services, but at present little data to support where and how that investment might be best directed.

The Australian Government has proposed cross-jurisdictional collaboration to develop a National Disability Data Asset (NDDA). The NDDA, if agreed by all state, territory and Commonwealth governments, will deliver for the first time an ability to share, link and analyse over 200 existing datasets, enabling better informed policy and program development.

The NDDA commenced with a pilot phase during 2020-2021, comprising five pilot test cases across four jurisdictions, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia, with Commonwealth participation. Pilot test cases looked at the experience of people with disability in the domains of Early Childhood, Mental Health, Justice, Housing and Education to Employment. Tasmania did not participate in the pilot.

The NDDA is due to be established over the period 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2025 and will be co-designed and co-governed across Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the disability sector. States and territories are also being asked to co-fund the NDDA. The Department of Communities Tasmania is currently seeking approval across government to support Tasmania's participation in the NDDA. Investment in the NDDA will allow governments across Australia to:

- overcome existing problems of fragmented and poor-quality data;
- enable a better understanding of how people with disability are supported through services, payments and programs and the outcomes achieved;
- provide, for the first time, a person-centred view of the pathways of people with disability through service systems;
- provide insights to facilitate more 'data informed' policy and investment decisions by providing access to a common data set of State and Commonwealth data;
- inform Australian research efforts through timely and quality data; and
- provide people with disability with better information to access services.

Informed investment in mainstream services will deliver better outcomes for people with disability in Tasmania and ensure that there is not duplication of services. Investing first in the NDDA will facilitate informed policy and investment decisions of government.

In addition to the potential of the NDDA, Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 has been endorsed by all governments and guides the focus and investment of governments in services to deliver better outcomes for people with disability across mainstream services. Targeted Action Plans (TAPs) direct that focus and investment.

11. The Tasmanian Government should identify people living with a disability that are not currently accessing services to ensure continuity of care.

RESPONSE: *SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE*

People with disability represent an estimated 26.8 per cent of the Tasmanian population according to the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) 2018 data released by the ABS in 2020. The 2018 SDAC was designed to provide reliable estimates at the national level and at the state level for each of the funding states (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia).

SDAC estimated 140 100 people in Tasmania have a disability. ABS Data Table 4.1 All persons, living in households, disability status, by age, sex and geographic location—2018, estimates there are 74 700 people aged 0-64 years and 60 000 aged over 65 years with reported disability.

An estimated 23 800 people from birth to 64 years of age reported a profound or severe core activity limitation, that is a limitation in communication, mobility and/or self-care activities.

The ABS 2021 Census data identifies that, in Tasmania, 38 023 people identified a need for assistance with core activities, that is needs assistance in one or more of the three core activity areas of self-care, mobility and communication because of a long-term health condition (lasting six months or more), a disability (lasting six months or more) or old age.

At 30 June 2022, there were 12 104 people with disability who had become participants of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and an additional 191 children active in the NDIS Early Childhood Approach (ECA).

NDIS is just one element of the service system available to all Tasmanians. The NDIS operates alongside other service systems in accordance with the “Principles to Determine the Responsibilities of the NDIS and other Service Systems - Applied Principles and Tables of Support (APTOS)” agreed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2013 and updated in 2015.

In the context of disability services, continuity of care would indicate a level of care already provided that was no longer available due to changes in the service system or eligibility.

In preparation for transition to ‘full scheme’ NDIS from 1 July 2019 the Tasmanian Government identified every person receiving specialist disability services who would require ongoing care and support and who may not meet the eligibility criteria to become a participant in the NDIS. This was achieved in collaboration with people with disability, service providers and the NDIA.

Continuity of care was assured for those people with disability from the Tasmanian Government through Communities Tasmania, which has a budget allocation of \$1.5 million per annum to assure continuity of care for people with disability who may need specialist services that are not funded by the NDIS or other service systems.

In addition to continuity of care arrangements, the broader system of supports - including NDIS Local Area Coordination, Early Childhood Approach and Information Linkages and Capacity Building, the Commonwealth Disability Gateway and the Tasmanian Government continued supports such as Home and Community Care (HACC), Early Learning Centres and Children’s Therapy Services - provide interventions, supports, information and linkages to services for people with disability who did not meet the eligibility for a funded NDIS plan.

People with disability who are not currently accessing services may seek to access services through the range of supports available through the Tasmanian Government.

The Tasmanian Government continues to fund individual disability advocacy services to represent the views and needs of people with disability.

12. The Tasmanian Government lobby the Commonwealth Government to ensure people aged over 65 living with a disability are eligible for appropriate care.

RESPONSE: *SUPPORT*

The Australian Government holds primary responsibility for aged care policy, funding, management and service delivery. The Tasmanian Government has a strong interest in the planning and provision of aged care services and how they impact on the broader health system.

The Tasmanian Government has supported the work of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (Royal Commission), including through several submissions, and recognises it represents an important opportunity to consider how a better system of care for older Australians, including those living with a disability can be implemented.

The Royal Commission’s Final Report was tabled in the Australian Parliament on 1 March 2021 and includes 148 wide-ranging recommendations. The Australian Government has committed to

work with states and territories to implement recommendations which have implications for state and territory service systems, primarily the interface between health and aged care. The recommendations related to governance and workforce are also of particular interest because of the links to the broader care sector including NDIS and community services.

The Tasmanian Government is working closely with the Australian Government and other states and territories to ensure aged care reforms arising from the Royal Commission's recommendations integrate across hospitals, primary health and community sectors for the benefit of older Tasmanians, including those living with disability.

The Tasmanian Government also participates in Disability Reform Ministers meetings which provide a forum for the Commonwealth and states and territories to drive national reform in disability policy and implementations, including through the Australian Disability Strategy and the NDIS. This could include issues relating to aged care as they impact on the broader health and disability service systems.

TERM OF REFERENCE 3: FUNDING FOR ORGANISATIONS THAT SERVICE THOSE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THE NDIS

13. The Tasmanian Government urgently reinstate core funding for organisations that deliver services outside of the NDIS framework that support people living with a disability.

RESPONSE: NOT SUPPORTED

Organisations that deliver services outside of the NDIS framework are largely supported through the NDIS Information Linkages and Capacity (ILC) program, which is overseen by the Department of Social Services.

ILC provides funding to organisations to deliver projects in the community that benefit all Australians with disability, their carers and families.

These projects aim to create connections between people with disability and the communities they live in. Projects aim to build the knowledge, skills and confidence of people with disability, and improve their access to community and mainstream services.

ILC provides local area coordination, information, individual and mainstream capacity building and referrals that connect people with disability, their families and carers with broader systems of support. The ILC service system, along with NDIS Local Area Coordination are important elements of the design of the overall service system for people with disability and ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of the NDIS.

Up until 30 June 2019, funding for ILC-type services was provided by Communities Tasmania. At 30 June 2019, 18 ILC-type providers were block-funded between \$1 594 to \$495 185 per annum, for a total of \$3 031 809 per annum.

ILC-type supports ranged from one-off phone calls to ongoing support to link to services and, as such, it was difficult to estimate how many Tasmanians were supported through this funding.

While Tasmanian ILC-type providers were encouraged to align with ILC as a potential source of future funding, they were also encouraged to explore other revenue streams.

From 2020 to date, around \$339 million in ILC funding has been distributed to 496 grant recipients Australia wide.

An investment of around \$16 million in ILC activity has been made in Tasmania. This is a significant investment in delivery of services for people with disability, outside of the NDIS system of funded supports, and significantly more than could have been provided by the Tasmanian Government alone.

The Commonwealth Department of Social Services (DSS) is leading a review of the ILC program and the development of a new Investment Strategy, in close consultation with states, territories, the NDIA and people with disability. Swinburne University of Technology (Swinburne) was engaged to undertake ILC research activity and have recently published papers available here - [Summary - Informing Investment Design: Information Linkages and Capacity Building \(ILC\) Research Activity | Department of Social Services, Australian Government \(dss.gov.au\)](#).

Swinburne has made a number of observations from its research, which has included analysis of ILC grantee data, survey and interview.

The research considered:

- what proportion of investment should be allocated to ILC streams,
- whether geography should guide investment, and
- whether a cohort focus or differentiated approach might be more useful.

Swinburne proposes a range of solutions to funding design for consideration including:

- A targeted commissioned approach, driven by strategy and giving consideration to a procurement approach and stewardship;
- Stronger focus on the demand/areas of need;
- Ability to scale up 'what works';
- Support to connect collaborators and shape project design;
- Incentives for peer led activity and employment for people with disability; and
- Longer term funding to tackle complex issues, build trust and deliver change.

The Tasmanian Government agrees with finding 42 of the Report, that the current model of ILC funding is not a suitable source of funding for the sustainability of numerous small organisations that support the disability sector. However, reinstating the previous model of core funding provided by the Tasmanian Government risks duplication of funding and a confusing service delivery model for people with disability.

The Tasmanian Government has committed significant investment to realise the NDIS system of supports for people with disability, the establishment of which was well informed by the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Disability Care and Support published in 2011.

The Tasmanian Government is committed to ensuring this investment delivers outcomes for all Tasmanians with disability and does not seek to commit further investment to duplicate a system of supports already funded. The Tasmanian Government will continue to work with the Commonwealth and other states and territories on a model for ILC that will support the sustainability of organisations that support the disability sector in Tasmania.

14. It is essential the Tasmanian Government further address the consequences of the lack of timely early intervention which impacts child development.

RESPONSE: *SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE*

Early intervention for childhood development is a critical element of the NDIS. The NDIS early childhood approach, Early Connections, is a nationally consistent approach for children with developmental delay or disability and is delivered by NDIA Partners in the Community supported by national guidelines of Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention.

At 30 June 2022, 191 children were accessing Early Connections and five children were waiting for Early Connections in the quarter (NDIS Quarterly Performance Dashboard 30 June 2022). In the previous quarter to 31 March 2022, 159 children accessed Early Connections and eight were waiting for Early Connections.

Thirteen per cent of all active participants in Tasmania are aged birth to six years (as at 30 June 2022).

The Tasmanian Government continues to fund St Giles to deliver a Children's Therapy Service for children not eligible for NDIS with health-related therapy needs and continues to provide a free Autism Diagnostic Service for children to 18 years. In the 2021-22 budget Communities Tasmania committed \$1 572 340 to deliver the Autism Diagnostic Service and \$3 501 402 to fund St Giles Children's Therapy Service. Both services report difficulty recruiting and retaining appropriately skilled Allied Health Professionals. Workforce issues continue to impact waiting times for services. In Northwest Tasmania, the THS provides a publicly funded children's therapy service for eligible children.

Additionally, DoH is implementing an overarching Paediatric Model of Care for publicly funded health services across Tasmania with consultation included from the NDIS and the Department of Education to assist families and staff in navigating timely access to the right service.

The Tasmanian Government recognises that high quality inclusive learning experiences for children in their early years has a positive impact on their education and whole of life outcomes. The Department of Education provides support for children birth to age 4 and their families, through access to a range of quality early learning opportunities including:

- Child and family Learning Centres (CFLCs).
- Launching into Learning (LiL).
- Kindergartens.
- Learning in Families Together (LIFT).
- Libraries Tasmania – Rock and Rhyme and Storytime programs.
- Working Together – supporting early learning in education and care settings.
- Early Childhood Intervention Services – supporting children and families to access early years programs and supports in their community.

TERM OF REFERENCE FOUR: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DISABILITY SUPPORT SECTOR, INCLUDING ALLIED HEALTH

15. The Tasmanian Government needs to ensure greater alignment of the education system with labour market demands, reducing barriers for people training or upskilling through a more simplified process.

RESPONSE: **SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE**

The Community Services Industry Plan 2021-2031 is a strategic approach to growing the skills and capacity of community services workers. It provides the overarching framework to guide strategic industry planning and development through three strategic priorities: Local Solutions for Tasmanians, Workforce Development and Training and Leading for Impact.

Tasmania has the largest proportion of community services industry workers in Australia, with 17 824 workers comprising a little over seven per cent of the total workforce for the state. It is one of the largest industries in Tasmania, employing more people than many higher-profile industries, including the building and construction, accommodation, agriculture, forestry and fishing industries. (Community Services Industry Plan 2021-2031 (communities.tas.gov.au))

The Department of Education (DoE), through the Years 9-12 Project, has developed a Vision for Vocational Learning and Vocational Education and Training (VET) to 2030. The Vision has a focus on creating customised, localised and personalised Vocational Learning and VET opportunities, supporting solutions that build on regional strengths and workforce needs.

The DoE works closely with industry and schools across the state to ensure that training opportunities for young Tasmanians are focused around workforce demand and will lead to meaningful employment pathways post-school. The DoE's Trade Training and Trade Skills Centres play an important role in this process – providing industry-standard training facilities customised to each region's key industries.

The DoE's Packages of Learning are an integrated approach to teaching subjects, including English, Maths, Science, History or Geography, Technologies and Work Studies. The Packages of Learning are taught with an industry focus. Health and Community Services is one of the five packages currently being delivered. To successfully foster partnerships between schools and local businesses, schools are selected where industry growth exists in their region.

The DoE has also recently established new Industry Advisory Groups (IAG) that are aligned to priority industries in Tasmania. The groups provide advice to the Department on all aspects of senior secondary education, including VET, vocational learning (including work-based learning, career education, apprenticeships) as well as senior secondary curriculum development. The Community Services and Health IAG has representation from National Disability Services (NDS), the State's peak body for disability service providers, as well as TasCOSS, as the State's peak body for community services.

In addition to the work of the Tasmanian Government, the Australian Government have invested in the Boosting the Local Care Workforce (BLCW) initiative as part of the NDIS National Workforce Plan. BLCW aims to develop the capacity of disability and aged care providers to operate effectively and expand their workforce through:

- reducing barriers that impact providers' ability to start and grow their service offering;
- improving the operation and efficiency of labour markets by better matching supply and demand; and
- providing local level knowledge on the disability and aged care service provider and workforce markets.

16. The Tasmanian Government should consider developing a specific disability workforce development strategy to support the disability sectors growth and skill development needs.

RESPONSE: *SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE*

The Tasmanian Government in collaboration with Tasmanian Council of Social Services (TasCOSS) have delivered the Community Services Industry Plan 2021-2031. This is a strategic approach to growing the skills and capacity of community services workers. It provides the overarching framework to guide strategic industry planning and development through three strategic priorities: Local Solutions for Tasmanians, Workforce Development and Training and Leading for Impact.

This support to the community services sector also recognises the ongoing road to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for targeted investment in the community service industry workforce to meet increased demand for services.

The Tasmanian Government has provided \$3.3 million over three years towards the strategic priority 'Workforce Development and Training' to assist meeting the community services industry projections of an additional 4 000 jobs by 2024. The funding is administered by the Department of State Growth. TasCOSS, government and industry are partnering to deliver this commitment.

Workforce is one of the priority areas of Disability Reform Ministers. The [NDIS National Workforce Plan 2021 - 2025](#) is a strategy to build a responsive and capable workforce that supports NDIS participants to meet their needs and achieve their goals. The Workforce Plan has 16 initiatives over three priority areas agreed by Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments.

1. Priority One: improve community understanding of the benefits of working in the care and support sector and strengthen entry pathways for suitable workers to enter the sector. There are five initiatives under this priority (the National Communications Campaign was previously a named initiative under this action).
2. Priority Two: train and support the NDIS workforce. There are four initiatives under this priority.
3. Priority Three: reduce red tape, facilitate new service models and innovation, and provide more market information about business opportunities in the care and support sector. There are seven initiatives under this priority.

The care and support sector is one of Australia's largest and fastest growing sectors, with around 3 750 unfilled vacancies now and an additional 83 000 NDIS workers expected to be required by 2024.

This growth is being driven by continued rapid expansion of the number of NDIS participants and an increasing number of older Australians and veterans within our community accessing care and support.

The 'Vision' of the plan is to build a responsive and capable workforce, working together to:

1. Support and retain existing workers: Enhance care and support sector jobs to retain suitable existing workers.
2. Grow the workforce: Attract new suitable workers to meet growth in demand for support workers, Allied Health Professionals, nurses and others.
3. Maintain quality of participant supports delivered by workers: Improve and maintain the quality of supports to meet the standards expected of participants and their families
4. Support sector efficiency and innovation: Improve regulatory alignment and enhance market information to enable more flexible use of the workforce and drive provider innovation.

There has been progress on all 16 initiatives with the following notable achievements:

- The 'A Life Changing Life' campaign - the fourth burst of advertising finalised on 9 April 2022.
- Campaign support kits, training and engagement for the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Vendors have been procured to:
 - Map career pathways in the NDIS workforce as well as develop guidance on topics, content, assessment criteria, delivery modality and options for industry recognition for short-courses or micro-credentials to offer more flexible and efficient means of skilling the workforce to improve the quality of supports and enhance career pathways.
 - establish and pilot professional networks led by sub-contracted organisations and produce a report on the learning from the pilot to produce model activity guides and next steps to consider as part of the workforce plan implementation.
 - develop and trial a digital platform that integrates existing ICT infrastructure to provide a verified record of worker information to facilitate industry recognition and portability of qualifications, skills, screening checks etc.

TERM OF REFERENCE FIVE: ANY OTHER MATTERS INCIDENTAL THERETO

17. The Tasmanian Government consult with the transport industry to address the lack of accessibility and availability of transport options throughout Tasmania.

RESPONSE: *SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE*

The Tasmanian Government is committed to ensuring that public transport and the regulated small passenger vehicle transport sector includes safe, efficient and accessible options available across the state.

In support of this outcome, all contracted general access public transport operators are obliged to progressively update fleet in accordance with the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (DSAPT). Progress to date has been successful, for example, Metro Tasmania, the largest provider, now offers all of its public transport services using accessible vehicles. From anecdotal reports, the increased availability of accessible vehicles in the fleet has seen the number of trips on the public transport network being undertaken by passengers who are reliant on wheelchairs and other mobility devices increase steadily since the requirement was first included in contracts in 2009.

To further support accessibility of the public transport network, the Tasmanian Government has committed \$10 million over four years to upgrade priority bus stops under the All Access All Weather election commitment. This funding will enable the Tasmanian Government to work collaboratively with councils to target upgrades of priority bus stops to DSAPT-compliant standard. Consultation on the prioritisation of bus stops will include engagement with operators about their understanding of their customers' usage. Additionally, councils will be encouraged to consult through their access committees to inform the prioritisation at a local level and advocacy groups will be consulted at a state-wide level.

Of benefit to all public transport passengers has been a steady expansion of the public transport network to increase service frequency and improve coverage. Expansion of services in more remote areas is challenging, but new services have been introduced based on a consistent needs analysis. In 2016 a new service was established to link Devonport and Burnie with a direct route and in 2017 a new service was established connecting Sheffield and Railton to Devonport. In 2019 the service from the West Coast to Burnie was increased to a daily return timetable from twice weekly.

Services have been improved significantly across the week following a major review of bus services. New timetables were introduced in the South in January 2019, in the North in January 2022 and in the North-West in January 2022. The new networks have provided service increases across a broader span of hours in many areas, for example Sunday services were introduced in the North-West for the first time and the Burnie to Devonport service now operates hourly for much of the day. Another benefit of the new networks is improved interconnections between services offering the opportunity to undertake onward travel to more destinations.

All these improvements were undertaken in a process of careful consultation with communities and industry. Monitoring of the network is a continuing activity involving industry engagement.

The Tasmanian Government established the Wheelchair Accessible Taxi (WAT) scheme in 2004 and has continued to support the scheme with licences available at no capital cost in unlimited number, trip subsidies payable to operators for carriage of wheelchair-reliant passengers and

passenger fare subsidies for members of the Transport Access Scheme (TAS). Fare subsidies are available under the TAS for all eligible members travelling in any taxi.

The availability of taxis generally - and WATs in particular - has been impacted in recent times due to a lack of driver availability. This has been in part triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic which saw many drivers leave the sector and has been compounded by international border closures and high employment. The impact on WAT services has been felt particularly in Launceston.

The Tasmanian Government engaged with the taxi industry and developed a grant scheme to cover the cost of onboarding new drivers to help address the shortage. The first round of the scheme has now concluded. Nine new drivers were onboarded, all in Launceston including four WAT drivers. Applications for the second round closed recently and applicants will shortly be provided with advice of the outcome.

Notwithstanding the incentives provided by government, the availability of WATs is focussed on the major metropolitan centres of Hobart, Launceston and Devonport. It is a commercial decision for a taxi operator to seek a WAT licence and obtain a suitable vehicle. It is challenging to propose market interventions to further offset the cost of entry to this market without skewing the market for taxi services overall. However, the Tasmanian Government is seeking advice on what measures might best incentivise the delivery of WAT services.

18. The Tasmanian Government review the impact of the reduction to the taxi subsidy ensuring no client is disadvantaged.

RESPONSE: NOT SUPPORTED

The Transport Access Scheme (TAS) assists Tasmanians with a permanent and severe disability that restricts their mobility and impedes independent access to the community.

One component of the TAS is the Taxi Subsidy Scheme which provides taxi fare subsidies to eligible people, referred to as members of the scheme. Currently, the aggregate amount of subsidy used over a year is not capped for any taxi subsidy member. Rather, the amount of taxi subsidies accessed depends on the passenger's usage.

When the Tasmanian Government committed to the NDIS, it was agreed (consistent with other states and territories) that transport, including taxi subsidies, would be an in-scope NDIS support and as such is the responsibility of the NDIA. Accordingly, the Tasmanian Government agreed that taxi subsidies for Taxi Subsidy Scheme members who were NDIS participants would be part of the state's contribution to the cost of the NDIS. In line with this, NDIS participants would exit the Taxi Subsidy Scheme upon transition to the NDIS and transport supports would instead be delivered through individuals' NDIS plans.

This arrangement was due to commence in 2016, however issues in ensuring that NDIS participants were receiving the transport supports they needed resulted in a Tasmanian Government decision to continue to support NDIS participants to access discounted taxi travel on a temporary basis. The cost of this decision was funded by the Tasmanian Government.

Subsequent work with the NDIA, Australian Government and jurisdictions commenced to develop and implement a nationally consistent model for supporting NDIS participants with their transport needs. This work is continuing.

In April 2019, the Tasmanian Government announced that rather than bring taxi subsidies to a 'hard' end for NDIS participants, a gradual withdrawal would occur by introducing a capped Taxi Supplement. This was to be introduced once necessary supporting systems were in place.

In January 2020, the Australian Government agreed to reimburse jurisdictions for the costs of NDIS participant use of state-based taxi subsidies, conditional on NDIS participants having full access to taxi subsidies. The Tasmanian Government consequently deferred introduction of the capped Taxi Supplement and NDIS participants who receive taxi subsidies were advised they would be notified before a cap was introduced. The capped amount is set to commence at \$1 000 for the first year and reduce to \$350 for each of the following two years. The cap was set following careful analysis of usage of taxi subsidies to ensure no disadvantage should participants experience any difficulty using their NDIS transport supports.

At the March 2022 DRMM, noting the impact on programs administered by state and territory governments, such as taxi subsidy schemes, Ministers agreed in-principle to an extension of current arrangements while longer-term reforms are developed. Further communication with the Australian Government is anticipated on the duration of an extension.





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