

**THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS  
MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON  
THURSDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2005.**

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**INQUIRY INTO THE COMMUNITY SUPPORT LEVY**

**Ms HELEN HORTLE**, ACTING COORDINATOR, TASMANIAN CENTRE FOR GLOBAL LEARNING WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Mr Fletcher) - Welcome to the committee. You have obviously read the terms of reference. We are a joint House committee and we want to inquire into and report upon the Community Service Levy and its processes. Perhaps I could open up by asking you if you could explain to the committee the details of your organisation - a narrow explanation of what you are about and whether or not you have received any grants from the Community Support Levy program in the past.

**Ms HORTLE** - The organisation that I represent is the Tasmanian Centre for Global Learning - previously the TASDEC Global Learning Centre. We have been operating in Tasmania for about 18 years. Up until about two years ago we were funded by the Commonwealth, by AusAID, to deliver professional development to teachers in Tasmania. That contract was unexplicably terminated and since then we have operated without funding, which means we are running an organisation with no funding except a small amount that we receive from other non-profit organisations such as Anglicare, Caritas, UNAA and a few others. That just keeps the office running.

Our organisation recently changed its name and had a restructure and we are now called Tasmanian Centre for Global Learning. We specialise in human rights and social justice education, so we are positioning ourselves to act between the education sector and the community sector, to raise awareness of those issues amongst students and teachers. We have received funding from the Community Support Levy. We received a grant of \$27 000 in, I think 2001, to do Active Citizenship Skills training - which is a very successful project. We ran two pilot courses. Unfortunately we haven't been able to continue with that program because we haven't been able to get follow-on funding. It is a very difficult one to make financially sustainable.

We recently applied to the Community Support Levy for a very exciting project that we have up and running, even though we have no funding. The project is 'Are You Making a Difference?' It is a Victorian developed project that runs in schools. It encourages schools to get involved with the local community in making a difference in a social justice and environmental sense and getting into partnership with community organisations. We applied to the Community Support Levy for that recently and were not successful, so we have no funding for that project and it is going ahead on a volunteer basis. We have pilot schools ready to run it.

The reason we believe we may not receive funding is that it is all project funding that is available from the Community Support Levy; it is not core funding. It is the same with most of the philanthropic organisations. We apply to Myer, the Tasmanian Community Fund and everything available and a lot of them at the moment won't look at us because we don't have core funding. Well, that is my belief. One of the things that is very difficult is to find out why you didn't get the funding.

With this particular round of the Community Support Levy you get a letter saying, 'You were unsuccessful. If you want more information, phone'. When you phone it is unofficial information. They are as helpful as they can be but it's from committee notes and you get such things as, 'Well, compared to the other projects' - and you don't know what they were - 'you didn't look quite as financially sustainable. You didn't look as if you had consulted your target population sufficiently'. That application went in in September and we heard in February. So now we have to start all over again and try to get funding.

I guess it feels very much with the Community Support Levy as if you're working in the dark. You can't work with them and I think we feel that very much. We want to work with the Government, particularly with the Tasmania Together process. Our submission to this committee was about that. We think the Tasmania Together process is fantastically visionary but how do we work with it when we can't get funding? The two available sources of funding from the Government - the Tasmanian Community Fund and the Community Support Levy - don't work with that, nor do they publish guidelines. You really don't know what they are looking for when you put in a funding application. It is very much working in the dark.

**CHAIR** - Helen, there will be some questions coming from the statements you have made so far. We have read your submission and noted the points you have made strongly. You were supportive in some areas but you have identified some negative points as well. I think the committee is well across those but we would like to question you as we go on in relation to the observations you have made so far.

**Mr WILKINSON** - I just had one point where you said you can't work with them. What do you believe is the best way of being able to realise that you have exhausted all your avenues by way of making an application? It seems to me - and tell me if what I say is correct - that if you want to make an application you put in your application, you endeavour to abide by the guidelines, the guidelines are a bit rubbery so you don't exactly know what to put in the application and you don't get that information from the people you are applying to; if you were able to go to them and be nursed through the process a bit better, you'd feel a bit more comfortable with the result. Is that correct?

**Ms HORTLE** - Absolutely. I don't know who is on the committee and they don't know us as an organisation. None of them come to see us. When people come to see us it seems to make a difference. They see where we operate and so on and we can work together on a project that might suit their guidelines. That would make a big difference.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Do you think now that it's a process whereby you put in your application, somebody else puts in an application - a number do - your application may well have more merit than all the others but because you haven't been able to work with somebody to flesh out all the issues your application doesn't get up as opposed to one of

the others that might have a CEO who has previously been on the recommendation board or something like that?

**Ms HORTLE** - Yes. This time I believe there was \$1.8 million worth and only \$450 000 awarded - that is twice the usual. So our chances went from 50 per cent to 25 per cent. We wouldn't have bothered putting it in if they had said they only wanted it for unemployment schemes or schemes for the homeless or whatever. But if they had come, we might have been able to talk to them and they might have said, 'We really like what you're doing but maybe you can change it this way'. Even an opportunity to be interviewed, to answer some of the things they said about our application would be helpful. Maybe we are just not as good at writing funding application as some others.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Would you like to have a process whereby you are interviewed in the first place before you make an application, rather than going through the whole rigmarole of putting in your application, waiting for five months before you get an answer?

**Ms HORTLE** - Of course, yes.

**Mr WILKINSON** - And in that interview process you would be able to see whether what you are applying for is grantable? Is that the type of thing?

**Ms HORTLE** - Yes, and get some feedback on how we could improve the project or our organisation to better meet their needs - to build a relationship.

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - Can I just explore with you the issue of what you call 'core funding'? I gather where you refer to equity funding you mean funding for your core or being able to operate -

**Ms HORTLE** - Yes, to cover administrative costs. The general feeling seems to be that for some reason non-profits should be able to operate without overheads. I am not sure how? I am an accountant by training and to earn a living I teach accounting at TAFE. I have spent the last 18 months writing funding applications and trying to get together core funding.

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - So in the context of what this program can provide organisations, what would that deliver yours or what could that provide yours in terms of resourcing, administrative costs and core functions that you have to undertake to remain viable and effective?

**Ms HORTLE** - We need to show other philanthropic organisations and particularly businesses that we want to work with them and get business sponsorship but it is highly unlikely they will support us while we can't guarantee financial viability into the future, that we can just keep the office open. We very strongly believe that if we were able to get government support and core funding for maybe a three-year period then we would be able to add to that by getting this other funding, both from business sponsorship and from philanthropic. But until we can prove our viability we can't do that. The Community Support Levy and the Tasmanian Community Fund are two methods the State Government has to provide that core funding for overheads.

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - Would the sort of money that is appropriated from this program be sufficient to provide you that viability? I don't want you to expose your financial circumstances.

**Ms HORTLE** - Our financial circumstances are on the public record. We would need about \$40 000 a year and the project funding is \$30 000 a year at the moment, which some would say is not a huge amount anyway to run a project. We were previously running on \$90 000 a year but, as I say, we have some funding from other community organisations, which is interesting - other non-profit organisations.

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - Are they bequests or donations?

**Ms HORTLE** - They are core funding. They just provide us with core funding donations because they recognise our value as an organisation. They are trying to keep us going.

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - Do you mind saying who they are or giving us some examples of the organisations?

**Ms HORTLE** - Yes. The organisations are Caritas Australia which is the Catholic overseas aid organisation, Anglicare Tasmania, Australian Volunteers International and the United Nations Association of Australia. World Vision and Community Aid Abroad have just joined our management committee and we are negotiating with them also but we are talking here about amounts of \$2 500 to \$3 000 each per year.

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - In specific day-to-day terms what would this additional funding allow you to do?

**Ms HORTLE** - It would allow us to have a part-time paid coordinator who could keep the office running. We run a resource centre and library and apply for all the other funding to add value and run the projects. We would then employ project officers to run specific projects as we get the project money in.

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - You have a need to effectively employ somebody on a fairly significant basis to actually pursue grants and funding sources as a job in itself, I gather. Is that what you are saying?

**Ms HORTLE** - It always was up until we lost funding. At the moment it is being done on a voluntary basis but obviously that cannot continue indefinitely, not as a core coordinator. You can use volunteers. You need someone to coordinate volunteers as well but volunteers tend to come and go, of course.

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - In terms of what you provide as a service, for want of a better word, what are your prospects of getting funding from this levy program for those services you provide?

**Ms HORTLE** - For the projects?

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - Yes.

**Ms HORTLE** - We just were one of the ones rejected for this project, the Are you MAD schools project.

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - And prior to that?

**Ms HORTLE** - We had received one for the Active Citizenship Skills project.

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - So you are in the ballpark in terms of what you are delivering, it is just that you have a greater need with your core function requirements?

**Ms HORTLE** - There are lots of other organisations where you can get project funding. We are about to apply to the Myer Foundation, the Commonwealth Department of Education. They have major project funding available but I do not think we are going to get them because we cannot guarantee them we will be able to keep the office open for another year or two.

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - So there is also a credibility issue then.

**Ms HORTLE** - Absolutely. What I am about to do for DEST has a financial liability section to be filled in.

**Mr BARTLETT** - Would you summarise that as saying that if you were able to access that sort of core baseline, \$30 000 to \$40 000 a year, funding you would actually be able to leverage that up significantly for the organisation by clipping in various projects bits of funding?

**Ms HORTLE** - Yes, we would.

**CHAIR** - On top of that, Helen, I suppose an extrapolation of your figures is that if there were 100 such organisations each wanting \$40 000 you have totally utilised the fund for core services for 100 organisations in Tasmania. Is there equity in that?

**Ms HORTLE** - That is a difficult question but, as I said, there are those other funds that provide project funding but there is no source of core funding. I think that is the crucial issue and the leverage that we can provide to that if we could get core funding, yes.

**CHAIR** - Is it your judgment that there would be a very substantial demand in numerical terms from similar organisations to your own for core funding or do you think that the Tasmanian Centre for Global Learning is unique and a one-off or one of a very small class or group?

**Ms HORTLE** - I do not think that we are unique in that sense, in needing core funding. At the moment I know that others have lost Commonwealth core funding. We would be happy to compete with those others - if you call it competing - in an open process for that core funding. We would be happy to sign a contract with key performance indicators, particularly, as I have said in my submission, linked to that Tasmania Together process where we show we are contributing to the social and economic development of the State.

**CHAIR** - I wonder if you could think of a practical example of it. I am very interested in this linkage between the Community Fund and Tasmania Together and your organisation

perhaps as representing similar organisations. I wonder if you could give the committee a practical example of how you might interface with the Community Fund and Tasmania Together to deliver very positive outcomes?

**Ms HORTLE** - Tasmania Together lists I think 13 goals and within that there are the benchmarks. Some relate, for instance, to getting young people more involved in the decision-making process. We would be more than happy to sign a partnership agreement, with key performance indicators, saying that we would help to get young people more involved in decision making in Tasmania. That is a measurable outcome and we would then look to be funded over a three-year period. Those outcomes would be measured: we would have run training sessions with so many Tasmanian school children or young people that got them involved in or learning about their community and how government works through a youth consultative committee and so on, working with them, and that would be measured at the end. That is how I see it working, so it could be measured.

**CHAIR** - Fine. Could I take you back to your earlier comment with regard the process itself and the lack of guidelines. I think you suggested there was a lack of a debriefing process so you were left wondering at the end of the day whether you were near or you failed because of certain reasons. I want to then link that to one of the aspects that we will consider in one instance, or one section, which is the quite high cost administration of the Community Support Levy. Do you have suggestions with regard the way the process might be better refined or simplified to reduce those overhead costs and provide better outcomes to the applicants?

**Ms HORTLE** - That is not something that we have specifically addressed in our submission. I guess we were looking at the broader context. I have not looked at the admin costs that are being charged. I believe there are some being charged against the Community Support Levy itself. I think I said in my submission that my contact with the staff has been fine. I have no complaint there; it is with that broader structural process. There is going to be an admin cost involved with any of those.

**CHAIR** - So as a matter of belief do you believe that the fund itself should pay all those admin costs or do you think they are a charge against some other section of government?

**Ms HORTLE** - There is a deed determining that, is there, or is that something that has changed?

**CHAIR** - Some agencies of government do not charge for administrative costs and others do. I am wondering what the expectation of user groups or the applicants would be?

**Ms HORTLE** - The expectation obviously would be that we get as much of that share as we can and that admin costs are kept to a minimum. I guess it depends on the intention with which it was set up. I believe that they did not previously come out of the fund but some of them are now.

**CHAIR** - Regarding your suggestion with regard debriefing of all the applicants and making guidelines and other matters to do with the process available in the stages, do you believe that would add to the administrative costs or decrease the administrative costs?

**Ms HORTLE** - I guess it would take more time for them to be building those sort of relationships, of course, but it would decrease ours hugely, so if you are talking total community costs and how much work community organisations are getting done, I have spent 18 months not doing much that I would call 'work' in the community. I have spent 18 months trying to get funding so that we can do work. That is not a productive use of volunteers and people working in community organisations.

**CHAIR** - Is your body an incorporated body?

**Ms HORTLE** - We are an incorporated association.

**CHAIR** - Do you report to government on an annual basis?

**Ms HORTLE** - No. We don't get government money so we don't get asked to. We would be happy to.

**CHAIR** - The act requires you to submit financial reports.

**Ms HORTLE** - Annual returns, yes of course we put our annual returns in.

**CHAIR** - Every year?

**Ms HORTLE** - Yes, we do.

**CHAIR** - Do you ever get a response from government acknowledging that?

**Ms HORTLE** - We get a receipt for our fee.

**CHAIR** - Okay. Do you believe there is any benefit in you sending that in? Does the organisation get any benefit from sending that in? It never gets an appraisal from government?

**Ms HORTLE** - No.

**Mr DEAN** - Most of my questions have been answered already but you are sort of saying there is a lack of transparency with the whole thing - I think feedback, assistance and direction. Having put your application into the Community Support Levy for the funding, what feedback do you get from them? Did you get any at all to say that you haven't quite covered that, you should cover something else or add to it? Is there any feedback?

**Ms HORTLE** - No. I didn't bring it, but I get a letter of about three lines saying, 'Thank you for your application, it was unsuccessful. Should you have any queries please phone this number'.

**Mr DEAN** - You made a comment that some people are not as good at writing, putting applications in as others and that was a point I made prior to this session commencing. So you don't have the ability to say to them, 'Are there points that we have failed to direct our attention to?'

**Ms HORTLE** - You phone and the project officer is quite good on giving feedback over the phone on that but it is not official so it is being reported secondhand.

**Mr DEAN** - So there is no position for you to come before them and give a personal presentation or a personal position on your application - you can't expand or you can't add to it?

**Ms HORTLE** - No, and you cannot answer any of those things that you were told after they have been decided were the reasons you were not successful.

**Mr DEAN** - I think what you are saying to us is that if that process were available it would be of assistance and it may well determine your success or otherwise.

**Ms HORTLE** - Yes, it would. It would determine whether or not we applied if it happened at the beginning and what we applied for. If we knew that they were focusing on a particular area and I suppose because of the area we work in because it is awareness raising in education, I think it often does not rank as highly as the more traditional charities working with the homeless and so on and that may be quite right but perhaps there needs to be those separate funds to deal with the different areas.

**Mr DEAN** - You have made comment on this previously but I just want to get it clear in my own mind, you are saying that in your view there is a lack of guidelines in relation to these applications to the direction that you should follow so you are saying that it is up in the air. When you get it you just try to address what the guidelines do identify, and you are saying there is a lack of them, so you are really not knowing where to go. Is that what you are saying?

**Ms HORTLE** - They are very broad. The guidelines are extremely broad. There may well be a focus the committee looks at when they meet but you do not know that from the guidelines that you get to fill in. Some of the other philanthropic organisations say, 'These are our general guidelines but this time, this round, we are focusing on youth health', so you think, 'We won't bother applying for this particular project' but that does not happen with the Community Support Levy, there are the general guidelines. Whether that happens in their committee process I don't know and that is not something you find out.

**Mr DEAN** - When you come to put your application in, is there the ability then for you to ring or to make personal contact to say, 'We are looking at putting in an application for funding, are there any suggestions that you can make to us as to what we ought to do because we feel we have a good case, we fit within those guidelines'? Is there that ability or do you simply go in cold, put the application in and that is it?

**Ms HORTLE** - You can and I did this time around and it was helpful to an extent but the project officer, it seems, doesn't have the authority to say, 'This is what we are focusing on'. So it has to be a very professional, 'Yes, you must put in your application. I can help you. You must fill in this section and this section is important'. That is as far as it goes. It is not, 'This is what they're looking at this time'. That person is not able to say, 'I don't think you should bother applying because I really don't think you have a chance'.

**Mr DEAN** - As I understand, in this instance they have agreed that you did fit within the guidelines and that they could have, had everything else been right, given you that funding. Do they say to you that perhaps you should resubmit your application at a later period and you may be successful?

**Ms HORTLE** - No.

**Mr DEAN** - Is it finished, gone? You can't do it again?

**Ms HORTLE** - We can apply again; we can keep applying.

**CHAIR** - You said that your letter saying 'Thanks but no thanks' arrived and provided a telephone number. Can we assume that if you used that telephone number you would be debriefed on your application?

**Ms HORTLE** - I did use the phone number and that is when I got the list of verbal reasons why we didn't, but they're very general. The project officer looks at the committee notes and says, 'Okay, one committee member thought you didn't look very financially viable' or 'The project didn't look financially viable'. This is after it's all finished. Or 'compared to the others, you maybe hadn't consulted your target population as much'. It is all about timing, too, when you put it in. We had to put this in in September and by the time we knew didn't get the funding we had been working on the project for three or four months and a lot of things had changed. You didn't get the opportunity to answer those queries. It is a relative ranking. They are just saying that of the \$1.8 million they had to have a means of not funding some. I did ask, 'Where did we come? Did we get in the short list?', but they can't tell you that, so I don't know whether we were at the bottom of the pile or the next one that would have got funding.

**Mr WILKINSON** - I suppose it is difficult to say, isn't it? If you knew you were very close to being funded you would say, 'I will put it in the following year' but there might be some more above you the following year therefore you don't get funded again. So it is difficult for the organisation as well. It seems to me that the major frustration - and I have been involved with it myself on a number of occasions - for organisations like yours is that the major work that you're doing is endeavouring to get funding rather than getting about the business of global learning. Is that correct?

**Ms HORTLE** - It is.

**Mr WILKINSON** - And that is the major frustration you have?

**Ms HORTLE** - As I said, I have spent 18 months doing this and I don't know how much longer I can continue, on a volunteer basis, keeping the centre open. It does get very disheartening.

**Mr WILKINSON** - What do you believe would be the best way that the organisation - you obviously think they have a very good system in place - could improve that system?

**Ms HORTLE** - The existing Community Support Levy?

**Mr WILKINSON** - Yes.

**Ms HORTLE** - Building relationships; working with the Government, with other branches of government and with the community organisations; being transparent and letting us know what they want.

**Mr DEAN** - You have said, I think, that the group operates in mainland States as well; is that right?

**Ms HORTLE** - Our organisation is only in Tasmania.

**CHAIR** - Helen, just by way of encapsulating what you have had to say, I would like to read you a statement that I think encapsulates what you are suggesting or your major concerns. I would like you to say by way of summary whether you approve or disapprove, or whether you would like to change it in some way. I am saying that your major consideration revolves around the provision of equity funding to non-profit organisation. Such funding would allow these organisations to sign up to long-term partnership agreements, such as the partnerships program being developed by the Tasmanian Together Progress Board, and your organisation sees a need for a more strategic framework with clearly stated priorities and these should be announced with each funding round. Does that pretty much draw together the core of your argument?

**Ms HORTLE** - Yes, it does.

**CHAIR** - Is there anything else you would like to say by way of concluding your brief?

**Ms HORTLE** - No. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. I look forward to seeing the results.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much for coming forward.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

**Ms MARGARET STEADMAN**, MANAGER, TASMANIAN ENVIRONMENT CENTRE, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Mr Fletcher) - Welcome along. I wonder if you would open our session by just giving a brief summary of the work of the Tasmanian Environment Centre, whether you have received grants from the Community Service Levy before and, if you have, how you have applied them and we will intervene with questions as they arise.

**Ms STEADMAN** - Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. If you have a written submission in front of you, I made a brief description of what the Tasmanian Environment Centre is about in that submission. We are a not-for-profit community organisation that has set itself the mission of supporting solutions for sustainable communities. We are interested particularly in the built environment, in urban and peri-urban environment and issues to do with human impacts on the environment but particularly IN working with ordinary householders, if you like, like you and me, in encouraging people to adopt sustainable lifestyle practices which is clearly the direction that we need to go in.

We are not a confrontational organisation. We are not a politically active organisation although we will lobby Government if we think there is policy change that needs to happen but we are a behavioural change organisation that works to support community and to provide information and encourage people to take action. We have been in existence for about 30 years and when I look at our records, the financial problems have been pretty well cyclical and ongoing but we have done some really significant things and I have brought some very simple examples of the sorts of things that we have done in recent times with this - publications like the *Derwent River Wildlife Guide* which is a really accessible pocket guide to the culture and environment of the Derwent River. Every year for the last six years we have run Tasmania's Environmental Home Expo in the City Hall which is intended not to be encouraging people to move into the bush and build their country paradise necessarily but to actually change the suburbs and ordinary ways of life, so it is a very practical, down-to-earth thing.

We have also been involved from its outset in the Mountain Festival which is an absolutely community-based arts and environment festival that encourages and builds on people's sense of place and builds a sense of connection to the environment and to the people's sense of wellbeing and commitment to caring for a sense of place. It has been a really important association for us with the Mountain Festival. We have been the address, we have helped manage the Mountain Festival and I sit on the committee. We run a community garden, which is a tiny quarter acre which is densely packed with organic garden allotments in Lenah Valley and is accessed by individuals who don't have their own gardens and by disability and school groups that want to grow their own vegetables organically. That has huge possibilities for expansion.

We have been involved in the Cool Communities Program, which is a nationally-funded Greenhouse Office program. Unfortunately they thought it was a fantastically successful program but they haven't continue to fund it in the current cycle. We have worked with communities and householders in encouraging them to reduce their personal car use to reduce the amount of energy they are using in their households in ways that are not

punishing and sacrificial but are really integral to how they run their house. We have worked with university students, community groups and local government doing that.

**CHAIR** - Have you had any Community Support Levy funds?

**Ms STEADMAN** - No, we haven't applied for the Community Support Levy because it's guidelines - and this is where my submission mentions that the guidelines are actually quite narrowly focused. The major part of my submission is to say - and I am very glad to have the opportunity to say it face to face - that community organisations like ours make a substantial contribution to the wellbeing and sustainable future of the community but it is not really easy to make it fit within the guidelines of the existing Community Support Levy. As the previous witness was saying, you can spend an awful lot of time making submissions and trying to make what you do fit the guidelines when it would be really wonderful if there was a community funding source that could support the day-to-day infrastructure of organisations like ours and that had wide community wellbeing focus rather than being narrowly targeted to physical health or those sorts of issues. That was the thrust of my submission.

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - In that context, could you expand on the matter you have raised in your submission about the difficulties you see with the defining of the word 'charitable', how it is applied and the constraints that places on an organisation such as yours to access this funding?

**Ms STEADMAN** - The organisation is a registered charity in terms of an environmental organisation so we have tax deductibility for donations and so on. In my understanding of 'charity', the guidelines focus on social welfare organisations in my understanding of charity that are delivering a social welfare service to people, whereas we are not. We are delivering information and resources that enable them to make changes and respond to questions about sustainable living. It is not providing a social welfare service to people in the way, for example, that Anglicare or Caritas and so on might be considered to be doing. Our sense was that we didn't meet the guidelines and possibly the guidelines are wider than we have understood, but certainly the way in which the guidelines are proposed currently doesn't encourage organisations like ours to apply for that funding. You find yourself having to look at what you want to do - chopping off bits, adding bits and changing the language so that you can play the game to get the money, whereas if you have something really substantially important to do that needs doing it would be wonderful to have a funding source that allowed you to say who you are and what you need to do and to have a funding body decide whether that was what they supported. We spend an enormous amount of time trying to make language fit the narrow funding guidelines.

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - If I could just be clear, you are saying that because you are not a charity organisation as such -

**Ms STEADMAN** - Yes, like Anglicare or Centrelink or Centrecare.

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - Yes and because as well you do not fall within the realm of what might be perceived to be a sport and recreational group or one that requires gambling remediation, you are a square peg in a round hole.

**Ms STEADMAN** - Yes, we fall outside the circle but I think that the sort of work that we do, and the community need to which we respond, is a very important community service that falls outside the granting guidelines.

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - Have you been able to pursue these issues with any government agency, or anyone who administers this program, to discuss your concerns up until now?

**Ms STEADMAN** - No, this has been a really good opportunity to say that we think it would be good if these guidelines could be widened and in particular if there could be more than one-year granting cycles. One of the major problems for organisations like ours is that the granting cycles tend to be a one-year cycle, or you get them for a particular project but you do not get any administrative moneys so you have this vacuum surrounding a project but nobody will give you money to pay the rent or the phone bill. So a three-year funding cycle at least would be really supportive and would allow much more work to be done by community organisations like ours because you are not constantly worrying about whether you can pay the rent next year. It is very problematic.

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - Could you explain or clarify what you mean when you say in your submission, in the last sentence of point 2, that its narrowness of scope means that it is underspent.

**Ms STEADMAN** - My understanding is that this fund is actually underspent; if it had a wider scope then more organisations would be able to apply. You would be able to give the money away several times over and do really -

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - But that is your view or your understanding?

**Ms STEADMAN** - My view - yes, my understanding.

**Mr BARTLETT** - Can I just drill down a bit into the comments you made about triennial or administration costs - and I asked this of the last witness as well. Do you believe that if you were able to access, from CSL or any other fund, administrative costs that gave you longevity of two to three years rather than just year to year - say, \$30 000 to \$40 000 as a baseline fund - you would be able to leverage that funding out more easily by accessing other project funding from Federal sources or from other philanthropic organisations?

**Ms STEADMAN** - Yes, absolutely.

**Mr BARTLETT** - I did not ask this of the last witness but I will ask it of you, would you have a gut feel for what sort of leveraging - would it be 4:1 or 6:1? What sort of outcome do you think you would get?

**Ms STEADMAN** - Perhaps if I can give a little bit of history before I directly respond to that. We have in the past been receiving Federal funding under a granting program called the Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations. When I first joined the Environment Centre eight years ago that was \$50 000 a year. We thought then that that was only just enough to keep us going. Over about three years it was reduced to \$36 000 a year, last year it was reduced to \$10 000 and this year we have not even been invited to submit. That funding program actually appears to be withering for particular organisations. It means that we have in the past managed on about \$40 000 a year so I

would think it is about 1:4 or 1:5. We can run on about \$40 000 a year with several part-time staff, paying for a CBD location. We run very economically but we can have four or five times that amount in terms of other grants and projects and so on - and possibly more.

**Mr BARTLETT** - So does the sustainability that comes with the knowledge that you have a three-year funding cycle give you a tick in the box effectively when you go to these other organisations for funding?

**Ms STEADMAN** - Yes. At the moment - I said I would tell the truth here - our organisation doesn't have that security. We got a short-term grant from the current State Government, for which we are really grateful. It has kept us going in the absence of this Federal grant. It is quite difficult going to other organisations and saying, 'These are the great ideas we have' - and we have many, lots of projects that we can work on and some that are practically in the pipeline, but it is very difficult when you're not even sure that you are going to exist after the end of June. It is difficult employing staff; you can't offer staff anything more than a short-term contract. It is hugely problematical working effectively. Energies go into just keeping the doors open that could go into doing really useful work.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Following on from David's question, if you knew that for three years you were going to get \$40 000 per year you would be happy obviously?

**Ms STEADMAN** - Yes.

**Mr WILKINSON** - How much do you think you could extend that, knowing of your certainty and ability to oversee the projects that you would be liking to do?

**Ms STEADMAN** - I think we could increase that by a factor of four or five in terms of additional memberships - about \$200 000 is what normally is our total budget; a bit over some years. We have done that on about \$36 000 to \$40 000 as the core funding that we could direct to administrative costs and paying the rent and those sorts of issues and in partly funding my position and an administrative position. The rest of my salary I earn by the projects we get involved in and all of those sorts of things.

**CHAIR** - Margaret, to challenge you somewhat and to test your evidence, the Tasmanian Environment Centre has a community of interest being the Derwent River, the city and the mountain beyond in general terms. Where you have a particular interest in Lenah Valley, the city, the mountain or the river, wouldn't you recognise that in every community of Tasmania there may well be community groups of a similar nature and they would all be entitled to a level of core funding to fund them -

**Ms STEADMAN** - Certainly.

**CHAIR** - and to meet that need would be far beyond the capacity of the CSL?

**Ms STEADMAN** - Yes. We are called the Tasmanian Environment Centre and our scope is not just greater Hobart. We provide a service to the whole of Tasmania. We respond to questions, inquiries and support groups and provide information. The *Derwent River Guide* is one of our publications but we have also produced a community Coastcare guide that is used by every community Coastcare group around Tasmania. We have

supplied a wide range of information and support material to Tasmania as a whole. The reality is that in terms of some of our projects their geographical location has been Hobart - and I use the Mountain Festival, for example, as an example because that is a really good one to show how the sort of work we are doing actually does promote the general health and wellbeing of the community, but it is Tasmania wide.

One of the projects that we are doing this year is under the Affordable Housing Program of the State Government. We will be running Train the Trainer programs in the north of Tasmania as well as in Hobart to train community groups like Anglicare in helping low income households to run their houses in an energy-efficient way, saving money on their power bills but also saving on electricity use as well. Also the core communities program ran in Launceston and we provided information statewide. So we are a statewide organisation in that sense; it is not just a greater Hobart organisation.

**CHAIR** - Do you recognise that there might be other groups similar to your own operating around the State of Tasmania?

**Ms STEADMAN** - Indeed, absolutely and the cake only cuts into so many slices but they would have every right to submit as well, obviously.

**Mr WILL HODGMAN** - But they probably wouldn't get it on your experience of the definitions that are applied and if they were a similar group to yours they probably would also fall outside the boundaries of the scheme as it currently applies.

**Ms STEADMAN** - Currently they would, yes.

**Mr DEAN** - I understand that you have never applied because you say that you don't meet those guidelines but I guess it is possible to interpret those guidelines to fit within your -

**Ms STEADMAN** - Well, yes. If we were confident that the guidelines were really broadly interpreted then conceivably we could, but I guess you need to understand how much time goes into writing funding submissions - it often takes weeks to prepare a funding submission. I have just finished doing an Enviro Fund submission and it took weeks. If you think that you have very little chance of getting the money then you would put your energies into where you think what you are doing clearly fits the guidelines so if this is going to stay in the same form I think there is scope to actually extend the guidelines so that it is clearer that organisations like ours might apply.

**Mr DEAN** - Is it your perception then that you do not have the ability to, say, go to the Community Support Levy and ask the organisation what you could or should do or whether you would fit or not? Do you believe that you have the ability to do that or not?

**Ms STEADMAN** - Yes. My recollection is that I have done that in the past and clarified what the guidelines actually mean. With the projects that we are running, we would have to mangle the language to actually make them fit.

**CHAIR** - Margaret, you state in your evidence that the CSL is capable of restructure. Just what do you mean by that?

**Ms STEADMAN** - Well, I guess you would not be meeting at all if there were not potential for restructuring it and my understanding is that it is project-related funding and one of my main arguments is that it would be really useful to have infrastructure funding for organisations and that would require some reorganisation of how it works.

**CHAIR** - By infrastructure funding you mean funding for administration - for core administration work, for the employment of people?

**Ms STEADMAN** - Yes, rather than just project funding. That is important obviously but on its own it is not sufficient unless it is actually factored into it that a proportion of the funding can be allocated to administrative costs. But frequently in funding programs it actually will specifically say 'ineligible - administration, rent, capital costs' those sorts of things.

**CHAIR** - Yes, and your recommendations are based on the presumption that there is more money there than they can spend at the moment?

**Ms STEADMAN** - That is my understanding, that the funds have not been fully spent.

**CHAIR** - Just by way of summary, the strength of your argument has been that the TEC and other organisations like this are badly in need of core administrative funding, and a way should be open for that to happen. You believe that there should be a commitment to triennial funding to allow longer term planning rather than jumping from year to year -

**Ms STEADMAN** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - and that that sort of triennial funding would build further social capital because you would leverage off that core funding to access further programs. I think you said, by way of answer to Mr Wilkinson and Mr Bartlett, that perhaps four or five times on average can be gained, in your opinion.

**Ms STEADMAN** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - You believe there should be a refocus to identify and provide support to community networks. There is a limited sum of money and immediately the process becomes more involved at a community level there is a significant increase in the cost, I would presume, which will be a charge against the fund and will reduce the size of the fund. Do you have a process by which you believe community needs could be better identified - the Tasmania Together process? - or is there some other process where the people who make the decisions could be aware of the community network needs? Do you feel isolated in that area?

**Ms STEADMAN** - I think my comments related to how valuable organisations like ours are in terms of community networking. That is a valuable component of the work that we are doing. No, I don't think we feel isolated but we feel unsupported, if you can understand the difference. We have a lot of networks that we are building with local government, State government, community groups and so on, but it is like the other project work we do and we are really struggling. The networking part of what we do is really an important element in community building and that is a major part of what we do. I don't have any major suggestions as to how I think that might be improved, but it is

important that it be supported. Tasmania Together has been a very useful process, I think, because it has made visible a lot of people's shared understandings of the Tasmanian community. We have participated in consultations and continue to do that because I think it has been a quite useful process. I think the community issues that came out of that process illustrate that we are working on the issues that people really care about and that build community.

**CHAIR** - Is there anything you wish to say by way of conclusion, Margaret?

**Ms STEADMAN** - No. Thank you very much for allowing me to make a face-to-face presentation.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**