

**MISSION
AUSTRALIA**

**Pre-Budget
submission
Tasmania 2022-23**



Pre-Budget Submission to Treasury December 2021

About us

Mission Australia is a national Christian charity motivated by a shared vision of an Australia where everyone has a safe home and can thrive. Since 1859, we have been standing alongside people in need across Australia, offering real hope that has lasting impact.

In the 2020-21 financial year, we supported over 150,000 individuals through 474 programs and services across Australia. This included over 21,000 individuals in Tasmania supported through 29 services including community services (children and families), early learning, employment solutions, housing and disability services (Local Area Coordination and Early Childhood Early Intervention).¹

In 2009, Mission Australia established Mission Australia Housing (MAH), a Tier 1 Community Housing Provider. In 2013, we took over the management of a portfolio of 500 social homes for Housing Tasmania in Clarendon Vale and Rokeby and this year a further 680 social housing homes were added to the portfolio in Warrane, Mornington, Risdon Vale, Chigwell, Midway Point, Sorell, Orford, Triabunna, Swansea and Bicheno.

We know that great communities thrive where there are connections, opportunities and engagement across the economic spectrum. We know that individual service responses are not sufficient to address the challenges of deep and persistent disadvantage. That is why we use a place-based model which manages tenancies; co-ordinates support services; targets intergenerational disadvantage through education and employment and supports people with disability to access mainstream services within their local community as well as specialist support through NDIS packages when needed. We use a research and evidence-based approach to our work and services, so we can measure our impact and demonstrate program outcomes.

Mission Australia's pre-budget submission focuses on the need for sufficient investment in the mental health system to ensure coverage for everyone's level of need in the community, addressing housing affordability for those most vulnerable, and the need for adequate funding for evidence-based programs for vulnerable young people.

Community mental health

The Tasmanian Government has demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing mental health issues in the community. The adoption of a stepped care approach, known as the Tasmanian Mental Health Continuum of Care Model in the state's mental health plan – *Rethink 2020* – is a critical foundation for

¹ Mission Australia, 2021. Annual Report 2021, <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/annual-report-2021>

the service system. It puts Tasmania on a footing to respond to the range of mental health needs in the community.

However, on the ground Mission Australia is seeing service gaps that limit the effectiveness of this model. To ensure people receive timely and appropriate support and treatment at each stage of care, it is essential that sufficient and appropriate services are available.

Research has shown that a lack of adequate investment in mental health care can increase health, social and economic costs to individuals and the community.² Modelling commissioned by the Australia's National Mental Health Commission has found that investment in preventive and early mental health interventions in particular can result in considerable cost savings to government.³

Service gaps in NDIS coverage

The transition to the NDIS has seen the phasing out of previous Commonwealth community mental health programs (e.g. Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs), Partners in Recovery (PiR) and Support for Day to Day Living in the Community (D2DL)) and reduced funding of programs through Primary Health Tasmania.

It was expected that people who relied on these services would access the NDIS to continue to have their support needs met. However, it is estimated 89% of Tasmanians with a disability will not qualify for the NDIS.⁴ Tasmanians have the highest rate of psychosocial disability in Australia⁵ but, despite this, only 1% of NDIS participants currently identify psychosocial disability as their primary condition.⁶

Further complicating people's access to an appropriate service, the NDIS currently has a shortage of registered providers with staff to deliver Psychosocial Recovery Coaches in Tasmania. This is the only psychosocial service under the NDIS that can potentially provide similar support to the aforementioned Commonwealth services.

Loss of recovery supports

There is a significant gap in recovery-focused low-medium intensity mental health supports, particularly in regional areas. The closure of the Hope and Recovery Transitional Service (HARTS) has contributed to these challenges. Established as a service for existing PHaMs clients to support their transition/eligibility

² Mcdaid, D., & Park, A. L., 2011. Investing in mental health and well-being: findings from the DataPrev project. *Health promotion international*, 26 Suppl 1(Suppl 1), i108–i139. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/dar059>

³ National Mental Health Commission, 2019. The economic case for investing in mental health prevention Summary. <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/getmedia/ffbf9cc5-f815-4034-b931-dfc0c1ecb849/The-economic-case-for-investing-in-mental-health-prevention.PDF>

⁴ Stafford, L. 2021. The NDIS is not for everyone, nor the sole solution: The importance of a continuum of care for Tasmanians with mental health needs Information Paper 2021. <https://www.anglicare-tas.org.au/download/19061/>

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019. Disability, Ageing and Carers Australia, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release> Australian

⁶ Stafford, L. 2021. The NDIS is not for everyone, nor the sole solution: The importance of a continuum of care for Tasmanians with mental health needs Information Paper 2021. <https://www.anglicare-tas.org.au/download/19061/>

testing for NDIS services, or to support their transition to Continuity of Support programs, this support is no longer available despite low levels of transition to the NDIS.

While there are the Commonwealth-funded psychosocial support programs and the National Psychosocial Support Measure and Continuity of Support is available, funding is inadequate and people are on long waiting lists, have been knocked back and referred back into the NDIS and are simply not receiving appropriate levels of support.

Youth mental health service system under strain

The Mental Health Council of Tasmania has found the youth mental health system is experiencing unprecedented demand.⁷ The impact of COVID-19 on young people's mental health has heightened existing issues of service system capacity and the inability to deliver effective, personalised care to young people who present with more than mild but not sufficiently acute mental ill-health.⁸ This problem, known as the 'missing middle', is a gap in service provision for people whose mental ill-health is too complex for primary health care but not severe enough for specialist acute mental health services.

A proven model for freeing up service capacity is the 'Lead Support Coordination Services' model that was a piloted by Mission Australia, Australian Red Cross and Baptcare. It is a holistic and person-centred approach to case management and coordination and involves young people working with a Lead Coordinator to identify their needs who then matches them with available services. The pilot demonstrated the benefit of a coordinated and efficient approach to wrap around services and led to freeing up workforce capacity and achieving positive client outcomes.⁹ The model should be made a permanent part of the youth mental health system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of these service and resourcing gaps we urge the Tasmanian Government to:

- build on the last budget's investment into community mental health services to sufficiently support the Continuum of Care Model so it can meet demand for all support needs in the community (aligns with Rethink 2020 Reform Direction 4, New Focus Area 3: Providing services across the continuum of care)
- specifically address the 'missing middle' in the youth mental health service system, and mental health system more broadly, by commissioning the design and implementation of services that address this need (aligns with Rethink 2020 Reform Direction 7: Responding to the needs of specific population groups).

⁷ Mental Health Council of Tasmania, 2021. COVID-19: A mental health response for young Tasmanians Opportunities for Change. <https://mhct.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/REP-Youth-Mental-Health-Report-20210414.pdf>

⁸ Mental Health Council of Tasmania, 2021. COVID-19: A mental health response for young Tasmanians Opportunities for Change. <https://mhct.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/REP-Youth-Mental-Health-Report-20210414.pdf>

⁹ Mental Health Council of Tasmania, 2021. COVID-19 Impacts on the community mental health workforce, <https://mhct.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/MHCT-COVID-Workforce-Report-Nov21.pdf>.

Housing and rental affordability

The wellbeing of Tasmanian communities is dependent on safe, secure and affordable housing for everyone. Having a home is critical for people's mental and physical health, their education and employment prospects, and their ability to meaningfully participate in the community.

Social housing waitlist is increasing

There is a shortage of housing for people on low and moderate incomes in Tasmania, with 4,468 people waiting for social housing on the Housing Register as of September 2021.¹⁰

We welcome the government's significant investment in social housing that is expected to deliver 3,500 dwellings by 2027. In particular, we strongly support the additional investment in the Community Housing Growth Program and the proceeds from the CSHA Debt Waiver into a program to boost social housing. However, that investment will not be enough to meet the urgent need for social housing which has grown 22% in the last 12 months.¹¹

Private rental is becoming increasingly unaffordable

People in the private rental market are facing increasing financial pressure. Across Tasmania, weighted median rents increased 9.9% from the year to September 2021, with the North and North West regions experiencing growth above the state average.¹² Greater Hobart continues to be the least affordable capital city in Australia for local average income households.¹³ Despite household incomes in Tasmania being significantly lower than the national average, rents are only marginally lower than mainland averages.

The expiry of COVID-19 rental protections at the end of January 2021 saw an increased trend in evictions from the private rental market as well as substantial rent increases.¹⁴ This will be further exacerbated with reduced affordable housing in the market as National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) incentives wind up resulting in landlords increasing rents to market levels or selling their rental property.

Introducing enhanced measures to support vulnerable people in the private rental market is urgently needed. Measures similar to Rent Choice in NSW provide deeper medium-term financial assistance for a fixed period to low to moderate income households and when coupled with Independent Support Plans, enable them to secure and sustain successful tenancies in the private rental market.

¹⁰ Department of Communities Tasmania, 2021, Housing Dashboard September 2021, https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0024/193344/Housing-Dashboard-September-2021.PDF

¹¹ Department of Communities Tasmania, 2021, Housing Dashboard September 2021, https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0024/193344/Housing-Dashboard-September-2021.PDF

¹² Tenants' Union of Tasmania, 2021. Tasmanian Rents September Quarter 2021, <http://tutas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/RDA-Rent-Stats-Sep-2021.pdf>

¹³ SGS Economics and Planning, 2020. Rental Affordability Index December 2020 key findings (Issue December). https://www.sgsep.com.au/assets/main/Projects/SGS-Economics-and-Planning_RAI-2020-FINAL.pdf

¹⁴ Humphries, A, 2021, Tasmanians face sudden rent hikes as COVID-19 protections expire, ABC Online news article, 19 Feb 2021, accessible at [Tasmanians face sudden rent hikes as COVID-19 protections expire - ABC News](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-02-19/tasmanians-face-sudden-rent-hikes-as-covid-19-protections-expire/10107744)

Planning reform to boost social and affordable housing

Social and affordable housing should be included in the Tasmanian Planning Policies (TPPs) as a priority to ensure decision-makers and planners can plan appropriately for the housing needs of the whole community. The inclusion of social and affordable housing will contribute to offsetting the factors contributing to the housing crisis in Tasmania such as increased rental costs resulting from low vacancy rates and availability of suitable private rental accommodation.

Mission Australia, together with ShelterTAS and other community and housing sector organisations, advocated for this important change in our submission to the consultation process on the draft scope of the TPPs. We again urge the Government to adopt this change as one of the practical measures it can take to boost affordability for Tasmanians.

RECOMMENDATIONS

An adequate supply of social and affordable housing stock and maintaining an affordable private rental market is critical to ensuring everyone has a safe and secure home. We recommend the Tasmanian Government:

- align investment in social housing to meet the growing demand
- strengthen its approach to subsidising private rental for people on low incomes, and adopt a model similar to NSW's Rent Choice
- recognise social and affordable housing in the TPPs as an issue in its own right.

Vulnerable young people

Expand community services to meet need

Mission Australia works closely with vulnerable young people with complex needs, particularly through our Targeted Youth Support Service (TYSS) and YouthBeat programs. We have found there are insufficient services for this cohort across the state and further investment is required, especially in the North and North West of Tasmania.

As in the previous year, TYSS is already exceeding its targets for supporting children and young people experiencing homelessness. TYSS is a vital service for young people between 10 and 18 years of age, who are identified as having significant and/or multiple risk factors and whom without intensive support are likely to enter the child safety and/or youth justice systems. It is a holistic intervention service offering intensive case management and therapeutic interventions. A robust evaluation over five years found substantially improved outcomes for young people who engaged with the service, reducing future risk and cost to the community.¹⁵

Additionally, outreach supports are an important part of effective interventions for young people with complex needs, helping to meet them 'where they are'. Through YouthBeat, which is fully funded by

¹⁵ Ann MacRae, A., 2016. Evaluation report on the Targeted Youth Support Service 2010-2015, BapCare, http://www.bapcare.org.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/17700/Evaluation-report-on-the-Targeted-Youth-Support-Service-2010-2015-journal-format.pdf

Mission Australia, we offer a wide range of services and support to young people, including identifying and addressing anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse, referral and intervention for young people in crisis and assistance with accessing additional services and social support networks. We foster strong relationships with police, community groups and local support services. Currently, our service coverage is Derwent Valley, Clarendon Vale, Blackmans Bay, Dodges Ferry, Lauderdale, South Arm and many other areas, but there is an opportunity to provide a similar service in areas of the North and North West of Tasmania where there is a lack of outreach services with government funding.

Lack of youth diversionary programs

The closure of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre presents an opportunity to reshape the youth justice system and put a greater emphasis on the wellbeing and rehabilitation of young people at-risk of offending, or reoffending, through community evidence-based interventions.

We welcome the government's intention to implement a service delivery model focused on early intervention, diversion strategies and detention as a last resort measure, to coincide with two planned facilities to replace Ashley Youth Detention Centre.¹⁶ We strongly encourage diversionary initiatives be a priority policy focus. There is strong evidence to demonstrate that youth diversionary programs are effective in reducing recidivism and preventing long-term involvement with the criminal justice system.¹⁷ There are numerous successful diversionary programs in Australia that could be adapted to the Tasmanian youth justice system.^{18 19 20}

RECOMMENDATIONS

We urge the Tasmanian Government to:

- continue funding effective supports for vulnerable young people including TYSS to support young people with complex needs to transition to independence.
- fund outreach-based services (such as YouthBeat) to expand to regions outside of Hobart, primarily in the North West and North of the state where there is a lack of early intervention and support for this cohort.
- prioritise the reduction of incarceration of young people through implementing successful evidence-based youth diversionary programs.

¹⁶ Department of Communities Tasmania, n.d. About Youth Justice Services
https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/children/youth_justice

¹⁷ CIRCA, 2017. Youth on Track Social Outcomes Evaluation: Final Report,
<http://www.youthontrack.justice.nsw.gov.au/Documents/Youth%20on%20Track%20Social%20Outcomes%20Evaluation%20-%20Final%20Report%2019%20April%202017.pdf>

¹⁸ Department of Communities and Justice, 2021. Youth on Track performance and evaluation,
http://www.youthontrack.justice.nsw.gov.au/Pages/yot/about_us/yot-performance.aspx,

¹⁹ KPMG, 2010. Restorative justice group conferencing is effective,
https://www.vgls.vic.gov.au/client/en_AU/search/asset/1268063/0

²⁰ Thomas, S., Liddell, M. and Johns, D., 2016. Final Report Evaluation of the Youth Diversion Pilot Program (YDPP: Stage 3),
https://www.childrenscourt.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-11/YDPP%20Stage%203%20Final%20Report%20Dec%202016%20-%20Executive%20Summary_%28final%29.pdf

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