

Submission by the Tasmanian Government

*A new system for better employment and
social outcomes*

Interim Report of the Reference Group on Welfare Reform
to the Minister for Social Services

August 2014



Tasmania
Explore the possibilities

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I. Executive Summary

The Tasmanian Government welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the Australian Government's Interim Report, *A New System to Better Employment and Social Outcomes* (the Interim Report).

The outcomes of this important and complex undertaking will have significant implications for Tasmanians due to the high number of households reliant on the income support as their main source of income (32.7 per cent compared to 24.8 per cent nationally).

The Tasmanian Government supports in-principle a simpler and sustainable income support system and agrees that reforms to reduce income support system expenditure need to have a strong focus on providing support to individuals of working age to transition to earned income. The Tasmanian Government supports an approach that is aimed at helping vulnerable Tasmanians move out of disadvantage by tackling the barriers they face, and prevents them from falling back into poverty by encouraging resilience over reliance.

However, the challenges facing Tasmania are significant and compounded in regional areas where the rate of reliance on the Australian Government income support system is especially high. While the Tasmanian Government is working to restore confidence in local economies and open the State for business, this will take time and communities will need to be supported and have access to services in person centric ways that help individuals and families participate in the new economy.

In addition to the *Hand Up for Vulnerable Tasmanians* commitment, the Tasmanian Government is implementing a significant reform agenda to support families and 'job ready' individuals including:

- Human services reform towards a person-centred service support system for disadvantaged Tasmanians that is being designed in collaboration with community sector organisations.
- Addressing youth unemployment including a partnership with the Beacon Foundation which will allow the organisation to help 1 500 extra Tasmanians students to be job ready.
- Creating a job ready generation by lifting school retention through extending high schools to year 12 and employing up to 105 new teachers in rural and regional communities.

It will be critical that reforms to the income support system complement and not undermine the implementation of these initiatives. In this regard the Tasmanian Government would welcome a formal opportunity to consider, provide advice and input into the Australian Government's deliberations on the review's final recommendations.

Further to this, changes to the income support system will have ramifications for states and territories and the services for which they are ultimately responsible. Individuals and families reliant on Australian Government income for support use health, justice, welfare and other services at higher rates, and often at a higher cost due to case complexity, than the rest of the population. Once again, these impacts will be felt more acutely in Tasmania than other states and territories.

Ongoing, it will be critical to ensure that decisions made by one level of government are not impacting on another, both financially and in terms of service system impacts, and also to avoid pulling against state based attempts to address entrenched disadvantage.

While the Australian Government has committed to restoring the relationship between the levels of government through the development of the White Paper on Reform of the Federation, Tasmania encourages this review to explore options that address an enduring governance framework for capturing the broader impacts on state and territory governments in decision making on income support changes.

The remainder of this submission provides the Tasmanian Government's perspective on the specifics of the *A New System to Better Employment and Social Outcomes* Interim Report.

2. Simpler architecture and rates

Pillar one of the Interim Report discusses the need for a simpler and sustainable income support system, in particular the architecture, rates and rates adjustment over time, and independence.

The Tasmanian Government supports the principle of a simpler architecture for the income support system. A simplified system is important for income support recipients to understand the income amount, conditions and benefits for transitioning to earned income, while ensuring that disincentives are removed or reduced, such as minimising effective tax rates.

2.1. Impacts of targeting and streamlining

Tasmanian has a number of indicators that contribute to the socio-economic circumstances of its population. One of the most significant is the number of households in Tasmania reliant on the income support as their main source of income is 32.7 per cent, compared to 24.8 per cent nationally.¹

A reduction in income support payments to individuals and vulnerable households may result in an increased demand on services, resulting in a cost shift to Tasmanian Government services. Impacted services could include:

- Healthcare – an increased demand for healthcare and increased difficulty in accessing affordable healthcare amongst vulnerable households.

The Commonwealth Grants Commission recognised the significant impact of low socio-economic status on expected health costs. For example, it was estimated that in highly accessible areas, for persons aged 50-64, costs of low socio-economic status (SES) persons admitted to patient services were almost two and half times that of high SES persons, or \$1 229 per annum rather than \$496 per annum.²

- Food security – a small number of non-government organisations provide food security services in Tasmania and these services are in high demand.

Emergency food relief organisations provided around 1.8 million kilos of food to more than 200 community food programs per year. These services form part of the social safety net, which is jointly funded by the Australian and Tasmanian Governments.

- Emergency relief – both the Tasmanian and Australian Governments have contributed to emergency relief services in Tasmania in recent years to assist people in financial crisis. In 2011-12, nearly 29 000 Tasmanians accessed emergency relief.

- Housing and homelessness – increases in demand on public housing and homelessness services could occur from reduced household economic circumstances.

In Tasmania, funding received under the National Partnership (NP) on Homelessness has enabled services to operate five supported accommodation facilities for persons who are, or at risk of, homelessness. In 2012-13, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)'s records show that there were 5 585 homeless people in Tasmania who presented to Specialist Homeless Services.³ While the NP on Homelessness was extended into 2014-15,

¹ ABS, Household Income and Income Distribution, Australia, 2011-12, Cat. 6523.0.

² Commonwealth Grants Commission, 2010 Review Final Report Volume 2, Table 12-9 Sample matrix of national per capita costs for providing admitted patient services, non-Indigenous people, 2007-08.

³ The most common reasons for homelessness in Tasmania (2012-13) were financial difficulties (21 per cent), interpersonal relations – including domestic violence (26 per cent) and accommodation crisis (32 per cent).

future funding is uncertain.

Other Tasmanian Government funded community support services may experience an increase in demand such as:

- financial counselling providers, already under strain with waiting periods of several weeks in some areas;
- neighbourhood and community houses which offer financial counselling and other social services to vulnerable households; and
- the No Interest Loan Scheme, which provides small, short-term loans to qualifying Tasmanians to assist with cost of living essential such as car registration or medical equipment.

The Interim Report makes brief reference to welfare system reforms currently underway in countries such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand and the Netherlands. However, the Interim Report does not provide any evidence about how these reforms have influenced social and economic outcomes for the unemployed in these countries. The Interim Report also does not consider any broader social support systems that may be in place in these countries or analyse the differences in culture that could influence the capacity for international welfare policy to be appropriately transferred to the Australian context.

2.2. Rate structure, baselines and indexation

Determining the rate of the income support, alternative eligibility requirements, thresholds and assets tests are a principal concern to the Tasmanian Government. Any adjustment of these criteria needs to consider the effect on jurisdictions with a high proportion of the population engaged in the welfare system.

Research indicates that low income households face a disproportionate and cumulative impact on health and wellbeing as a result of socio-economic factors influencing the following:

- resources – the level of income (financial resources) and networks of support and information (non-financial resources) available to households;
- capacity - the amount of 'stretch' or surplus that financial and non-financial resources create for households; and
- expenditure - the budget items important to life in Australia that are purchased with that income.

Means testing processes need to consider the principle of equity and seek to limit loopholes so that those who really need support are able to access it. An underpinning consideration is to assist those from lower income families and those with additional difficulties, such as regional isolation, to meet the costs associated with education (including transport, study materials and student accommodation) and the costs associated with the transition to independent adulthood and the workforce.

Potential changes to the welfare system also need to consider the context of other proposed initiatives such as the introduction of a co-payment for bulk billing general practitioners.

The consumer price index (CPI) represents average price changes for average household expenditure. Research highlights that households in receipt of pensions and allowances as their main source of income were impacted by price changes, particularly for essentials, at a greater rate than what was represented through the CPI.

For this reason, it is reasonable that pensions and allowances are altered by the rate of change of cost of living indexes instead of the CPI.

Such an approach would more accurately reflect cost pressures on low income households. For example, the aged pension is indexed to whichever is higher between the CPI and the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index.

The following table indicates the percentage increase in cost of living indexes over six years for Tasmanian households and compares them to the average (All households, Hobart) and the national CPI.

Table 1 indicates that while the CPI has grown 18.7 per cent over the six years between 2003-04 and 2009-10, many low income households have had cost of living increases at rates above the CPI, with the highest 4.8 percentage points higher (single parents with dependants, renting and on government benefits).

When expenditure on essentials takes up a high proportion of the household budget, price increases can cause rationing or substitutions that may lower the quality of living.

Table 1: Household cost of living indexes by Tasmanian households, change over six years⁴

Household type	2003-04 to 2009-10
Consumer Price Index, Australia	18.7%
All households, Hobart (average)	19.9%
Aged and Veterans receiving pensions	20.6%
Unemployed and in education receiving allowances	20.8%
All households under the 50% poverty line	20.8%
All households under the 60% poverty line	21.1%
Renter-Private	21.5%
2nd income decile of equivalised disposable income	21.6%
Renter-Public	22.4%
Single parents with dependants, renting and on government benefits	23.5%

2.3. Independence

There are a number of situations where a young person may require income support in their own right, including when young people are:

- not able to access family support, including through homelessness or leaving their family early due to relationship breakdowns;
- living at home and have caring responsibilities;
- at-risk or have offended and need to self-provide while transitioning from out of home care or youth detention; and

⁴ Modelling using ABS Household Expenditure Survey, Australia: Summary of Results, 2003-04 and 2009-10, Cat. 6530.0 and ABS Consumer Price Index, Australia, 6401.0, 2003-04 and 2009-10.

- living with parents that do not fully provide for them.

In these circumstances, income support and independent living need to be considered with other support services to assist inclusion of young people in learning opportunities.

A commonly accepted definition across all jurisdictions of an 'independent student' would also assist policy alignment. If a consistent status were defined, it would ensure young people who are deemed by the education system as being independent were also accepted by the welfare system and receive income support in their own right. Implementing such a definition would have implications for record keeping, privacy and attendance requirements at a school system level, as well as for clearly indicating which students should be accessing independent income support.

3. Supporting people into employment

Pillars two and three of the Interim Report discusses the need to strengthen individual and family capability to equip people for employment, including ensuring employment is a focus of the welfare system, there are transitional programs into employment and 'mutual obligation'.

The Tasmanian Government is committed to tackling unemployment and driving state growth. Inheriting the highest unemployment rate in the country, the Tasmanian Government is particularly concerned about ensuring unemployed people have appropriate incentives to work.

There are many examples of employment transition programs conducted by organisations experienced in working with young people, especially disadvantaged young people. Successful programs include those that provide employability skills, individual career counselling, relevant work experience, support in applying for jobs and support in the early months of employment.

Mentoring programs can support students transitioning into work or training, and disadvantaged young jobseekers already in the labour market. Structured mentoring programs provide the opportunity for students to receive individual assistance and support in terms of planning their future. Where family functioning has been problematic, having a supportive mentor can increase personal growth and increased confidence.

The complexity of the income support system needs to be considered so that appropriate incentives are provided for transitioning to earned income, including through short-term or part-time employment. Inappropriately designed means testing and poor tapering of income support can create effective tax rates that may reduce incentives for people to take up employment.

People receiving income support may be reluctant to take up employment as they are unsure about the impact on the level of support and benefits they receive. In Tasmania, this could be an issue for potential workers concerned about the delay in receiving support and benefits following short periods of employment in seasonal work, such as agriculture and tourism.

People with permanent impairment and no capacity to work should be exempt from the need to train for, and seek, work. The Interim Report notes that the test for people with permanent impairment and no capacity to work will need to be much more sophisticated and robust than the past approaches.

In the disability employment context, there are people who work for Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE) who have capacity to work in mainstream employment. These people require support to make a gradual pathway into employment, and some may need to remain on transitional employment programs or with additional support for some time.

The current arrangements, whereby people must either be an ADE client or a prospective employee in the mainstream market (ie a client of a Disability Employment Service) do not allow for this kind of flexible and graduated support over time.

Supporting carers of people with disability is also important to increase workforce participation. However, formal support for those being cared for (for example respite or in-home care) can be difficult to access, insufficient to meet needs, inflexible and unreliable. These factors compound the problems carers have with obtaining employment.

For carers of people who are not eligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or other systems such as aged care, there is a risk that they will continue to face barriers to returning to work or maintaining employment due to the demands of their caring role. Part-time work options, graduated return to work arrangements and workplace flexibility, which recognises the demands on carers are critical factors in ensuring carers are supported to access and maintain employment.

Tasmania has a high proportion (over 10 per cent) of carers under the age of 25. Young carers in particular are vulnerable to missing vital education and training opportunities, which then reduces future work readiness. Recognition and support for young carers in the education system is one part of the equation. The income support system also needs flexible payment criteria to allow young carers to catch up on their education, training and work experience at the conclusion of their formal compulsory education.

The 'earn or learn' focus for young people can be enhanced through earlier intensive engagement and positive intervention, especially for those that have recently left school or have never been employed. Ideally this would link to the provision of allowances for young people who engage in employability and foundation programs during the first six months of unemployment. This may need to be combined with case management, support and access to work experience related to real job opportunities.

Mutual obligation requirements should consider the personal circumstances of individuals accessing benefits. These may include:

- the intermittent and episodic nature of some partial disabilities, including people with mental illness, which require flexibility and understanding in establishing mutual obligation requirements;
- the lack of support structures for young people at risk that may reduce their capacity to meet mutual obligation requirements, including a lack of family structure, stable housing, education and skills; and
- the particular needs of foster and kinship carers, including access to affordable childcare.

4. Supporting people with education

Pillar two of the Interim Report discusses the need to retain young people in education, increase literacy, numeracy and employment related training.

In regional areas, it is more challenging to retain students in education and training after year 11. The Tasmanian Government is supporting regional schools to encourage completion of year 12 through:

- improving retention rates so an extra 2 000 young Tasmanians complete their years 11 and 12 studies;

- keeping colleges open – and giving students a choice whether to continue their studies in their local high school or go to college;
- investing an extra \$45 million to extend high schools to years 11 and 12 education in rural and regional communities, including \$6 million for school upgrades;
- employing up to 105 new teachers to extend high schools to years 11 and 12 in rural and regional communities;
- investing \$8.4 million into providing up to 25 new literacy and numeracy specialists, concentrating on years 7 to 9;
- sending a strong message to young Tasmanians that their education does not finish in year 10; and
- a target that in six years, Tasmania will be at, or above, the national average in every single NAPLAN measurement, and meet national benchmarks in reading, writing, maths and science.

Early intervention for young people needs to consider engaging students who leave school early, or with low level literacy and numeracy skills, to encourage participation in literacy and numeracy, vocational programs and/or employability programs. It is important to note that parents and communities are strong influencers on literacy and numeracy outcomes achieved by children.

The Tasmanian Government has identified this as a critical issue and has an Adult Literacy Action Plan, known to the public as 26TEN. An important aspect of the action plan is mobilising the literate population to assist the less literate to improve their skills.

VET in Schools programs (VETiS) can provide job relevant training. However, participants need to have basic work readiness skills and adequate literacy and numeracy before being selected to participate. Employers also need to value VET and see VETiS as a valuable recruitment avenue.

Integration of literacy and numeracy training within vocationally relevant training can also improve the skills of young people. A program that is having success in Tasmania at the nexus between schools and work is Success Pathways, run by Group Training Australia – Tasmania. Under this program, young people who have been applying unsuccessfully for an apprenticeship or traineeship are given specific language, literacy or numeracy training that will support them to be successful at future interviews.

Priorities for funding vocational education and training need to consider occupations with high growth prospects or with proven employment outcomes. Skills Tasmania is undertaking industry validation of training projects that involve Registered Training Organisations working with industry to ensure that training meets their needs and is of high quality.

There are eight Trade Training Centres in rural and remote areas in Tasmania, with two further Trade Skills Centres to be opened in 2015. Each of these centres is closely associated with the local school, community and industry groups. They provide new and well-equipped infrastructure to enable students to become job ready.

The centres deliver education and training programs to, in order of priority, years 11 and 12, years 9 and 10, and adults. The education and training programs have a strong and practical approach to improving literacy and numeracy, and linking skills and qualifications to the requirements of local employers through building a pathway of learning and engagement for participants.

Ensuring that students are financially supported to continue in education to take advantage of this training, particularly in years 11 and 12 would assist in increasing and retaining student numbers in these programs. Programs such as these keep at-risk students engaged in education and provide them with real work skills, which they can use as a transition pathway to employment.

Higher quality and more relevant training is valuable to industry and will make people with these qualifications more employable. Using the Trade Training Centre model, public and private registered training organisations can use the infrastructure available to deliver national accredited training. With an assurance from local employers that the courses delivered at the centres match the skill needs and qualification requirements of the local economy, job seekers from a variety of backgrounds are better placed to secure employment. Industry involvement and partnership with the lead school in the management of the centres provides assurance that course delivery and employer demands are matched.

Pre-apprenticeship training in trade areas of growth can result in a high level of transition to an apprenticeship. Transition rates can be enhanced where industry is involved in the selection of students into the course and has a commitment to employing those who successfully complete the pre-apprenticeship.

Successful individual placement and support programs can be adapted to meet the needs of young and disadvantaged people, particularly those who have never been in the workforce or are marginally attached. An integrated approach to support for these people that builds their skills, knowledge, material and structural resources is important.

5. Role of government

Pillars three and four of the Interim Report discuss community capacity, red tape and the roles of government and business.

Governments must eliminate the impost of red tape on the business and community sectors. The Tasmanian Government will establish a Regulation Reduction Coordinator, with a mandate to deregulate the Tasmanian business environment, boost productivity, and reduce operating costs.

Red tape for the community sector is also being targeted. In 2014, the Tasmanian Government committed to significantly reduce red tape and compliance reporting for the community sector, while retaining the important checks and balances of accountability. This included:

- eliminating duplication for organisations that have external nationally accredited quality management systems in place;
- ensuring any new regulation imposed on the sector is relevant and necessary and does not duplicate existing compliance reporting; and
- investigating the simplification and standardisation of contracts, pre-qualifications for existing community sector providers and contract roll-overs, and the consolidation of multiple stream program funding.

The Tasmanian Government will be working with the Australian Government on reducing the day-to-day administrative burden on service providers.

Governments also aim to ensure services are delivered to meet people's needs. This includes overcoming barriers to service access and the importance of early intervention and prevention. Child and Family Centres operate across Tasmania to enable a collaborative approach to service delivery that is specific to the local community and the needs of the families within it.

Child and Family Centres enable families to engage with services in a non-threatening environment, to support improved family networks. They also offer educational and work-related programs to assist parents to improve their work readiness. Proactive work is also occurring with at-risk families through a focus on relationship building.

This has been facilitated by recent legislative changes that enable family focussed support such as family group conferencing and family meetings prior to statutory intervention.

Work is also occurring in Tasmania to develop a single shared entry point for government and community delivered services to increase support to vulnerable families with the community. The White Paper on Reform of the Federation presents an opportunity for the Australian Government and states and territories to clarify service responsibilities and more importantly, establish better ways of working together in areas of mutual interest to ensure complementary and coordinated effort.

5.1 Evaluation and evidence based policy

Pillar two seeks feedback on improving monitoring and evaluation on individual and family outcomes for the most disadvantaged.

The actuarial evaluation and investment approach to early intervention and prevention in New Zealand represents a robust, financial risk approach to guide service design and interventions for long term outcomes. Such approaches are key to understanding the impact of investments on health and wellbeing outcomes for clients. They are also essential to innovative approaches to finance and outcomes such as investing for outcomes through social impact bonds.

Using this model in Australia requires careful consideration of how responsibilities and funding are allocated differently between the Australian Government and state and territory governments.

Inter-government initiatives may result in fragmentation and can work against or frustrate the ability of organisations (government, non-government, business and community) to work together to address entrenched problems such as intergenerational unemployment, poor school retention and low literacy.

New approaches to overcoming program fragmentation and implement and track client outcomes include collective impact. Trials in the United States using the collective impact methodology indicate this can be an effective method for engaging local interests, and bringing government, non-government, business and community sectors together towards shared goals over the long term and outside of grant, budget and political cycles.

The Tasmanian Government is focused on outcomes through a 2014 announcement to partner and invest \$250 000 into Tasmania's peak social body, the Tasmanian Council of Social Service Inc. (TasCOSS) over four years, to develop new shared tools to oversee, measure and monitor the outcomes of the Government's initiatives. The partnership with TasCOSS will assist the introduction of new tools to measure outcomes without burdening the community sector with more reporting.

It is important that government funding is provided for rigorous evaluation so as to grow the number of research proven interventions. Evaluations also need to be publicly available through national research centres of excellence and government supported centres, such as the National Closing the Gap Clearinghouse.

Organisations seeking government funds need to focus on research proven interventions, or to base proposed innovative programs on evidence based research – based for example, on the identification of the factors (individual, family and societal) that contribute to enhanced capability and resilience.

6. Engaging with business

Pillar three discusses engaging with employers to improve outcomes for people on income support by providing employment, including the role of social enterprises in such engagement.

The Tasmanian Government recognises that economic participation increases social participation and individual self-reliance. The Government announced a broad range of policies as part of its Jobs Creation Package to assist the growth of Tasmanian businesses and employment, including:

- establish a \$12 million Regional Revival Fund to facilitate construction of infrastructure required for major private sector job creation projects;
- extend the existing payroll tax rebate for new jobs for an additional year (to 30 June 2015), with employers able to claim the rebate until 30 June 2016, with costs will be capped at \$4 million;
- provide a small business jobs bonus of up to \$1 000 for new positions created by Tasmanian small business between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2015, with costs will be capped at \$2 million; and
- immediately implement a two year water and sewerage headworks charges holiday for new developments, including sub-divisions, for a period of two years, capped at \$5 million per year.

Research has identified that social enterprises provide a highly supportive environment for the employment of disadvantaged job seekers. Social enterprises in Tasmania have the potential to generate both social inclusion and economic development outcomes.

The 2011 Tasmanian Social Enterprise Study drew 187 respondents from a range of industries and social sectors across the State. It found that a range of factors impacted on the set up, sustainability and growth of the social enterprise sector. Participation in social enterprise can lead to: increased skills, capacities and access to training. When people participate in social enterprise management and decision-making, it can lead to participants developing new networks and increased opportunities for building social participation.

The Study also found that social enterprises demonstrate strong growth aspirations. In the next three years, 76 per cent of social enterprises aim to expand the range of products and services they offer; 62 per cent aim to increase the income they derive from trade, and 44 per cent aim to expand their geographic reach.

In 2014, the Tasmanian Government committed to resource 15 to 20 start-up food cooperatives in local communities around Tasmania to help addresses food security. This approach helps meet social objectives as well as builds employment opportunities with local communities.

A range of factors affect the set-up, sustainability and growth of the social enterprise sector. These include a lack of suitable funding to accommodate the risks and complexities of social enterprises through the phases of enterprise set up, development and expansion. Developing good business know-how, financial models, governance structures and management all rate as challenges, as well as the cost and accessibility of locations from which to operate.

Social enterprises indicated five key areas to expand and grow the sector:

- better targeted financial assistance;
- raising community awareness of social enterprises and their contributions;
- stronger collaborative relationships with government, not-for-profit and private sectors;
- learning, knowledge-sharing and hands-on help; and
- an enabling legal and regulatory environment, including social procurement.

Social enterprise can be used as an important tool in providing employment for people who may otherwise face barriers in accessing the job market. In regional and disadvantaged communities where jobs may be scarce it is one of the few avenues for economic participation.

Social impact bonds have been identified as an innovative way of attracting new outcomes based investment that benefit individuals and communities. However, most social bonds are in the early stages of implementation and the benefits of these finance instruments are yet to be realised.

7. Access to technology

Pillar three of the Interim Report seeks feedback on the role of, and access to, information and communication technology for disadvantaged job seekers.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics annual survey of household internet use indicates that higher income households are more likely to have internet access at home than lower income households. In 2012-13, 98 per cent of households with income of \$120 000 or more had internet access, compared to 57 per cent of households with income of less than \$40 000⁵.

Furthermore, the survey indicates that for people living with a disability, in a low-income household or dependent on a Parenting Payment, Age Pension, Disability Support Pension or Newstart Allowance, the likelihood of having no internet at home is between two and nearly five times higher than the national average⁶.

Tasmania employs 23 literacy co-ordinators around the State including three in corrective services through the 26TEN program as well as trained volunteer tutors. The coordinators and volunteers assist job seekers in both using information and communication technology (ICT) and also in the mechanics of job applications is fundamental to job readiness.

⁵ ABS, Household use of information technology, Australia, 2012-13, Cat. 8146.0.

⁶ Walton P, Kop T, Spriggs D, Fitzgerald B, *A digital inclusion: empowering all Australians*, *Australian Journal of Telecommunications and the Digital Economy*, vol. 1, no. 1, Nov. 2013, pp. 9.1-9.17, 2013.

Tasmanians currently have access through the LINC (Library and Information Network Centre) and Regional LINC and Community Service Hubs to a range of ICT services with trained staff to assist them as well as access to the technology itself. Tasmania has LINC and Community Service Hubs located in regional locations across the State, which provide access to library services, ICT, Centrelink, Child and Family Centres and Service Tasmania in the one location. Ensuring access to both ICT infrastructure as well as on the ground assistance in regional areas is fundamental to disadvantaged job seekers.

Access to technology needs to be considered in relation to access to the infrastructure and access to assistance for job seekers and support in applying for jobs. Higher priority could be given to supporting ICT literacy through the JSA network, to assist Tasmanians engage with the JSAs and overcome literacy deficits to increase employability.

