

Service Tasmania Community Consultation

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30 September 2026

Dear Service Tasmania

Re: Proposed Service Tasmania opening hours changes

The Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) is the peak body for the community services industry in Tasmania and a leading advocate for Tasmanians living on low incomes. We represent the interests of our members and Tasmanians experiencing poverty, inequality and disadvantage.

Introduction

TasCOSS welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the Service Tasmania proposal to change the opening hours at the Campbell Town, Currie, Oatlands, Queenstown and Whitemark service centres.

The consultation webpage indicates this proposal is to better align services in local communities and ensure services are sustainable into the future, in response to face-to-face customer demand being significantly lower than the opening hours offered.

TasCOSS is concerned by the cumulative impact of service withdrawals in regional communities. Combined with reductions in banking, postal, health and other government services, changing access to services can create additional barriers to economic and community participation where alternatives are already very limited.

We provide the following comments in response to the limited background information available on the consultation webpage.

- **Informed decision-making essential.** The consultation webpage measures impact by the number of transactions that occur at particular regional Service Tasmania counter. TasCOSS contends the Government should measure impact by demonstrating that everyone in a regional community can reasonably access the government services they need. Further, the consultation

webpage invites feedback on the days and hours to close, rather than seeking feedback on whether the reduction is justified at all, or options for alternative service models. There has not been any robust assessment of the need, impact and net benefit of any changes to operating hours provided through the consultation portal.

- **Low use is not necessarily evidence of low need.** The targeted service centres are already operating fewer than standard full-time hours. Restricted opening hours can, in itself, cause a reduction in demand, as people who cannot attend may postpone a transaction, seek help elsewhere, try an unsuitable online option or simply give up. Using only completed transactions as a measure can therefore create a cycle in which reduced access produces lower usage, which is then used to justify further reductions.
- **Frontline services impacted.** In addressing Budget repair, the Government has made numerous commitments to protecting frontline services. As the public-facing access point for a range of government services, from a community perspective, a reduction in staffed or face-to-face opening hours is a reduction in frontline service availability. The Government has a responsibility to explain how reducing frontline services improves efficiency, and which centres will be targeted in any further efforts to ensure services are sustainable into the future.
- **The costs shifted elsewhere.** Any claimed efficiencies or savings from opening hours reductions should account for additional travel costs and time for residents, demands on families and carers, increased reliance on community organisations, and administrative costs arising from delayed, incomplete or unsuccessful transactions. If people cannot successfully navigate government transactions independently, neighbourhood houses, community organisations, financial counsellors and other services may become the de facto assistance network.
- **Digital exclusion is particularly important.** TasCOSS supports digital services, but it must be noted that digital access is not equivalent access. The Government claims that increased digitisation has lowered shopfront demand, however, it must be remembered that Tasmania is the most digitally disadvantaged jurisdiction in the country, and regional communities lag the rest of the state. Online government services assume reliable connectivity and equipment, digital confidence and literacy, and the capacity to understand and navigate government systems. Increased digitisation may work well for some people, but it must not be assumed that digital services are accessible for all who need to transact with government or access services.

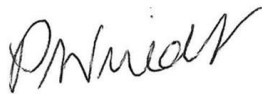
Summary

TasCOSS is concerned that reducing Service Tasmania opening hours in regional communities risks compounding existing barriers to essential services, particularly for people experiencing digital exclusion, those with complex needs and those with limited alternatives.

Before any reduction in face-to-face services proceeds, the Government should undertake and publish a robust assessment of community need, accessibility and impacts, rather than relying on transaction volumes alone.

Importantly, the Government must consider the broader costs shifted to individuals, families and community services, and ensure regional Tasmanians continue to have reasonable and equitable access to face-to-face government services.

Yours faithfully



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