24 November 2026

Members of the Tasmanian Parliament
Parliament House, Hobart

Dear Honourable Members

Re: Electoral Disclosure and Funding Amendment (Spending Limits) Bill 2026

I write on behalf of the Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) to express our support for the objectives of the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Amendment (Spending Limits) Bill 2026* (the Bill), and to encourage consideration of amendments that will produce a fairer electoral framework.

TasCOSS is the peak body for the community services industry in Tasmania and advocates for immediate and long-term solutions that eliminate poverty and improve economic and social outcomes for all Tasmanians. An important part of this work is ensuring that Tasmanians experiencing disadvantage and exclusion can inform public policy and democratic debate.

The introduction of expenditure limits for House of Assembly elections is a positive step in addressing important issues of electoral fairness, accountability and participation. Expenditure caps will also improve public confidence in democracy by strengthening transparency, trust and political equality, resulting from a reduction in the ability of wealthy candidates, political parties and well-funded interest groups to gain a significant advantage through advertising and campaigning.

This is an important public interest objective. Election expenditure caps will encourage election campaigns to be fought on ideas, policies, leadership and community engagement, rather than the capacity for financial resources to influence political decision-making and purchase advertising.

Introducing a spending cap for candidates and parties campaigning in Tasmanian House of Assembly elections is consistent with requirements for Legislative Council and local government elections, and aligns with other jurisdictions. Election spending limits are in place for Australian federal elections, and for state elections in New South Wales, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory.

The Bill's proposed candidate-based formula reflects the features of Tasmania's Hare-Clark electoral system. While its provisions for independent candidates, divisional spending limits,

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gifts in kind and anti-circumvention measures are intended to produce electoral fairness, TasCOSS considers the expenditure limits proposed in the Bill require closer examination, as they may create substantial differences between the campaigning capacity of political parties and independent candidates.

In particular, TasCOSS notes that the proposed 20% loading for independents should not be considered as self-evidently fair, and the calculation of party expenditure limits according to the number of endorsed candidates has the potential to create substantial differences between the resources available to parties and independent candidates. The candidate-based formula may also create incentives to field additional candidates primarily to increase permitted expenditure.

I encourage you to examine the Bill against the objectives of fairness in electoral competition, and consider sensible amendments that ensure the final legislative framework is fair, workable in practice and protects meaningful democratic participation. This may include:

- increasing the independent candidate multiplier;
- limiting the number of party candidates that generate additional spending capacity; or
- replacing candidate-based limits with fixed divisional allowances.

Tasmania has already introduced significant changes to electoral disclosure and public funding arrangements through the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023*. This Bill would extend this framework by placing limits on specified electoral expenditure by parties, candidates and third-party campaigners.

I urge you to support the fairness, integrity and democratic objectives of election expenditure caps and work to deliver legislation that achieves those objectives by limiting the influence of money on election outcomes.

Thank you for considering our position.

Yours faithfully

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Chief Executive Officer

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