

## **The Tasmanian Government's response to social inclusion**

Tasmania was one of the first States in Australia to acknowledge social inclusion as an important public policy issue.

In May 2008 the Tasmanian Government established a Social Inclusion Unit in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. It also created the independent position of Social Inclusion Commissioner, to which Professor David Adams was appointed in December 2008.

The objectives of the Social Inclusion Unit are:

- To address the causes of social exclusion by developing practical solutions that are informed by evidence-based research and achieved by working with all spheres of government, the community and business sectors; and
- To promote socially inclusive communities throughout Tasmania.

In recent months, the Unit has supported the Commissioner in the preparation of *A Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania*, which was presented to the Premier on 21 September 2009. The Strategy contains a lot of evidence that is relevant to Tasmania as well as the results of extensive community consultations that were undertaken by the Commissioner and the Social Inclusion Unit. The Strategy includes information gained by the Tasmanian *Together* Progress Board and commends the monitoring of Tasmania *Together* benchmarks, and in particular, the online reporting system.

On 19 October 2009, the Premier released the State Government's Preliminary Response to the Strategy. The Response outlines a number of initiatives that will be implemented in the coming months including:

- The establishment of the Tasmanian Food Security Council, which will invest \$1 million in food security programs and ensure that food is delivered to where it is needed most;
- The establishment of a Community Finance Fund, which will feature three separate programs:
  - A Micro-finance Fund that will provide \$1 million in no-interest loans to people to buy essential household goods. Loans will also be made for other emergency needs such as car repairs and maintenance, dental and medical bills;
  - A Micro-credit Fund that will provide \$1 million in financial assistance to individuals and groups to establish micro-businesses. The Micro-credit Fund will enable people to borrow small amounts of money with no-interest repayments over time; and
  - A Social Enterprise Fund, which will provide \$3 million in financial assistance to support enterprises that have community development as their main objective. Profits generated by social enterprises are reinvested in the business or the local community rather than directed to business owners and shareholders.

Article provided by Social Inclusion Unit, Department of Premier and Cabinet

- Expansion of the successful Cars for Communities Program with an additional \$500,000 in 2009-10 to enable more vehicles to be purchased by community organisations.

The Preliminary Response acknowledges that many of the strategies for social inclusion require further consultation on cost, impact and implementation and on other possible action that can take place.

In the coming months, the Social Inclusion Unit will consult with government and with the community and business sectors regarding the Strategy, the Preliminary Response and priorities in the medium to longer term.

For more information, including online versions of *A Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania* and the Government's Preliminary Response, go to [www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/siu](http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/siu).