



**MULTICULTURAL**  
COUNCIL *of* TASMANIA

4 August 2020

# **Multicultural Council of Tasmania**

## **Updated Submission for the 2020-21 State Budget**



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## **1. Introduction**

The Multicultural Council of Tasmania (MCOT) is the peak body representing more than 80 multicultural organisations in Tasmania.

MCOT welcomes the opportunity to update its submission to the Tasmanian Government for the 2020-21 State Budget.

Taking account of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) Tasmanians when setting State Government policy will maximise their economic and social contribution, and so benefit the broad Tasmanian population.

We encourage the State Government to adopt the proposals outlined in our original budget submission, which are repeated in this updated submission.

We also encourage the State Government to adopt new proposals outlined here that relate to Tasmania under COVID-19 and beyond.

The submission is divided into proposals relating to regulation, revenue, and government spending. A summary of the financial impact of the proposals is provided at the end.

## **2. Regulation**

It is in the interests of all Tasmanians for State Government policy to make it easy to start a business and hire staff. It is particularly important for those CALD Tasmanians who are temporary residents and hence ineligible for JobSeeker.

To make it easy to start a business and take on staff, regulations affecting employers should be reduced and new regulations avoided.

Regarding the reduction in regulations affecting employers, the State Government's red tape reduction process is to be commended. However, there remain opportunities to completely remove State Government regulation of specific industries or activities. Removal should be considered where generic regulation already applies (such as the Australian Consumer Law, Working with Vulnerable People Law, and Road Rules), and where word-of-mouth and social media can readily shape a provider's reputation. This includes industries and activities relating to passenger transport, accommodation, food and motor trades.

Regarding the avoidance of new regulations, the State Government should avoid sleep-walking into a regulatory environment where employers may be liable if an employee (or anyone else who has been at the employer's premises) contracts COVID-19. Such an environment would provide a strong disincentive to start a business and hire staff.



Worksafe Tasmania should be directed to issue advice to employers rather than enforceable regulations.

MCOT reiterates the recommendation in our original budget submission to reduce occupational licensing so as to maximise the contribution of CALD Tasmanians with qualifications obtained outside of Tasmania.

The State Government is responsible for occupational licensing and can unilaterally change occupational licensing policy in Tasmania.

The State Government should automatically recognise qualifications recognised in other Australian States and Territories. This would improve the productivity of existing Tasmanians. It would also allow reduced government spending in bodies such as Consumer, Building and Occupational Licensing that currently devote resources to deciding whether a person with a qualification recognised elsewhere in the federation should be granted a Tasmanian licence and allowed to practise their vocation in Tasmania.

The State Government should also improve the recognition of qualifications obtained outside Australia. The Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification provides a free service to determine whether a range of qualifications obtained outside Australia should be recognised as equivalent to an Australian qualification. However, some qualifications are currently beyond the scope of that Office. In these circumstances, the decision about whether to recognise a qualification obtained overseas generally falls to an industry body. This is a concern, as industry bodies serve incumbent providers and have an incentive to prevent the entry of new providers. The State Government should consider removing the responsibility of industry bodies for deliberating on qualifications obtained overseas. This should be done even where the industry body is undertaking this responsibility under Commonwealth legislation, as there is no explicit Constitutional head of power for the Commonwealth Government to undertake occupational licensing.

The State Government should also reassess the need for licences in low-risk occupations, such as motor vehicle trading. Removing the need for licences in low-risk occupations would remove the need for government to assess overseas qualifications relevant to these occupations. It could also increase the availability and reduce the cost of services provided by these occupations.

### **3. Revenue**

Given the deteriorating fiscal outlook, the State Government should gradually extend land tax to principal places of residence.



## **4. Government spending**

Spending by the State Government across a range of portfolios supports the contribution of CALD Tasmanians to Tasmania's economy and society.

### **4.1 Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management**

Services by Tasmania Police are fundamental to ensuring that CALD Tasmanians are free to contribute to Tasmania's economy and society.

Police forces in other jurisdictions include civilian staff employed as Multicultural Community Liaison Officers to ensure that police understand the policing concerns of CALD Australians and that CALD Australians understand that the police serve the entire community including CALD Australians.

The State Government should commit \$300,000 annually to the recruitment and retention of two Multicultural Community Liaison Officers, one serving Southern Tasmania and one serving the North. This commitment would be in line with the 33 Multicultural Community Liaison Officers employed by the police force in New South Wales, whose population is fifteen times that of Tasmania.

CALD Tasmanians are under-represented in Tasmania Police. Tasmania Police has commenced a social media campaign to encourage recruits with a CALD background. The State Government should commit \$200,000 annually to communicate this existing campaign material on other local media, including television, radio and online advertising.

### **4.2 Department of Communities Tasmania**

#### ***4.2.1 Peak body funding***

MCOT appreciates the funding it receives under the budget of the Department of Communities Tasmania, and is committed to efficiently using the funding it receives to serve CALD Tasmanians and promote social cohesion for the benefit of all Tasmanians.

MCOT has been active during the COVID-19 crisis in communicating State Government messages to CALD Tasmanians, in keeping the State Government informed of community developments, in providing emergency relief and support to CALD Tasmanians in need, and in promoting a socially cohesive multicultural Tasmania in the media. MCOT has also pursued best-practice governance reforms, increased its membership, lobbied federal and local governments on behalf of CALD Tasmanians, and broadened its operations across the State, including through our current re-establishment of a small Launceston office.



### *Timing*

The end date for the current peak body grant to MCOT is 30 June 2021. MCOT requests that the Budget in November 2020 provide multi-year funding to MCOT from 2021-22. Such timing would ensure the most efficient spending of State Government funding, by allowing MCOT to enter into transactions for services, labour and equipment that span beyond June 2021.

### *Quantum*

Regarding the quantum of funding, MCOT notes that current base funding of \$115,000 fails to cover the prevailing rates in the not-for-profit sector for administrative/finance/CEO staff and basic operational and communications costs. To appropriately cover these basic costs, plus the costs for a policy officer, a Launceston-based project officer and modern communications and office services, annual base funding should approach \$500,000, in line with funding of other Tasmanian peak bodies.

Note that funding to MCOT would be markedly higher than this if funding were in line with funding in other States. For instance, the Victorian Government provides \$9 million annually for multicultural organisations (<https://www.budget.vic.gov.au/valuing-our-diversity>). Given Tasmania's smaller population, annual funding of \$700,000 would represent a commensurate commitment.

Aligning MCOT funding with the funding of other peak bodies would reflect the State Government's support for all segments of Tasmania's community, and help ensure that Tasmania's CALD community is a full participant in the broader Tasmanian economy and society.

#### ***4.2.2 Festival funding including Harmony Week***

In previous years MCOT has successfully delivered Harmony Week events, including events linking Tasmania's CALD community with decision-makers and the broader Tasmanian community. The State Government should again provide annual funding for MCOT to deliver Harmony Week events.

This should fund a dedicated coordinator strengthening relationships across Local Governments, communities and organisations, gaining further private sector sponsors, and overseeing casual staff in the North and North West in the weeks leading up to and including Harmony Week. (Required resources: Coordinator, 30 hrs/wk for 20 wks \$25,300; Casual staff in Launceston and North West \$7,500; Website, communications and promotional materials \$5,000; State-wide events - small grants \$8,000; Administration, office costs and support \$6,200; Travel \$3,000; Total \$55,000pa).



More broadly, Tasmania's cohesive, participatory society would be enhanced through multicultural celebrations akin to those funded by State Governments elsewhere in the federation. For instance, the ACT (a jurisdiction smaller than Tasmania) hosts a multicultural festival through funding of nearly \$2 million over four years

([https://apps.treasury.act.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/1369790/G-Community-Services-Directorate.pdf](https://apps.treasury.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1369790/G-Community-Services-Directorate.pdf)). The State Government should pilot its own multicultural festival at a fraction of this cost (e.g. \$100,000 p.a.), with MCOT happy to assist delivery via the Department of Communities portfolio, or to be directly responsible for delivery. A pilot State Government multicultural festival, covering arts, sport and food, would be consistent and coordinated with Glenorchy City Council's annual Taste of Moonah event and Clarence City Council's biennial World Games.

#### *4.2.3 Welcoming Cities and Communities*

The State Government has provided MCOT funding to encourage local government to welcome new residents from CALD backgrounds. There has been some success, although greater ownership from local government regional authorities and the Local Government Association of Tasmania is recommended for future engagement. Accordingly, MCOT recommends that Welcoming Cities and Communities funding be continued, with funds (\$60,000 p.a.) shared between regional authorities, LGAT and MCOT.

#### *4.2.4 Anti-racism campaign*

The State Government should fund a Tasmania-specific anti-racism campaign amidst the COVID-19 crisis. A state-based campaign would ensure that the State Government controls the messaging to ensure effectiveness. MCOT recommends communicating to potential perpetrators (as opposed to victims and bystanders) and that messaging focus on discouraging generalisations (as opposed to denunciatory lecturing). MCOT is happy to assist delivery via the Department of Communities portfolio, but is also well placed to take direct responsibility. Production costs, tapping into expertise in the Tasmanian CALD community, can be kept below \$50,000 while broadcast costs (including on Sky News free-to-air broadcasting in Tasmania) can be kept below \$150,000.

By way of comparison, the Victorian Government provides \$3 million annually for anti-racism action plan and projects to improve social cohesion and reduce racism, discrimination and social division (<https://www.budget.vic.gov.au/valuing-our-diversity>).



Given Tasmania's smaller size, a \$240,000 campaign would represent a commensurate commitment.

#### *4.2.5 Temporary resident emergency relief*

MCOT greatly appreciates the State Government's generous \$500,000 temporary residents package. \$50,000 of this has been provided to MCOT, which is dispensing these funds in the form of grocery vouchers to individuals and grants to multicultural community organisations that are providing emergency relief to temporary residents in their community. This relief is necessary to avoid destitution amongst a population that is hard hit by job losses, ineligible for JobSeeker and JobKeeper, and often with little practical opportunity to relocate to their country of origin.

Given the economic outlook, the Federal Government has deemed it necessary to continue JobKeeper and the heightened JobSeeker beyond September 2020. For the same reason, there is great need for the State Government to continue its generosity to temporary residents through a further iteration of its temporary residents package. The \$50,000 provided to MCOT to date will run out by Budget time, but the need for support will not. The other organisations that have received funding under this package will be in a similar boat.

Therefore the State Government is requested to provide a further \$500,000 in temporary resident emergency relief for the 2021 calendar year, with \$50,000 of this to be provided to MCOT to allow continuing grocery vouchers to individuals and grants to multicultural community organisations that are providing emergency relief to temporary residents in their community.

#### *4.2.6 Other proposals in the portfolio of the Department of Communities Tasmania*

MCOT continues to recommend the spending options for the Department of Communities Tasmania portfolio that were outlined in our original submission.

- A six-monthly Tasmanian Multicultural Forum, convened by MCOT in conjunction with the Minister's Office and the Department of Communities Tasmania. The Forum could be modelled on the forums organised by the youth sector peak, the Youth Network of Tasmania, and alternate between Launceston and Hobart. The Forum would allow communities and leaders to respond to existing policies and programs and propose new policies and programs. (Required resources: Project Officer, 8 hrs/wk for 52 wks \$15,200; Administration, office costs and support \$2,300; Travel \$2,500; Total \$20,000pa).



- Develop the organisational competence of multicultural organisations, assisting them with strategic planning, fundraising frameworks, maintaining strong governance, satisfying compliance requirements, and engaging younger people as leaders of the organisation. (Required resources: Sector Development Officer, 7.5 hrs/wk x 52 wks \$14,500; Administration, office costs and support \$2,500; Travel \$4,000; Total \$21,000pa).
- A Multicultural Women's Circle based on the Wodonga model for women and mothers from multicultural backgrounds to meet weekly for two hours during Tasmanian school terms, with gatherings including information sessions on education and employment pathways, women's health and well-being, yoga, mindfulness and art, and with a child care worker at each session to supervise children. (Required resources: Sector Development Officer, 7.5 hrs/wk x 52 wks \$14,500; Activities, events and catering, \$250/wk x 40 weeks \$10,000; Administration, office costs and support \$3,500, Total \$28,000).

## 4.3 Other portfolios

### 4.3.1 Employment

The State Government should fund a campaign to break down barriers for employers to hire CALD Tasmanians. The campaign would communicate to employers the benefits of cultural and linguistic diversity in the workplace. It would increase employment opportunities for CALD Tasmanians, leading to a greater contribution to Tasmania's economy and society.

The campaign would be developed in consultation with the Multicultural Employment Stakeholders Network, a state-wide network of professionals in the employment sector working with Tasmanians from a CALD background. Members include service providers, job providers, representatives of the local and State Government and community sector organisations.

MCOT could lead the campaign, involving a part time research leader/project officer/campaign manager (\$52,000), the design of campaign material including the use of focus groups (\$15,000) and distribution (\$25,000) – totalling \$92,000.

### 4.3.2 Other proposals from our original budget submission

MCOT continues to recommend the spending in a range of portfolios that was outlined in our original submission.

In 2019-20 the Victorian State Government budgeted to spend \$27 million on multicultural aged care facilities and \$7 million on community language schools. Adjusting these figures



for Tasmania's lower population suggests a \$2 million spend on multicultural aged care facilities and \$500,000 spend on community language schools. Spending on multicultural aged care facilities is warranted given the age-related deterioration of English-language skills that can occur in populations for whom English is a second language. Spending on community language schools can ensure that Tasmania can tap into the productive potential of foreign language skills for generations to come.



## 5. Summary

| <b>Recommendation</b>  | <b>Annual financial impact</b>   |
|--|--|
| Regulation reduction and avoidance, including reduced occupational licensing so as to maximise the contribution of CALD Tasmanians | Budget positive  |
| Extend land tax to principal residences  | Eventual \$130 million annual revenue gain                               |
| Multicultural Community/Police Community Liaison   | \$300,000  |
| Police recruitment   | \$200,000  |
| MCOT peak body funding   | \$500,000  |
| Harmony Week   | \$55,000   |
| Multicultural Festival   | \$100,000  |
| Welcoming Cities and Communities   | \$60,000   |
| Anti-racism campaign   | \$200,000  |
| Emergency relief for temporary residents   | \$500,000  |
| Multicultural Forum  | \$20,000   |
| Organisational competence of multicultural organisations   | \$21,000   |
| Multicultural Women's Circle   | \$28,000   |
| Breaking down barriers to employers to hire CALD Tasmanians  | \$92,000   |
| Multicultural aged care  | \$2 million  |
| Community language schools   | \$500,000  |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>\$4.576 million annual spend, offset by land tax revenue proposal</b> |