



WITNESS STATEMENT OF RICHARD ECCLESTON

I, Richard Eccleston of [REDACTED] in the State of Tasmania, Professor of Political Science at the University of Tasmania, do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

1. I make this statement in my personal capacity.
2. I make this statement on the basis of my own knowledge, save where otherwise stated. Where I make statements based on information provided by others, I believe such information to be true. Where I express an opinion, I do so based on my experiences and knowledge in public policy and economics.

Background and qualifications

3. I have the following qualifications:
 - (a) Bachelor of Arts (Honours) from the University of Tasmania, awarded in 1997; and
 - (b) Doctor of Philosophy (Political Science), from the University of Queensland, awarded in 2002.
4. My previous roles have included:
 - (a) Senior Lecturer at Griffith University (Centre for Governance and Public Policy) from 2000 to 2006;
 - (b) Head of Politics and Public Policy discipline at the University of Tasmania from 2010 to 2013; and
 - (c) Founding Director of the Institute for Social Change at the University of Tasmania from 2014 to 2019.
5. I have published 12 books (including textbooks) and over 100 articles and reports on various aspects of comparative politics and economic policy.
6. I have been awarded five major 'discovery' grants by the Australian Research Council and a Fulbright Senior Fellowship in connection with my research.
7. I am a member of the following committees and professional associations:
 - (a) International Studies Association;

- (b) Australian Institute of International Affairs;
 - (c) International Political Science Association;
 - (d) Australian Political Studies Association; and
 - (e) Institute of Public Administration Australia.
8. I was also the Secretary of the International Political Studies Association Research Committee on Business and Politics between 2006 and 2010.
9. Attached to this statement and marked Attachment **RE-1** is a copy of my career profile on the University of Tasmania website.

Current role

10. I am currently employed as Professor of Political Science and Director of the Tasmanian Policy Exchange at the University of Tasmania. I commenced working at the University of Tasmania in 2007.
11. In my role as Professor of Political Science, I teach in the fields of Australian and comparative politics, public policy and political economy.
12. In my role as Director of the Tasmanian Policy Exchange (**TPE**), I lead the University's policy engagement and have delivered eight major policy research projects over the last two years on a range of significant topics from Tasmania's climate strategy to an independent review of the State's Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill. TPE was established in 2020 to enhance the University's capacity to make timely and informed contributions to policy issues and debates that impact Tasmania. TPE consists of a small team of staff who work with external partners to establish and frame priority policy questions, before working with other University of Tasmania staff members to develop policy options and longer-term collaborations.

Tasmanian context: demographics and labour market

Tasmanian demographics

13. Tasmania is a small and regionally dispersed jurisdiction. It has a population of 540,800, which comprises just 2.1% of Australia's population share.¹ Almost 56% of the population resides outside the Greater Hobart region and its estimated population density is 8 people per square kilometre (compared with 29.2 people per square kilometre in Victoria).²
14. According to the ABS, more than 37% of Tasmania's population resides in its most socioeconomically disadvantaged (bottom 20% of the national income distribution) areas (which are mostly regional, inland areas) and less than 5% reside in its most advantaged (top 50%) areas (which are mostly clustered around Hobart, Launceston and select coastal areas). In contrast, the Australian Capital Territory had the lowest proportion of people living in the most disadvantaged areas (0.7%) and the highest proportion of people in relatively advantaged areas (55%).³
15. Research suggests that those residing in these socioeconomically disadvantaged areas are less mobile and unlikely to move around the State to seek employment or live in other communities. For instance, very few people from these areas move to Hobart to study, which may be because people in these areas do not have access to the resources that would support them to engage with a tertiary education. It is also common for families living in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas of Tasmania to have lived in the same community for generations. This creates a strong sense of connectedness in those communities which may also contribute to the lack of intrastate movement amongst these populations.
16. In addition to limited intrastate mobility, Tasmania has historically experienced limited inward migration (whether interstate or overseas). According to the ABS:

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'National, State and Territory Population' <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/sep-2021>.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'National, State and Territory Population' <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/sep-2021>; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Regional Population' Australian Bureau of Statistics.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage' <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Socio-Economic%20Advantage%20and%20Disadvantage~123>.

- (a) between 1994 and 2013, Tasmania experienced a net average annual interstate migration loss of 1,076 people.⁴ During this period:
- (i) the greatest net interstate migration losses occurred in the 15 to 29 years age groups;
 - (ii) net interstate migration gains were experienced for all age groups older than 35, with the greatest net gains experienced in the 50 to 64 years age group; and
- (b) between 2007 and 2013, Tasmania experienced a net annual average overseas migration gain of 1,510 people.⁵ However, Tasmania generally received disproportionately fewer migrants than the national per capita share.
17. As a result of this limited inward migration, as at 2016:
- (a) 12% of the Tasmanian population were born overseas (noting that this was significantly lower than all other States and Territories at the time, the second lowest being the Northern Territory at 20%);⁶ and
 - (b) the population in Hobart was comprised of 14.8% first generation immigrants, 14.6% second generation immigrants and 70.6% third-plus generation immigrations (compared to 36.2%, 25.2% and 38.6% respectively in Melbourne).⁷
18. I would describe the historic demographic profile of Tasmania as an “apple core”. By this I mean that the population was largely comprised of children who left after finishing school or university and older adults who returned to retire, with few young adults aged between 20 and 40 to fill the middle. My point is illustrated by the 2016 Census data, which lists the median age in Tasmania as 42 years old and the largest age group as those aged 55 to 59.⁸

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Historical Population Statistics, 2014, Cat. No. 3105.0.65.001.

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Historical Population Statistics, 2014, Cat. No. 3105.0.65.001.

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, '2016 Census Data Seminar Greater Hobart' [https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/Census+Data+Seminars/\\$File/Hobart+presentation+sli+des.pdf](https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/Census+Data+Seminars/$File/Hobart+presentation+sli+des.pdf).

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, '2016 Census Data Seminar Greater Hobart' [https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/Census+Data+Seminars/\\$File/Hobart+presentation+sli+des.pdf](https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/Census+Data+Seminars/$File/Hobart+presentation+sli+des.pdf).

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, '2016 Census: Tasmania – One in every five Tasmanians aged 65 years and over' <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mediareleasesbyReleaseDate/7F1A862B6F8B6BA0CA25814800A41AC?OpenDocument>.

19. More recently, however, Tasmania has experienced a counter-trend in net interstate migration and its demographic profile has started to change. The number of younger adults that are choosing to migrate to Tasmania from interstate is increasing and the community is slowly becoming more diverse and dynamic.
20. Attached to this statement marked **RE-2** is an article titled 'Tasmanian Demographic Analysis SnapShot – October 2021' by the Institute for Social Change.

Tasmanian labour market

21. There has been significant structural change in the Tasmanian labour market since 2006. Tasmania has shifted away from a manufacturing and resource-based workforce (employment in agriculture has increased and is much more highly skilled than previously) to one that is increasingly dominated by the services sector with the public sector being a relatively larger employer than other larger Australian jurisdictions. As a result, the Tasmanian State Service plays a central role in the Tasmanian labour market (discussed further in paragraphs 28 and 41 below).
22. Research conducted by me and my colleagues at the Institute of Social Change indicates that this shift to reliance on the public sector for employment is likely to be the result of an ageing population, workforce rationalisation in the private sector, changing markets and changing policy positions of governments. Our research and conclusions are set out in the report titled 'The Changing Nature of Work in Tasmania' by the Institute for the Study of Social Change (as it was then). Attached to this statement marked **RE-3** is a copy of this report.
23. According to the ABS, Tasmania is the lowest performing State or Territory in a number of key labour market metrics. Specifically:
 - (a) Tasmania's labour market participation rate is 61.5%, which is the lowest in the country and is significantly lower than the national average of 66.5%.⁹

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Labour Force, Australia', <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/latest-release#states-and-territories>.

- (b) Tasmania's average weekly ordinary time cash earnings are \$1,541.70 for full-time adult employees, which is the lowest in the country and is significantly lower the national average of \$1,748.40);¹⁰ and
- (c) Tasmania's underemployment rate of 8.1% (March 2022), which is the highest in the country and is significantly higher the national average of 5% (although noting that Tasmania's unemployment rate of 3.9% is slightly better than the national average of 4%).¹¹
24. I was surprised to learn, during my recent research, that Tasmanian employers rely more heavily on informal networks for recruitment than any other state. Specifically, 32% of recruitment in Tasmania occurs without the job being advertised (the second highest being Northern Territory at 26%) and 38% of recruitment occurs via word of mouth (the second highest being Northern Territory at 24%). In my opinion, reliance on informal methods of recruitment is likely to exclude marginalised or less-connected jobseekers, and represents a barrier for workforce diversity and recruiting talent more generally. This may be impacting on labour market participation and unemployment rates in Tasmania.
25. Attached to this statement and marked **RE-4** is a copy of a summary report titled 'COVID-19 and the Future of Work in Tasmania' by the Tasmanian Policy Exchange dated September 2021, which sets out the research referred to in paragraph 24 above. Attached and marked **RE-5** is a copy of the final report.
26. I am conscious that it is difficult to draw comparisons between Tasmania and other States or Territories in Australia due to the distinct social, economic and demographic profile of Tasmania. In my view, the Northern Territory and South Australia¹² are perhaps the two most comparable jurisdictions, but any parallels are inherently limited. For example, while the Northern Territory is similar to Tasmania in terms of size and scale, the Northern Territory has a more dynamic labour market and experiences a much higher turnover in the

¹⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Labour Force, Australia', <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/average-weekly-earnings-australia/nov-2021#state-and-territory>.

¹¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Labour Force, Australia', <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/latest-release#states-and-territories>.

¹² South Australia is not significantly different to Tasmania in scale (only approximately twice the size) with a similar industry mix and history. However, the geography in South Australia is very different to Tasmania and the population is highly concentrated in Greater Adelaide.

professional population compared to Tasmania. As a result, the Northern Territory does not have the same type of lifelong, generational bonds between community members (at least not in the professional space).

Labour market – moving forward

27. The key trends and implications identified in the COVID-19 and the Future of Work in Tasmania Report include:
- (a) the health and community care industry will likely experience strong and sustained employment growth in the coming years given Tasmania's ageing population, an increasing demand for care services more generally and broad-based recognition of the need to increase public investment in high quality care services. The long-standing shortage of a wide range of health professionals in regional Tasmania appears to be intensifying due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - (b) impacts on employment were felt more accurately by younger, lower-paid and less securely-employed workers. Further, more women lost jobs than men during the pandemic, and are returning to the labour market more slowly; and
 - (c) there are emerging skills and labour shortages across the Tasmanian economy with the rise in job vacancies (up 44% since February 2020, 9 points above the national average). In particular, Tasmania's social and community care industry's current plan estimates that an additional 4,000 workers would be required by 2024 to meet community need.

Tasmanian State Service

28. The Tasmanian State Service (**TSS**) is established by the *State Service Act 2000* (Tas) (**Act**). According to the Tasmanian State Service Annual Report 2020-21:
- (a) the TSS is comprised of 33,416 staff, of which:
 - (i) 81% are permanent employees;
 - (ii) 18% are employed on a fixed-term basis;

- (iii) 1% are agency heads, holders of prescribed offices and senior executives appointed under Part 6 of the Act;
 - (b) TSS does not engage any casual employees;
 - (c) the average employee age is 45 years;
 - (d) almost 27% of the workforce are over the age of 55 and just over 13% of the workforce are under the age of 30; and
 - (e) the average length of service is 12.87 years.
- 29. Attached to this statement marked **RE-6** is the Tasmanian State Service Annual Report 2020-21 dated October 2021.
- 30. There are a number of other notable characteristics of the TSS workforce:
 - (a) women are overrepresented, although they are in lower paid social service delivery roles rather than management roles;
 - (b) younger employees are underrepresented, due to limited large-scale graduate recruitment; and
 - (c) people with disabilities, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are underrepresented.¹³
- 31. Recent workforce data indicates that diversity at the TSS is improving but with a low turnover rate it is a long game.¹⁴
- 32. Further, I recently chaired an International Review of the Executive Master of Public Administration course provided by the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (**ANZSOG**). Having spoken to Heads of Agencies across Australia and New Zealand as part of this review, I found out that increasing workforce mobility (between the agencies as well as between the public and private sector) was a key issue facing public sector employers in terms of retention of institutional knowledge and talent.
- 33. In contrast, the low turnover rates at the TSS suggest that this is not so much of an issue in the Tasmanian public sector. On the other hand, the Northern Territory Public Sector (**NTPS**) (which bears some similarity with Tasmania in

¹³ As identified in the Independent Review of the Tasmanian State Service by Dr Ian Watt AC.

¹⁴ TSS Annual Report 2020-21 (RE-6).

terms of size) has a much higher turnover rate and therefore a fluid public sector workforce. Of course, this is partly due to the NTPS' reliance on inter-jurisdictional recruitment for short-term engagements and unlike Tasmania, professionals who work in the Northern Territory would not typically share lifelong and generational bonds with colleagues and broader members of the community.

34. However, longevity of employment within the TSS can be a double-edged sword. It results in an older and more stable workforce but is perhaps less dynamic and diverse, and implementing cultural change can be a slower process. Given the broader community dynamics in Tasmania, there is also a risk that obligations to colleagues might trump obligations to uphold high ethical standards in the workplace.
35. The circulation that I have seen, particularly at management levels, has largely been between the TSS and either state-owned enterprises or government business enterprises. While there is circulation, the personal and professional networks remain the same.

Alignment of ministerial portfolios with agency structures

36. The machinery of government in Tasmania in my opinion is unnecessarily complex in terms of the number of agencies and how they map into ministerial portfolios. Some Government Departments serve several different Ministers, and Ministers often have to engage with multiple Departments to administer their portfolio. Among other things, this can lead to double up of, or confusion over responsibilities.
37. In comparison, the ACT, which has a similar parliament to Tasmania and a proportional Hare-Clark system, has a much simpler portfolio structure which facilitates strategic alignments between related portfolios. For example, the ACT portfolio structure is fixed and they do not have omnibus agencies such as the Department of State Growth in Tasmania. Having said that, the ACT is not an appropriate comparator because its parliament was set up to govern a highly educated and affluent population, quite different to Tasmania.
38. Further, the Tasmanian parliament faces a broader talent challenge because the back bench from which the Cabinet can draw is limited. When there are Cabinet reshuffles (due to resignations, retirements or otherwise), Ministers

often have to pick up portfolios for which they do not possess any relevant expertise or experience.

Watt Review

39. In July 2021, Dr Ian Watt AC completed the Independent Review of the Tasmanian State Service (**Watt Review**).
40. The Watt Review made these observations regarding the TSS:
- (a) Tasmania is the oldest public service on average in the country and faces challenges as larger proportions of the workforce transition to retirement, bringing a loss of skills and knowledge and potentially opening up skills gaps across the sector;
 - (b) Tasmania is currently facing skills shortages across areas such as construction, engineering, health professionals, nurses and teachers. For example, the need for employment in the health care and social assistance industry was projected to grow by 12.1% in Tasmania over the 5 years to May 2023, but in 2018-19 only 35% of vacancies were filled;
 - (c) Women represent 71% of the overall TSS workforce but only 43% of senior leadership, indicating there may be barriers to women progressing to more senior roles;
 - (d) TSS remains relatively homogenous with 6% of the workforce identified as having a disability and 3% as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin;
 - (e) Almost 90% of respondents of the State Service Survey were born in Australia, compared to over 80.7% in the population;
 - (f) There were 1,333 employment separations between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. 93% were resignations or retirements. Around 2.5% left through voluntary assisted separations, 2% were terminated and 2.7% died or left for health reasons; and
 - (g) The turnover rate in the TSS in 2019 was about 5.6%, which is lower than New South Wales (6.9%) and the Australian Public Service (8.25%).

41. Further, the Watt Review found that TSS' investigation and discipline procedures (such as the Employment Direction 5) are overly prescriptive compared to similar arrangements across other states and territories, and that the proportion of total employment separations for a breach of the Code of Conduct in the TSS is significantly lower than the proportion of Australian Public Service employees terminated for misconduct. In my view, this may suggest that the overly prescriptive procedures are impacting on TSS' ability to effect necessary employment separations. The TSS is highly unionised and unions would certainly play a role in any disciplinary and termination process concerning their members.
42. The low turnover rate at the TSS indicates that once employees commence with the TSS they tend to stay there. This is in line with broader community dynamics where colleagues feel a sense of obligation to each other combined with the reality that options for professional work outside the TSS are more limited than in larger jurisdictions. It means that the TSS does not have challenges with retention that many other public sector employers have. In my view some workforce mobility is desirable so that contemporary ideas and perspectives can be shared between workplaces and industry sectors.
43. The Tasmanian Government's response to the Watt Review either supports or supports in principle each of the recommendations of the review. Relevantly, the Tasmanian Government has:
- (a) agreed to re-write all Employment Directions to ensure that they support a capable, agile and accountable service by June 2023;
 - (b) expressed its in-principle support to increasing the number of placements available in the graduate, cadet and traineeship programs to create more employment opportunities for young people in the TSS; and
 - (c) expressed its in-principle support to delivering a program of short-term secondments of TSS employees into the industry and the community sector (and vice versa).
44. Attached to this statement marked **RE-7** is the Government Response to the Independent Review of the Tasmanian State Service.

45. It remains to be seen the extent to which these measures will enable TSS to effect necessary employee separations, improve workforce diversity and facilitate the sharing of knowledge across sectors.

Informed Hypothesis

46. Drawing on the matters set out earlier in this statement, my lay hypothesis is that the combination of strong social connections and limited workforce mobility in Tasmania could create an environment in which it is more difficult to deal with problematic, unethical or even criminal conduct. In such an environment, a person may not wish to call out what they see as "bad" behaviour at work as this can potentially have a flow-on impact on that person within their broader community.
47. Likewise, the absence of degrees of separation between professional, personal and community lives presents potential challenges to establishing robust and effective systems of disclosure and whistleblowing particularly where conduct is egregious and affront to community norms. For that reason, Tasmania needs a regime and an approach to dealing with sexual abuse that is mindful of and works within that context.
48. These pressures are likely to be compounded in regional areas. By way of illustration, a victim (or another person on their behalf), when deciding whether to make a disclosure, might be influenced by their desire to preserve their standing in their community and the potential consequence of disclosure. For example, limited job opportunities in regional areas might act as a barrier to disclosing or reporting issues. Naturally greater awareness of and education about sexual abuse can mitigate against these dynamics.

Integrity and probity

49. There are strong social and professional connections among the population and among many employees of the TSS. These interdependencies make it particularly difficult to maintain integrity and a commitment to process and ethical conduct.
50. One way of mitigating potential integrity risks is through incorporating outside and external perspectives into program design. This would provide a number of

other benefits, such as facilitating greater professional interaction and exchange of views.

Recommendations on program design

51. The Commission of Inquiry's recommendations must be practical and capable of being implemented in Tasmania, having regard to its size and resources as well as the matters I have discussed above.
52. In my experience, there are a number of factors which should be considered in program design in the Tasmanian context. I have set out what I consider to be the most significant factors, below.

Focus on implementation

53. Having a sound legislative basis is necessary, but that is simply the foundation. Legislation may not have a practical bearing on decision making or resource allocation.
54. There needs to be a greater focus on implementation and on the development of strategies to achieve the level of cultural change required. The critical question is how the program will be implemented and resourced so that it can change attitudes and raise awareness over time.
55. As part of this, consideration must be given to all of the key components necessary to support implementation, such as people, resources, structure, systems and culture.

Place-based approach

56. It is also important to build community capability, so that service systems can be more responsive to community needs. Place-based approaches are one way of working in a place that empowers the broader community to collaborate and respond to their own unique challenges through locally tailored systems.
57. Every place-based approach is, by definition, unique to the place it is targeting. That said, place-based approaches tend to share common characteristics that guide their design and implementation, including:
 - (a) responding to complex, intersecting local drivers that require cross-portfolio and sectoral responses;

- (b) developing a shared understanding of local context drawing on a broad range of evidence, from data to research to lived experience and local knowledge;
- (c) being based around shared outcomes that reflect locally agreed priorities and unite local stakeholders;
- (d) embedding deep engagement and collaborative governance structures that engage across sectors and with a diverse cross-section of the community; and
- (e) applying formal approaches to evaluation to enable accountability and guide strategy.

58. However, there are a number of limitations of place-based approaches:

- (a) they require sufficient lead-time to build trust and relationships with the community and other service organisations. There is need for a permanent flexible resourcing to build relationship and facilitate the process;
- (b) successful delivery of place-based initiatives requires stable, dependable and predictable policy, political commitment and adequate funding; and
- (c) the impact of place-based approaches can be difficult to measure because community change is a complex process. Evaluation requires methodologies that can clearly demonstrate causality, attribution and cost effectiveness. This requires a long-range view, sufficient investment and support to fully embed an evaluation culture within community service organisations.

59. It is challenging to strike a balance between programs that are community led and driven on one hand, and programs that are sustainable on the other. Success stories can often turn to failure after a key leader leaves, or after a particular period of time due to a decline in interest. Therefore, programs need sustained resourcing, training and clear commitments from the community. This can be difficult in small communities where the pool of skilled and qualified people is restricted.

60. These sustainability risks can be mitigated to an extent by bringing communities together to establish a coordinated community of practice, as part of a capacity and empowerment model. This would involve:
- (a) communities sharing their issues, trends and learnings, and discussing potential solutions;
 - (b) sharing of resources, such as education materials, so that communities do not have to 'reinvent the wheel'; and
 - (c) sharing of expert knowledge with other communities through the provision of staff training, with a view to embedding capability.
61. However, a coordinated community practice requires broad agreement between the communities around the problem and a willingness to discuss it. This may be challenging on sensitive issues such as child sexual abuse.

Accountability and governance

62. Programs need accountable leadership and effective governance structures and practices. Design choices have to be made around which government departments have ownership of programs and the extent to which it is owned by the community, or whether programs are provided centrally and branded as a government program.
63. In the children and young people space, there is a substantial degree of overlap in responsibilities between agencies and they are necessarily reliant on each other although these issues have been partly addressed in the Agency restructure following the announcement of the abolition of the Department of Communities in early 2022. Relevantly, the proposed governance reform coming out of the Watt Review seeks to promote collaboration and cooperation between Heads of Agencies in the delivery of programs and initiatives across the TSS. It remains to be seen how this will be implemented in practice, but there are models for overall outcomes which can be considered by the Tasmanian Government.

Service redesign model

- 64. Alignment between the system and the program design is critical to achieve better outcomes. One way to ensure alignment is for the government and service provider to collaborate in a service redesign model.
- 65. By way of example, I am currently working with the Brotherhood of St. Laurence and Jobs Tasmania on the establishment of community jobs hubs across Tasmania. This program started with assessing the needs of the community and young jobseekers and being agnostic in terms of who is providing the services, followed by a redesign of the system to meet their needs down the track.
- 66. In my experience, this type of service redesign model has been delivering good results in other states and the Tasmanian Government is starting to engage with this model more often.

I make this solemn declaration under the *Oaths Act 2001* (Tas).

Declared at *Hobart*.

on *2/5/2022*

[Redacted Signature]

Richard Eccleston

Before me

[Redacted Signature]

[Redacted Signature]