



NEIGHBOURHOOD
HOUSE PROGRAM

**STRATEGIC
FRAMEWORK**

2019–2023

PART 2

*Achieving, Belonging,
Celebrating, Doing – Community
Development in Action*



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Introduction



The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of how the Tasmanian Government-funded Neighbourhood House Program operates.

This document is aimed at Neighbourhood House Boards of Governance (Boards), staff and managers, Tasmanian Government staff and anyone else who would like a basic understanding of how the program works. It summarises the key tenets of the program and provides references to external resources.

The Neighbourhood House Program Strategic Framework is a shared document between the Tasmanian Government and Neighbourhood Houses. It comprises two parts:

- Part one sets out what the parties want to achieve and describes how to get there. It aims to ensure that Houses are working to build a better Tasmania.
- This document is Part two. It gives an overview of operations and practice.

The third important document in the suite of program management documents is the *Tasmanian Government and Neighbourhood Houses Shared Commitment to Collaboration: A protocol for working together for the benefit of local communities* (the Protocol). The Protocol was developed in 2019 to solidify both parties' ongoing commitment to working together for the benefit of Tasmanians.

Roles and Responsibilities



Tasmanian Government Department of Communities Tasmania

The Tasmanian Government provides resources for Neighbourhood Houses, including core funding for staff and operations, and many of the properties from which Neighbourhood Houses are operated. The Department of Communities Tasmania is currently responsible for managing the Neighbourhood House Program from the Tasmanian Government perspective.

Neighbourhood Houses and peak body, Neighbourhood Houses Inc. Tasmania (NHT) receive funding from the Tasmanian Government but are not part of the Government.

Neighbourhood Houses

There are 35 Neighbourhood Houses in Tasmania, located all around the State. Together with the peak body NHT, they operate as a Network. All Neighbourhood Houses share the same goals – to support people, connect community, create opportunities for people to learn new skills, undertake local leadership roles and contribute to their community.

The core business of each House is community development. Community development is about people coming together around a common issue or opportunity and then working together to do something about it.

Neighbourhood Houses bring people together in community gardens, play groups, cooking classes, community sheds, vocational training, access to counselling, community lunches, food cooperatives, and much more.

They are all run by the community for the community and offer a welcoming safe space to connect with others and spend time.

Neighbourhood Houses are:

- run by a small staff and a large team of volunteers (including a volunteer Board)
- not-for-profit
- legally incorporated associations
- non-partisan – not aligned to any political party
- secular – not aligned to any religion.

House activities and programs are open to everyone, respectful of people's dignity and provided in a way that is free from discrimination. Each Neighbourhood House has its own Board which is responsible for consulting and designing programs to achieve this at a local level.

Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania (NHT)

NHT is the peak body for Neighbourhood Houses in Tasmania. NHT is an incorporated association and the 35 Neighbourhood Houses are its Members. It is governed by a 10-person Board which is elected by, and drawn from, member Houses. This ensures that the governance and work of NHT is always focussed on the issues that really matter to Houses.

NHT provides resources and support to Neighbourhood House managers and Boards. This includes operational templates and handbooks, tailored governance training, mentoring and information, tools for measuring outcomes, networking opportunities, regional meetings, special events and statewide programs, training and advocacy.

Governance Factors that Help Houses to Function Well

NHT has developed the House Health Checklist below as one way for Boards to reflect on the values and operations.

- The Board is committed to, and takes an active leadership role in, developing its community.
- The Board develops, regularly updates and follows its strategic plan which it uses to guide decisions.
- The Board manages and tracks its financial position responsibly and frequently – there is a budget in place and financial reports track spending against the budget.
- The Board has friendly and co-operative external relationships with a wide range of groups and organisations and seeks regular feedback from them.



- The House seeks out and welcomes as many people from the community as possible.
- The House has codes of conduct, and policies and procedures that guide the Board, staff, volunteers and users of the House.
- Board members behave and communicate openly and respectfully with each other.
- Constructive, productive and supportive relationships are in place with all people who work in or use the House.
- All Board members, staff and volunteers have up-to-date position descriptions.
- The House develops, regularly updates and follows its policies and procedures.
- There are clear, written definitions of delegated authority.
- There are regular staff meetings.
- The Manager has an annual appraisal which always involves discussion and reflection on the role and any training needs.
- The Board ensures the manager conducts annual staff appraisals which always involve discussion about each staff member's current position description and any training needs.
- The President and the Manager communicate regularly and have structured meeting times outside Board meetings.
- Training and support is offered to all Board members, staff and volunteers to be able to do their best.
- House governance is principled, transparent, accountable and effective.
- Board members and staff have fun, enjoy their work and celebrate achievements.

How the Network Operates



Community Development

Community development is an inclusive, fair and responsive approach to creating solutions with communities. It encourages active participation, consultation and broad involvement from the community in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of the project.

Central to community development is consulting with the community, to find out what they need, want, and are ready to act on. House staff and volunteers can help with creating plans and working towards achieving them. Neighbourhood Houses programs engage and grow the skills, strengths and capacities of participants for their own, and their community's, benefit.

The Important Role of Neighbourhood Houses in Place-Based Approaches

Neighbourhood Houses have been operating in Tasmania for over 40 years. Over that time, there has been a growing recognition of the value of place-based approaches, where the collective issues of a community are addressed at a local level. Neighbourhood Houses are experts in community development.

Houses are community-led and meet community needs through a grassroots approach. To support local communities, the Tasmanian Government has located a range of services in suburbs and towns across the State.

This includes Child Health and Parenting Centres, Child and Family Centres, Integrated Care Centres and Communities for

Children initiatives. These local service delivery complements the community development activities being undertaken by Neighbourhood Houses and offers opportunities for collaboration and learning.

In addition to working with locally-based government and non-government service providers, Neighbourhood Houses may formally join with partners to deliver community development on a larger scale. A range of community development initiatives are operating across the State, often using the Collective Impact framework, in which the efforts of several services or development providers are unified to address a defined goal or program. Examples include One Community Together in Clarence Plains and Burnie Works. These Place-Based Approaches address a range of issues of importance to local communities.

Members of the Neighbourhood House Network work together to share information, coordinate approaches and develop tools and templates that can be used by all members. Houses and NHT work together to advocate for change on specific issues.

Formal meetings include:

- **Regional House Meetings** are held in the North, North West and South every two to three months to ensure that information is shared among the members of the Network. Team members from CSPP may be invited to contribute to regional meetings via attendance and/or information sharing around shared projects and priorities.
- **House Manager Meetings** are held annually and provide a forum for collegial support, information sharing, process updates and structured practice sharing. In between these meetings, House managers have ongoing access to peer support via an online discussion group and phone tree. Mentoring is also offered by NHT for all Managers.
- A **Tasmanian Neighbourhood Houses Conference** is held annually. The conference program changes annually and covers topics of interest and relevance to Network members.
- **Neighbourhood House Week** is held annually in May. NHT usually organises a statewide event on the Thursday of the week, for example a simultaneous lunch.

- The **NHT Board** comprises staff, committee members and volunteers from each of the three regions.
- **House Boards:** Each House has its own board which meets regularly to ensure the House achieves its purpose of community development.

The Network also uses a range of informal and ad-hoc approaches to share information and gauge opinion, including:

- testing ideas through online surveys and discussions
- consultation with focus and working groups, with membership drawn from across Houses
- consultation with, and participation in, other community sector activities and networks
- advocacy
- mentoring
- peer support.

By working together, the Network is able to have input to state and national policy development. Examples of Tasmanian Government policies to which Neighbourhood Houses have contributed include:

- *A Healthy Tasmania*, and its associated *Thrive Tasmania Model*
- *The Tasmanian Government Framework for Community Engagement*.

The Network is an important source of information about what works and what could be done better at a community level. Houses that have tried similar approaches may be able to provide information on lessons learned that will benefit new initiatives.

Active collaboration, sharing and peer support between Houses is vital for the network. Open

collaboration and sharing are known to bring new insights and improve practices across the full range of House activities including; community development practice, administration and operations, House management, governance, and volunteer engagement and coordination.

Key Relationships

Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association (ANHCA)

ANHCA is the national peak body for Neighbourhood Houses. It represents over 1 000 Houses across Australia. It is funded by, and brings together, the work of each state Neighbourhood House peak body. The ANHCA Board comprises the chief executive officer and president of each peak body with teleconference meetings held every two months. An annual face-to-face meeting is held to share ideas, resources and common concerns. A major contribution of ANHCA is its ability to auspice funding applications to philanthropic funding groups which require tax deductibility status.

Tasmanian Council of Social Services (TasCOSS)

TasCOSS is the peak body for the diverse Tasmanian community sector. Its vision is: 'One Tasmania, free of poverty and inequality where everyone has the same opportunity.' TasCOSS provides information and advocacy, coordinates input into public policy and fosters community sector development. Network members can gain access to TasCOSS membership discounts via NHT.

Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC)

Houses are to be registered with the ACNC, who are now responsible for oversight of the Charity sector.

Resources

Information on the Neighbourhood House Program is available on the NHT website, and the Communities Tasmania website.

The key resources are:

- The Neighbourhood House Program Strategic Framework Part I
- The Protocol – Tasmanian Government and Neighbourhood Houses – Shared Commitment to Collaboration.

The NHT website also contains a wide range of useful resources. Key resources include:

- **NHT Operations Manual for House Management** – this document contains a range of key information about how Houses operate, including roles and responsibilities, human resources, funding and reporting. It contains useful operational information for anyone involved in House management.
- **NHT Handbook for House Boards** – this document is primarily for board members. It covers the role of the board, how to ensure board meetings are effective, strategic planning, good financial reporting, risk management and understanding the House constitution. See especially the Role of the Board video.
- **NHT Our Stories** – this booklet gives examples of successful community development projects. It can be used to get ideas and identify who may be able to provide information and ideas.



- **NHT Community Development Toolkit** – provides practical resources for designing, delivering, marketing, documenting and evaluating community development programs. Includes a Handbook and Resources.
- **Policies** – NHT provides various sample policies covering essential areas including human resources management, workplace health and safety, media, facilities hire and conduct of participants. These can be easily adopted by Houses for local use.
- **Outcomes reporting** – NHT provides tools and guidance on outcomes reporting. Neighbourhood Houses use the Results Based Accountability approach to reporting.
- The publication, *Making a difference for our communities: the evidence of the impact of Tasmania's Neighbourhood House Network* demonstrates the impact of Neighbourhood Houses.

Governance Training

Houses work best when they have a good understanding of governance. NHT staff can provide governance training on topics including:

- roles and responsibilities of board members
- strategic planning
- finance and Budgeting
- managing Risk
- managing people.

Contact NHT for details.

It is important that board members can fulfil their allocated roles effectively. Board members are encouraged to seek other specialist advice and training, in addition to accessing NHT resources and training, and seek qualifications, membership and/or accreditation relevant to their role. When board vacancies occur, Houses are encouraged to consider what skills each position will require, and try to select board members who have, or are able to acquire the necessary skills.

Working with State Government

The Tasmanian Government is a key partner of Neighbourhood Houses.

The Department of Communities Tasmania is the agency currently responsible for funding and strengthening relationships with Neighbourhood Houses. Neighbourhood Houses work with a number of Tasmanian Government departments.

Tasmanian Government and Neighbourhood Houses Protocol

A key document guiding the relationship between the Tasmanian Government and Neighbourhood Houses is the *Shared Commitment to Collaboration: a Protocol for Working Together for the Benefit of Local Communities* (the Protocol). The Protocol was developed by Communities Tasmania on behalf of the Tasmanian Government, and by NHT on behalf of the Neighbourhood House Network. It is available on both the NHT and Communities Tasmania websites.

The Protocol was launched in June 2019. It acknowledges that Tasmania's Network of Houses is the heart of our local communities. The protocol encourages Tasmanian Government and Neighbourhood Houses to work together to identify how they can assist local communities to benefit from social, community and economic development opportunities across Tasmania.

Neighbourhood Houses help the Tasmanian Government to:

1. Engage locally to understand the issues facing communities and together develop solutions.
2. Meet its goal of ensuring a better quality of life for all Tasmanians, regardless of where they live.
3. Ensure all Tasmanians benefit from social and community development, and that no one is left behind.

The Tasmanian Government will:

1. Consult and engage where appropriate with Neighbourhood Houses on local, place-based issues and collaborate on solutions.
2. Communicate the Protocol with staff and encourage collaboration with Neighbourhood Houses.
3. Ensure staff are given enough time where possible to develop effective working relationships with Neighbourhood Houses.

The Tasmanian Government and Neighbourhood Houses will work together to build and strengthen local partnerships to ensure activities and programs are accessible to everyone, adapted to meet the needs of local communities, and integrated so that resources are best targeted to the people and places that need them.

How to Initiate Collaboration Between Tasmanian Government and Neighbourhood Houses

Either Tasmanian Government or Neighbourhood House staff can initiate a conversation about working together. Tasmanian Government staff can contact a House directly or contact NHT. Outcomes will be better if Government and Neighbourhood Houses engage early in the development process and if both parties work together, rather than one party informing the other.

It may be more difficult for Houses to work out who to contact in Government. Sometimes, it is easy to work out who to contact. For example, it may be possible to contact the local school or police station directly and go from there. Sometimes it is more difficult. For example, staff of a local service might not have enough authority to initiate work with a Neighbourhood House and the request may need to be escalated to someone more senior.

It may take a few steps to get in touch with the right person. It can be useful to send an email, because the request can be forwarded to the most relevant area. The Tasmanian Government gateway website www.tas.gov.au links all Tasmanian Government departments, divisions, authorities, boards, commissions, councils, courts and government business enterprises. This website is updated to reflect changes, so it is a useful way of working out which area is responsible and how to contact them. NHT can also help Houses to locate the right Tasmanian Government contact.

Outcomes Focus



Outcomes-Based Reporting

Communities Tasmania uses outcomes-based reporting to assess Neighbourhood House performance. This means the focus is on the impact that Houses are making in community development rather than the processes used to achieve it.

Communities Tasmania and the Network use the Results Based Accountability (RBA) Framework described in Friedman's book *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough* (2015, PARSE Publishing). RBA considers three key questions:

- How much did we do?
- How well did we do it?
- Was anyone better off?

NHT's website contains a collection of resources to support outcomes-based reporting using the RBA Framework. Additionally, NHT can be contacted for information and advice.

Neighbourhood House Program Goals

Houses vary in focus, but all Houses work towards four program goals:

- Connect Community
- Support People
- Create Opportunity
- Local Leadership.

Tasmanian Government Outcomes

The Tasmanian Government sets outcomes to describe the change it wants to achieve. Neighbourhood House funding agreements currently use the following four population outcomes:

- Individuals reach their potential
- Families are strong and supportive
- Communities are safe, inclusive and resilient
- Tasmanians have good health and wellbeing.

Outcomes are revised occasionally to ensure they are up-to-date. When funding agreements are updated, the most recent Tasmanian Government outcomes will be included.

Funding and Reporting

Funding Agreement Basics

Community Services Policy and Programs (CSPP) is a unit located in Communities Tasmania and is currently responsible for program and funding agreement management.

Contact details are available at the end of this document.

The funding agreement is a legal document between the Crown and each Neighbourhood House. It sets out what each party must do. The Tasmanian Government provides funding, and the Neighbourhood House must meet conditions around performance, financial management and quality and safety. A template is used to create each funding agreement. It includes:

- Purpose of funding
- Strategic objectives
- Outcomes
- Activities
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Service specialist standards obligations.

Reporting Requirements

Neighbourhood Houses are required to report to the Tasmanian Government on performance, finances and quality and safety. These requirements are outlined in the funding agreement and include:

- **Financial accountability.** A copy of the half yearly financial report must be provided within five days of it being presented to House Board. The annual general meeting report, including audited financial report must be provided by 30 November each year.

- **Quality and Safety.** Serious incidents must be reported via email to CSPP in Communities Tasmania within 24 hours. Contact details are provided at the end of this document. Houses must also demonstrate continuous quality improvement. Some Houses use the Standards and Performance Pathways (SPP) information system, however use of SPP is not prescribed or funded by the Tasmanian Government. CSPP funding agreement managers can provide more information about quality and safety reporting.
- **Changes to board membership** are to be reported as soon as they occur.
- **Service delivery reporting.** This includes performance against KPIs and outcomes. The current reporting templates and tools are available on the NHT website. Houses are required to submit completed reports to CSPP via email with a copy (e.g. cc the email) to NHT by 31 July each year. NHT then compiles the individual reports into a Statewide Outcomes Report which is provided to the network and Tasmanian Government.

Houses may have other reporting requirements for other funding they receive.

Core Funding

The Tasmanian Government provides core funding to Neighbourhood Houses and the peak body NHT. This process began in 2000-01 when the State Government made an ongoing commitment to fund a network peak body, and to run a process to standardise the core

funding levels for Neighbourhood Houses. This resulted with the co-development of the first Neighbourhood House Program strategic framework for 2002-2007.

Before this process Houses had established themselves as independent community-based organisations. Across the state they were mostly volunteer-run and in receipt of various but largely piecemeal funding. This created uncertainty and funding inequity and made future planning difficult.

Today Houses are still operating as independent community organisations, and this remains a key strength of the program's approach. Government support via a program funding approach has provided recurrent core funding which has allowed for certainty, coordination, and a networked and strategic approach during the past decade.

This has enabled development of the statewide outcome reporting approach which evidences the impact of Houses across the state as well as in the individual communities they are based.

The first funding amounts were determined through an analysis of population, remoteness and relative socio-economic disadvantage in the communities where Houses were located.

Since then successful State Budget lobbying by the peak body, NHT and the network, has seen the core funding baseline rise to its current level. In-line with these budget submissions, the current funding allows each House to employ two full-time equivalent staff for coordination and management of the House in line with the Strategic Framework

Funding and Reporting

and Tasmanian Government Funding Agreements.

Funding Agreements with individual Houses contain further details, and the included funding tables will reflect the salary increases stipulated under the 2012 Equal Remuneration Order.

While it is recognised that community demographics and need can change over time the Tasmanian Government remains committed to the existing network footprint and the communities they represent

Funding Requests for New Houses

Any future funding requests for new Neighbourhood Houses will be considered against the placement of other local and place-based services, Government priorities and the needs of the community.

As an overriding principle, funding of any new Neighbourhood Houses would be targeted to priority regions of the highest need which meet the other criteria specified on page 30 of Part I of this Framework.

The Tasmanian Government considers new requests on a case-by-case basis. For instance, in 2018, Phoenix House on King Island was recognised as a remote Neighbourhood House and now receives ongoing funding.

Occasionally, the Tasmanian Government may make special-purpose funding available to the network. For example, in 2018 the Tasmanian Government allocated an additional \$2 million for capital upgrades and \$150 000 for security improvements. Where appropriate the Tasmanian Government partners with NHT to manage distribution of special-purpose funds to Houses.

Additional funding

In addition to core funding, individual Houses may receive funding from other sources, for example from Australian, Tasmanian or local governments, not for profit or philanthropic organisations. Options for raising funds include:

- Grants, for example Tasmanian Government Communities, Sport and Recreation grants, the Tasmanian Community Fund or Aurora Energy community grants.
- Rental income for premises, vehicles or equipment.
- Special events such as community markets, celebrations, fairs etc.
- Donations.
- Crowdfunding.

NHT has bulk purchasing power and this is used to attract better rates and discounts for goods and services which have included; insurance, employee assistance, human resources and payroll consultancy and solar panels. Occasionally NHT will administer funds provided by Government for distribution around the Network. Network members can find information about current opportunities on the NHT website.

Houses are advised to seek a clear understanding of the financial acquittal and reporting requirements that relate to each grant or funding allocation and ensure they have the capacity for compliant reporting.

Infrastructure: Leases and Maintenance

Many properties used by Neighbourhood Houses are provided by the Tasmanian Government Departments of Health and Communities Tasmania.

These properties are provided at a discounted rent.

The Tasmanian Government is working to consolidate these properties under the management of Communities Tasmania during 2019-20.

This will enable a single management approach to be implemented for most of the properties. Communities Tasmania will collaborate and communicate with NHT and the network around this process.

The remaining House properties are either local government, Department of Education or self-owned.

Glossary

Term	Explanation
Communities Tasmania	The Tasmanian Government Department of Communities Tasmania
CSPP	Community Services Policy and Programs – the business unit in Communities Tasmania currently responsible for the Neighbourhood House Program. Includes program policy and Funding Agreement Management functions.
Framework	The Neighbourhood House Program Strategic Framework 2018-2023. Comprises two parts. This document is the second part.
Houses	Collective term for Neighbourhood Houses.
NHT	Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania, the sector peak body for Neighbourhood Houses in Tasmania
The Network	The Network of Neighbourhood Houses in Tasmania, including the peak body NHT.
Outcome	Desired or intended effects from a strategy or program.
Place-based	An approach that aims to address complex issues faced by a community at a local level.
Protocol	A document developed by the Tasmanian Government and NHT to encourage collaboration. The full title is: The Tasmanian Government and Neighbourhood Houses Shared Commitment to Collaboration: a protocol for working together for the benefit of local communities.
Results-Based Accountability™	A trademarked approach to outcomes measurement.

Contacts

For further information please contact:

- Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania: nht@nht.org.au or (03) 6228 6515.
- The Community Services Policy and Programs team in the Department of Communities Tasmania: hdc.commservices@communities.tas.gov.au or (03) 6166 3692.



**Neighbourhood Houses
Tasmania**



**Tasmanian
Government**