People who are hard to reach

A GUIDE TO ENGAGEMENT
PEOPLE WHO ARE HARD TO REACH

A guide to engagement

Community engagement is not truly inclusive if it only involves people who are readily available.

The Government understands that in any community, there are some people who face complex, multiple and/or particular challenges in their lives.

Some people may want to become engaged in a particular issue but don’t know where to start, or they may experience obstacles that prevent or deter them from engaging.

WHAT MAKES PEOPLE HARD TO REACH?

Communities or individuals can face a number of barriers that make engagement with Government inaccessible or unappealing.

Incorrect assumptions made by government agencies about how people best participate in engagement can create significant barriers to engagement. Attitudinal barriers, such as apathy towards the government or a particular issue, a previous negative experience of engagement, and/or consultation fatigue are all factors that affect participation in engagement opportunities.

Other factors that can create barriers or deter individuals and communities from engaging include:

- lack of confidence
- lack of money
- lack of knowledge of rights
- lack of literacy or numeracy skills
- mental or physical health issues
- physical or intellectual disability
- issues related to gender, sexuality, or race
- language barriers
- age barriers
Engaging with people who are hard to reach

- lack of social support
- lack of transport
- time constraints
- homelessness or without a stable physical location
- caring responsibilities
- work commitments.

INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT

As part of planning engagement in a specific geographic area it is recommended that you talk to local government and non-government organisations, such as neighbourhood and community houses, about the demographic features and issues affecting that community. Ask questions about members of the community who could benefit from, or contribute to, the development of a government service or program but who do not engage due to particular barriers. You may also consider collaborating with organisations that work in the community or are connected with the people that you are trying to reach.

It can also be helpful to talk to staff in your own and other agencies who have previously engaged in this area or with this cohort to determine what worked well and what didn’t.

To improve your chances of successfully engaging with hard to reach communities and individuals you will need to take a flexible, non-judgemental approach and make the effort to go where people are. Communication should target people individually. You may choose to enlist the help of a community organisation, or well-known person in the community, to make a connection for you.

Use language that reflects how the community or individual sees themselves. It is not appropriate to make assumptions and ‘label’ the community or individual before you have an understanding of the situation or issues that are being faced. Labels may include ‘socially excluded’, ‘poor’, ‘disadvantaged’ or ‘vulnerable.’

Key considerations in planning and undertaking flexible engagement with hard to reach groups and individuals include:

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1 A more comprehensive list of possible barriers to engagement can be found on page 25 of A Tasmanian Government Community Engagement Framework.
Communicating consistently and frequently before, throughout and after the process, utilising local networks and different methods and formats of communication as appropriate. Do not rely on public notices or general advertisements.

Being considerate of and responsive to people’s time commitments and other constraints such as transport, cost, child caring responsibilities, disability, health problems, literacy, and language barriers.

Allowing enough time to try different approaches to engagement. For instance if small group meetings don’t work, make personal visits and work with community members one-on-one.

Ensuring all documentation and communication is in accessible language and in a range of formats (phone calls, emails and face-to-face visits, Mp3s, Easy English).

Making sure your approach is warm, friendly and non-judgemental. Engage in a way that is personally meaningful, acknowledge personal experiences, concerns, issues and/or problems.

Realising you may not have the skills to address the concerns, issues and problems that arise during engagement. In that instance, you should involve your manager and determine whether professional help is required.

Managing your own expectations and the expectations of the people you are reaching out to.

As always, it is important to provide feedback and follow up with those who have participated. Ask about their experience of engagement and what they felt was successful and unsuccessful to help build an evidence base for future engagement activities.

The A to Z of engagement techniques developed by the Department of Health and Human Services as part of the Your Care, Your Say project, provides an excellent overview of methods for community engagement.

WHERE DO I START?

There are a large number of organisations and networks that have a focus on issues that impact disadvantaged or socially excluded individuals and communities. These organisations can help you to identify and understand the current issues, and can provide information and advice on which communities you may wish to engage with and how to engage them. The Tasmanian Council of Social Services (TasCOSS) is an excellent place to start.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
<th>CONTACT DETAILS</th>
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| Anglicare                                        | Anglicare’s Mission is to achieve social justice and provide the opportunity for people to reach fullness of life.  
Website: [http://www.anglicare-tas.org.au/](http://www.anglicare-tas.org.au/)  
Email: [http://www.anglicare-tas.org.au/ContactUs.aspx](http://www.anglicare-tas.org.au/ContactUs.aspx)  
Phone: 1800 243 232                                                                                   |
| Baptcare                                         | Baptcare provides services and support to older people, children, families, people with a disability, financially disadvantaged people and asylum seekers.  
Website: [www.baptcare.org.au/child-youth-family/tasmanian-services/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.baptcare.org.au/child-youth-family/tasmanian-services/Pages/default.aspx)  
Email: [info@baptcare.org.au](mailto:info@baptcare.org.au)  
Phone: 03 9831 7222                                                                                   |
| Centacare Tasmania                               | Centacare respond to the needs of disadvantaged or marginalised individuals, families and the community by providing services that will enhance human dignity and freedom and enable people to realise their full potential.  
Website: [www.centacaretas.org.au](http://www.centacaretas.org.au)  
Email: [www.centacaretas.org.au/contact/](http://www.centacaretas.org.au/contact/)  
Phone: South (03) 6278 1660  
North (03) 6332 0600  
North West (03) 6431 8555 or 1800 819 447                                                             |
| Colony 47                                        | Colony 47 is a not-for-profit organisation offering services to disadvantaged Tasmanians.  
Website: [www.colony47.com.au](http://www.colony47.com.au)  
Phone: 1800 265 669                                                                                   |
| Department of Premier and Cabinet, Communities, Sport and Recreation Tasmania (CRST) | CRST brings together a number of related activities that have a focus on improving the quality of life of all Tasmanians, building community capacity, addressing social disadvantage and facilitating active citizenship.  
Phone: (03) 6232 7095                                                                                   |
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<tr>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mission Australia, Tasmania</td>
<td>Mission Australia works with government, community and advocacy groups, other not-for-profit organisations and businesses to deliver a range of community and employment support services that help individuals and families to stay housed, access education and gain the skills, training and confidence to find employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hobart@missionaustralia.com.au">hobart@missionaustralia.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>(03) 6234 3240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army Tasmania</td>
<td>The Salvation Army Tasmania provides support and welfare to a diverse range of individuals and groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:salvosaus@aus.salvationarmy.org">salvosaus@aus.salvationarmy.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>(03) 6228 8400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Cross Tasmania</td>
<td>The Red Cross works with the most vulnerable people and communities in Australia and internationally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tas@redcross.org.au">tas@redcross.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>(03) 6235 6077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniting Care Tasmania</td>
<td>Uniting Care Tasmania delivers family and community services that support and assist vulnerable families, children and young people across Tasmania, including some of the most disadvantaged regions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:admin.southtas@tas.unitingcare.org.au">admin.southtas@tas.unitingcare.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>(03) 6244 1144</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tasmanian Association of Community Houses (TACH)</td>
<td>TACH is the peak body for the 34 Community Houses and Neighbourhood Centres around Tasmania.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Web:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tach.asn.au">www.tach.asn.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tach@tach.asn.au">tach@tach.asn.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>(03) 6228 6515</td>
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<td>CONTACT DETAILS</td>
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<td>Tasmanian Council of Social</td>
<td>TasCOSS is the peak body for the Tasmanian community services sector, &quot;working</td>
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<td>Services (TasCOSS)</td>
<td>for a fair, just and inclusive Tasmania&quot;.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Web:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tascoss.org.au">www.tascoss.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:admin@tascoss.org.au">admin@tascoss.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>(03) 6231 0755</td>
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OTHER RESOURCES

There are many government and non-government organisations that provide valuable free resources on how to engage with disadvantaged and hard to reach groups. Some useful links are provided below:

**Capire**

Capire’s website has a range of resources on engaging with hard to reach people. 

**Australian Government Department of Social Services**

The Department of Social Services is responsible for, and include information for, the following areas [www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities](http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities):

- Families and Children
- Housing Support
- Seniors
- Communities and Vulnerable People
- Disability and Carers
- Women
- Indigenous
- Mental Health

**Queensland Government**