

### **1) What are your current biggest frustrations when dealing with Government—both the Executive and departments?**

COTA Tasmania's experience has varied across government. In our experience, the Executive is often more responsive than departments in terms of communication, access, and ministerial office engagement. We have generally found ministers' offices willing to meet, communicate, and collaborate.

The greater frustrations tend to arise within departmental processes. These include slow internal timeframes for matters to be agreed and progressed, multiple layers of approval for relatively routine matters such as grant documentation, and a lack of internal resourcing in areas that are intended to support stakeholder engagement and policy development. In particular, where government is seeking effective engagement with older Tasmanians and the organisations that represent them, capability and staffing need to match that ambition.

There is also frustration when reporting and workplan processes appear to operate as one-way transactions, with limited feedback on submitted reports, outputs, or progress. This can make it difficult to know whether stakeholder input is being used effectively or how work is tracking against shared expectations.

More broadly, short-term funding arrangements for peak bodies continue to undermine continuity, planning, and workforce stability. Longer-term funding commitments have been discussed for some time, including five-year funding for peak bodies, but need to be translated into practice.

### **2) Please share an example of an interaction, project, or process that has gone well. What made it successful?**

A strong example was the Older Persons Mental Health Reforms process in 2025. COTA Tasmania was involved as part of a working group that contributed to the development of new operating service models. What made this process work well was that advocacy and consumer organisations were engaged as genuine participants alongside government staff, helping to build a shared understanding of the reforms and the clinical care needs of older people requiring the service.

The process was strengthened by open and transparent communication from the Director and team, regular updates, and the participation of senior clinicians who attended sessions and listened directly to stakeholder perspectives. The timeframe also mattered: engagement occurred over an extended period, with a mix of face-to-face and online sessions, which allowed for deeper involvement and ongoing dialogue.

It did not feel like a one-off consultation. COTA felt heard, respected, and meaningfully involved in shaping the work.

### **3) How can Government better engage with stakeholders and with Tasmanians more broadly?**

Government could improve engagement through a more coordinated whole-of-government approach to consultation and community engagement. There would be value in a central point, potentially within DPAC, through which agencies plan and coordinate major consultation and engagement activity. This would help improve consistency, reduce duplication, and avoid bottlenecks where multiple consultations are issued at the same time.

Such a function could help ensure that consultation processes are:

- evidence-based in their design
- inclusive in who they reach and how they are conducted
- accessible, including for people who may be excluded by digital-only methods
- appropriately timed and coordinated across portfolios

A more centralised approach would also help build corporate memory, so that stakeholder views and previous engagement are not lost or needlessly re-sought across different departments and processes.

### **4) Do you have any other feedback or suggestions to help improve the performance and responsiveness of Government and the State Service?**

Government performance would be strengthened by a greater focus on implementation, accountability, and visible follow-through. Too often, significant effort goes into developing strategies, frameworks, action plans, and consultation processes without enough public visibility of what happens next.

Tasmanians do not need more strategies that sit on shelves; they need evidence that consultation leads to decisions, decisions lead to action, and action leads to measurable improvement.

Where commitments are made, they should be supported by clear responsibilities, realistic timeframes, measurable KPIs, and regular public reporting that is accessible and meaningful. This would improve transparency, strengthen trust, and make it easier for stakeholders and the community to understand what has been promised, what progress has been made, and where further effort is needed.

COTA's previous Budget Priorities Statements have also identified opportunities to improve efficiency and responsiveness, and those themes remain relevant here, particularly where they relate to clearer accountability, better coordination, and more effective use of resources.