



*Tasmanian Association of Community Houses Inc*

**EVERYDAY LITERACY FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES  
PROGRAM**

**EVALUATION BRIEF  
FOR  
PROGRAM STAGES  
2009 – 2011**

**APRIL 2011**

*TACH gratefully acknowledges the funding support of the Tasmanian Community Fund  
to establish the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program*



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# 1. Background and Context

## 1.1 Description of the Program

The Tasmanian Association of Community Houses (TACH), on behalf of the Neighbourhood House sector, has obtained a \$1.5 million grant from the Tasmanian Community Fund to establish and administer the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities (ELLC) Program.

The Tasmanian Community Fund (TCF) was established in 1999 from the sale proceeds of the Trust Bank to directly benefit the community by making grants to community organisations. In 2009, with the aim of improving adult and family literacy levels in Tasmania, the TCF invited applications for funding under the title *Learning in Perpetuity*. On the basis of its application, TACH was granted the funding.

Over the ten year period of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program, TACH is investing the \$1.5 million and using the interest to resource projects developed by Neighbourhood Houses to address literacy needs in their communities.

Depending on the investment earnings, approximately \$100,000 will be available in 2011 for funding local literacy projects, indexed in later years for inflation. In addition, some interest and capital will be put aside, so that at the end of the ten year period, a Literacy Future Fund will be established. This fund will be available for Neighbourhood House literacy projects in perpetuity.

The aims of the Program are for Neighbourhood Houses to offer support for a person's literacy development through two broad approaches. These are:

1. Provide a non-threatening entry for people through practical projects that seamlessly build literacy into the process.
2. Target support for people who have already identified or begun addressing their literacy needs.

In the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program, the focus is on improving adult and family literacy levels. For the purposes of the Program:

- Adult literacy refers to working with people past the age of compulsory education.
- Family literacy refers to working with parents and children together, developing stronger relationships between parents and their children and getting parents involved in their children's education.

## 1.2 Program Rationale and Assumptions

Literacy and life skill levels are an indicator of our ability to reach our potential as individuals and as a community.

The 2006 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey measured proficiency against the five domains of Prose Literacy, Document Literacy, Numeracy, Problem Solving, and Health Literacy on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest skill level and 5 the highest. Level 3 is considered the minimum required for individuals to meet the complex demands of everyday life and work in the emerging knowledge-based economy. This is what is sometimes referred to as functional literacy.

The table below sets out the results of the survey showing the proportion of Tasmanians assessed at those skill levels.

**Tasmanians literacy skill levels - 2006 (ABS Survey Results)**

	skill levels 1 & 2	skill levels 3 - 5
<b>Prose literacy</b>	49.0%	51.0%
<b>Document literacy</b>	50.7%	49.3%
<b>Numeracy</b>	56.2%	43.8%
<b>Problem solving</b>	73.0%	27.0%
<b>Health literacy</b>	63.4%	36.6%

**Tasmania Together** notes that functional literacy is important for self-development and effective engagement in community life. To address the disturbing results shown in the ABS survey, **Tasmania Together** includes a standard of supporting improved levels of community literacy. The table below sets out the current **Tasmania Together** targets for adult literacy levels.

<b>Increase the proportion of persons (15 – 74) who are considered functionally literate [skill levels 3 - 5]</b>	
<b>2006 (ABS survey results):</b>	51.0% prose literacy & 49.3% document literacy
<b>2010:</b>	53.5% prose and document literacy
<b>2015:</b>	56.0% prose and document literacy
<b>2020:</b>	58.0% prose and document literacy

People without functional literacy skills face difficulties in dealing with everyday tasks that we all encounter in modern life. Compounding these difficulties, they often feel embarrassed or ashamed of their literacy skill levels and feel less confident in themselves and their abilities.

In many cases this means people try to hide their difficulties and find it hard to seek support to improve their literacy. Poor literacy becomes a hidden problem and the people affected are skilled at concealing their secret.

It is for these reasons that Neighbourhood Houses were identified as being an important focal point for reaching people without the literacy skills to best achieve their potential. They are located throughout Tasmania in neighbourhoods and communities that face significant socio-economic disadvantage or social isolation. One of the biggest difficulties for people in these communities can be addressing their literacy issues. People often had a poor relationship with formal schooling, now feel disconnected with formal services, and are very reluctant to re-engage with institutions. In many cases, there is a strong reluctance to acknowledge literacy issues at all.

Neighbourhood Houses offer a soft entry point for people to engage with community life, build confidence and self-esteem, and enhance their choices in life. Houses are more than just physical venues, though this is important in communities with little community infrastructure. Neighbourhood Houses offer programs and activities both in the House and out in the community through which people develop relationships, build self-confidence and become motivated to move forward in their lives. In other words, the Neighbourhood Houses have both the physical and relationship capital to support local literacy projects.

The Neighbourhood Houses are not literacy experts, though many have already been involved in offering literacy support. Rather they are experts in linking disengaged members of their community with opportunities.

### ***1.3 Purposes of the Evaluation***

Under the funding agreement with the Tasmanian Community Fund, TACH is contractually obliged to commission and conduct an independent external evaluation of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities Program at two year intervals throughout the ten year course of the program.

The main purposes of this evaluation are to assess the initial effectiveness of the ELLC Program in achieving its aims and provide recommendations to guide the continuing development and operation of the Program.

Given that this evaluation is the first for the ten year duration of the program, this latter purpose is particularly important. Recommendations from the independent evaluation will guide the further development of the program, strengthen evidence-based practice, generate knowledge to improve the delivery of literacy projects and inform other workers and agencies in the literacy field of useful learnings.

### ***1.4 Primary Stakeholders***

The primary stakeholders for the evaluation are the Tasmanian Association of Community Houses and the Tasmanian Community Fund

## **2. Terms of Reference**

### **2.1 Key Evaluation Objectives**

The key evaluation objectives cover two distinct, though interrelated, areas. One deals with the implementation of the overall ELLC Program and the resultant effectiveness of the Program. The other deals with the implementation of the individual projects funded by the ELLC Program, and the outcomes attained by those Projects.

#### **2.1.1 ELLC Program – Implementation and Outcome Evaluation Objectives**

The key objectives for the evaluation of the implementation and outcomes of the ELLC Program are:

- Determine the appropriateness of the Program aims, rationale and assumptions, and policies.
- Review management, administrative and technical capacities of TACH to deliver the Program
- Review the processes and efficiency of operation of the Program
- Review the effectiveness of the delivery of the Program
- Recommend any improvements to Program design and delivery

#### **2.1.2 Funded Projects – Implementation and Outcome Evaluation Objectives**

The key objectives for the evaluation of the implementation and outcomes of the funded Projects are:

- Review how Projects identify local literacy needs
- Determine the suitability of Projects for addressing identified literacy needs
- Review the capacities of Houses to manage, administer and provide appropriate skills to deliver literacy Projects
- Review the processes and efficiency of operation of Projects
- Review the literacy and other outcomes from the delivery of Projects
- Identify gaps in local capacities and resources
- Recommend any improvements to the design, delivery and data collection of Projects

### **2.2 Evaluation Questions**

While the evaluator can negotiate with the Evaluation Manager to determine the most appropriate evaluation questions to meet the evaluation objectives, the following range of questions are likely to be relevant.

#### **2.2.1 ELLC Program**

- Are the rationale and assumptions for the ELLC Program appropriate for addressing local community literacy needs?
- Is an annual funding round the most suitable model for delivering the Program?
- Are the funding application guidelines and processes appropriate and sufficient?

- Is the selection process funding suitable Projects?
- Are Neighbourhood Houses receiving suitable and sufficient support through the Program to deal with everyday literacy issues in their local communities?
- What are Neighbourhood Houses views of the ELLC Program?  
What are key external stakeholders views of the ELLC Program?

### **2.2.2 Funded Projects**

- What types and numbers of Projects have been delivered e.g. overt literacy support, embedded support (literacy by stealth)?
- What are the total numbers of participants including gender and age ranges?
- What are the geographical areas serviced by projects (mapping)?
- Are funded Projects appropriately targeted?
- Are funded Projects managed efficiently?
- What literacy expertise was used to design and/or deliver Projects?
- What partnerships or linkages with other literacy providers were included in Projects?
  
- Are existing methods of collecting data from participants useful and effective?
- What other methods could be recommended?
- What was the literacy status of Project participants before and after Projects?
- Did participants like the way Projects were delivered?
- Have Projects elicited a change in behaviour, if so what type of behaviour?
- Have participants confidence levels changed?
- Have participants used any of the skills learned since completing Projects?
  
- Do Neighbourhood House staff and Project workers consider Projects were effective in providing literacy support to participants?
- What are local community members views of Projects?
- What are key external stakeholders views of Projects?
- What barriers were encountered or additional support needed in designing and/or delivering effective literacy Projects?
- What literacy resources did Projects provide that continue to be available after completion of the Projects?
- Do community members and Neighbourhood House staff find these resources useful and relevant to the needs of the local community?

## **3. Activities and Deliverables**

### **3.1 Activities**

- Review all ELLC Program files and Program documentation
- Review all funding applications received by the Program
- Review all Final Reports of funded Projects
- Conduct surveys and/or interviews with TACH staff, staff of funded Projects, key Neighbourhood House personnel & key external stakeholders
- Conduct follow up surveys and/or interviews with participants in funded Projects

### **3.2 Deliverables**

- Produce a written Draft Evaluation Report for TACH (two hard copy, one unbound, and one electronic copy in Microsoft Word)
- Produce a written Final Evaluation Report (six hard copy, one unbound, and one electronic copy in Microsoft Word) which:
  - Takes into account comments on the Draft Report
  - Is no longer than 70 pages
  - Includes a 1 to 2 page Executive Summary
  - Sets out findings against relevant evaluation questions
  - Makes recommendations in light of the evaluation findings
- Provide a statement of acquittal of funds
- Provide copies of all data collected in undertaking the evaluation
- With the Evaluation Manager, provide an oral presentation of the evaluation to TACH Board
- With the Evaluation Manager, provide an oral presentation of the evaluation to Tasmanian Community Fund Board

## **4. Sources and Methods of Data Collection**

Sources of data made available to evaluator by TACH:

- All records, procedures, information and forms of the Everyday Literacy for Local Communities (ELLC) Program
- All funding applications received by ELLC, all reports from funded projects and contact details of those projects

Data collection by evaluator:

- Face to face interviews with TACH staff
- Face to face interviews with Neighbourhood House staff or project workers who dealt with the funded Projects
- Survey/Questionnaire or face to face interviews with project participants
- Survey/Questionnaire or face to face interviews with key external stakeholders

The expectation is that at least 6 funded projects from the three funding rounds will be selected for data collection, with at least 2 projects being selected from each of the first two funding rounds. If insufficient projects are completed from the third funding round to be suitable for evaluation, additional projects from the first two funding rounds can be selected

Methodological choices by the evaluator will need to consider what is appropriate for the various participants in funded projects, taking account personal and community sensitivities and privacy considerations. These choices will also need to address considerations such as the comparability of data collected.

## **5. Evaluation Timetable**

The Draft Evaluation Report is due by 21 October 2011. Except for the oral presentations, the Final Evaluation Report is due by 25th November 2011. The oral presentations will be arranged by mutual agreement of the parties involved, but after the Final Evaluation Report is presented.

## **6. Budget**

The budget available for this evaluation is \$20,000 excluding GST.

The budget is to be inclusive of all costs for the evaluator including travel and accommodation, face to face meetings, research and data collection, report writing and publication, and oral presentations.

## **7. Skills and Knowledge**

The successful evaluator or evaluation team will specify methods appropriate to the key evaluation objectives and evaluation questions.

The successful evaluator or evaluation team will have:

- Knowledge of contemporary evaluation design and methodologies that include both quantitative and qualitative methods
- Experience in devising methodologies for evaluation within community development organisations
- Experience in devising methodologies for literacy based project evaluation
- Knowledge of locally based community development organisations and the context within which they operate
- Knowledge of literacy issues broadly in the Tasmanian community and specifically in the communities within which Neighbourhood Houses operate
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills and the ability to project these appropriate to the audiences encountered in conducting the evaluation
- Robust and competent project and time management skills
- Commitment to equality
- The ability to take initiative and work independently
- A willingness to travel within Tasmania
- An ability to adopt flexible work patterns, including weekends and evenings.

## **8. Key Risks and Mitigation Strategies**

The evaluator or evaluation team will have in place a risk mitigation strategy which, among other things, recognises that:

- the participants in most Projects will not have seen their involvement as being connected to literacy support;
- the emotional and physical safety of people must not be compromised;
- a current police check must be in place if the evaluation requires working with or in close proximity to children;
- Australian privacy laws and confidentiality must be understood and followed;
- program participants may get distressed talking about difficult experiences;
- all requirements for responsible research practice must be observed;
- the evaluator or evaluation team will not represent themselves as an instrument of TACH nor make any representations on behalf of TACH; and
- there may be limitations with the budget as this is inclusive of travel, face to face meetings, research, report writing and publication.

## **9. Evaluation Manager**

The Evaluation Manager and key contact for the evaluation is John Hooper, Executive Officer, Tasmanian Association of Community Houses. Close liaison with him will be required throughout the project.

## **10. Ownership of Information**

The ownership of any evaluation material arising from this evaluation and the report produced lies with the Tasmanian Association of Community Houses and may be published by them. The use by the evaluator or any member of the evaluation team of any of the evaluation material or reports for any purpose must be approved in writing by the Tasmanian Association of Community Houses.

## **11. Submitting an Expression of Interest**

The Expression of Interest should include the following:

- An outline of how the evaluator/evaluation team would achieve the deliverables and objectives stated above including:
  - research/evaluation methodologies
  - description of how data from local Projects will be collected and analysed
  - task list against timeline
  - any other matter deemed relevant by the evaluator
- Evidence of the evaluator/evaluation team's skills and knowledge relevant to the requirements of the brief
- Evidence of high quality report writing and the ability to research and analyse information
- CVs of any staff and members of an evaluation team and the extent of their involvement
- A detailed budget to achieve the work outlined
- References

Two copies of the Expression of Interest, one unbound, should be submitted by close of business on Friday 27 May 2011 to:

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Executive Officer  
Tasmanian Association of Community Houses  
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