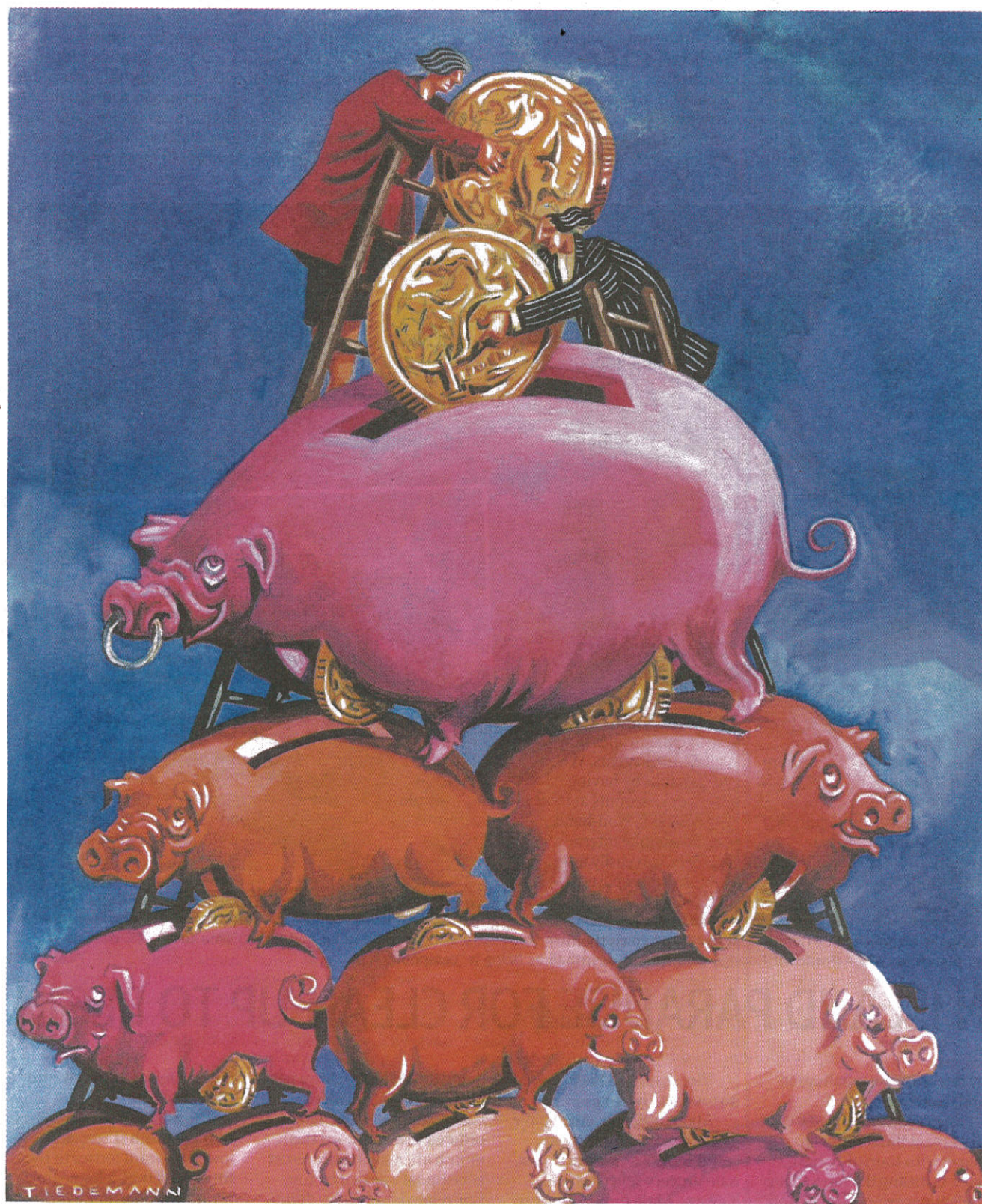


talkingpoint

can bank on it



deserve more kindness

They limit her access to clinics and doctors and they convey to her false information. The underlying assumption... is that women can't be trusted to make their own health decisions."

The challenging path that Charlie and Sue have taken is being replicated by at least 10 Tasmanian women each month.

Since closure of the surgical facility in January, patient numbers from Tasmania have grown tenfold.

Each woman tells a familiar story.

The need to travel has

placed them under increasing stress and strain and taken them from family and support networks.

It's added significant cost financially and emotionally.

Abortion is ethically challenging from some, but it is a very important part of a woman's sexual and reproductive health.

It needs to be provided with care, compassion and with the option to access a suite of supporting services such as counselling, contraception, screening for sexually transmissible infections and treatment. It also needs

publicly funded support like many other health services.

I urge the Tasmanian Government to consider the mental and physical welfare of Tasmanian women seeking abortions.

They do not deserve to be second-guessed, judged, stigmatised and penalised for making a deeply personal decision about their health and family circumstances.

Tasmania has a chance to be one of the states in Australia that deals with this issue compassionately and responsibly.

I urge the Premier and

Health Minister to consider supporting the local provision of a surgical abortion service as part of a broader suite of sexual and reproductive health services.

We stand ready to work with the Government as do politicians and healthcare professionals from all sides of the political spectrum.

Let's support Tasmanian women like Charlie and Sue.

Michelle Thompson is chief executive of Marie Stopes Australia, a national not-for-profit provider of sexual and reproductive health services.

Collaborating across agencies key to literacy

Addressing reading, writing skills needs a co-operative strategy, says **Wendy Quinn**

I HAD the privilege of experiencing the astonishing power of collective wisdom arising from authentic collaboration during my long career in the Health and Human Services Department.

For about five years, in the early 2000s, my job involved managing complex service areas including mental health, correctional health, disability and alcohol and drug services. Management of a new unit was added in the form of the Complex and Exceptional Needs Unit. This included implementing a new collaboration strategy. The unit was resourced with a small number of people to support the strategy across the very large department, including engagement of other government agencies involved with complex clients such as the Education Department, Police, Department of Justice and Corrective Services.

The genesis of the strategy arose from then-health minister Judy Jackson, who was dismayed her department could not solve the needs of complex clients. People in this group whose needs did not fit neatly into any one service system were sent elsewhere and often ended up with no service at all or very costly real needs.

An example is a homeless teenager with a mild intellectual disability and substance abuse issues who is not attending school and is in contact with police and justice for lighting fires.

The collaboration strategy achieved amazing results, finding lasting solutions for situations that were previously deemed unsolvable.

It was underpinned by the vision that collaboration is about people working together to achieve the best outcomes.

There was no official additional budget for service delivery allocation. Success relied on tangible support from the highest levels of leadership, a small group of enthusiastic, skilled facilitators employed and carefully developed and well-articulated processes and documentation working at three different levels. Firstly, at service delivery level in all services across the department using the principles to support working together and intervening early. Secondly, intervening with more complex cases with the assistance of key co-

ordinators. Key co-ordinators were about 100 designated managers/clinicians. CEN provided them leadership training and support.

The third and highest level of intervention involved the most senior directors/managers of service areas including hospitals, mental health, housing and child protection meeting to form a Board for Exceptional Needs to pool resources and collective wisdom aimed at finding solutions for the most complex exceptional and even catastrophic cases.

Senior people from other agencies were invited to attend BEN meetings, which operated as high-level case conferences. In line with Alan Briskin's harvesting collective wisdom work, they were underpinned with collaborative dialogue techniques including deep listening, suspension of certainty, seeing whole systems and seeking diverse perspectives, respect for others and group discernment in tandem with welcoming all that arises, and retaining a sense of humour despite the seriousness of situations.

The strategy was underpinned by five principles expressed in plain English and disseminated via every means possible, including posters that appeared in every meeting room in the department and small business card summaries with liberal use of easily identified artwork.

The principles being: **WORK** together in a spirit of co-operation.

INTERVENE as early as possible.

KEEP the client and their world at the centre.

FIND solutions that are fair, creative and affordable.

Applying an ethical and imaginative filter and wherever possible working with available resources.

DESIGN understandable processes.

CEN and the collaboration strategy fell victim to organisation restructure and changes in government direction. These collaborative methods could however be transferable to the issue of literacy in Tasmania.

Wendy Quinn was a member of the Tasmanian government senior executive service from 1999 to 2011. She now coordinates the UTAS Master of Leadership and runs a consultancy in guiding transformational journeys.