



Hon Michael Ferguson
 Minister for Health
 Minister Information Technology and Innovation
 Leader of Government Business in the House of Assembly

15 May 2015

Dear Minister,

The Tasmanian General Practice Forum (TGPF) is pleased to be able to provide comment on the Tasmanian Government’s White Paper *Delivering Safe and Sustainable Clinical Services (Exposure Draft)* as part of the *One State, One Health System, Better Outcomes* reform program.

The TGPF is the Tasmanian reference group for specialty of general practice, comprising representatives from the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), Australian Medical Association (AMA) Tasmania, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) Tasmania, Rural Doctors Association Tasmania (RDAT) and Tasmania Medicare Local (TML) – provides a forum of significant value and strength for discussion and positioning on key issues and challenges, and a mechanism for joint advocacy on important matters concerning general practitioners and the primary care sector.

Each of the five respective organisations is addressing the White Paper with separate submissions. Collectively, however, the TGPF has agreed on the following recommendations as fundamental to the position of general practice as gate keepers and capacity of the health system:

<p>Recommendation 1</p>	<p>That clinically-led decision making and evidence be front and centre of all Tasmanian health system investment and policy. Increasing GP representation on all Clinical Advisory Groups is paramount in guiding sustainable health reform and identifying opportunities for improved utilisation of general practice capacity in the health system to ensure the best health outcomes for the community</p>
<p>Recommendation 2</p>	<p>That the White Paper specifically addresses clinical handover and transfer of care between primary and hospital sectors. From the perspective of general practice the potential benefits to be gained from clinical service redesign in one part of the system will be limited if whole-of-system linkages are not clear and strong. Attention to clinical handover involving GPs will improve the long standing issue of service duplication, medication and service delays and continuous clinical care almost immediately.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3</p>	<p>That the Tasmanian Government commit to improving its system capabilities to drive eHealth. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extension of its electronic clinical communications to provide access for GPs to their patient’s hospital records,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better use of the current electronic discharge summaries to eliminate regional differences; and • expansion of the use of telehealth to deliver efficient and timely care particularly in rural and remote areas.
Recommendation 4	The proposed Role Delineation Framework needs to extend beyond tertiary facilities and inpatient care to be inclusive of the comprehensive skill set that GPs already apply in the primary care setting as well as the additional generalist skills that can be applied in secondary care settings. This would set the rules and expectations for delivery across the system with a process for credentialing of GPs, a tangible outcome.
Recommendation 5	That the Tasmanian Government, in partnership with sector partners, lead the development of a shared vision for the single Tasmanian health system that will help drive whole of system planning, reorientation of health system investment and balance responsibilities and priorities in health service provision.

From a primary care perspective, the TGPF does not agree that the ‘system is broken’ to the extent suggested in the Foreword, however, there is certainly agreement that there are many challenges to be overcome and many efficiencies to be gained. The Tasmanian Government will need to move beyond a focus on its own hospital facilities in describing ‘the system’ and more strongly acknowledge its capable sectoral partners. Tasmania has a strong primary health sector grounded in general practice which – as the system gatekeeper – has a track record of adapting to the changing needs of the community. The TGPF strongly emphasises that “what can be done in general practice, should be done in general practice” as a simple rule of thumb for all service planning.

The TGPF looks forward to the release of the White Paper and to actively contributing to further whole of health system reform that is required to make Tasmania a healthier state. The TGPF will continue to meet regularly to discuss Tasmanian health reform and welcomes the opportunity to provide consensus based advice from the General Practice community to the Minister.

Yours sincerely

Tasmanian General Practice Forum Members (as detailed below)

If you would like more information please contact any of the member organisations.

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