

The Tasmanian Labor Party is pleased to provide a submission to the Our Healthcare Future Consultation Paper.

This submission aims to provide an overview of the Labor Party vision for a safe and effective health care system in Tasmania, under the three reform initiative headings.

It is the Labor Party's belief that a robust and well-resourced universal health care system is the ideal framework around which to build other levels of integrated care.

Better Community Care

The Tasmanian Labor Party acknowledges that we need to address the causes of ill health through health promotion, prevention and early intervention activity if we are to effectively and systematically improve the health of Tasmanians.

With Tasmanians experiencing some of the poorest health outcomes it is vital that wellness promotion, illness prevention and chronic disease management are embedded in our health care system. A long term strategy, recurrent base funding is necessary for effective preventative health programs.

Such a strategy should set short, medium and long term goals to address a range of health related challenges and risk.

It is well reported that the health of Tasmanians and the social determinants of health, such as socio-economic status, housing, education and employment are a large factor in the health outcomes of Tasmanians. Governments must work together in addressing these determinants as a matter of priority. .

Equality and equity of access to health care must be addressed and include health literacy so Tasmanians can improve their health and their families.

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A communication strategy needs to be developed to, educate and promote preventative health strategies to the community, to lessen the impacts of the social determinants of health.

A Health in All Policies approach will improve the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians. This will require a legislative framework to ensure the long term sustainability of such a policy, with the Department of Premier and Cabinet being the coordinating agency responsible for development.

State and Federal Government Departments responsible for health programs and initiatives need to work closer together to align programs and achieve maximum results.

Preventative health screening and early intervention are critical with our current health challenges. This along with livability principles must be in all Government policy relating to built environment.

Modernising Tasmania's Health System

The Government needs to work to improve the understanding of health care professionals about the capacity in regional hospitals and community health centres to continue to improve telehealth services and patient care where the patient lives. Increasing the use of tele-health will assist patient access to appointments without travelling which will enhance their options for accessing care.

The use of video conferencing for staff meetings and professional development in the health sector should be actively encouraged and supported. The use of technology has the potential to save time and money whilst linking our health system with best practice models from around the world.

The Government should prioritise the transition to integrated electronic health records which will aid the smooth transfer of patient information between all levels of health care and ensure timely and accurate information is available when treating patients. Data protection must be a key component of any IT system improvements and upgrades

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Planning for the Future

Building Tasmania's health intelligence provides an opportunity to improve understanding, planning and evaluation of illness prevention and health promotion strategies. Reliable, meaningful data consistent with national definitions is needed to help build health intelligence and inform policy decisions.

Providing public health services to Tasmania is a network of 4 major hospitals and 23 rural and community hospitals/multipurpose centres. Service provision includes acute and sub-acute inpatient beds, day surgery/treatments, primary health care, residential aged care and emergency care. The Tasmanian Labor Party believes that this network provides an important foundation for increasing access to services and reducing duplication of services. Labor is committed to improving models of service delivery to provide better care to more people.

Labor remains committed to strengthening the links between the acute hospitals, rural hospitals, and providers of primary health services, aged care, private hospitals, mental health and disability services. Better linkage means better utilisation of acute and sub-acute beds, better transition of care from one provider to another without delays or lack of appropriate information relating to the health plan of patients and reduction of representations to Emergency Departments.

The reliance upon acute care services for patients will decrease when the significant issue of the social determinates of health and wellness are fully understood and addressed by government, in a whole of government approach. A Health in All Policies approach is required due to the fact that most of the social determinates of health are outside of the health department's responsibility.

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The Tasmanian Labor Party has a strong history of supporting Preventative Health and Health promotion services in Tasmania. The evidence and experience from our work shows that the policies and programs aimed at behavior change, measured across a population, take many years through which efforts must be sustained and responsive. We would encourage the Government to draw on this knowledge and experience to expand and continue such efforts and thus continue to build on a preventive health system that will deliver improved health and wellbeing outcomes for all Tasmanians.

Given the multiple social determinants of health, it is clear that a prevention agenda requires cross sectoral, multilevel interventions that extend beyond the health sector into sectors such as housing, welfare, justice, immigration, employment, agriculture, education, family and community services, Indigenous affairs and communications. There are many positive changes that individuals and families can make, but if the environment in which they exist – where they work, live and play, interact and experience life – is not conducive to good health, the impact of individual behaviours may be severely limited.

Tasmania's future depends on our ability to tackle long-term health challenges and this will require extensive changes to meet demands of increased rates of chronic disease and an ageing population. Good health boosts productivity and improves workplace participation. A healthy state will deliver a stronger economy.

We recognise the need for far greater focus on prevention and wellbeing. Keeping people well and out of hospital will deliver not only benefits to individuals but the entire health system.

The 2018-19, State Budget included 1.2% of the \$8.1 billion total health budget in specific preventative health measure. Many other countries commit to an investment of around 5% of their total health budget into preventative health. We believe the Government should be working towards budget 5% of the health budget for prevention health a Health in all Policies approach.

The Tasmanian Labor Party welcomes the opportunity to work with Government and encourages the Government to consult in a meaningful way with the Tasmanian public about its plans for Our Healthcare Future.