



SHPA Tasmanian Branch submission to Our Healthcare Future: Advancing Tasmania's Health (Exposure Draft), July 2022

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia is the national professional organisation representing the 6,300 hospital pharmacists and their intern pharmacist and pharmacy technician colleagues, working across Australia's health system. SHPA is committed to facilitating the safe and effective use of medicines, which is the core business of pharmacists, especially in hospitals.

Welcoming the opportunity to provide input into this Consultation, SHPA Tasmania Branch's recommendations address ways in which the Tasmanian Government can advance Tasmania's health by closing the loop on medication safety and address ongoing issues which pose ongoing risks to patient safety and health outcomes. We commend the Tasmanian Government for exploring opportunities to extend the role of clinical professions such as pharmacists, to better support the delivery of healthcare across Tasmania.

SHPA Tasmanian Branch has the following recommendations and considerations necessary for Advancing Tasmania's Health to achieve its objectives.

If you have any queries or would like to discuss our submission further, please do not hesitate to contact Jerry Yik, Head of Policy and Advocacy on yyik@shpa.org.au.

Establish a Tasmanian Hospital Pharmacy Workforce Strategy for Tasmanian Health Service, encompassing investment in hospital pharmacy workforce recruitment and retention strategies and expanding the Residency training programs to all four Tasmanian Public Hospitals

In line with 'Building the Health Workforce' and Health Workforce 2040, SHPA recommends establishing a Tasmanian Hospital Pharmacy Workforce Strategy for the Tasmanian Health Service to encompass:

- Profiling the current hospital pharmacy workforce to identify gaps in services against professional standards
- Workforce recruitment and retention strategies to address workforce shortages and increased demand for hospital pharmacist expertise
- Expanding accreditation of all Tasmanian Health Service sites to offer Foundation Residency for pharmacists
- Scaling up [Foundation Residency programs](#) to offer more positions for early career pharmacists to ensure Tasmania has a sustainable pipeline of pharmacists
- Scaling up [Advanced Training Residency programs](#) to ensure Tasmania has a sustainable pipeline of specialist pharmacists in critical disciplines such as cancer services, critical care, mental health, surgery and perioperative medicine and emergency medicine
- Expanding scope of practice of hospital pharmacists and hospital pharmacy technicians to achieve safe, quality and efficient care

This is much needed as the demand for pharmacists' expertise increases, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, reduced hospital capacity and pressures to efficient and safe bed flow which hospital pharmacists are critical to. An examination of workforce data from the Tasmanian Health Service shows increased rates of recruitment and retention difficulties, and without sufficient means to understand these issues, safe and quality pharmacy care will be threatened.



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Throughout Tasmania and around Australia, hospital pharmacy departments are already being forced to staff specialist acute care wards with junior pharmacists in the absence of experienced specialist pharmacists. The expansion of Foundation Residency and Advanced Training Residency programs in both positions and health service sites, is necessary to ensure there is a sustainable workforce pipeline for Tasmanian hospitals.

To capitalise on the current investment of 23 hospital pharmacy interns annually in Tasmanian public hospitals, SHPA recommends extending the Foundation Residency programs for early career Tasmanian hospital pharmacists to all four Tasmanian public hospitals to ensure young pharmacists trained by the Tasmanian public hospital system remain in this pipeline. SHPA commends the Tasmanian Government for implementing Foundation Residency programs at the Royal Hobart Hospital and Launceston General Hospital, and believes that extending this to the North West will establish an important workforce development and retention strategy in the North West Regional Hospital and Mersey Community Hospital.

SHPA also recommends extending the Advanced Training Residency program to additional specialties at the Royal Hobart Hospital where there is specialist capacity. SHPA commends the Tasmanian Government for being an 'early adopter' of Advanced Training Residencies in Pharmacy Leadership, and believes that extending this training opportunity to disciplines such as Critical Care, Oncology, and Paediatrics will improve workforce development and patient care. The rise in chronic diseases combined with an ageing population with complex medication regimens places a growing burden on the Australian health system. The increased demand and service pressure is particularly acute in north-western Tasmania, where recruitment is chronically difficult.

To complement these investments, additional pharmacist clinical educators are also needed to oversee and continue the ongoing development of the workforce.

SHPA commends the Tasmanian Government's recent investment into pharmacy technicians to enable Bedside Medication Management models, announced in March 2022. This is a significant expansion in scope of practice for pharmacy technicians which will achieve efficiency and safety in Tasmania's healthcare system. Additional expansion in scope of practice for pharmacy technicians which also achieve efficiency for pharmacist resources, is Tech-Check-Tech models for the supply of inpatient medicines, which have demonstrated accuracy and safety. Additional information can be found in the Pharmacy Technician Workforce Roadmap.

Ensure investment into clinical pharmacy services, including innovations such as Partnered Pharmacist Medication Charting (PPMC) services are maintained and expanded to address system wide capacity issues with emergency departments, bed access and flow, and elective surgery waitlists

As explored in the 'Drivers of Tasmania Population health Needs', projections of hospital utilisation show that if trends continue, public hospital demand will increase significantly over the next twenty years, as will the number of ambulance responses. Hospital Pharmacists are typically the last clinician a hospital patient will see prior to discharging, and are therefore critical to efficient and safe bed flow in hospitals and emergency departments.

In order to tackle future pressures throughout the system and unprecedented demands on resources, at a minimum the current level of hospital pharmacy services need to be maintained, and should be expanded to achieve safety, quality and efficiency in the healthcare system. These should be funded against pharmacist to patient ratios published in [professional standards](#) and within the Tasmanian Health Service Pharmacy Staffing Requirements for Inpatient Wards and Facilities Protocol to ensure comprehensive clinical pharmacy services



can be delivered to patients. Absence of these will only increase the risk of medication-related hospital admissions, which cost the Australian healthcare system \$1.4 billion annually, and also risk the development of Hospital Acquired Complications (HACs) for which there are funding penalties.

SHPA commends the Tasmanian Government on implementing PPMC to select wards at major sites in Tasmanian Health Service, and strongly recommends expanding PPMC throughout more wards and all healthcare facilities in Tasmania..

In the PPMC model, a pharmacist conducts a medication history interview with a patient; develops a medication plan in partnership with the medical team, patient and the treating doctor, and then the pharmacist charts the patient's regular medications and the doctor charts any new medications. This model has been proven to reduce the proportion of inpatients with at least one medication error on their chart by 62.4% compared with the traditional medication charting method, while also reducing the length of inpatient stay by 10.6%.

Using a PPMC model will decrease the burdens upon medical staff and clinical resourcing dedicated to medication charting and increase the through put of patients if medications are already reviewed and charted prior to admission and ready for review by the admitting medical or surgical team. It has also been shown to improve medication safety and patient care.

A [Deakin University health economic evaluation](#) of more than 8,500 patients has explored the impacts of PPMC models upon patients in emergency departments and general wards. The economic evaluation also showed a decrease in the proportion of patients with at least one medication error from 19.2% to 0.5% and a reduction in patient length of stay from 6.5 days to 5.8 days. The estimated savings per PPMC admission was \$726, which in the replication was a total hospital cost saving of \$1.9 million with the five health services involved in the PPMC service continuing their operations.

The decrease in patient wait times in emergency departments and the ability to increase the number of elective surgeries undertaken are essential for a sustainable healthcare model and hospital pharmacists are able to provide clinical expertise and services to achieve these outcomes whilst reducing the administrative and clinical burdens upon the medical workforce

Invest in Clinical Informatics Pharmacists as electronic medicines management experts in all stages of planning, development and roll-out of the Tasmanian Health ICT plan which encompasses electronic medical records to ensure the viability, quality, safety and governance of electronic medicines management across the state

Early and dedicated funding should be provided to enable dedicated Clinical Informatics Pharmacists to be involved in the planning, development and roll-out of the Tasmanian Health ICT plan. Pharmacists as medicines management experts are skilled to ensure that the electronic flow and whole systems approach to electronic medicines management and records are properly integrated and standardised across the healthcare system in a manner that is consistent with national and international safety standards and recommendations.

In line with the strategic ambition 'Delivering the Health Infrastructure of the Future', SHPA recommends implementing a 'closed loop' electronic medication record (EMR) system across Tasmania's hospitals to ensure medications are used safely and cost effectively through enhanced Electronic Medication Management.

Closed-loop EMRs means an integrated and interoperable electronic medication management system which includes hospital-wide medicines stock management and clinical medicines management systems where medication orders are electronically tracked and linked from the time of prescribing through to dispensing,



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supply, administration and discharge and embedded throughout patient electronic medical records. Closed-loop EMRs have the potential to reduce medication errors including those relating to allergies and adverse drug reactions, other clinical errors, and improve medication safety by eradicating the need for transcription.

Clinical Informatic Pharmacists are skilled in the design and implementation of these systems and are suitably trained to implement closed-loop Electronic Medical Records (EMRs) ensuring medication safety.

Failure to include pharmacy in advance of implementation will be extremely challenging for the state's healthcare system and will likely delay progress and negatively impact projected state government costings. The importance for the early inclusion of pharmacists as medication safety experts in the planning of Health ICT and electronic medical records implementation can be seen in the failure of electronic medical records design to adequately detect and alert staff to the incorrect prescribing. For example, the [Sydney patient who died from multi-drug toxicity](#) after being inappropriately prescribed the wrong medication on their EMR, did not have sufficient medication safety oversight from pharmacists.

Tasmania's Our Healthcare Future plan prioritises technology to improve the quality, safety and effectiveness of the health care system and dedicated Clinical Informatics Pharmacists as a medicines management experts is necessary to achieve this.



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