

Investment in the alcohol and other drugs sector in Tasmania Summary



2016 - 2022

Investment in alcohol and other drug services increased by

50%



\$17.3m

Tasmanian Department of Health **\$10.3m**
Australian Government **\$1.9m**
Other sources **\$5.1m**



2016 - 2022

Cost of service demand increased by

\$60.2m



2016 - 2022

The population increased

There were more people with severe substance use disorder

The cost of treatment increased



\$12.2m

Shortfall between investment and demand. Since 2017 the shortfall has decreased from 50% to 25%



Service user and service provider feedback



Strengths

Sector is open to new and innovative ways of working

Strongly committed to passionate workforce

An active and supportive alcohol and other drug peak body - ATDC



Shortfalls

Access to services outside the South
Pharmacotherapy
Online information
Special populations

Why this report is important

The Tasmanian alcohol, tobacco and other drugs sector is undergoing significant reform.

The aim of the reforms is to ensure Tasmanians affected by alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs have access to appropriate, timely, effective and quality services.

In response to a 2015 review of alcohol and drug use and service responses in North-West Tasmania, the Tasmanian Government engaged consultants Siggins Miller to conduct a treatment system review. In August 2017, the Tasmanian Government released the A Single Tasmanian AOD Service System Framework – Final Report (the Siggins Miller Report) which identified key actions to inform the reform of the sector. The report used available data from 2015-2016.

The report guided the development of the Reform Agenda for the Alcohol and Other Drugs Sector in Tasmania, which was released in 2020.

In 2022, Primary Health Tasmania and the Tasmanian Department of Health commissioned 360Edge to update the 2017 report to inform the ongoing reforms.

This update will support the Reform Agenda for the alcohol and other drug sector and inform commissioning of services by Primary Health Tasmania in July 2023 and the review of Tasmanian Department of Health funding agreements in July 2025.

How we went about the report

We looked at three key areas to support the Reform Agenda for the Alcohol and Other Drugs Sector:

- Funding investment
- The costs of treatment demand
- Experiences of people who use alcohol and other drug services across Tasmania.

Investment estimates

We looked at the amount that is invested in alcohol and other drug services across government, non-government and private services. To do this we categorised services into a 'taxonomy' and identified the funding invested in each of the categories. This is not a perfect method as some services fit into multiple categories and some don't fit neatly into the main categories but it is a reasonable categorisation of service types.

Treatment demand estimates

The 2017 report used the Drug and Alcohol Service Planning Model (DASPM) designed to estimate the resources for an average population that would be funded by state and federal governments, including services delivered by community service organisations specifically for people who use alcohol and other drugs. It didn't include related services like housing and homelessness and forensic services like corrections, prisons and diversion programs.

We calculated costs of resources needed

to meet the demand for services across five drug types: alcohol, benzodiazepine, cannabis, amphetamines, and opioids.

Because a small number of people seek help for other types of drugs, this is not a completely accurate calculation, however it captures most of the demand for alcohol and other drug related services.

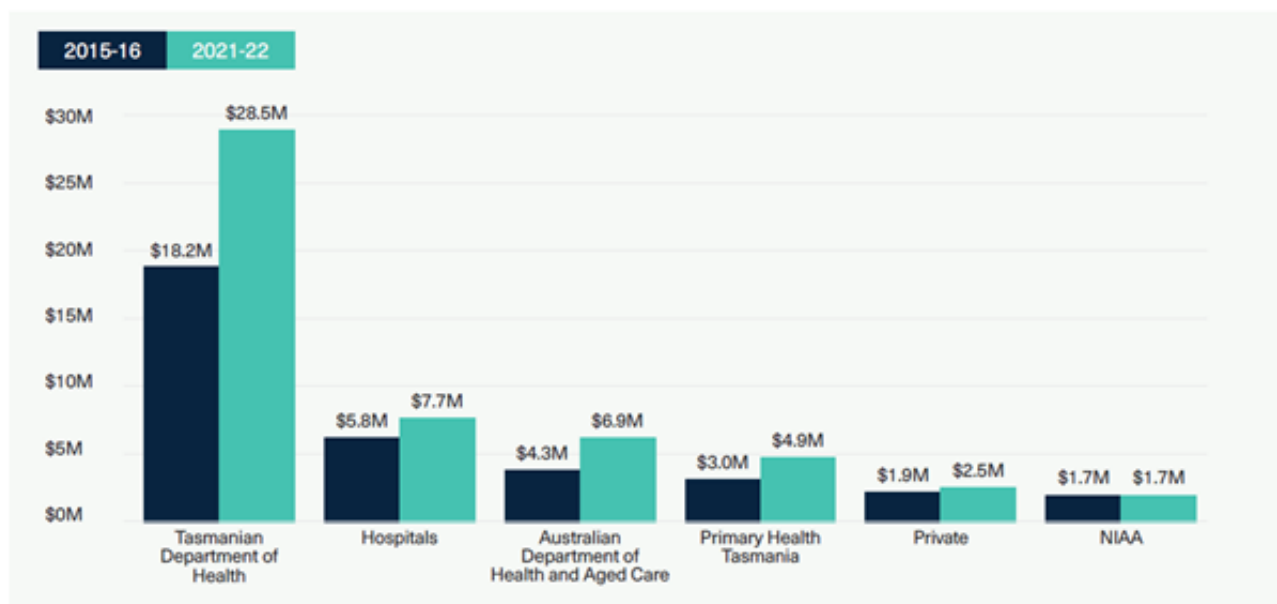
Service user experiences

We talked to a range of service users and service providers.

We asked them about the strengths of the system that could support the Reform Agenda for the Alcohol and Other Drugs Sector. We also asked them about service gaps and difficulties with the service system.

This information can help identify areas of high need for further investment.

What we found



Service types

Tasmania offers a wide range of service types across government, non-government and private services. We used the 2017 report to categorise these so we could allocate funding estimates.

The categories include:

- 'Low threshold' intervention services, such as information, assessment, brief intervention, education and prevention
- Withdrawal services, including outpatient, home-based, hospital-based and residential withdrawal
- Psychosocial services including outpatient counselling, case management, outreach, group programs
- Medication assisted treatment (also known as pharmacotherapy)
- Primary care such as general practice
- Residential treatment
- Inpatient treatment (non-withdrawal) such as in a hospital service

Funding investment

There has been a 50% increase in investment in alcohol and other drug services since the 2017 report.

The investment in alcohol and other drug treatment in Tasmania was \$52.2m in 2021-22 compared to \$34.9 in 2016-2017, a difference of \$17.3m.

The Tasmanian Department of Health made the biggest investment in services and made the largest increase, investing an additional \$10.3m.

During the period 2016-2022, there was new investment of \$1.9m from the Australian Government's National Ice Action Strategy and \$3.6m of new Tasmanian Government investment in residential rehabilitation.

The quality of treatment for alcohol and other drug services in Tasmania was rated highly.

Treatment demand

Investment needed to meet alcohol and other drug treatment demand in Tasmania in 2021-22 was \$60.2 million.

The reasons for the increase in demand costs are increases in Tasmania's population by 37,000 so more people need services; there were more people with more severe substance use disorders in the population; and the cost of delivering services increased.

The gap between demand and investment

The difference between investment needed and treatment demand costs is \$12.2m.

Since 2017, the gap between demand and investment has been reduced by 25%. An additional \$12.2m of investment is required to meet demand.

In particular, investment in withdrawal services needs to increase by 50%, non-residential and residential rehabilitation needs to increase by 30%, and significantly more investment is required in pharmacotherapy.

Service user experiences

Strengths of the alcohol and other drug system

The quality of treatment for alcohol and other drug services in Tasmania was rated highly. The key strengths identified by service users and service providers were:

- The sector is open to new and innovative ways of working
- A strongly committed and passionate workforce
- The important role of the peak body Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council Tasmania (ATDC) in supporting and strengthening the community sector, providing leadership, advocacy and relationship building.

Alcohol and other drug service system

The key service shortfalls identified by service users and service providers were:

- Access to residential rehabilitation in the North West
- Access to withdrawal services outside of the South region
- Access to pharmacotherapy treatment
- Availability of online information about alcohol and other drug treatment services
- Availability of services for specific populations (eg. women, young people, families and people living in rural areas)
- Availability of culturally responsive services
- Services and support for people coming out of prison
- Collaboration with related services such as mental health, criminal justice and housing services.

What's next

Tasmania Reform Agenda for the Alcohol and Other Drugs Sector

The 10-year Reform Agenda for the Alcohol and Other Drugs Sector plan outlines eight reform priorities to ensure Tasmanians affected by alcohol and other drug use can access appropriate, timely, effective and quality alcohol and other drug services, supports and treatments.

The Tasmanian Government has committed \$7.493 million over the 2023 and 2024 budget years to continue to implement the Reform Agenda for the Alcohol and Other Drugs Sector.

A number of specific actions have been identified including recruitment of staff to the Tasmanian Department of Health Alcohol and Drug Services; the development of a homeless consultation and liaison service and an alcohol and other drug brief intervention program; and the development of a lived experience representative body and network.

There are plans to expand access to residential rehabilitation and withdrawal services, particularly in the North and North-West, including expanding trials of the 'Detox at Home' program. These additional investments are in line with the needs identified in our report.

There is also an intention to expand access to pharmacotherapy. There is currently a review underway of the Tasmanian Opioid Pharmacotherapy Program.

The Australian Government has recently announced changes to Opioid Dependence Treatment medicines to make them more accessible. The Tasmanian Department of Health is working with the Australian Government to implement these changes.

The Department of Health has consulted with the sector and people with lived experience to develop the next implementation plan for the Reform Agenda.

Activities under this plan will progress work to address identified issues and ensure integrated and collaborative reform responses.

The broader context of reform

The Tasmanian Government is publishing a new Tasmanian Drug Strategy 2023-2028, expected to be released at the end of 2023. It is a whole-of-government and whole-of-community strategy that will align with the National Drug Strategy 2017-2026 and closely intersect with the Reform Agenda for the Alcohol and Other Drugs Sector.

Other significant Tasmanian Government reform programs and strategies that will influence the alcohol and other drug sector in Tasmania, include:

- Rethink 2020, the state's overarching mental health plan
- Tasmanian Mental Health Reform Program
- Healthy Tasmania 2022-2026
- Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-2027.



360 edge.