

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **GPs support calls for better monitoring of morphine prescription**

The peak body for Tasmania's general practitioners, General Practice Tasmania, has welcomed calls for improved monitoring of the prescription of morphine in Tasmania. However it warns that the problem is far more complex than has been publicly reported.

General Practice Tasmania Chairman Dr Patrick O'Sullivan, said that the problems of high prescription levels and 'doctor shopping' highlighted in a recent coroner's report into a young person's death in southern Tasmania were of significant concern to GPs.

"At the same time, we need to be careful to understand the full extent of the problem and the complex factors influencing it," Dr O'Sullivan said.

"Overall, we are unconvinced at the suggestion that Tasmanian GPs are, in some way 'different', to their mainland counterparts in their prescribing practices. We believe that more work needs to be done to understand and address the underlying causes including monitoring GP prescribing patterns to determine the extent of the problem. Significant gaps in services that are currently being filled by GPs, by default, must also be addressed," he said.

"We must remember that people suffering from chronic pain have legitimate need for these drugs and do not have ready access to specialist pain management clinics. They are often waiting for extended periods to have their conditions treated. We certainly agree that there is a need for better support for GPs in helping these patients"

"To address service access for patients with substance abuse problems, we are currently running an education program aimed at developing better links between GPs, alcohol and drug services, mental health services and community pharmacies so that there is a wider range of viable, alternative management options for these patients.

"Tasmanian GPs are doing what they can under the circumstances, but closer monitoring of the complexity of the issue is certainly required."

### **Contact Details:**

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*The General Practice Tasmania network is a unique statewide infrastructure that supports contemporary general practice in Tasmania by linking GPs with each other, by supporting all members of the general practice team and, increasingly, by employing or supporting allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, dieticians and psychologists to be part of the primary care team. General Practice Tasmania is also a proud member of the Australian General Practice Network.*

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