

MEDIA RELEASE

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GENERAL PRACTICE TASMANIA WELCOMES EMPHASIS ON PRIMARY CARE

General Practice Tasmania (GPT) has greeted today's announcements by Federal Labor with cautious optimism saying that the promise of increased Federal investment in primary care is long overdue.

GPT spokesperson, Dr Judith Watson, said that she was particularly pleased to see the strong emphasis on keeping people healthy and out of hospital but that there was still a lot of work to be done to fully understand the details of the plan and the implications for health care reform in this State.

"General Practice Tasmania has, for some time, been calling for an increased investment in primary care, health promotion and illness-prevention programs together with a plan for appropriate transport to support equitable access to services," Dr Watson said.

"Federal Labor's plan appears to acknowledge the importance of these things in a manner that supports the State's health plan - and that's a good thing".

"What we don't know are the detailed plans for GP Super Clinics and Integrated Care Centres and we trust that the promise in today's announcement to work with the Tasmanian community will extend to working closely with local health care providers, particularly general practice, in designing these services.

"Whilst multidisciplinary team care offers the potential for improved patient outcomes we must ensure this is balanced against any negative consequences such as the future sustainability of small private practices and service access in smaller towns. Early engagement of local providers is vital to get this balance right.

"We would also not like to see any Federal plan overshadow the imperative for the State to change its own models of service delivery. There needs to be a willingness to look at new ways of working and to look beyond the government service system for the solutions.

Unfortunately, neither the State nor Federal Labor plans fully address the underlying problems of workforce shortages and the lack of information and communications technology infrastructure to support communication between the public health system and general practice.

Contact Details:

General Practice Tasmania spokesperson, Dr Judith Watson, may be contacted on 0421 609 703.

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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