

MEDIA RELEASE

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GENERAL PRACTICE TASMANIA DELIVERS ITS MAJOR POLICY PRIORITIES

In the lead up to the State election on March 20, the General Practice Tasmania Network has sent a policy statement to all three political parties outlining the steps needed to begin to put health services in Tasmania back on the right track.

Whilst the General Practice Tasmania Network welcomes the Commonwealth Government's national leadership and directions for the health system it is still necessary for the State Government to focus on a number of key priority areas in health.

As the key body representing general practice in Tasmania, General Practice Tasmania believes that the health care system needs to be reoriented to have a greater focus on primary and preventive health as well as supported self-management.

General Tasmania Tasmania spokesperson Dr Judith Watson said that support for general practice and primary health care was critical to the solution of health issues in the State.

"Above all, the next State Government must recognise that health is not just about hospitals.

"There needs to be a significant and sustained investment in primary prevention, wellness promotion and early intervention for patients with chronic disease as well as those with mental illness. Without this, the growing burden of chronic disease in the state will not be addressed." Dr Watson said.

"As a priority, the General Practice Tasmania Network recommends an urgent investment in systems that support secure electronic communication between health care providers.

Dr Watson said that as well as working with the Commonwealth Government to address health workforce shortages, the next government needs to publish hospital and specialist waiting times so that general practitioners and patients can make informed decisions regarding treatment options and referrals.

"We recommend that the incoming government also considers new models of care such as properly resourced short stay facilities serviced by GPs," she said.

"While there has been some progress in improving the health of the Tasmanian population over recent decades, substantial inequalities remain.

"Health policy must consider those groups with particular health needs or inequitable access to care, such as children and young people, older Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people with mental health problems and people with complex and chronic conditions.

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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.



“The response to the needs of these populations has often been fragmented and disjointed, rather than involving a comprehensive, integrated approach to overall health and wellbeing.

“If suitably supported and funded by the Tasmanian Government, the General Practice Tasmania Network has the knowledge, representative capacity and proven ability to work in partnership to effect change and deliver local solutions through general practice,” Dr Watson said.

Dr Watson also said that priority must also be given to models of care in rural and remote Tasmania where small populations and distance pose difficulties in attracting and retaining health providers.

General Practice Tasmania’s full Policy Statement is available at www.gptasmania.com.au

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