

HEALTH LITERACY ACTION PLAN 2019–2024



healthy
Tasmania
A Tasmanian Government
and Community Partnership



FOREWORD

Understanding and having the skills and confidence to use health information are critical for us all to have the best health we can, and yet it is hard to tell what is understood simply by looking at people.

Each of us wants to be able to make sound decisions about our health in our day-to-day lives at home, school, work and in connection with health and social care services.

Health literacy is affected by factors like education and general literacy, employment, early life and social support. In Tasmania, we also face a high rate of chronic conditions plus an ageing and geographically dispersed population that further worsen health outcomes.

This means many Tasmanians find it hard to:

- access health information and services
- understand information
- use information to make informed choices.

Low health literacy contributes to poor health outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

This Action Plan is all about increasing people's control over their own health, and working with consumers, health and community service providers to achieve this.

All of our health and community service staff, and our organisations and practices, should be very responsive to people's needs, and help people make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.

We have already taken steps towards this and we have established partnerships resulting in:

- a statewide health literacy network
- investment in health literacy projects and resources
- national and international interest in our actions
- local research
- cross-sector initiatives like 'It's OK to Ask' and '#hellomynameis'
- inclusion in the undergraduate curriculum for medicine, nursing, health science and education.

This Action Plan will continue to improve health literacy for people and organisations with activities that:

- align with other state and national initiatives
- suit people with diverse needs
- engage services and sectors we haven't reached yet.

We invite you to join us over the next five years to make this vision a reality.

Siobhan Harpur

CEO Public Health Services, Department of Health
and Chair Healthy Tasmania Steering Committee

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2019–2024 Health Literacy Action Plan provides a clear focus for creating a health literate Tasmania.

This strategic, action-focused document sets achievable goals for healthcare and community providers across the state to help improve health literacy for individuals, communities and organisations.

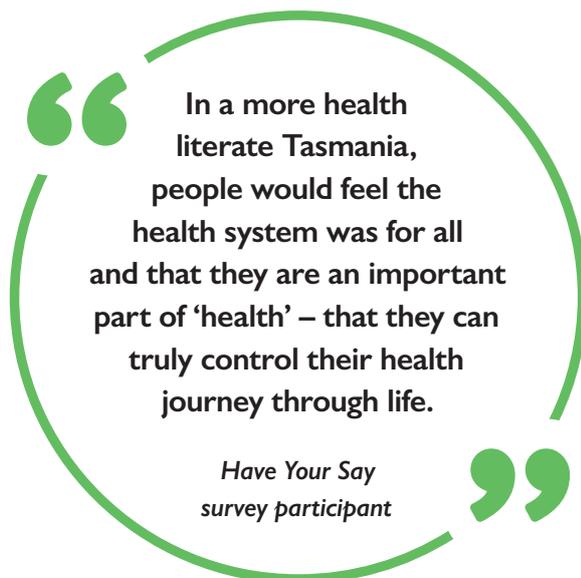
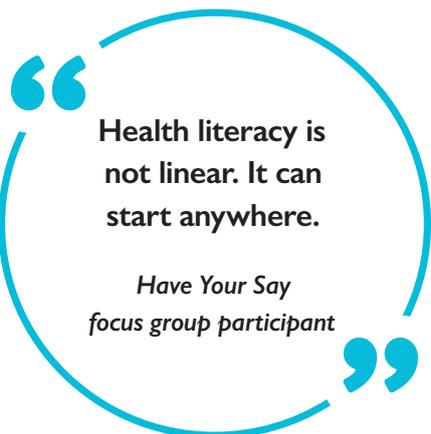
By implementing this plan, we can empower people to take control over their health.

We have four specific priorities under this plan: to improve community health literacy awareness; increase health literate organisations; develop a health literate workforce; and create partnerships to improve health outcomes. This plan builds on:

- our last Health Literacy Action Plan and its recommendations
- an evaluation, through 'Have Your Say' community consultation sessions and surveys.

Public Health Services, Department of Health (DoH) will continue to coordinate and lead this plan along with the Health Literacy Working Group and the broader community.

We will monitor progress toward our goal by assessing state and national population data. We will develop a corresponding evaluation plan to outline how we will report our results.



WHAT IS HEALTH LITERACY?

Health literacy has been described as “making sound health decisions in the context of everyday life: at home, in the community, at the workplace, the healthcare system, the marketplace and the political arena. It is a critical empowerment strategy to increase people’s control over their health, their ability to seek out information and their ability to take responsibility.” – (*Navigating health: The role of health literacy; Alliance for Health and the Future*, International Longevity Centre-UK.)

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care’s (ACSQHC) National Statement on Health Literacy says:

Individual health literacy	A person’s ‘skills, knowledge, motivation and capacity to access, understand, appraise and apply information to make effective decisions about health and healthcare and take appropriate action’.
Health literacy environment	The infrastructure, policies, processes, materials, people and relationships that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• make up the health system• impact individual health literacy.

This plan also focuses on digital health literacy, the ability to use information and technology to find, evaluate, create and communicate information.

OUR VISION

Our overall goal is for Tasmania's population to be health literate. Under this plan, we strive to:

- improve literacy, health literacy and personal health management
- reduce barriers for people with diverse needs
- increase the number of health literate organisations and hone workforce skills to better respond to health literacy needs
- broaden our partners' engagement in the community.

OUR PRIORITIES

Over the next five years, we will focus on the following areas to achieve our vision:

- 1 Improving health literacy awareness across the community.
- 2 Increasing health literate organisations that can respond to individual and community health literacy needs.
- 3 Developing a health literate workforce across Tasmania with the knowledge and skills to make best practice routine.
- 4 Creating partnerships to improve health outcomes together.

I Improving health literacy awareness

Objective	We want to raise the profile of health literacy and lead activities to address it across the community.
Actions	<p>To do this, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expand health literacy initiatives • celebrate successes using 'Spot On' (see below) • work across sectors to boost digital and health literacy • make health literacy training more accessible across the state • create a strong communication and social marketing campaign • build and communicate the evidence • brief government and agencies on national and international health literacy issues. <p>We will also engage others by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • giving people chances to network and share local and state initiatives, projects, lessons and outcomes • promoting and supporting consumer involvement • building a network of local champions.
Outcome	This will be a success if we improve health workforce understanding of health literacy and encourage them to use this awareness when communicating with consumers.

Notable initiative

'Spot On' is a health literacy network initiative to recognise good practice. It's about noticing and sharing what people and services are doing

– big or small – to make it easier for people to find, understand and use information and services.



Notable initiative

#hellomynameis is a campaign to build trusting relationships between consumers and service providers.

The campaign has been growing across Tasmania since 2016 and is improving how people experience health and community services.

hello my name is...

2 Increasing health literate organisations

Objective	We want to make it easy for people to access, understand and use information and services.
Actions	To do this, we will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teach organisations how to identify and respond to people's health literacy needs • expand the Health Literacy Learning Organisations (HeLLO Tas!) peer learning model (see below) • recognise organisations working toward becoming health literate and give them incentives to continue • add health literacy measures to commissioning/funding agreements • support consumer engagement. We will also promote cultural respect as a core part of health literacy by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building pathways between organisations to support the needs of people from diverse backgrounds • embedding it in quality improvement standards and processes.
Outcome	This priority will be a success if organisations respond to health literacy needs.

Notable initiative

HELLO TAS!

The HeLLO Tas! toolkit helps community sector organisations assess their health literacy.

It includes:

- a step-by-step process for doing a self-assessment and developing a health literacy action plan
- practical tools to help with these tasks
- links to accreditation standards, resources and extra reading material.



“ In a more health literate Tasmania, everyone would be able to access healthcare and feel comfortable and supported to do so. ”

Have Your Say survey participant

3 Developing a health literate workforce across Tasmania

Objective	We want to make best practice the standard by improving the health literacy knowledge and skills across the state.
Actions	To do this, we will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop and support health literacy initiatives that improve staff skills • review key resources and make them more accessible to users • build a network of best practice champions. We will also expand health literacy training by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • including it in staff orientation programs, and health and community care curriculums • offering specific communications training around having difficult conversations, such as delivering bad news • reintroducing the ‘Ask, Tell, Ask’ approach for communication training and professional development to help providers tailor their advice to what patients need to hear • making plain English training mandatory across all levels and sectors.
Outcome	This will be a success if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health and community organisations have health literate employees • users face fewer barriers to using a service.

Notable initiative

26TEN is a network of organisations and individuals that work together to improve adult literacy and numeracy in Tasmania. Its name comes from the 26 letters of the alphabet and the 10 digits we use for counting.

26TEN supports using plain English and offers training across sectors and in the community. See the list of events on their website, including sessions on how to use plain English in your emails.

To find out more:
email@26ten.tas.gov.au



“ All positive and negative experiences can be improved by using understandable language and providing time and space to make decisions. ”

*Have Your Say
focus group participant*

“ I attended the plain English, two-day training. It really changed the way I write and observe others writing. ”

*Have Your Say
focus group participant*

4 Creating partnerships

Objective	We want to build strong networks across sectors to improve health literacy outcomes together.
Actions	<p>To do this, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• strengthen relationships with our partners by sharing resources, training and opportunities• find ways partners can work together to address health literacy issues• support Health Consumers Tasmania• embed health literacy in current initiatives• expand training and research opportunities in the state. <p>We will also expand partnerships into new sectors on the health literacy working group, like education, local government, sport and recreation, media and business. We will work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• schools to embed health literacy into classroom activities• medical associations, professional bodies, boards, industry and business to improve consumer information and support• media to include health literacy in reports on health and wellbeing, like mental health• 26TEN, the University of Tasmania, libraries, businesses and community services to boost digital literacy.
Outcome	This will be a success if there is greater collaboration on health literacy.

Notable initiative



The Right Place Initiative connects people with health and community services in a local area. Community services and businesses in towns nominate to become Right Place 'champions'. Staff undergo training to know what services are available in their local area so they can help the public find the services they need. This 'no wrong door' approach means consumers are helped at their first point of enquiry.

Notable initiative



HealthLit4Kids is a world-leading school program that works with the education and health sectors to help children, families and communities to better understand their own health.

It co-designs whole of school health literacy action plans with schools by:

- helping schools to set their own goals
- giving teachers and schools health literacy resources, tools and curriculum links
- helping teachers and students to build skills, knowledge and confidence in this area.

“ It was a wonderful celebration of collaboration ... It really shows you how you can embed [health] perspectives cross-curricular and it really gave us a boost as a community to do that. The conversations and the language children have developed ... have given us an impetus to think more for the future, too. ”

Teacher and HealthLit4Kids evaluation participant

OUR APPROACH

Tracking our progress

We will monitor progress toward each of our priorities in the population using:

- ABS National Health Survey data
- the Tasmanian Population Health Survey
- state-based data collected with the Health Literacy Questionnaire.

Priority	We'll measure
1 Improve health literacy awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• increases in community awareness• numbers of recognition and best practice awards
2 Increase health literate organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• organisations that commit to plain language• organisations that become health literate• changes in policies and systems to support health literacy
3 Develop a health literate workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• changes in health literacy knowledge and skills• how many people access training and resources
4 Create partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• numbers and diversity of health literacy network members• evidence of action to support health literacy across sectors

We will develop a more detailed evaluation plan to outline how we will collect information and report results.

Redeveloping our action plan

The following groups helped us redevelop our 2019–2024 Health Literacy Action Plan:

- previous Communication and Health Literacy Action Plan evaluation participants
- participants of three 'Have Your Say: Health Literacy Action Plan 2018–2023' community consultation sessions in each region
- participants of the 'Have Your Say: Health Literacy Action Plan 2018–2023' survey
- members of the DoH Health Literacy Network Working Group.

The Health Literacy Network Working Group includes:

- 26TEN
- Consumer representative, Renate Hughes
- Health Consumers Tasmania
- Primary Health Tasmania
- Public Health Services, DoH
- Tasmanian Council of Social Service
- Tasmanian Health Service – Health Promotion
- University of Tasmania.

Aligning with international, national and state support

This plan closely aligns with efforts to improve health literacy at international, national and state levels over the last decade. It complements the Health Tasmania Five Year Strategic Plan that recognises the importance of health literacy.

The World Health Organization's Economic and Social Council issued a ministerial declaration in 2009 establishing health literacy as a key factor in significant health outcomes, while the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes good health and wellbeing in its 17 sustainable development goals.

The agenda recommends all countries include health literacy targets in a national health plan. The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights 2008 does this by supporting consumer rights to:

- get information about services, treatment options and costs in a clear and open way
- make decisions about care.

Along with defining health literacy, the 2014 ACSQHC national statement addresses the importance of safe and high-quality care. It aims to:

- integrate health literacy into all aspects of organisations, education programs and training
- effectively communicate information in a way that meets consumer needs.

Australia's National Strategic Framework for Chronic Conditions (2017) further identifies health literacy as a way to prevent and manage such conditions.

The Health Literacy Working Group are committed to improving the lives of Tasmanians by taking action on health literacy.

Members represent the following organisations:







Tasmanian
Government

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