Dear Minister,

Green Paper Feedback

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

Firstly, under our goal to improve outcomes, I firmly believe that Tasmanians must also have:

- Quality health education to help them understand how to become healthy, how to stay well and how to manage their own health.

If our government encourages people to have the freedom to choose how we live our lives, whether to smoke, how we eat, if we exercise, etc, then it should also provide access to the education, knowledge and skills to make healthy choices.

We as a community must be open to change and accept that it is not reasonable to have all services in all locations, however affordable and easily navigable travel options must be provided for people who live in more remote areas.

Putting aside health conditions that occur for no known reason, I speak primarily of the diseases of relative affluence – obesity, lung conditions through smoking, heart disease, diabetes etc. Personal responsibility for health is a concept that needs to be developed as part of our culture, instead of allowing the perpetuation of a misguided belief that the health system will “fix” whatever wrongs we commit to our bodies. The ‘doctor as god’ model is no longer relevant in the current era and our population needs to be educated, encouraged and supported to make good choices about our health.

I believe that this must be done with a “carrot” rather than “stick” approach. Positive, evidence-based, population-wide campaigns can have a wonderful groundswell effect.

There are many positive campaigns that have worked well in Australia and overseas but they cannot succeed in isolation of access to good health care. Victoria’s “Life. Be in it.” campaign of the 1980s is one example. Here in Tasmania we have a range of issues, many of which do not exist in more education populations.

I encourage you to be bold and positive! “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!”

Heather Doubleday