FACT SHEET

TASMANIA’S HEALTH PLAN  GENERAL PRACTICE

What is Tasmania’s Health Plan?

• A comprehensive Health Plan that focuses on services and clients
• Includes both the Primary Health and Clinical Services Plans
• It is a road map for the development of all health services for the next 5 – 10 years
• Planning for the changes will commence immediately in some areas while other strategies will take time to implement
• It is likely that the reform process will affect all health services over a longer period of time

Why do we need to change?

Our health system is facing a number of unprecedented challenges:

• Dealing with an explosion in chronic disease
• A rapidly ageing workforce and difficulties recruiting new staff
• Maintaining safe, quality services
• Providing services for an ageing population
• Managing increases in costs of health care

Why do we need a new relationship with general practice?

• General practice is a key component of primary health. General Practitioners (GPs) are highly valued by the community as the first, and often only, point of contact with the health system.
• While Tasmania as a whole has as many GPs as the rest of Australia, GPs are not spread evenly across the state, GP numbers in 22 of the 29 Local Government Areas fall below the national average. Rural and regional areas are particularly hard hit as professional isolation and marginal financial viability make these practices unattractive to many GPs.
• The Tasmanian Government already supports or subsidises about 50% of the rural general practice workforce but there is an urgent need to expand support arrangements if Tasmania is to have a health system that includes GPs in the future.
• This includes retention of existing GPs in Tasmania and attracting new GPs into the system.

What does this new relationship involve?

• A new relationship between general practice and the Department will be established that better supports the sustainability of the sector and provides additional capacity to respond to the challenges of chronic disease.

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• A consistent Departmental policy concerning the availability of support arrangements for general practice will be developed in collaboration with general practice organisations.
• Co-location of general practice and state health services will occur where this is possible and would benefit service arrangements.
• Working with the University to examine the feasibility of a Primary Health Clinical Education Centre at the Clarence Community Health Centre.

What will these changes mean for General Practitioners?
• Closer links will be developed between rural General Practitioners and acute hospitals, especially for training and support.
• These changes will inform the negotiations around the Rural Medical Practitioners (Public Sector) Agreement.

What will these changes mean for Departmental Staff?
• The Department will work with general practice representatives to progress general practice provision of state funded community health services.
• There will be no immediate changes for community health staff, who will continue to operate under current arrangements.
• Any reconfiguration of roles and responsibilities will happen over a period of time.
• Eventually it is expected that a primary health care team approach will be available for the treatment of clients with chronic conditions

What will these changes mean for patients?
• Increased support, through General Practice Workforce Tasmania, will aid in the recruitment of GPs to Tasmania.
• The development of a Primary Health Clinical Education Centre will encourage more Tasmanian medical students into general practice.
• Working with general practice to explore opportunities with the Australian Government for other health professionals to access to Medicare benefits in order will provide greater sustainability of primary health services and a broader range of health professionals to the public.

How will the changes be managed?
These changes will be introduced over time and in consultation with general practice organisations, Departmental staff and local communities.

How can I find out more about the changes?
Visit DHHS Internet site Future Health - www.health.tas.gov.au or ring the Future Health Hotline - 1300 795 311

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