

AMA Tasmania

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To all political parties:

Below are 11 questions being put to all parties in the upcoming 2018 Tasmanian State election.

Members of the AMA have posed these questions in the knowledge that health services in Tasmania are not meeting demand.

We will publish the answers, or lack thereof, on our website in the lead up to the poll, in order to give members and those around them a guide to where each party sits on the health issue.

1. How will your party address the profession's concerns about the governance of the Tasmanian Health Service (THS)?

- a. What do you see as the future governance structure of the THS?

One that explicitly puts the interests of patients first, and is empowered to make budget allocations within areas:

- independent of political interference,
- using long-term evidence-based plans for improving health,
- with consideration to the balance of independent expertise, ex-officio, and voting members on the Board needed to achieve the above.

- b. What are your party's plans for the management structure of the THS and where will the management of the individual hospitals sit? For example, will the RHH, LGH, and NW have autonomy on a day to day basis?

The Tasmanian Greens support a One Health System. We want to make sure any reshaping of the THS Executive function does not in any way undermine this. That means decisions about healthcare delivery must be evidence-based and have the interests of the patient and the needs of Tasmania's long-term health improvement first.

Therefore, the governance decision-making that guides allocation of THS resources must:

- Include the expertise of each hospital's senior manager
- Be based on the principle of the best outcomes for Tasmania as a whole, with prevention a strong principle
- Be directed by independent evidence-based plans for all group areas (in the manner of the Chronic Disease Alliance's Cardiac Plan)
- Centralise and rationalise duplicated aspects of health administration, including the purchase and servicing of medical technology and pharmaceuticals.

The THS executive's role should concentrate on performing tasks which cannot be performed effectively at the local hospital level. The Greens will place authority to make day to day decisions back in local hospitals, enabling public hospital managers to quickly fill job vacancies and address issues in ED's and hospital wards when they arise.

c. How do you plan to restore trust and confidence in the THS management?

Remove the opportunity for influence by the Minister over budget allocations within areas, and refocus the THS Board to make sure the interests of no single group can override the priority to put the best interests of patients first, or the **evidence** about where scarce money needs to be targeted to improve health for all Tasmanians (now, and in the future).

We have demonstrated we can listen and learn: the Greens organised a public hospital round table discussion attended by representatives from the AMA, ANMF, HACSU, RHH Medical Staff Association, RACGP, and AASW. This informed our public hospital policy and is reflected in our 2017/18 alternative budget, where our largest investment was in health.

d. How do you plan to remove unnecessary bureaucracy?

The Tasmanian Greens will work with healthcare stakeholders and administrators to determine the most appropriate management structure.

e. How do you plan to implement a focus on preventive care?

Unless we spend more on preventive health and target the social determinants of health, there is a likely prospect our children may have worse health outcomes than we do – especially if you have less money than the very well-off. Prevention helps everyone maintain good health into old age and have a better quality of life.

The Greens believe community ownership over community health services must be established. We believe we must target structural and systemic determinants to prevent disease, and to stop disease moving from chronic to acute.

We have committed to establishing a **State Policy on Health and Wellbeing** (one of six new state policies we have committed to). This would affect decisions of all agencies and all levels of government that affect health outcomes.

We listened to stakeholders and in our 2017/18 Alternative Budget, we provided significant funding for Population Health, Health in All Policies, Healthy Spaces and Places, State-wide Cardiac Services, Food and Nutrition Coalition, Rethinking Mental Health, TasCHARD, Ride2School, Active Launceston, Glenorchy on the Go, Needle and Syringe Program, A Safe Festival Experience, Comprehensive Tobacco Control, Sugar Strategy, Community Sector Skills Fund, Creating Resilient Young Tasmanians, LGBTI Suicide Prevention Program, and Community Wellbeing Grants. We also provided \$20 million in funding for pedestrian and bicycle projects to create healthier communities. Details and funding for each of these commitments are provided in our Alternative Budget which can be located here:

https://tasmps.greens.org.au/sites/default/files/media/Alternative%20Budget%20201718%20FINAL_3.pdf

The Tasmanian Greens will also work to:

- develop and implement programs that reduce the incidence of illness caused by unhealthy or unsafe environmental practices or habits;
- regulate closely, using the Precautionary Principle, the sale or introduction of products and processes which impact adversely on health;
- plan and implement changes to infrastructure which encourage healthy lifestyles including improved active and public transport;
- better regulation of food production and processing;
- ensure all Tasmanians have ready access to current information and appropriate assistance to maintain a healthy lifestyle;
- prioritise integrated preventative health strategies;

- ensure that junk food advertising is restricted and does not target children;
- expand programs that discourage smoking (esp. TARPS);
- introduce legislation to restrict the advertising of alcohol;
- develop strategies to minimise the misuse of drugs and increase funding for education programs and rehabilitation services.

f. How do you plan for THS/DHHS services to integrate with general practice and primary care?

The Tasmanian Greens will:

- Improve the discharge system, including ensuring appropriate provision of discharge summaries, so as to dramatically slow the rate of readmissions in Tasmania's public hospitals;
- review and revise health priorities through ongoing, open processes with community participation;
- expand rural and isolated community health services – we believe unless communities must have a formal role in determining the services they have access to in their region
- increased funding for GP-led health literacy, health promotion and supporting mental health services to try and keep people from needing to access hospital services;
- increase the use of Physician Assistants and Nursing Practitioners in regional areas to provide additional options and assist doctors;
- provide greater, more efficient ambulance services across the whole state including the islands.

g. How do you plan **to improve integration of services** for the care of complex chronic disease in the community?

It is critical that Primary Health Tasmania, the DHHS, THS and local GPs are able to provide integrated services. Budget allocations must be decided with evidence-based, independently-developed, long-term chronic disease plans (cardio-vascular and respiratory diseases, diabetes, cancers, and hepatitis etc). The refocus of the THS will be important part of delivering better integration, as will be the removal of political influence.

Integration of services must have the voice of the patient/community first.

The Greens believe that ensuring adequate funding for the treatment of chronic diseases shouldn't be at the expense of funding programs aimed at reducing the incidence of preventable illnesses.

2. How will your party address the issues in relation to the Royal Hobart Hospital in its role as the major tertiary referral hospital for the state of Tasmania?

a. How will you ensure sufficient availability of acute beds including ICU and HDU beds in the short term, which is now?

The current crisis at the RHH was inevitable as a consequence of the redevelopment of the site in combination with a failure in sufficient forward planning, and risk management to ensure suitable contingencies were in place. The Greens have called on the government to take action to fund alternative acute bed capacity for the last three years. In March last year, the Greens supported peak health agencies by initiating a roundtable discussion, which contributed to pushing the Liberal Government to consult with staff and make a Crisis Management Plan.

The Greens' largest investment in our 2017/18 Alternative Budget was in health. We committed funding for 200 new hospital beds, on the basis of advice this is an amount understood to manage immediate issues needed for timely service delivery and patient safety. The beds and staff will be phased in over three years as space becomes available.

The Greens also committed Emergency Department Relief Funding for 2017/18 to help the Royal Hobart Hospital cope with current pressures. The expertise of RHH hospital managers into the funding decisions made by the THS executive is essential.

b. How will you ensure sufficient availability of acute beds including ICU and HDU beds in the longer term, accepting that the population of Tasmania is older and sicker and less health literate than the majority of Australians?

Our approach is holistic. We recognise that environmental, economic, social and political factors are significant determinants of good health. Good health stems from good policy in all areas of government. Clean air and water, nutritious food and an adequate standard of housing are basic preconditions for physical and mental wellbeing and can prevent many illnesses or diseases.

An increasing and ageing population, increased urbanisation, increases in chronic disease patterns and non-communicable diseases, sedentary lifestyles, obesity, increasing costs, technological advances, earlier diagnosis and more available treatments are all factors which are creating mounting pressures on Tasmania's health system and health systems globally.

We are committed to significantly reducing the incidence of preventable illness, including cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, cancers, hepatitis and diabetes by changing the conditions of life which encourage such illness, and by educating for the maintenance of lifelong health and well being through the promotion of appropriate exercise and nutrition and the reduction of risk-taking behaviour.

But we also understand that hospital admissions will continue to rise in the medium to long term and have committed to ensuring adequate numbers of fully staffed hospital beds are made available where they are most required. The basis for future decisions about bed allocations must be informed by a formal long-term strategic plan, and independent evidence.

c. How will you address the disparity of beds across the state considering that the south of the state has 52% of the population but 45% of the beds? Noting that we are not in any way suggesting a reduction of beds in the North or Northwest.

Our proposed 200 additional beds will be rolled out in consultation with healthcare professionals to ensure they go where the need is greatest, not where it is politically expedient. Budget allocation must be long-term, evidence-based and independent, and we would change the structure of the THS to remove the political interference that appears to occur over allocations between sectors currently.

d. How will you improve access to non-urgent procedures and non-urgent outpatient appointments?

We will review and revise funding of health priorities using a formal evidence-based plan, and ongoing, open processes for stakeholder and community participation.

We will boost regional healthcare services for non-urgent cases which will reduce the pressure on hospital resources, including:

- expanding rural and isolated community health services; and
- increasing the use of Physician Assistants and Nursing Practitioners in regional areas to provide additional options and to assist doctors.

3. How will your party address the current and ongoing issues with access to Mental Health services?

a. How will you address the issues with acute psychiatric inpatient care given that the current inpatient bed situation within the Royal Hobart Hospital has been highlighted by the coroner as contributing to deaths?

The Greens have called to return numbers of inpatient adult psychiatric beds at the RHH back to a minimum of 42 beds. The additional 10 beds are funded out of the new 200 hospital beds in our 2017/18 alternative budget.

b. How will you improve outpatient access and support for non-psychotic patients?

The Greens support the Re-think Mental Health Strategy and the Moving Toward a Mentally Healthy Tasmania Plan. We will work with the Mental Health Council, AMA and other stakeholders in achieving these widely supported strategies.

c. What connections will be in place between community care and housing? What systems will be introduced the care for homeless patients?

The Greens support the proposal to establish formal housing partnerships to ensure every person with a mental illness has access to housing options and support.

4. How will your party address the issues with Alcohol and Drug Services (ADS) in this state?

a. What is your vision for where ADS will sit from a governance view? Will it remain with Mental Health Services or sit alone as an autonomous government-funded organisation?

We don't have a fixed party position on this issue and would listen to stakeholders. In principle we support governance structures that put the patient first, are non-judgemental and prioritise harm reduction.

b. How will ADS be linked to other services such as Education, Police and Justice?

See above

5. How will your party ensure the future of health care in this state?

a. What are your plans and commitment towards creating a strong and vibrant Tasmanian Medical School via an effective partnership with the University of Tasmania?

b. How do you plan to develop Tasmania as a magnet for clinical and healthcare research?

c. How do you plan to address the staff concerns about adequate and equitable remuneration across the state including at the rural facilities?

6. How will your party support the Tobacco Free Generation Bill?

a. Measures

The Greens support the Tobacco Free Generation Bill.

b. Timelines

We will work to make sure it is called on in the next term of government.

7. How will your party address accreditation and recruitment issues?

a. Mental health at the RHH, Physician Training at the LGH?

The Greens will ensure our public hospitals are appropriately resources and staffed through long term strategic planning that prioritises maintaining accreditation and ensuring timely recruitment to key position. Mental health positions would be prioritised.

b. Speciality training positions generally and the now inevitable generation gap that will occur.

While long term strategic plans are critical, we also acknowledge that an inevitable generation gap will occur. We would work with key stakeholders to implement a management plan to address this gap, ensuring further accreditation isn't put at risk while working to regain accreditation that has been lost, including psychiatric medical training at the RHH.

8. What Palliative Care measures do you propose both in Hospital and in the community?

a. Patient centred outcomes?

The Greens believe that terminally ill patients should be able to choose how, when and where they die. In our alternative budget for 2017/18 we provided \$3 million over the forward estimates to ensure Palliative Care Tasmania could continue their educational work so Tasmanians can make informed choices about where they die. We also provided recurrent funding for District Nurses to deliver Hospice at Home services, across Tasmania and funding for a stand-alone palliative care facility in Northern Tasmania, which has an ageing population and an over-stretched public hospital.

b. Increase in the Palliative care workforce

See above.

9. Will you present a transparent funding model for health?

a. GST allocations to be included?

We believe funding allocations should be determined on independent evidenced based needs free from political influence.

b. Will your party publish details of allocations made from the grants commission?

The Grants commission already publishes these details. But we would make sure they are easily identified through a link on the Treasury website.

10. Will your party support a co-located Public Private Hospital development at the LGH?

a. Will your party approach a private company to facilitate?

We believe in universal health care that includes a public hospital system that is adequately funded to meet patient needs. This includes public infrastructure upgrades to the LGH that meet patient demand.

b. What time frames will you apply?

In our 2017/18 alternative budget, we have funded 200 new public hospital beds, to be rolled out where they are needed most over the next three years, as space becomes available.

11. How will your party support mandatory reporting? The Tasmanian Government has a professional and ethical obligation to protect and promote public health and safe healthcare as well as care for its employees.

a. Will your party support the WA model?

We don't have a fixed party position on this issue and would listen to stakeholders. In principle we support open and transparent governance. Any action that will increase transparency while protecting and promoting safe public health outcomes as well as care for employees has the Greens in principle support.