



Latrobe Council



Preserving the Past ... Promoting the Present ... Planning for the Future

FROM THE OFFICE OF MAYOR PETER FRESHNEY

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One Health System,
Department of Health and Human Services,
GPO Box 125,
HOBART, Tas, 7001

Dear Minister Ferguson,

LATROBE
Adopted home of HAMAS SHEEAN



SUBMISSION - DELIVERING SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE CLINICAL SERVICES

Thank you for the opportunity for Latrobe Council to comment on the content of the Department of Health and Human Services *"White Paper - Exposure Draft, March 2015"*.

The Latrobe Council is generally supportive of attempts to improve our State's health system and in particular the clinical outcomes for patients, no matter where they choose to live.

We strongly agree with the decision to have "One Health System" for all Tasmanians as the replacement for the former three regional health care organisations. This decision alone will, in our view, address many of the concerns that have been raised by our ratepayers. These concerns include the availability of specialists, delays and reluctance to transfer patients, reliance on Locums and the associated financial impact and access to specialist services that are currently not available at the Mersey Community Hospital but are in each of the other regional hospitals.

Council acknowledges and supports the recommendations detailed in the white paper to enhance the delivery in a number of existing specialist services and additionally provide our region with access to medical professionals specialising in Urology, Vascular Surgery, Drug and Alcohol, Geriatric, Palliative Care and Rehabilitation Services.

We clearly recognise that not all specialist services can be maintained or justified at each of our four regional hospitals but we have an absolute belief that basic services such as Emergency Care should be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at all four locations.

Our primary concern will always be that patients are able to access the best and most appropriate level of specialist care in the most expedient time-frame and that they are clinically stabilised and supported until their arrival at the ultimate point of care.

Transportation and accommodation of patients and family members will undoubtedly be a key in addressing the concerns of our residents relating to the potential loss of the High Dependency Unit (HDU) and associated specialist staff but we note and welcome the State Government's recent commitment to spend an additional \$14 million in this area.

One aspect that appears to have been overlooked in this reform process is the potential of tele-medicine for improved health outcomes. With the NBN roll out, the manner in which this relates to minimising transport while increasing access to high quality health professionals should be further pursued and opportunities maximised.

I suspect that the Minister is aware that the Latrobe Municipality has sustained, significant growth for many years and this is not projected to decrease in the foreseeable future. Undoubtedly, the Mersey Community Hospital is a significant attractor for this maintained growth as well as a key contributor to the local economy in terms of employment and subsidiary services and continues to play a key role in Council's focus of a holistic approach to health and wellbeing.

Crucial for our community is to ensure that the Mersey Community Hospital is not subjected to continual political interference and election cycles and that it becomes a key component of the Government's reform agenda and integral to the provision of health care services right across the state.

We believe that the dedicated Elective Day Surgery Centre option outlined in the white paper is a positive step in this direction but are firmly of the opinion that the location of maternity services for the North West Coast at the Mersey Community Hospital would ensure that the closure of the Mersey Community Hospital is no longer an option for future governments of any persuasion.

We call on the Minister to work with our local health professionals to not only maintain current service levels but consolidate and increase the level of services at the Mersey Community Hospital to meet the health needs of the greater populace of the North West Coast, ensuring the Mersey's long term sustainability. This stable environment would then provide a level of certainty for the community and for medical professionals, clinicians and nursing staff and would, in some way, address the concerns raised relating to the recruitment and retention of these highly skilled professionals.

Council looks forward to your continued, open and frank communication with our community about the changes as a vital part of the process.

Yours faithfully,



CR. PETER FRESHNEY
MAYOR