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Response to Delivering Safe and Sustainable Clinical Services

Green Paper Response

History and The Model of Care

After Hours Doctor is an accredited medical deputising service supporting Hobart GPs manage their patient's health needs during the after hours period. It has been in operation since 1987

After Hours Doctor provides after hours care on behalf of 85% of Hobart's General Practitioners (GPs).

It provides clinic, telephone advice and home visits. The telephone advice is provided in conjunction with GP Assist.

The clinic is situated on Main Road in Derwent Park a northern suburbs of Hobart, about 10 minutes from the city centre. It acts as an urgent care and GP minor injuries unit.

The purpose built and well equipped clinic is open from 9:00am – 10pm on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays and on week nights from 6:00pm – 10:00pm. It includes a minor procedures room, access to Pathology and X-Ray. An extended hours pharmacy is opposite the clinic.

Home visits are also available throughout the whole of the after hours period, including overnight. These are available to all but most are provided to Aged Care Residents or those who are housebound by virtue of their illness, age or social circumstance.

All calls requesting a home visit are first triaged by GP Assist in order to ensure that these valuable services are appropriately targeted.

The After Hours Doctor receives funding from two sources – a subscription paid by the Tasmanian Medicare Local on behalf of those GPs who use the service and a percentage of patient fees generated by the doctors working.

After Hours Doctor is one of only a handful of accredited medical deputising services in Australia which operates a clinic, and has provided 28 years of service to Hobart.

The After Hours Doctor has succeeded for a number of reasons it has the right scale, a dedicated workforce, doctors get professional satisfaction and most importantly it meets the needs of the GPs and public of Hobart alike. The After Hours Doctor bulk bills pensioners and health care card holders

The After Hours Doctor clinic is well known by patients seeking after hours care and, being well located and “GP focused”, offers obvious advantages over a co-located clinic on a less accessible hospital site.

The After Hours Doctor discourages attendances by patients for “routine” purposes, returning patients wherever possible to their own GP for non-urgent care.

The After Hours Doctor clinic offers an efficient way of attending patients and now treats in excess of 20,000 patients a year. The Royal Hobart Hospitals Emergency Department sees about 57,000 patients a year.

The After Hours Doctor is an efficient and highly cost effective model of after hours primary care.

Future

The After Hours Doctor is extraordinarily well placed to offer government the opportunity to explore new initiatives in the delivery of primary and community care and the most obvious is operating a GP Urgent Care facility 24/7 with a short stay unit, a minor trauma centre in conjunction with local GPs thereby diverting patients from the RHH ED, much like the Pegasus service in Christchurch New Zealand.

A facility of this nature would fit with the government’s objectives, vision and goals for health as set out in the Green Paper.