

23 February 2015

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Response to the Tasmanian Government Green Paper, “One State, One Health System”

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) welcomes the opportunity to respond to, and make recommendations on, the Tasmanian Governments “One State, One Health System” green paper.

The RACGP is the largest professional member organisation in Australia, representing almost 30,000 members. General practice undertakes in excess of 120,000,000 primary health care consultations per annum. At the state level, this translates to over 2.5 million consultations per annum with evidence suggesting that less than 1 in 10 consultations will potentially initiate an interaction with the state health system at either secondary or tertiary hospital level. General practice is a unique specialist discipline. Rigorous scientific medical training, and the ability to appropriately apply evidenced care in community settings, places general practice at the centre of an effective primary health care system. Overwhelmingly the evidence suggests that an effective primary health care system is essential in crafting an effective statewide health system.

The RACGP recommends that, while it is appropriate for the green paper to concentrate on those areas of health that stand within the state government remit, ostensibly secondary and tertiary care, General Practice should be seen as integral to any state wide, system change. International evidence suggests that a system change which strengthens the interface between the state health system and a vibrant primary care system offers the greatest potential for system-wide savings and increases in efficiency.

We would also highlight the important role small rural hospitals play in many Tasmanian communities, the key resource that GPs represent in staffing those hospitals, and recommend that current resources within DHS should be maintained.

General Practice and individual practices should be seen as key partners in process to improve broader health outcomes in Tasmania with the comprehensive skill set General Practitioners apply in the primary and secondary care setting formally recognised in development of a Role Delineation Framework. The RACGP counsels caution, as General Practice should not be seen as solution to problems of service delivery in the state hospital system, rather that evidence internationally shows primary care and general practice as a key component of effective health delivery, both in outcomes and in cost.

The RACGP reminds the government that General Practice principally operates in a private, small business environment and submits that any recommendations which come out of the green paper should effectively address the relationship between this sector and other parts of State Health System

Changes to the Tasmanian health system should be made under the strength of evidence based proposals that produce equality of care and access for all Tasmanians. Any attempt to produce systemic change to state-wide health resourcing and operation should involve full and transparent consultation with all providers of health care: in tertiary, secondary and primary care sectors irrespective of their funding source.

Person centred, continuous, comprehensive care should be a core principle in designing a new framework for the Tasmanian Health System. The green paper, and any government white paper that issues from it, must ensure that this is an underpinning of changes made to the system. The RACGP believes that it is imperative that fragmentation of care is not an outcome of any recommendation.



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