

Memo

To: Project Director, Health Reform
Copy To: Fred Howard, Areas Services Manager
From: Celina Sargent, Acting Manager Youth Health South
Date Prepared: 10 February 2015

Subject: **Feedback on the Green Paper: *Green Paper: Delivering Safe and Sustainable Clinical Services***

Pulse Youth Health South (YHS) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Green Paper: Delivering Safe and Sustainable Clinical Services*. While the paper focusses predominantly on the hospital system it is vital that our health system is considered in the broader context of preventative health, primary health, early intervention and services within the community.

YHS supports the establishment of a single state-wide Tasmanian Health System, which will improve health outcomes and provide Tasmanians with access to better services.

YHS, part of the Tasmanian Health Organisation South, is a whole of Southern Tasmanian health promotion, prevention and early intervention service for young people aged 12-24 years. The service is staffed predominantly by Nurses and Allied Health Professionals.

YHS delivers individual health services from a centre base (Glenorchy) and provides outreach and health and wellbeing promotion to young people across Southern Tasmania. The Services also leverages strategic partnerships with a range of organisations to maximise outcomes for young people and increase the range of services it provides. For example a psychology clinic is provided on site through a partnership with the University Psychology Clinic.

In 2014 YHS provided 6642 health services to individual young people and almost 4000 young people attended health and wellbeing promotion sessions or groups.

The service model includes an evidence informed Framework (*Youth Health Framework 2008-2011*) with six elements of best practice that guide the service. These are:

- Accessibility and equity
- Evidence-informed practice
- Young people centred approach
- Collaboration and partnerships
- Skilled and diverse workforce and
- Sustainability

The Youth Health Framework was developed in 2008 in response to increasing pressures on the health system. It was developed in line with the Primary Health Services Plan and set a clear strategic direction for youth health services within the then Department of Health and Human Services. The Framework focussed on health and wellbeing promotion, prevention and early intervention and is still as relevant now, as it was then, to guide the work of the youth health services into the future.

Tasmanian young people have significantly poorer health outcomes in the area of smoking, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmissible infections and obesity than the national average. Mental health is another significant health issue for young people in Tasmania and a considerable proportion of young people presenting to YHS are experiencing some form of mental health issue.

Research suggests that interventions that focus on prevention and early intervention, and promoting positive mental health at a population level, are an essential component of any strategy to reduce mental health problems in the community. Evidence also supports investing in specific health services for young people to prevent and reduce chronic disease and hospital admissions.

Young people often face numerous barriers in accessing health services including cost, perceived lack of confidentiality, access, transport and waiting times. It is critical to have youth health services that have a non-judgemental and respectful approach to young people, and provide services that are physically accessible with flexible and timely responses that acknowledge the developmental needs of young people.

Youth health services have existed in various iterations in Tasmania over many years. The previous state-wide model of service delivery for youth health services, which was supported by the Youth Health Framework, was separated into regional services with the establishment of the three Tasmanian Health Organisations. Currently the staffing structures and model of service delivery is different in each of the three regions. Moving to a single Tasmanian Health Service provides an opportunity to have an open discussion about establishing a state-wide youth health service. A state-wide service could provide far greater opportunities for consistency, service improvement and workforce development.

The Youth Health Framework will continue to be a valuable tool and evidence-informed approach towards ongoing planning and implementation of youth health services and programs. The Framework is included as appendix to this response.

While this response has only touched on adolescent health, it is critical to continue to provide youth health services if we are to reduce the burden on the health system. These services need to not only prevent ill health but promote healthy lifestyles and improved health literacy.

Youth Health South believes it is in a strong position to continue to deliver services to vulnerable young people in Tasmania that have a focus on early intervention and prevention. It also supports greater collaboration and coordination within the health care system which is critical to improving the health outcomes of young people. YHS would welcome the opportunity to have further input into the design and delivery of services for younger Tasmanians within the context of the new Tasmanian Health Service.