



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

Mr Tim Thorne
tth26550@bigpond.net.au

Dear Mr Thorne

Thank you for your correspondence of 26 November 2011 to the Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon Nicola Roxon MP, regarding the Tasmanian state budget cuts to health services. The Minister has asked me to reply on her behalf.

The Australian Government understands your concerns regarding the Tasmanian government's budget cuts to health services. The Minister is concerned with the Tasmanian government's decision, and is also concerned about the impact this will have on Tasmanians' access to public health services and on their health outcomes.

The Australian Government is committed to long term reform to achieve improved, equitable and lasting health care for all Australians. On 2 August 2011, all governments signed a new National Health Reform Agreement, including Tasmania. The Agreement sets out the intention of the Australian Government and state and territory governments to work in partnership to improve health outcomes for all Australians.

A key part of the Agreement is the National Partnership Agreement on Improving Public Hospital Services (NPA). To date, the Commonwealth has provided to Tasmania over \$14 million in facilitation and capital funding for elective surgery under the NPA. This builds on the nearly \$23 million provided to Tasmania under the Elective Surgery Waiting List Reduction Plan. The Australian Government will continue to work with Tasmania on elective surgery as a key component of national health reform, in good faith that the Tasmanian government will meet their side of the bargain.

Commonwealth funding to Tasmania continues to be very strong, with \$2.3 billion more in funding for Tasmania's health system over a decade.

The Australian Government has provided, through the largest mental health investment in the nation's history, a \$2.2 billion investment over the next five years to drive fundamental reform in Australia's mental health system. This investment was informed by extensive engagement with experts, service providers and consumers and carers.

Tasmania may benefit from programs under this \$2.2 billion mental health package including:

- Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) initiative
- Support for Day to Day Living in the Community
- Personal Helpers and Mentors and Respite Services
- Headspace services
- Expanding community mental health services – 40 additional Family Mental Health Support services
- E-mental health portal

In addition, the Commonwealth continues to assist improving health outcomes for Tasmanians through the significant funding provided for the Royal Hobart Hospital and other Health and Hospital Fund projects and the continued funding of the Mersey Community Hospital, on top of significant investments under health reform for emergency department and subacute care services.

Although the Commonwealth works closely with states and territories to improve health care delivery, and provides significant funding to them, the day-to-day administration and management of hospitals remains the responsibility of state and territory governments.

You may also wish to raise your concerns with the Tasmanian Health Minister, the Hon Michelle O'Byrne, MHA. Minister O'Byrne can be contacted by writing to:

The Hon Michelle O'Byrne, MHA
Minister for Health
Ground Floor
Public Building
53 St John Street
LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

Thank you again for taking the time to bring these matters to the Minister's attention.

Yours sincerely



Martin Rocks
Director
Elective Surgery Policy and Programs Section
National Partnership Agreements Branch

2 December 2011