

THE LIBERALS' FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Healthy Futures: Building a better health system



Tasmanian Liberals
The Economy • Jobs • Cost of Living

Future Directions 5:

HEALTHY FUTURES: Building a better health system

The Vision

The Liberal vision is for Tasmania to have the healthiest population in Australia by 2025, and a world-class health care system where people get treatment and support when they need it.

Unlike the Green-Labor Government, we don't believe you can fix the health system by bleeding it dry. Rather than reducing supply as the Government is doing, we want to reduce demand.

We believe that Tasmania deserves:

- A health system that is as responsive and accessible, and provides at least the same level of care as the rest of Australia;
- A health system that improves lifelong health outcomes for Tasmanians, supports Tasmanians to manage their own health better, and to be as healthy as they can be;
- A health system that delivers quality services in a clinically-appropriate way in the most cost-effective setting;
- A health system that listens to health professionals and empowers them to become part of the solution; and
- A health system that is affordable and sustainable into the future.

The Actions

The Liberals' strategy to build a better health system will ensure a healthy future for all Tasmanians.

From day one, a majority Liberal Government will strategically invest into the right areas of health. But more importantly, we will take a "whole system" approach to health, to get all sectors (acute care, primary care, aged care, GPs, public and private hospitals) working together as partners in a fully integrated health system that works efficiently for the benefit of Tasmanians.

The Strategy includes –

1. **Recognising health as an essential service**
Getting back to basics to guarantee health care is a priority of government
2. **Shorter waiting lists for essential surgery**
Getting the job done with \$76 million to provide up to 15,000 additional operations

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3. **Ensuring Tasmania has the healthiest population in Australia by 2025**
Improving the health of Tasmanians today to avert a crisis in health need tomorrow
4. **Delivering health care in new ways, in your community and in your home**
Reducing hospital demand with innovative out of hospital services
5. **Driving innovation in health to make long-term efficiencies**
Investing in health practices for better health outcomes and less cost
6. **A home-grown workforce for the future**
Retaining our Tasmanian-trained nurses and doctors
7. **Making every health dollar count**
Directing the majority of health funding to frontline patient care
8. **Delivering budget certainty and stability**
Guaranteed minimum budgets to stop the crisis approach to health
9. **Partnering in health for everyone's benefit**
A public and private health system that works together for all Tasmanians
10. **Planning for tomorrow's health services today**
Action plans to deliver our future health services and health workforce

The Background

In June 2011, the Green-Labor Government announced it would cut \$100 million a year from the health budget, increasing to cuts of \$150 million a year by 2014.

These cuts have resulted in the closure of over 100 hospital beds, operating theatres shut down, hundreds of frontline health workers losing their jobs (including over 287 nurses), and millions of dollars slashed from elective surgery budgets. This has had a devastating impact on Tasmanians, the morale of health professionals, and the strength of our health system.

Many of the cuts made to frontline health have been ill-considered and will end up costing the health system more in the long run.

Tasmania is now in the ludicrous position of having a State Green-Labor Government ripping \$430 million out of one end of the health system over the next four years, while the Federal Labor-Green Government tips in \$325 million in "emergency aid" at the other.

The Actions

1. Recognising health as an essential service

The Liberals will get back to basics, by recognising health as an essential service that governments must provide, before all else.

A majority Liberal Government will refocus the allocation of public sector resources to [prioritise the delivery of essential services](#), including health, education and public safety.

Instead of looking at each Department as a silo in terms of budget priorities, a majority Liberal Government will take a whole of government view to the business of government, prioritising those essential services, like health, education and public safety, and guaranteeing their delivery to the Tasmanian community.

The Liberals' have already reprioritised more than \$480 million in Government expenditure in our 2012 [Roadmap for Recovery and Growth](#), enabling us to find an additional \$76 million over four years for additional elective surgery to provide up to 15,000 extra operations, re-open operating theatres and public hospital beds. From day one in government, we will be looking to free up more resources to build a better health system for the future.

2. Shorter waiting lists for essential surgery

The Liberals will invest an additional \$76 million over four years into elective surgeries, to provide up to 15,000 extra operations.

Elective surgery is essential surgery. It is costly for the health system and costly for people's health to make Tasmanians wait for essential elective surgery longer than clinically-recommended timeframes. People waiting longer than they should get sicker, develop complications and may need more complex surgery and a longer hospital stay, or could end up in the Emergency Department as their condition deteriorates. More than half of those on the elective surgery waiting list in Tasmania have been waiting longer than they should.

The Federal Government has since indicated it will invest an additional \$31 million into elective surgery over the same period.

To maximise the outcomes for Tasmanians from this additional investment, a majority Liberal Government will work with hospitals and clinicians to:

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- (a) Separate emergency and elective surgery to get the job done. This has been proven to dramatically improve patient care, increase throughput of patients, reduce elective surgery waiting lists and improve surgical training opportunities¹;
- (b) Establish Dedicated Service Centres in specific types of elective surgery in each region²;
- (c) Allow hospitals to choose cost-effective options for purchasing blocks or types of elective surgery to increase throughput and reduce waiting times;
- (d) Ensure complex, as well as simple elective surgeries, are included.

These measures will ensure shorter waiting lists, improved patient outcomes, reduced costs from shorter hospital stays, fewer complications, less elective surgery cancellations, and take the pressure off GPs who are bearing the brunt of lengthier hospital waits.

Increased volumes of surgery and ensuring patients are seen within clinically-recommended timeframes will also improve Tasmania's chances of accessing millions of dollars in extra Federal funding under national health agreements.

3. Ensuring we have the healthiest population in Australia by 2025

A majority Liberal Government will set a goal of Tasmania having the healthiest population in Australia by 2025.

This is an ambitious goal given that today, Tasmanians have some of the poorest health outcomes in the country. But unless we start to improve the health of Tasmanians, we will face a crisis of need for health services to treat preventable chronic disease.

Tasmania's preventive health approaches have to date been ad hoc and have remained at the periphery of the health system. We cannot afford to wait until people are sick before addressing known risk and lifestyle factors that contribute to disease.

The Liberals' detailed policy to achieve our goals to have the healthiest population in Australia by 2025 will be released prior to the next State election.

¹ "The Case for the Separation of Elective and Emergency Surgery", Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' submission to the Council of Australian Governments Expert Panel, May 2011: http://www.surgeons.org/media/307115/sbm_2011-05-24_separating_elective_and_emergency_surgery.pdf

² http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/8563/2004-06-Richardson-Report-v2.pdf

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4. Delivering care in new ways, in your community and in your home

A majority Liberal Government will reduce hospital demand by strategically investing in innovative out of hospital health care programs that can be delivered in the community or in the home.

The most important investment any government can make in the face of rising demand and increasing costs for acute services is to reduce demand on our hospitals with a long-term goal of reducing acute overnight occupancy to 85%, ensuring more services are provided in the home and community, with integrated and seamless pathways between primary and acute health sectors.

A majority Liberal Government will begin the task of redesigning the health system to provide healthcare that is (a) clinically appropriate (b) improves health outcomes and (c) is delivered in the most cost-effective setting.

Working closely with Tasmanian Health Organisations and other health professionals, the Liberals will invest in a range of hospital diversion and demand reduction programs to –

- reduce hospital admissions and preventable re-admissions;
- reduce Emergency Department presentations; and
- reduce length of stay in hospitals³.

The type of programs may include –

- (a) Hospital in the Home, which provides care at home for clinically stable patients. A recent report found Hospital in the Home is, on average, 22 per cent more cost effective than treating patients with long term conditions in a hospital, with better outcomes for patients⁴.
- (b) Post-acute care. Coordinated short-term care after a period of hospitalisation which, together with improved discharge planning, has been proven to reduce unplanned hospital re-admissions and reduce length of stay;
- (c) Sub-acute/transitional care. This type of care provided in the community is usually around half the cost of an acute hospital bed, and innovative options can include community providers, including aged care facilities, for patients who need a longer stay and rehabilitation;

³ <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/harp/about.htm>

⁴ www.hithsociety.org.au/LiteratureRetrieve.aspx?ID=62557

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- (d) Mobile allied health teams to provide multidisciplinary care for Tasmanians with chronic disease or long-term conditions to keep them well and *out* of hospital;
- (e) In-home integrated acute and sub-acute care services for the elderly. Some States of Australia have engaged not-for-profit providers to deliver 24/7 home hospital services to reduce hospital admission and emergency presentations for older patients - e.g. the “Friend in Need –Emergency” (FINE) program in WA;
- (f) Supported self-management care for people with long-term conditions, including mental health, to reduce Emergency presentations and hospital admission - e.g. Diabetes Assist which has saved \$1.5m in projected health care costs over 3 years, or “year of care” models currently being trialled in the UK;
- (g) Extended paramedic care models as part of an integrated health approach to community health care, which has had successful results in NSW in reducing Emergency Department presentations;
- (h) Telehealth. Full utilisation and the coordination of telehealth care will have multiple benefits for the health system, and people living in remote and rural areas including –
 - improved access to clinical specialists closer to home;
 - reducing unnecessary referrals to specialists; and
 - savings in costs for travel and accommodation for patients/clinicians; and
- (i) Joined-up community-based palliative care services to provide a Statewide palliative care network.

5. Driving innovation in health to make long-term efficiencies

The Liberals believe governments have a key role in driving change, and it is often necessary – especially in health where trends and technology can change rapidly – to invest to make savings.

The Victorian Health Innovation and Reform Council was established earlier this year to lead continuing innovation and improvement in public health services, including through high-level research into international advances in health. The Council is currently working on key projects including reducing unplanned hospital re-admission rates and telehealth initiatives.

A majority Liberal Government will work with the Victorian Government to access this work and research, to test its application for the Tasmanian health system and avoid duplication of effort, in line with our commitment to make every health dollar count, and direct the majority of funds into frontline patient care.

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In Government, we would partner with the University of Tasmania, Rural Clinical School and Menzies Research Institute to drive best practice improvements and innovation for the Tasmanian health system and, in a reciprocal arrangement, share our own evidence-based approaches with Victoria.

We will also welcome submissions for health innovation and health economics projects from THOs, clinicians, and other health professionals and bodies, and will strategically invest in new practices if they are evidence-based and shown to deliver improved health outcomes and long-term efficiencies.

For example –

- targeted investment in infection control can improve health outcomes, reduce costs and improve capacity in hospitals as the number of bed days 'lost' to infection is decreased;
- the State Renal Plan, if implemented, will save \$16 million to 2018 and provide better health outcomes for people with chronic kidney disease; and
- sponsorship of "translational research" – a bench to bedside approach which translates research into practice – will have public benefit in pressure areas such as cancer, diabetes and asthma.

6. A home-grown workforce for the future

The Liberals recognise the importance of retaining our Tasmanian trained nurses and doctors.

Without a health workforce, there is no health system, and the best health workforce we can have is the one we train ourselves. Tasmanian-trained health professionals are world class, and provide our best chance for stability in our health workforce into the future. We must do everything we can to ensure we are not training a health workforce only to export them interstate and overseas.

It is critical to retention of our home-grown health workers that we provide a graduate year – a transition to practice placement for our nurses, and an internship for our medical graduates, including fee-paying international students who come from around the world to study at the first-class University of Tasmania's School of Medicine.

7. Making every health dollar count

The Liberals guarantee to direct the majority of health funding into frontline, patient care.

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We will not simply throw money at health. Instead a majority Liberal Government will invest strategically in the right areas of health based on two criteria: Will it improve health outcomes? And will it slow the rate of growth in health expenditure for the long-term?

A majority Liberal Government also commits to –

- (a) the leanest health bureaucracy in the country;
- (b) an ongoing focus on finding savings in health that will not impact on patient care (e.g. procurement, administration, unnecessary travel, mobile phones, consultants, etc);
- (c) a concerted effort to stop duplication, particularly repeat medical tests/scans;
- (d) a transparent analysis of the added costs of running long-term frontline staff vacancies (which can result in overtime, double shifts, call-out costs, locums, staff burn-out and stress leave, resignation and re-recruitment); and
- (e) engagement with our health workers at all levels to identify and slash waste and to re-invest those savings into better health services.

8. Delivering budget certainty and stability

A majority Liberal Government will guarantee minimum three year budgets for Tasmanian Health Organisations to stop the boom/bust, crisis-driven approach to health and deliver certain and stability for our health services and health workforce.

Tasmanians deserve to know that if they are sick or injured, there is a health system responsive to their needs. Health professionals deserve certainty; surgeons do not train for over 10 years to sit twiddling their thumbs while operating theatres are closed, and nurses trained in Tasmania should not have to leave the State to find a job.

The fact is, we will not retain health professionals without providing certainty.

A majority Liberal Government will deliver long-term budget certainty and stability by -

- (1) prioritising and refocusing the allocation of public sector resources to provide for the essential services Tasmanians need, before all else. That includes health, education and public safety;

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- (2) setting three-year minimum guaranteed budgets for Tasmanian Health Organisations to provide our hospital and area health services with secure funding and certainty. Additional funds for health will be used to redesign the health system, reducing hospital demand and improving the health of Tasmanians; and
- (3) proactively seeking out additional streams of funding for health from the Federal Government and other sources, including corporate and philanthropic donors.

9. Partnering in health for everyone's benefit

The Liberals believe there are benefits for all Tasmanians by establishing better relationships between public and private health sectors, and promoting resource sharing.

A key recommendation to the Government from the Richardson Report into Tasmanian hospitals was to establish partnerships across the public and private health sectors, including -

- sharing the high cost of technologies;
- developing policies that enable equipment sharing across the public and private sectors;
- partnerships which maximise health professional education at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels including recruitment and retention; and
- partnerships to improve patient care and reduce duplication across sectors, staff sharing (where services are co-located, such as security staff), purchasing and procurement, and research.

Just as there are benefits for Tasmanians from establishing better relationships between the public and private health sectors, there are costs to the health system in duplicating effort.

The Liberals acknowledge that our public and private health systems are critically dependent on each other, and in government we will ensure the Tasmanian public health system works collaboratively for the benefit of all Tasmanians.

10. Planning for tomorrow's health services today

A majority Liberal Government will develop action plans to deliver a healthy workforce and deliver new health services for Tasmania into the future.

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Over the past decade, the Government has spent tens of millions of dollars on engaging external consultants to develop plans in all areas of health, only to ignore or cherry-pick their recommendations. For example, in 2009 the Government paid \$1.26 million to a consultant to undertake a Core Business Review of public hospitals, which identified over 1500 service improvement opportunities, but the report was left to gather dust.

Many of the existing taxpayer-funded plans have value in terms of the future direction of health, including the \$1 million-plus Tasmanian Health Plan. The problem has been poor implementation by the State Government.

Planning for future health services is imperative, but instead of spending millions extra, a majority Liberal Government will, with the close involvement of our clinicians and our health professionals, dust off and update existing plans and convert them into rolling five-year action plans with a clear schedule of priorities and transparent, measurable outcomes in each of the following key areas:

- (1) Our workforce, including training, career pathways, succession planning, and an evaluation of emerging roles for our health professionals (for example, extended care paramedics, assistants in nursing, the physician assistant or nurse endoscopist.
- (2) Our services - the type of services we need to meet current and emerging health demands in Tasmania and the location of those services in a redesigned health system that focuses on a highly integrated primary and acute care system.
- (3) Our health infrastructure, including long-range forward planning for placement of, or replacement of hospitals, ambulance stations and the extension of community-based health centres and their services, based on demographic data and health projections, not on political electorates. This will include the health workforce needed to operate new facilities as they come on line.
- (4) Our health equipment, to ensure timely replacement of equipment and investment in best practices technologies. Currently equipment replacement and purchases are driven by funding availability rather than life cycles which leads to inefficiency.

The Outcomes

The Liberals' Healthy Futures strategy to build a better, well-integrated health system will deliver significant outcomes for Tasmanians and for the Tasmanian health system, including:

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Benefits for the Tasmanian health system	Benefits for Tasmanians
<p>A joined-up, integrated health system</p> <p>Slowing hospital demand and costs</p> <p>Reducing hospital admissions/readmissions</p> <p>Reducing Emergency Dept presentations</p> <p>Stopping duplication and waste</p> <p>Retaining our home-grown nurse/doctors</p> <p>\$76m more for elective surgery</p> <p>Shorter hospital stays</p> <p>Seamless pathways between hospital/home</p> <p>A healthier population / prevention of disease</p> <p>Leanest backroom of health in the country</p> <p>Taking pressure off GPs</p>	<p>Health care when you need it</p> <p>Shorter waiting lists</p> <p>Up to 15,000 more operations</p> <p>Fewer elective surgery cancellations</p> <p>Surgery within clinical timeframes</p> <p>More health care in the home / community</p> <p>Improved patient care/ better health outcomes</p> <p>Savings in cost of transport to care</p> <p>Helping you get healthier</p> <p>Helping manage your illness out of hospital</p> <p>After hospital support programs</p> <p>Shorter hospital stays</p>