

HEALTH WORKFORCE IMPACT STATEMENTS

Background

The Tasmanian Government introduced “Better Hospitals Program one and two” to address significant deficiencies in the Hospital system in Tasmania. These deficiencies are in the number and location of specialist doctors as well as the state of the hospital infrastructure. Previous Government policy decisions were taken for the wrong reasons and without sufficient regard to the health needs of Tasmania.

Recent policy decisions on health workforce have been to identify critical workforce then determine the funding needed. Crude health workforce planning in Tasmania is not acceptable.

Key Issues for Patients

Tasmania has a shortage of specialist doctors, and their support staff, infrastructure and equipment, to support the Hospital System. If sufficient doctors in the right specialties are working within the Tasmania they will reduce the unacceptably long hospital waiting lists. A healthy hospital system improves the quality and timeliness of the medical support available to our General Practice doctors. Specialists need to be aggregated in viable mass, as per recommendations in the Richardson Report, not thinly scattered in the current unviable system.

Key Issues for Governments

The penny dropped for the Tasmanian Government when it added \$75 million per annum in 2004 to the Health Budget to fund the substantial acute shortfall in medical specialist and infrastructure. The Government will need to commence better modeling of the Tasmanian medical workforce not just reacting to acute collapses. The Government also needs to confirm whether it is realistic that there are 75 specialists available and willing to come to Tasmania, within a short time, to address the waiting lists and save the Royal Hobart Hospital as a teaching facility.

The Government will need to address the supply side of the problem in that retention and remuneration of the medical workforce needs to be addressed. Tasmania is currently bottom of national comparisons

The Government will need to introduce legislation that will discipline bureaucrats to think through the health workforce implications of spending decisions.

AMA Position

The AMA notes that it is common practice for Government decisions to require an environmental impact statement. **The AMA calls for all Government decisions on health to require a health workforce impact statement.**