

Emergency Rescue Package for Tasmania's Health System

June 2012

On Friday 15 June 2012, Minister for Health, the Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, announced a \$325 million emergency rescue funding package for Tasmania's public health system. Prior to announcing the package, Minister Plibersek spent two days in Tasmania assessing the public health system and consulting with health industry representatives and local government.

The funding package recognises the unique challenges faced by the Tasmanian health system, including:

- Tasmania's older population;
- higher rates of chronic disease; and
- state health system constraints.

The funding aims to both ease immediate pressures on Tasmania's health system; and prepare it for future challenges by investing in areas such as e-Health and training initiatives.

Minister Plibersek's press release is available [here](#).

Funding Package

The funding package will be delivered over four years in the form of targeted investments across eight areas of the Tasmanian health system:

- \$31.2 million over four years for an elective surgery blitz, providing approximately 2,600 additional surgeries targeted at areas where there are large numbers of patients whose surgery is overdue, such as orthopaedic and cataract surgery;
- \$22 million to establish Walk-in Clinics in Hobart and Launceston to provide care for minor illnesses and injuries, for extended hours and at no charge to patients;
- \$48.7 million over four years to support better care in the community to prevent and manage chronic disease through the Tasmanian Medicare Local. Individual GPs will continue to have central responsibility for the clinical care of their patients, with the Tasmanian Medicare Local supporting allied and preventive health services and the coordination of care;
- \$74.5 million over four years to provide better care for patients when they are discharged from hospital and better palliative care in the community;
- \$53.9 million over four years to train more medical specialists in Tasmania and provide more scholarships for nurses and allied health professionals;

- \$15.4 million over four years to address gaps in mental health services;
- \$36.8 million over four years to roll out the Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record in Tasmania's hospitals and enable allied health, pathology and diagnostic imaging services to connect to e-Health. In consultations with Minister Plibersek, frontline health professionals emphasised how electronic health records would reduce errors and duplication and improve the efficiency of their work.
- \$42.0 million over four years to support innovation in clinical services that would enable care to be delivered more effectively and efficiently. This will include \$1 million in seed funding to establish a Virtual Health Sciences Precinct, bringing together Tasmanian hospitals, the University of Tasmania Faculty of Health Science, the Menzies Research Institute, the Clifford Craig Medical Research Trust, and appropriate primary care providers.

Accountability

The funding package comes with a strict reporting and accountability regime, ensuring the investments result in improved health services.

The reporting and accountability measures include:

- A requirement that the Tasmanian Government guarantee that it will at least maintain its current effort in health, before receiving any funding for particular initiatives under this package.
- A requirement that the Tasmanian Government report monthly on how it spends any of the funding it receives for components of the package it delivers, and what services it provides.

In addition, a Commission on Tasmanian Government Delivery of Health Services will be established, led by appropriate independent experts, to examine how the Tasmanian Government is delivering health services and whether they are being provided as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Response

Tasmanian Minister for Health, Michelle O'Byrne, welcomed the Federal Government's funding package for Tasmania's health system, stating that the funding would provide a significant injection for the provision of health services across the State. Minister O'Byrne added that the funding did not absolve Tasmania from the need to make the health system more efficient through budget savings.

Minister O'Byrne's press release is available [here](#).

Andrew Wilkie, Independent Member for the federal seat of Denison in Tasmania's south-east, also welcomed the announcement. Mr. Wilkie had previously campaigned for Federal funding, and commended the speed with which the Gillard Government responded to the worsening state of the Tasmanian health system.

Mr. Wilkie's press release is available [here](#).