



Tasmanian Greens Party Policy 2014

Health

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The Tasmanian Greens believe that good health is a combination of optimum physical, mental, spiritual, cultural and social wellbeing; it is not simply the absence of disease or infirmity.

The Greens believe that far greater emphasis must be placed on preventative health programs that encourage the maintenance of good health into old age and ensure a better quality of life. The present level of expenditure on curative services is unsustainable and increasingly benefits those who lead inherently unhealthy lifestyles.

Our approach is holistic. We recognise that environmental, economic, social and political factors are significant determinants of good health. Good health stems from good policy in all areas of government. Clean air and water, nutritious food and an adequate standard of housing are basic preconditions for physical and mental wellbeing and can prevent many illnesses or diseases.

An increasing and ageing population, increased urbanisation, increases in chronic disease patterns and non-communicable diseases, sedentary lifestyles, obesity, increasing costs, technological advances, earlier diagnosis and more available treatments are all factors which are creating mounting pressures on Tasmania's health system and health systems globally.

We are committed to significantly reducing the incidence of preventable illness, including cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, cancers, hepatitis and diabetes by changing the conditions of life which encourage such illness, and by educating for the maintenance of lifelong health and well being through the promotion of appropriate exercise and nutrition and the reduction of risk-taking behaviour.

We recognise that alcohol and tobacco are the legal drugs which result in the greatest health risk and financial cost to society. We support the principle of harm minimisation and, consequently, treat the personal misuse of drugs as primarily a health issue.

The Greens are committed to system-wide planning, involving better coordination of service delivery, cooperation between hospitals and clinics, and the removal of unnecessary duplication of services to ensure the viability of acute care and quality medical attention while, at the same time, devolving some essential services to provide for a fairer distribution of healthcare throughout the state. We believe the only logical and realistic way to deliver a more equitable, efficient and sustainable health system would be through adopting a single funder model, a model where funding is consolidated but local control of health delivery services is maintained.

We believe care needs to move towards a more patient-centric mode of delivery, and that a greater focus on the social determinants of health will be required to reign in the overall health spend into the future. This is likely to see a shift in the focus of healthcare away from the current hospital-centric approach, towards community and even home-based wellness promotion and healthcare delivery. Cost savings arising from improved community health will be directed to more affordable, accessible, equitable and appropriate care when illness or infirmity does occur.

Measures

Healthy Environment

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

1. develop and implement programs that reduce the incidence of illness caused by unhealthy or unsafe environmental practices or habits;

2. regulate closely, using the Precautionary Principle, the sale or introduction of products and processes which impact adversely on health;
3. plan and implement changes to infrastructure which encourage healthy lifestyles including improved public transport and better regulation of food production and processing;
4. negotiate with the Commonwealth to move Tasmania's public health system to a single funder model, to turn around current projections which will see the entire state budget consumed by the health budget by 2030.

Healthy Lifestyles

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

5. ensure all Tasmanians have ready access to current information and appropriate assistance to maintain a healthy lifestyle;
6. prioritise integrated preventative health strategies;
7. ensure that junk food advertising is restricted and does not target children;
8. expand programs that discourage smoking;
9. introduce legislation to restrict the advertising of alcohol;
10. require state public-sector superannuation funds divest any current investments in tobacco companies and products, and do not enter into any new tobacco investments;
11. develop strategies to minimise the misuse of drugs including education programs and regulation.

Community Participation

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

12. review and revise health priorities through ongoing, open processes with community participation;
13. expand rural and isolated community health services;
14. increase the use of Physician Assistants and Nursing Practitioners in regional areas to provide additional options and assist doctors;
15. provide greater, more efficient ambulance services across the whole state including the islands;
16. ensure a mandatory requirement that pharmacists record all sales of pseudoephedrine products.

Hospitals

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

17. give greater administrative autonomy to regional hospitals in regard to staffing and capital expenditure;
18. centralise and rationalise duplicated aspects of health administration including the purchase and servicing of medical technology and pharmaceuticals;
19. undertake public consultation as to the timing, location and capital funding options when upgrading or replacing hospitals.

Mental Health

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

20. improve service delivery in mental health and in drug and alcohol rehabilitation by facilitating effective and formal partnerships between the public and private sectors;
21. create adequate accommodation facilities for outpatients.

Workforce

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

22. strengthen the health workforce by improving efficiency in recruiting, providing attractive career structures and conditions which retain nurses, doctors and allied professionals in the public system;
23. increase productivity of doctors and improve patient access to medical care by training and using Physician Assistants;
24. improve access to multi-disciplinary training and education in both rural and urban areas;
25. address ambulance service staff shortages and explore alternative and improved funding models for ambulance services;
26. ensure an appropriate ratio of administrative to service-delivery staff, to maximise the effective the provision of services.

Aboriginal Health

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

27. ensure that all Aboriginal people have processes for determining their own health priorities;
28. provide training in culturally sensitive health care to all professionals in mainstream health services.

Accessibility

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

29. ensure health professionals are trained to provide respectful and caring attention to all patients regardless of their disability, age, ethnic origin, sexuality or homeless status;
30. establish formal mechanisms to ensure open communication between all consumers, their families and the public health system to improve treatments, outcomes and care.

Dental Health

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

31. cooperate with the Commonwealth in developing and implementing a universal public dental health system, expanding the State Dental Service in the interim to include partnerships with private practitioners to improve access to services, especially in regard to children's dental care;
32. prioritise a feasibility study for a Health Professionals course through the University of Tasmania to provide training in dentistry and allied health professions.

Technology

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

33. promote the use of information technology to improve communication and reduce costs whilst ensuring privacy and confidentiality;
34. ensure standardised, compatible and integrated software across the regions.

Natural Therapies

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

35. improve access to quality alternative health care by developing an independent and accountable regulatory system of natural therapies;
36. encourage the development of a complementary medicines unit within the School of Medicine at the University of Tasmania.

Rural Health

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

37. increase the capacity for initial emergency treatment in rural and remote areas, particularly by improving air ambulance services;
38. fully incorporate an e-health system.

Pesticides and Chemicals

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

39. reduce the use of pesticides and other health-impacting chemicals across the state to an absolute minimum;
40. introduce chemical trespass legislation.