

A long-term plan for mental health

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The Plan to rebuild essential services

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“...one of the challenges in mental health service delivery is breaking down the silo mentality of all the different resources to get them working together”

(Richmond Fellowship, *Examiner*, 21 September 2013)

A long-term plan for mental health

Tasmania’s mental health system has become complex, disjointed and confusing to navigate. There is a lack of clear pathways, service gaps and unmet need, making it easier for vulnerable people to fall between the cracks.

It’s time for a new approach to deliver a seamless and integrated mental health system that provides end-to-end care and delivers a range of support options.

A majority Hodgman Liberal Government will invest in the mental health system to develop an integrated system that provides support in the right place, at the right time, and with clear signposts about where to get help and how.

The *Rethink* Mental Health Project

The last major analysis of Tasmania’s mental health system was undertaken a decade ago. Since then, Labor-Green Government budget cuts have impacted on access to support, resulting in a more fragmented system.

The Liberals *Rethink* Mental Health Project will provide for an independent analysis of the full range of public, private, federal, state and community sector-delivered mental health services.

It will map existing delivery and service limitations, both geographically and demographically, barriers for consumers, families and carers, and difficulties for young people transitioning into the adult mental health system.

Importantly, the analysis will be aimed at delivering better outcomes from existing mental health expenditure by focusing resources onto frontline services and support.

The analysis will be completed after 18 months and make recommendations for system reform and strategic investment into services, workforce and capital infrastructure.

This independent project will provide a roadmap for the Tasmanian mental health system for the decade ahead, and beyond.

The project will be led by the Mental Health Council of Tasmania.

A majority Hodgman Liberal Government will provide \$250,000 to the *Rethink* Mental Health Project.

Suicide Prevention

Tasmania has the second highest rate of suicide in Australia, at 14.1 per cent per 100,000. That equates to around 70 people per year who take their own lives – twice the annual road toll. Suicide is the leading cause of death for Tasmanians aged between 15 and 45.

A majority Hodgman Liberal Government will invest an additional \$3 million into targeted and proactive suicide prevention strategies.

While suicide rates have decreased across Australia, it is concerning that rates have not decreased in Tasmania, and coroners believe suicides in Tasmania to be under-reported by as much as 30 per cent.

The Liberals recognise that suicide is a complex issue and any effective suicide prevention needs to a community-wide response. The additional \$3 million will be prioritised into the following areas -

- Assisting communities with the implementation of their Community Suicide Prevention Plans;
- Establishing early intervention referral pathways, especially following a suicide attempt or self-harming;
- Delivering suicide prevention awareness training to persons in key occupations to recognise and respond to the signs;
- Ensuring Tasmanian researchers can access information needed to allow in-depth analysis of Tasmanian suicides, to better target prevention strategies;
- Developing a targeted Youth Suicide Strategy for Tasmania in consultation with the Youth Network of Tasmania; and
- Undertaking analysis of suicide ‘hotspots’ to mitigate risks if places are known for repeat suicides.

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“Many young people have suicide as their biggest concern”

[Youth Network of Tasmania, 2013]

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“The forest demise is having a huge impact within rural communities State-wide”.

[Rural Alive & Well, 2013]

Extended mental health support in rural communities

For the 50 per cent of Tasmanians living in our rural and regional communities, it is difficult to access mental health support.

A majority Hodgman Liberal Government will invest an additional \$1 million over two years into the Rural Alive and Well Program (RAW).

The job-destroying forest deal, high unemployment levels and business closures in regional communities has had a significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and families. Rural communities have developed trust and confidence in RAW's services that providing counselling, support and a crisis response in rural communities.

This investment will enable RAW to continue their work, and future funding will be considered in the context of the Liberals' *Rethink Mental Health* project.

Supported accommodation

Many mental health clients are currently 'recycling' through the mental health system from acute care, to community care, and back again.

As part of our *Rethink Mental Health* Project, a majority Hodgman Liberal Government will investigate the provision of new long-term supported accommodation options, including vacant land and buildings at the Millbrook Rise site in southern Tasmania, and new step-up, step-down models that divert vulnerable consumers from hospital (step-up) and support following a period in hospital (step-down).

Tasmanians with long-term psychiatric disability may be eligible for support under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), however, there is no provision for capital funding under this Scheme.

In recognising that not-for-profit providers have limited options to raise capital, we will also investigate the merits of, and interest in, providing zero interest loan schemes to the community sector as a means of building supply, so providers can leverage that capital into the future.

The *Rethink Mental Health* project will inform the type and location of new supported accommodation options.

Grassroots mental health support

Tasmania's thirty-four Neighbourhood and Community Houses have become the lifeblood of many communities, supporting thousands of Tasmanians in need.

A majority Hodgman Liberal Government will invest \$300,000 into providing mental health outreach services through the Neighbourhood House network.

The outreach services will be delivered by peer support workers – people who have experienced mental illness and recovered. Peer support programs have shown excellent results in other states and around the world, and are proven to add significant value to existing mental health services while delivering great outcomes.

Men's mental health and wellbeing

Men's Sheds are an incredibly valuable asset to the State, contributing to the community - and the economy - in a multitude of ways.

A majority Hodgman Liberal Government recognises the immense value of the forty-two Men's Sheds – and the 4000 active and regular members and users of Shed facilities - across the State.

A majority Hodgman Liberal Government will provide an additional \$555,000 to Tasmanian Men's Sheds

The critical importance of Men's Sheds to get men talking and improve their wellbeing, health, and mental health, cannot be understated. They provide a vehicle for men to connect with other men, maintain an active body and mind, share problems, talk about their emotions and work on projects that provide a valuable contribution to the local community.

An evaluation of the benefits of Men's Sheds was undertaken by Beyond Blue in 2013. It found there were clear health benefits associated with Men's Sheds and awareness of mental health issues, like depression and anxiety, is improved through Shed membership

More mental health advocacy

The Labor-Green Government reneged on election commitments to increase the number of mental health advocates.

A majority Hodgman Liberal Government will provide an additional \$100,000 per annum to Advocacy Tasmania, to increase the level of assistance it can provide to people with mental illness and people living with a disability.

This additional funding will assist Advocacy Tasmania to meet increased demand for its services State-wide.

Costings: \$1.95 million (some initiatives included have been previously announced and costed).

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“... Neighbourhood Houses are seeing people with mental health issues who are isolated and at times distressed ...”

[Tasmanian Association of Community Houses, 2013]