

RESPONSE TO PETITION

Petition No. 44 of 2023 Legislative Council

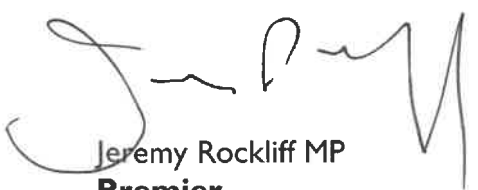
The petitioners ask the House to:

1. Ensure the Tasmanian Health Service (THS), who provide the service, have a full understanding of the unmet need for residents of King Island with regard to access to physiotherapy services in terms of:
 - (a) Waiting times; and
 - (b) Number of patients waiting for physiotherapy services.
2. Consider the delivery of a THS physiotherapy service that enables more time for appointments whilst the physiotherapist visits King Island, for example, visiting for two days rather than flying in and out on the same day.
3. Ensure King Island residents have timely access to physiotherapy to treat and manage:
 - (a) Chronic health care;
 - (b) Acute injuries; and
 - (c) Post-operative patients requiring regular physiotherapy.

RESPONSE:

- The provision of health services, including physiotherapy to remote sites such as King Island is a priority for our Government and the Tasmanian Health Service.
- A variety of physiotherapy services are provided across the North-West including acute, subacute and ambulatory services. Referrals made to the Physiotherapy service in the North-West are triaged based on clinical priority. The Tasmanian Health Service provides a fortnightly outreach physiotherapy clinic to King Island and continues to monitor services provided to the community to ensure the delivery of efficient and effective services across the North-West.

- The Tasmanian Government recognises the unique challenges that residents of King Island and the Furneaux Group Islands can face in accessing allied health and preventative health services. Recent changes to the Patient Travel Assistance Scheme aim to address these issues by providing support for residents to travel off island to access these services, including physiotherapy.
- The Tasmanian Government is also committed to growing the allied health workforce across the State. We welcomed the announcement from the University of Tasmania who launched an Allied Health Expansion Program, which offers courses across a range of disciplines, including physiotherapy.
- \$6 million was allocated in the 2022-23 State Budget to deliver additional professional experience placements for University of Tasmania students across the Tasmanian Health Service to support the Expansion Program.
- In addition, the Tasmanian Government announced a new \$1.125 million scholarship program that will target students in a range of allied health professions who are completing their final year of study in 2023 to either stay in the State after graduating or relocate and work in Tasmania.
- The Scholarship will see up to 45 allied health professionals added to the Tasmanian Health Service from 2024 providing an immediate workforce boost on the ground in areas that are currently experiencing workforce shortages.
- The Scholarship will provide an initial payment of \$15 000 to support their study fees with a further \$10 000 payment made upon completing three years of service in the Tasmanian Health Service.
- Since 2014 the Tasmanian Government has employed more than 1390 FTE additional nurses, 390 FTE additional doctors, 310 FTE additional allied health professionals and 220 FTE additional paramedics and dispatch officers.
- The Government has also released the *Long Term Plan for Healthcare in Tasmania 2040* for public consultation. The Plan details how the Government plans to build upon the success of existing services and expand the way we deliver health care, particularly within communities and in the homes of Tasmanians.
- This Plan will connect care across every part of the health system – hospitals, subacute, rehabilitation, mental health services and primary care in the community – to ensure Tasmanians receive comprehensive healthcare services.
- It focuses on expanding in-reach and home-based models of care and takes advantage of the learnings from COVID@homeplus so that virtual care options can be expanded.



Jeremy Rockliff MP
Premier
Minister for Health

Date:

6/6/23