

Questions without Notice

Name: Hon Ruth Forrest MLC

Questions:

With regard to the Rapid Access to Specialists in the Community initiative:

1. Has the service has commenced;
 - a. If so;
 - i. how has the program/initiative been integrated with existing health services;
 - ii. how many referrals and/or episodes of care have been provided;
 - iii. what feedback, if any is available regarding the benefits of the service; and
 - iv. what challenges have impacted to commencement or operation of the service?
 2. If the service has not commenced;
 - a. Has the service model been finalised;
 - i. If so, can a description of the model be provided;
 - ii. If not, when is finalisation expected?
 - b. Have staff been recruited; and
 - i. If so, how many staff
 - ii. In what specialties; and
 - iii. Where are they located?
 - c. Has the development of supporting materials (e.g. patient management plans, patient referral forms, promotional materials, policies and procedures) been completed; and
 - i. If not what is the timeline for completion?

Answered by: Hon Leonie Hiscutt MLC, Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council

Answers:

- I. The Rapid Access to Specialists in the Community Service commenced delivery on 1 April 2021. The Service covers population centres in northern Tasmania, currently extending west from Launceston through to Deloraine and surrounding areas. There will be further services delivered in the North West as the model continues to develop. To ensure continuity with the recent impacts of community transmission of COVID-19 on the Tasmanian Health Service (THS), the service has transitioned to delivery via telehealth for the present time.
 - a.
 - i. The service has been integrated with existing health services by providing specialist support predominantly to general practitioners (GP) in primary care such as GP practices, District Hospitals and Community Health Centres, Hospital Aged Care Liaison Team and the Community Rapid Response Team with rapid access to THS specialists for advice and patient review.
 - ii. There have been 104 patients referred to the service, with 228 episodes of care provided to date.
 - iii. Patients are benefitting from the additional support provided to their GPs, which is enabling more appropriate plans of care and better access to advice relating to issues such as comorbidities. Work is underway to develop a process to quantitatively measure service effectiveness, patient outcomes and GP perceptions of the service and to provide an opportunity for feedback about potential improvements ahead of any further expansion. This mechanism will be implemented once "in person" services resume.
 - iv. As the health system responds to the ongoing situation with COVID-19 in Tasmania, uptake of the service by GPs and other community-based health professionals has affected service delivery. Despite the impacts of COVID-19 in 2022 preventing the in-reach service being delivered "in person", the medical specialists continue to provide telehealth support to participating GPs. The THS is currently planning for the recommencement of in-reach services.



Jeremy Rockliff MP
Premier
Minister for Health

28 APR 2022