

CONSTITUENT QUESTION

House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Helen Burnet MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP
Premier (Responsible for Disaster Recovery)

QUESTION:

Given our state, national and global failures to make enough progress on emissions reduction, we are facing the escalating impacts of climate change. One of these is the increase in frequency and severity of disasters. Where is the evidence that this state government has taken seriously the recommendations of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, with particular reference to the lack of disaster planning for community health services, including general practice and community pharmacy?

These sectors are primarily funded by the federal government, but disaster planning is undertaken by state governments. Preparedness is key to community resilience both during and after disasters. Where is the detailed planning for general practice and community pharmacy in the case of disasters where power, transport and communications disruptions have occurred.

ANSWER:

The *Tasmanian Climate Change and Health Roundtable Report*, published in 2020, recognises the negative health impacts associated with climate change, including the increased frequency and severity of natural disasters.

Some people may be at increased risk from emergencies because they are experiencing health issues or social isolation. Primary healthcare providers such as general practices and community pharmacies, are a key point of contact with these members of the community. They support patient health management, which can

reduce the adverse impacts of emergencies. In addition, primary care providers often remain with the community for years after a disaster, helping to manage ongoing health effects.

The devastating bushfires during the summer of 2019-2020 were a catalyst for the Commonwealth Government to establish the *Royal Commission into Natural Disaster Arrangements*. One of the recommendations in its final report relates to the inclusion of primary care providers in disaster management.

Australian, state and territory governments should develop arrangements that facilitate greater inclusion of primary healthcare providers in disaster management, including: representation on relevant disaster committees and plans and providing training, education and other supports. (Recommendation 15.2)

The Department of Health has been working with Primary Health Tasmania, the Pharmacy Guild, and the Pharmaceutical Society to implement Recommendation 15.2 in Tasmania.

The Department recently circulated a consultation draft of the *Primary Care in Emergency Management Plan* to a range of stakeholders. The draft Plan supports whole-of-health-system collaboration and coordination of emergency management activities between the Department of Health and primary care providers by:

- Clarifying roles and responsibilities across government and supporting organisations in relation to the provision of primary care in emergencies.
- Describing arrangements for escalating issues from primary healthcare providers.
- Raising awareness of those involved in emergency management of the role of primary healthcare providers in emergencies.

Feedback from stakeholders will be incorporated before the plan is finalised in June 2025.

The Department of Health is also establishing a Health Emergency Management Partners Group comprising of senior representatives from general practice, pharmacy, private hospitals and others. The Group supports the development whole-of-health-system plans and arrangements for emergency prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery.



Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP
Premier

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