

Rural Health Senate Enquiry submission from Sonya Williams.

Background

According to the 2015 Dropping off the Edge report Brighton ranked as the most disadvantaged LGA in the State.

Many residents do not have private transport and rely on public transport which is unreliable and irregular.

Brighton is a fast growing municipality in Tasmania, with state treasury predictions of rapid growth in the next 20 years with the population to nearly triple.

Current situation

There are currently three General Practice surgeries in the municipality all working at capacity and not taking new patients. Many local residents including new residents need to travel for general practice services with the distance traveled in some cases considerable. For other residents unable to travel there has become a reliance on ambulance and Emergency Dept services. A example of this was when a local resident was unable to access a Dr and had to take her vomiting child into the ED, with more Drs or after hours this situation could have been avoided.

The only afterhours services for the northern suburbs of Hobart are at Derwent Park or Rosny, both of which are difficult to access from the Brighton Municipality and these popular services are often overcrowded. Both these services are extremely difficult to get to if you need to rely on public transport which runs very irregularly and timely (a 10 minute trip by car can be at least 20 minutes by bus), making it very difficult if you need to take small sick children with you. The Call the Dr service only goes to the start of Brighton township no further leaving many residents with little to no choice by to use emergency departments.

There are no x-ray facilities available in the municipality with the closest at New Norfolk which is only basic x ray and not accessible by public transport from the Brighton Municipality. Services at Glenorchy include two x- ray services but to access these you need to have referral from your General Practice and then make your way to Glenorchy before returning to your GP for results. For people without private transport this can become an all day ordeal, so to short cut this the easy solution is to ring an ambulance and go to the ED.

Area of need

Health outcome for residents of the Brighton Municipality are poor, according to phidu data the life expectancy in Gagebrook for a male is 66 years, a female 65 years whereas for Sandy Bay the expectancy is 83 for a male and 87 for a female.

Surely just because this is a lower socio-economic area people should not be deprived of the medical services that are offered to the more affluent areas.

Suggestions for change

To achieve better health outcomes for the people of Brighton an Integrated Medical Centre should be build, this would met the growing population demands, help overcome existing problems with service provision and could offer integrated primary health care including x-ray and scan facilities. Adult dental health which has a large impact on people's health could also be considered. Specialist visiting rooms would mean more people would attend appointments because they would not be traveling long distances. Currently if you have school age children to get to school and a

appointment to attend it is a all day outing. A local resident recently had to wait for four hours for an ambulance because of the delay it meant she was admitted to ICU.

Building a medical centre would not only improve the health of the residents but would take some pressure off the ambulance and Emergency Department.

About author

My name is Sonya Williams and I have lived in the Brighton Municipality for 38 years many of which I have worked in the Community Services sector. As a past Councilor of Brighton I have heard many stories about the lack of even general practice services in the area for far to long.