

Constituent Question in Parliament

House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Guy Barnett MP

QUESTION:

Tammy from the Bruny Island Community Association has contacted me. Healthcare providers, first responders and educators in the community have identified big gaps in current access to social work and mental health support on Bruny Island. It puts immense pressure and costs on services and residents' mental health. The association has a draft proposal for how mental health services for approximately 1000 residents on the island can be improved. She wants to know whether the government will act on this and their proposal, which has been developed by a working group across all sectors on the island. They want to proactively address the mental health concerns for the long-term and prevent the costly crises that are currently occurring. She asks whether there is a clear commitment by the government to ongoing funding for the BIRCH service for Bruny's elderly, a permanent on-island social worker for Bruny and a permanent part-time visiting psychologist for Bruny Island.

ANSWER:

The Tasmanian Government is committed to ensuring every Tasmanian has access to appropriate, timely, effective, and quality mental health supports, based on contemporary best practice, and delivered by a highly skilled workforce. We have delivered record funding of over \$410 million in this important area. With this investment, we are employing more people than ever before, including more clinicians, and lived experience workers – with an increase of over 197 FTE in the last four years alone. We are providing new and expanded services like the Peacock Centre, Mental Health Hospital in the Home, and Mental Health Emergency Response.

Our overarching Rethink 2020 mental health plan and the Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-2027 guide our efforts, overseen by the Premier's Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Advisory Council.

Public mental health services are available in a range of community and inpatient settings around Tasmania.

Access Mental Health, established last year, is the central point of contact for Tasmanians to phone for mental health advice, assessment, and referral. Access Mental Health comprises specialist mental health triage teams in each region and is accessible to anyone residing in Tasmania who is dealing with mental health challenges, including individuals, families, caregivers, and healthcare professionals.

Anyone in Tasmania can call on 1800 332 388, 24/7, for:

- immediate counselling support over the phone;
- information about the Tasmanian mental health system; and
- help making a referral to public mental health services.

Treatment and support can also be obtained through GPs, private psychologists and psychiatrists, other allied health providers, and community sector organisations, many of which receive funding from the Tasmanian Government.

I have asked the Department of Health to contact BICA directly regarding the needs of people living on Bruny Island in more detail, including options to address BICA's draft working proposal. I look forward to being updated on the outcome of these discussions in due course.

APPROVED/NOT APPROVED



Hon Guy Barnett MP
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

Date:

14/8/24