

CONSTITUENT QUESTION

House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Jen Butler MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Jacque Petrusma MP

Hon Roger Jaensch MP (interstate prescriptions)

QUESTION:

A constituent of mine from Boomer Bay, who has also written to you, has been required to travel interstate for her seven-year-old son to access the healthcare he needs. He was diagnosed with ADHD in June last year but cannot get an appointment with a paediatrician, public or private, to prescribe the medication he needs. She says, 'My son's schooling is suffering, his home life is suffering, and as a family we are left without options.' Even worse though, they now have an appointment in Melbourne at the end of April. They will face the challenge of filling a prescription in Tasmania that has been issued interstate.

Why should Tasmanian children have to travel to Melbourne to get the help they need? What support will your government provide this family who have had to pay massive travel costs? When will the legislation you promised last year to resolve the interstate prescriptions issue actually be introduced?

ANSWER:

Across Australia, there has been a significant rise in presentations to health services of young people with neurodivergence. In response to the national rise in presentations, the Australian Government initiated a Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs inquiry into assessment and support services for adults and children with ADHD. The Committee's final report was released in late 2023.

Implementation and support of the recommendations of this report through the proposed national framework will help address some of the challenges relating to ADHD, autism and the paediatric outpatient waiting list in Tasmania.

These issues are also at the centre of the Tasmanian House of Assembly Standing Committee on Government Administration B *Inquiry into the assessment and treatment of ADHD and support services*, and we look forward to considering the Committee's final report in due course.

In Tasmania, there has been significant growth in demand for specialist assessment, particularly of children with behavioural and developmental issues, including for diagnosis and management of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

There is also a national shortage of clinicians able to diagnose ADHD, noting that since 2015, there has been a three-fold increase in the number of Tasmanians prescribed Schedule 8 psychostimulants for ADHD.

The Tasmanian Health Service (THS) is working hard to reduce waiting times for specialist paediatric appointments, including through additional recruitment of specialists. At last year's election, the Tasmanian Government also committed to establishing a new GP specialist service for children with ADHD so families can access support sooner, with \$2.5 million allocated in last year's Budget.

The Department of Health has also implemented the necessary changes to enable specialists and GPs with Special Interests in ADHD, and the appropriate training, to be authorised to prescribe medications for up to three years, which is an increase from two years.

In regards to travel assistance, the Patient Travel Assistance Scheme (PTAS) is available and can provide financial assistance to eligible Tasmanian residents who are required to travel to access specialised medical care.

PTAS covers some of the travel and accommodation costs for Tasmanians who need to travel long distances for specialised care.

More details about who is eligible for PTAS and the application process are available here: <https://www.health.tas.gov.au/patients/health-costs/ptas#what-is-the-patient-travel-assistance-scheme>.

Interstate prescriptions

From Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing Roger Jaensch who is responsible for the *Poisons Act 1971*:

The Tasmanian Government has committed to making changes to the *Poisons Act 1971* to enable local pharmacists to dispense interstate prescriptions.

Consultation on amendments to the *Poisons Act 1971* will commence shortly.

APPROVED/NOT APPROVED



Hon Jacquie Petrusma MP
Minister for Health

Date: 18/3/25

APPROVED



Hon Roger Jaensch MP
Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Date: 17 March 2025