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Mr Stuart Wright  
Secretary, Joint Select Committee on Preventative Health Care  
Parliament House  
HOBART 7001

Dear Mr Wright

I write to you in respect of the final report of the Joint Select Committee into Preventative Health Care, tabled in Parliament earlier this year.

The Government did provide an initial response to the report during debate on a Notice of Motion relating to the report moved by the Member for Murchison in the Legislative Council. Further to that contribution, I have pleasure in attaching a further formal response on behalf of the Tasmanian Government (Attachment I).

As Committee Members are aware, the Government was working to develop its own preventative health strategy, the *Healthy Tasmania Five Year Strategic Plan*, while the Committee was developing its report. Having now released our strategy, the Government's response highlights linkages to the Committee's report as reflected through common themes and points.

Yours sincerely

Michael Ferguson MP  
**Minister for Health**

October 2016

## **Attachment I**

### **Formal Government response to the report of the Joint Select Committee on Preventative Health Care**

**Recommendation I focused on the need to account for the factors which influence health outcomes, such as education, housing and so forth.**

The Healthy Tasmania Five Year Strategic Plan (the Strategic Plan) is designed as a whole-of-Government document, in recognition of the fact that the factors which influence health go beyond the health portfolio.

For example, evidence shows that the early years are critical to establishing good health habits. That is why one of our key actions under Healthy Tasmania is our School Health Initiative under the Education portfolio, which provides \$2 million over four years for more action in schools focused on encouraging physical activity and promoting better nutrition. This will particularly focus on schools in lower socio-economic areas.

The Health in All Policies approach outlined in the Strategic Plan (detailed further below) will build the capacity of all Agencies and GBEs to consider the health impacts of policies. The Minister for Health will lead implementation of the Plan on behalf of the Government, with DHHS to deliver an annual report to the Minister outlining progress on initiatives across Government.

The Tasmanian Government is also pursuing a range of other policies which although not explicitly included in the Strategic Plan, support important outcomes linked to the goal of addressing the factors which can influence health and improving community health and wellbeing.

For example, we are pursuing a range of education reforms already commenced and proposed by the Government. This includes extending regional high schools to Year 12, lowering the school starting age and age raising the school finishing age, all of which will be critical levers to support better community health outcomes in future. Higher educational attainment is a key enabler to good health through promoting health literacy and improving students' employment prospects as they enter adulthood.

The Government has also increased funding to improve Adult Literacy through the 26TEN Coalition of Interest, including a continuation of focus in health literacy for adult Tasmanians.

In another example, we are investing in affordable housing to ensure vulnerable Tasmanians have a place to call home through our Affordable Housing Strategy. Stable housing can provide a foundation for Tasmanians to adopt healthy lifestyles, build social networks in communities, engage in learning and employment, and address health needs.

**Recommendations 2-2c focused on promoting a health in all policies approach to policy development across Government.**

Promoting a Health in All Policies approach is recognised as an important way to support effective action on the factors that can influence population health, that go beyond the health portfolio itself.

As part of the Strategic Plan, a Heads of Agency forum will be established to provide coordination and leadership on preventative health across Government, in working to ensure Government policies account for the factors which influence health outcomes.

Agencies and GBEs will be supported to consider the health impacts of policies through improved information sharing utilising the new Healthy Tasmania Portal. This will also support external stakeholder organisations and communities to identify need for health related initiatives and programs and how health needs should be factored in to other fields of policy and program development.

Both Government and the community will be further supported in promoting a Health in All Policies approach through receiving advice from the refocused Premier's Physical Activity Council, which will have its remit extended and aligned with the broader Healthy Tasmania agenda.

**Recommendations 3-3k focused on addressing the needs of people at different stages of life, recognising the role of other entities such as local government in achieving better health in communities, the importance of mental health to overall health and wellbeing, and other issues such as drug and alcohol misuse.**

The Strategic Plan is constructed around a 'Life Stages' approach, in recognition of the fact that people's health needs can be quite different depending on their age.

For example, we have included actions in the Strategic Plan which clearly target early childhood and the early school years.

We have committed to establish a more visible community presence for the Child Health and Parenting Service, centred upon a revised model of care with a stronger focus on prevention. As recently announced in parliament, the CHaPS service will transfer from Children and Youth Services to the Tasmanian Health Service on 1 January 2017. This will support the sustainability and effectiveness of the service by bolstering its ability to attract and retain staff, through giving them access to benefits like salary packaging and greater opportunities for professional development.

As mentioned we are investing \$2 million over four years in our School Health Initiative, which will promote initiatives focusing on more physical activity and better nutrition, particularly in schools in lower socio-economic areas.

There is a particular focus on supporting maternal health in the Strategic Plan, including action to supporting pregnant women to quit smoking through a multi-strategy approach. It

is acknowledged that Tasmania's rates of smoking during pregnancy remain significantly higher than the national average and that more needs to be done to support expectant mothers to avoid this significant health risk for themselves and their unborn children.

The Government also recently launched a new trial program in the North West to promote good oral health for pregnant women, Healthy Smiles for Two trial in the North West. The trial involves providing priority access to oral health services for eligible pregnant women, in light of evidence showing that poor oral health during pregnancy can have a significant impact on the overall health of mothers and babies.

For older Tasmanians, the Government has provided funding to the Council on the Ageing to support development of a new Active Ageing Plan to engage older Tasmanians in creating a productive and supportive community.

The Government will also encourage people of all ages and background to consider what is important to their communities and what initiatives they would like to promote as part of our Healthy Tasmanian Communities Innovation Pool.

Local Government is certainly a key partner in driving change at the community level, and there will be scope for local governments to take greater action on preventative health, for example through devising community action plans and activities that could be funded under the Healthy Tasmanian Communities Innovation Pool.

Government Agencies, led by DHHS, will also consult closely with local government in the development of the preventative health commissioning model and through the Premier's Local Government Council.

The Government recognises the key linkages between mental health and overall health and wellbeing. However, while mental health is mentioned in the Strategic Plan, action on this is being led through our flagship mental health policies Rethink Mental Health, the Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy and the Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy.

The Tasmanian Government has a range of ongoing strategies in place to combat illicit drug use, which have been developed and progressed separate to the Strategic Plan. In particular, in 2015 it committed to provide additional funds of \$4.8 million over four years to tackle the problem of Ice and other drugs in Tasmania. This funding is being used to implement recommendations from the *Review of Drug Use and Service Responses in the North West Tasmania* final report. Key progress includes:

- the new 12 bed residential rehabilitation facility established in Ulverstone, which commenced operation on 1 March 2016 and is run by the Salvation Army
- the Consultation Liaison Model of Care has been drafted and a specialist Alcohol and Drug Nurse has been recruited to a new Consultation Liaison position in the North West, with another position being advertised for the North

- the Alcohol and Drug Service is progressing work to increase access to inpatient withdrawal management services for clients in the North and North West, including consideration of transportation and clinical assessment issues and
- work is occurring to develop the service specifications and gap analysis for a new clinical information system for the alcohol, tobacco and other drugs sector.

Again, through separate but related work, the Tasmanian Alcohol Action Framework (TAAF) 2010-2015 has been extended to the end of 2016 while it undergoes a comprehensive review. The Department of Health and Human Services, as the lead agency, will examine potential linkages between this work and the Strategic Plan. This review of the TAAF will also align with the development of the next National Alcohol Strategy, which is currently being developed as a sub-set of the National Drug Strategy.

The Strategic Plan also targets action to tackle overweight and obesity through range of new initiatives designed to promote active lifestyles, physical activity and good nutrition. This includes bringing the nationally recognised LiveLighter campaign to Tasmania, the Healthy Tasmania Challenge, Healthy Kids Tasmania and the School Health Initiative.

**Recommendation 4-4c focused on health and wellbeing considerations being reflected in the State's planning, infrastructure and transport policies.**

As noted, actions included under the Strategic Plan will help promote a Health in All Policies approach to policy development across Government. In addition, there are a number of other mechanisms in place to support health and wellbeing considerations in statewide planning processes, as detailed below.

*Tasmanian Planning Scheme*

Provisions addressing roads in subdivisions in urban residential zones in the draft Tasmanian Planning Scheme specifically refer to connectivity with neighbourhood network, walking cycling and public transport being facilitated, and provision of bicycle infrastructure on new arterial roads.

*Land Use Planning and Approvals Act Amendments*

Amendments to the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*, which commenced in December 2015, provide a clear reference to health and wellbeing in the Schedule 1 objectives of the Act, requiring consideration to be given to this issue in a range of planning instruments and planning decisions under the Act.

The new wording is "to promote the health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians and visitors to Tasmania by ensuring a pleasant, efficient and safe environment for working, living and recreation."

### *Tasmanian Planning Policies*

The draft Tasmanian Planning Policies, which the Government intends to consult on broadly next year, will include objectives and strategies that promote healthy and liveable communities for our State. These policies will inform the development of planning instruments, including Regional Land Use Strategies and the Tasmanian Planning Scheme.

**Recommendations 5-5e focused on the importance of access to health services, health literacy, telehealth, health workforce distribution and access to healthy food.**

Ensuring access to better care is a central theme to the One Health System reforms. The Tasmanian Government has made a range of decisions through this process which are designed to ensure services are delivered safely and sustainably to people in all regions of Tasmania. To support people in instances where this means they may have to travel to access care, we have committed \$24 million to patient transport initiatives to support people accessing care in the hospital best suited to treat their needs.

The Tasmanian Role Delineation Framework, developed as a key component of the One Health System reforms, will ensure that high quality specialist services are provided on a sustainable basis, promoting better access to specialist care for Tasmanians. Creating one state-wide organisation, as opposed to three regional organisations, will also support increased mobility of the clinical workforce.

Health literacy is identified by the Strategic Plan as a key enabler of better health outcomes. The Strategic Plan identifies specific initiatives to promote health literacy, including supporting all State-funded health services to champion prevention as part of routine care and services provided. The Plan also commits to working with the media promote information on healthy choices.

As part of the Strategic Plan, the Government will also support greater health literacy through other initiatives such as the LiveLighter campaign, which provides information and resources to people to promote better nutrition and more physical activity, and the School Health Initiative, which will provide more funding to schools for initiatives to develop knowledge and habits on healthy behaviours earlier in life.

The Strategic Plan also includes an initiative to promote heart disease and diabetes risk tests to all Tasmanians in the appropriate age range, which provides an opportunity for information and advice on self-care and healthy habits to be provided in the primary care setting.

**Recommendations 6-6c focused on the collection and accessibility of health and wellbeing data across Government.**

The Government is implementing the Healthy Tasmania Portal as an online 'one stop shop' for preventative health information for both Government and the wider community. Led by

DHHS, the portal will host a range of preventative health data which will aid in program planning and development, as well as provide easy links to key preventative health services and initiatives.

New data items also have been added to the Tasmanian Population Health Survey for 2016. The tender to conduct the survey recently closed and it will be conducted later in 2016.

As mentioned, discussion on health consideration in policy development will occur through a Heads of Agency forum and an annual report on initiatives across Government will be prepared by DHHS and submitted to the Minister for Health.

Existing data on children's health and wellbeing is provided through a range of national datasets and also through the Tasmanian Council of Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity's annual reports.

**Recommendations 7-7g focused on funding for and governance of preventative health policy and programs across Government and the community, including a greater focus on screening and anticipatory care.**

The Strategic Plan commits to investing an additional \$6.4 million on new actions over the next four years, which comes on top of the more than \$70 million already spent on preventative health activity across Government.

An increase in the Tobacco Sellers Licence fee will support more anti-smoking social marketing at the evidence based level of 700 Targeted Audience Rating Points on an ongoing basis.

The Government is strongly committed to promoting evidence and outcomes-based policy in preventative health, and indeed in all health policy. As such, the Strategic Plan outlines that an assessment tool will be developed to assess the effectiveness of current programs, which will help determine if they should continue, be modified or cease. This is to ensure that public funds are being appropriately targeted to areas where they have the greatest demonstrated impact on improving the community's health.

This is, moreover, one of the guiding principles of the Strategic Plan and the reason why smoking and obesity have been identified as the Government's top priorities. Evidence shows that smoking and obesity have the greatest detrimental impact on the community's health. This does not mean that other risk factors and issues will not continue to be targeted and funded, but that particular effort should focus on smoking and obesity.

The Government also recognises the importance of 'grassroots' community-led action as an integral part of the solution to poor population health. Government certainly has a leadership role to play in preventative health policy, but the Government considers that fostering community leadership and empowerment is critical to getting better health outcomes. The Government is supporting this goal through the Health Tasmania Community Innovation Pool grants program, which will provide \$1 million in seed funding

for community-driven approaches to health and wellbeing. This will be particularly targeted at communities that have the poorest health outcomes.

The Strategic Plan reiterates the Tasmanian Government's commitment to working with the Australian Government on preventative and primary health policies and programs, a recent example of which is the announcement that Tasmania will be a trial site for the Health Care Homes initiative, which is designed to promote coordinated care for people with chronic conditions.

The Government also expects to consult closely with the Australian Government and local government on the development of a commissioning model, in view of the need to promote programs which are both cost effective and sensitive to local needs.

The Strategic Plan contains a new initiative for screening for diabetes and heart disease, using the Government's available communication channels. This will promote stronger action to prevent development of chronic disease and to effectively manage it in those who already live with chronic conditions.



