

Department of Health and Human Services

POPULATION HEALTH

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The Hon. Ruth Forrest
c/o Legislative Council
Parliament House
Hobart TAS 7000

Attention: Tom Wise, Clerk of Committees

Dear Ms Forrest and members of the Joint Select Committee as appointed

Subject: Health and Wellbeing Advisory Council submission to the Joint Select Committee Inquiry into Preventive Health Care

I write on behalf of the Health and Wellbeing Advisory Council to the Hon. Michelle O'Byrne MP, Minister for Health and the Parliament of Tasmania.

In January of 2012, the Minister gave the newly appointed Advisory Council the task of identifying how to improve the health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians. This is at once a pleasure, a privilege and a challenge which I believe is more important now than ever.

Over the past year, I have had the good fortune of working with an independent, highly talented and diverse group of people. The Advisory Council is not a board of medical professionals. Each member is a leader in their own unique field with a strong interest in improving the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians.

The Health and Wellbeing Advisory Council is highly collaborative. The depth of skill and experience brought together by members is equally matched by their own goodwill and passion for their community.

I commend you on accepting the position of Chair of the Joint Select Committee and your interest in the important work of this inquiry.

A key piece of work completed by the Advisory Council in 2012 is the *Health and Wellbeing Mapping Report*, that identifies a plethora of policies, programs, projects and activities taking place in Tasmania under the broad heading of 'health and wellbeing.' While an enormous range of health and wellbeing activity is underway, there appears to be little or no awareness of, or connectivity, between activities. There is no infrastructure or structured linkage that occurs between portfolios. There appears to be little attention given to the challenges of avoidable inequities experienced by many Tasmanians – lack of work, cost of housing, low education levels - all of which contribute to our poor health outcomes.

Despite this, there is a high level of consensus on the need to link together better, to collaborate and partner, in order to address the broader determinants of health.

There is great expectation within the community that people's health and medical needs will be met – this isn't occurring, and is inequitable for many people across the State, particularly in rural areas. However, not all Tasmanians are saying, "More hospitals" or, "More beds, please." Many are asking for more communication around what would help them to maintain their own health, for example improved access to transport and information to navigate the steps for early intervention and prevention.

A prime example of what helps families to maintain good health and wellbeing is targeted support during the early years. Support for children from pregnancy through to school age, and supporting young people through the teenage years, particularly through extended education, can help to secure their health and wellbeing for life. If families have access to good beginnings then a healthy lifespan can follow.

Place-based approaches, early intervention and prevention, taking a person-centred approach, improving access and integration and engaging local communities are other important ways of supporting people to live well and healthy.

Our task as a Health and Wellbeing Advisory Council is to identify how best the Tasmanian Government can help parents, families, individuals and communities to maintain and improve their own health and wellbeing.

You will find the published papers from our work so far on the Government website here:

http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/about_the_department/our_plans_and_strategies/a_healthy_tasmania

We are heartened by the Premier's budget Strategy Framework released in December 2012 that aligns with our thinking. We would be pleased to brief you and your Committee members in person with the evidence and representation of the health hopes and aspirations of Tasmanians. We look forward to talking with more Tasmanians and consolidating our own advice to the Minister and to Parliament in 2013.

Yours sincerely



Ms Leonie Young,

Chair Health and Wellbeing Advisory Council

27/2/2013