

CONSTITUENT QUESTION

House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Rebecca White MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Guy Barnett MP

QUESTION:

- I. One of my constituents, Loretta McShane, reports that her mother recently passed away with little palliative care support. Ms McShane reports this was a traumatic experience and her family has suffered significantly as result. Ms McShane cites the Tasmanian Palliative and End of Life Care Policy Framework and suggests that 2 years after its announcement, the policy is not being implemented as promised. Can you provide an update on the progress of the policy's implementation?

ANSWER:

I would like to express my sincere condolences to Ms McShane on the passing of her mother. I have asked my Department to look into these matters and provide me with advice on the specific matters, and I will respond to Ms McShane separately.

In regards to Tasmania's Palliative and End of Life Care Policy Framework, 2022-27, the Department of Health has been working with other partners in the non-government sector to implement the Framework, which identifies six key priority action areas built around the principles of person, family and caregiver focused care, participation and engagement, an acknowledgement that death is part of life, and supportive communities.

The implementation of the recommendations has been supported by Tasmanian Government funding of \$6.8 million for Palliative Care Partnerships and \$10.5 million for Home and Community Based Care including afterhours care. Additional staff have been also recruited across the State to boost capacity.

A number of initiatives have been completed under the Palliative Care Partnerships program, including:

- Two rounds of a co-funded small grants program with Primary Health Tasmania, with \$526 000 awarded to 19 community-based organisations for projects that improve coordination of services, build social connections, and promote psychosocial wellbeing. An additional \$332,128 was allocated to

organisations to review, modify and/or research models of care and undertake evidence-based redesign processes to improve outcomes for patients with life-limiting conditions.

- A 'Learning through Loss' project with Palliative Care Tasmania, in which public, private, and independent school staff are equipped with knowledge and skills that promote youth resilience when confronting loss and grief. As of last report, more than 326 school staff across 32 schools and 115 professionals and volunteers across 20 organisations undertook training. This project has been extended for another 12 months.
- Participating pharmacies, under the 'Palliative Care Prepared Pharmacies' community project, agree to continuously stock essential palliative medicines to ensure patients can access necessary medications when needed, regardless of where they live. This initiative was launched on 18 January 2024 and to date more than 94 of 157 (60%), of community pharmacies across 54 different towns and suburbs in Tasmania have signed up. This project involved collaboration between the Department of Health, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Primary Health Tasmania, and the Tasmanian Health Service.
- Contracting with Flinders University in South Australia for the provision of departmental subsidised on-line palliative care education courses accessible to doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals who have an interest in working in the sector or want to increase their knowledge and understanding of palliative care. So far, 82 individuals have been awarded a scholarship for either a certificate or specialist certificate in palliative care. A second round of scholarships opened on 27 May 2024.
- Contracting with Palliative Care Tasmania to deliver a public awareness campaign to increase the uptake of advance care directives in Tasmania.
- Funding Specialist Palliative Care Services in the north of the state to move from a five-day (Monday to Friday) roster to a seven-day roster for a trial period until 2025, to increase access to specialised clinical palliative care support on weekends.
- Funding Ambulance Tasmania to implement an 'Enhancing Paramedic Palliative Care Initiative' which will enhance the capacity and capability of Ambulance Tasmania paramedics to manage palliative care patients in the community, without the need to transport to hospital if not clinically required.
- Funding Palliative Care Tasmania for work on a palliative care community connector project to develop a framework for the mobilisation of informal supports in communities and connect people to formal service providers.
- Introduction of new telephony platforms for specialist palliative care services in all regions.

During 2024-25, deliverables from the Framework will include:

- Development of a 10-year specialist palliative care workforce strategy.
- Funding for specialist palliative services in the North of the state to undertake the training and mentoring of rural GPs in palliative care.
- Revision of Tasmania's 'Palliative Care Charter', an agreement between the Tasmanian community and service providers that communicates what care and support community members want and need during their palliative care journey, and how the system may be able to respond to those needs.
- An update of the Tasmanian palliative formulary and other pharmacy related initiatives.
- Investigations into a specialist palliative care at home service under the Hospital@Home South program.

APPROVED/NOT APPROVED

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Guy Barnett', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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