

## WEST COAST COUNCIL

Tasmania

Tel 03 6471 4700

Fax 03 6471 4720

PO Box 63, Queenstown 7467

11 Sticht St, Queenstown 7467

Email [wcc@westcoast.tas.gov.au](mailto:wcc@westcoast.tas.gov.au)

Web [www.westcoast.tas.gov.au](http://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au)

ABN 20448787926



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Enquiries to: Executive Officer (03) 6471 4721 or  
email [ea@westcoast.tas.gov.au](mailto:ea@westcoast.tas.gov.au)

Our Healthcare Future

Health Planning

Department of Health

GPO Box 125

**HOBART TAS 7001**

[ourhealthcarefuture@health.tas.gov.au](mailto:ourhealthcarefuture@health.tas.gov.au)

### WEST COAST COUNCIL SUBMISSION ON OUR HEALTH CARE FUTURE

The West Coast Council, on behalf of our community, commends the Government on considering future initiatives to improve health care in our State and strongly urges the Government to focus on healthcare in rural and remote areas.

Like many remote areas, health indicators for our resident's lag behind that of those in urban centers, yet many of the healthcare services taken for granted by many in Tasmanian are not available. There must be a focus on designing a health care system for all Tasmanian's that does not continue to leave those of us residing in remote areas behind.

Investment in healthcare must consider the needs of remote communities. Many in our community cannot access community care due to a lack of resources and cannot access the medical care needed due to travel requirements. The result of this is too many of our residents ending up in acute care in major hospitals. Investments that could address these issues include:

1. Investing in social workers in remote areas – social workers can assist residents access the care they need when they need it and navigate the sometimes complicated government assistance programs. This would assist in ensuring that as people can receive in home care for as long as possible and be discharged from hospital as soon as possible.
2. Reducing the burden on transport for patients. Many people in our community do not access services because of problems with transportation, either due to time or cost. The burden of travelling for a whole day, or even overnight for services such as physio, or specialist appointments, mean that many health issues are not dealt with until they are acute. There must be more investment to deliver more services in communities.
3. Investing in telehealth facilities at our remote district hospitals. This would alleviate some of the problems of distance by encouraging more services to be delivered without the need for patients to be transported.
4. Investing in health infrastructure that can be used by private providers. Consultation rooms and telehealth facilities at district hospitals should be leveraged by THS to encourage more private service providers to provide services in remote communities. There needs to be greater access to allied health services on a regular basis, and publicly provided services such as physio and dental do not meet this need. Facilitating private providers to provide services more often in remote communities would reduce the remoteness burden on patients.



5. Invest in rural doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals. Rural health professionals need different training and skills than those in urban environments. We need to train and empower those that work in remote areas to provide the maximum service possible. We must ensure that where there are opportunities to, we embrace upskilling our nurses and other to provide services such as operating, x-rays or other imagery, and supporting other diagnostic tests, with the aim of minimising the need for people to travel.

There must be creative solutions to provide more services in our communities, the requirement for people to travel hours to access services, or wait months between services being provided, leaves medical issues unaddressed for too long, increasing the impact on acute care. The lack of community support in our remote areas means that too often people cannot leave our district hospitals and be cared for in the home. We recommend that the government consider investing in the issues to improve the health of Tasmanians that support the state by living and working in our remote communities.

Yours Sincerely



David Midson  
**GENERAL MANAGER**

