

Working with the Tasman community to improve health outcomes

The Tasman Project is a collaboration between Primary Health Tasmania, the Tasmanian Health Service, Health Consumers Tasmania, and the Tasman community.

It is aimed at conducting thorough community and workforce consultation on the healthcare needs of the Tasman community and using the findings to inform future planning for health services in the region.

What are some key features of the Tasman local government area (LGA), including the health of people who live there?

- The Tasman LGA is located on Tasmania's south east coast and comprised of the Forestier and Turrakana/Tasman peninsulas.
- It has a population of roughly 2500 that is regionally dispersed, with most people living in and around places such as Nubeena, White Beach, Highcroft, and Port Arthur.
- The median age of residents is 57, compared to the Tasmanian average of 42.
- More adults in the Tasman LGA are likely to experience high or very high levels of psychological distress compared with Tasmania overall.
- During 2015-19, coronary heart disease (12.8%), dementia including Alzheimer disease (9.8%), lung cancer (6.8%), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (6%), and stomach cancer (3%) were the leading causes of the 133 deaths in the Tasman LGA.



Casey Garrett

What has the Tasman Project done so far?

At this stage, the project work has involved:

- 13 'kitchen tables' conducted by Health Consumers Tasmania, involving more than 80 community members, about their health needs
- a consultation session with 19 local primary healthcare providers
- an environmental data scan conducted by Primary Health Tasmania that provided insight into population health data, the different services visiting or operating in the region, and any environmental factors that influence the health and wellbeing of residents
- briefing the Tasman Council on the purpose of these consultations and the project's next steps.

What were the key themes that emerged from the consumer consultation process?

- The most important primary healthcare provider is a consumer's local GP, followed by their community pharmacist.
- Consumers said calling an ambulance, family or friend, or driving to an after-hours GP clinic located in Hobart were the most common ways to access after-hours care.
- Bulk-billing rates were raised in many sessions and the cost of Medicare gaps was of concern for a population that was at the lower end of the economic scale.
- Tasman locals felt a genuine need to upskill community representatives in first aid and mental health first aid as one way to address the current shortage of medically skilled people located in their community.
- There was a high focus on mental health issues for all age groups and genuine need for more knowledge on how to respond to those expressing the need for support and for more mental health services for the area.
- Consumers wanted to take charge of their healthcare needs by being proactive. They wanted an increase in low-cost preventive health measures which included allied health services, home help and access to aged care packages, but also items such as exercise classes and other ways to address their diminished isolation.

What insights have community members and healthcare providers taken away from their involvement in the Tasman Project?

"One thing I've really taken away from this process is just how hard our health professionals work and their dedication to what they do. I've also been given a lot of food for thought around the opportunities to utilise our existing workforce to provide support services to our allied health professionals. It is a really great way to upskill our local community and to help provide continuity of care and services." – Casey Garrett, Tasman Councillor

"I wasn't surprised by the things that have come out of the kitchen tables, especially the point about after-hours support on a local level.

But this project has been great because it's brought us together and got us talking, so we know each other. That's important because I don't think that the help is going to come from anywhere but within — within the community, and within the services that already exist in Tasman." – Leeanne Triffitt, facility manager at Huon Regional Care

What are the next steps for the Tasman Project?

The project work thus far has enriched the partner organisations' understanding of the health needs of Tasman, and provided invaluable ideas about opportunities for improved service delivery in the area, such as:

- facilitating active conversations about how services are funded into the future to support better coordination of care, and consistency of service delivery
- reviewing how better access to services, both in-hours and after-hours, contributes to better health outcomes
- working on improving access to health-related information by consumers and health professionals
- working towards having an integrated, connected, and supported workforce that is able to work to the full scope of its practice.

The next phase of the project will see the Tasman Clinical Services Action Group (led by the Tasmanian Health Service and Primary Health Tasmania) and the Community Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee (led by Health Consumers Tasmania) working to support the implementation of initiatives and activities over the coming years in line with the lessons learned. ■

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