

# Case study

Providing health care in one of northern Tasmania's most diverse areas

## Mowbray Medical

Mowbray Medical is based in the northern suburbs of Launceston.

The practice sees a diverse range of patients including university and Australian Maritime College students and staff, those of refugee and migrant background, and rural and remote community members.

Practice GP Dr Jane Hampson says:

*"We feel it important to be open and positive at reception, to make all our patients feel welcome and improve the outcome of all interactions."*

According to the City of Launceston, in 2021, nearly 20% of the northern suburbs population were born overseas – a 41% increase from 2016. This included an increase in Tasmanians who were born in China, India and Nepal, with nearly 4% of the population born in Nepal.

The dominant languages spoken other than English include Nepali, Punjabi, Urdu and Gujarati, with nearly a fifth of the community speaking a language other than English at home.



Dr Jane Hampson (left) and practice manager Jo Bean

*The artwork featured in this photo was designed and painted by Beverley Skurulis for Mowbray Medical*



## Working with patients when there are language barriers

Staff at Mowbray Medical access the national Translator Interpreter Service (TIS) for free when seeing patients with limited English, however there can be challenges.

*"Consultations are lengthened by use of the telephone TIS service as conversations are repeated or nuances can be lost. It also depends on the quality of the interpreter available, or they may not always be available for less common languages," Dr Hampson says.*

A range of translated and pictorial resources and videos are also used. It's important to note that there may be difficulty providing written information, as it may not be available in the patient's language and/or the literacy levels of the patient may vary.

*"Health literacy can be low, both in body systems and in health services. Health beliefs can be surprising sometimes and require patience to understand and explain."*

While the Mowbray clinic has GPs that speak other languages, they often move to other clinics when they have completed their supervision or training. This means the patients who speak the same language may then follow the GP when they move on and/or be left without a GP who speaks their language.

*"There are more support workers available now who speak Nepali, which is good. This is very dependent on a large population of people who speak that language. Some small groups have too few people to provide this service."*

## What changes has the practice made?

Mowbray Medical has made several changes to practice activities. These include:

- using reminders for all patients via phone
- posting letters with information so they can be translated or brought into the clinic with queries
- bulk billing for antenatal care for all patients
- having additional reception time to assist with appointments and bookings
- using TIS interpreters for consultations, rather than family or community members.

## What is the practice's message for other clinics?

*"Our clinic learnt as we went with regards to working with multicultural Tasmanians. Being open to and respectful of cultural differences and understandings about health care is crucial. In addition, ensuring you have enough staff to manage the time to supporting these patients properly is essential," Dr Hampson says.*

### Get in touch

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