

PRIORITY POLICIES FOR THE 2021 TASMANIAN ELECTION

Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA) is calling on candidates for the 2021 Tasmanian Election to support policy priorities to ensure all Tasmanians are provided with better access to exercise professionals and information on exercise to enrich their health.

Barrier/Issue	Solution
Underutilisation of exercise professionals to increase physical activity levels to prevent chronic diseases and childhood obesity.	That the Department of Health (DoH) and the Tasmanian Health Service (THS) assist Tasmanians with, or at risk of, prevalent chronic diseases to become more physically active and support sustainable behavioural change by establishing cancer, diabetes, mental health and obesity clinics across Tasmania.
Underutilisation of clinical exercise professionals to treat people with chronic diseases. Recognition and knowledge of the value of referral to a clinical exercise professional is inconsistent and therefore many Tasmanians are missing out on the benefits of treatment by an exercise physiologist for chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes and obesity.	That the DoH and the THS implement the Exercise is Medicine© program for Tasmania's primary healthcare providers to reinforce healthcare sector knowledge and health literacy on exercise prescription and behavioural change.
The existence of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) creates a barrier to delivering and receiving treatment from an AEP. AEPs are the only healthcare provider, eligible for a Medicare Provider number and required to charge GST. <i>'Every Tasmanian should be able to access proven treatments free from tax.'</i>	That the Tasmanian Government via the Council on Federal Financial Relations support the removal of GST on exercise physiology services.
There are no AEPs or AESs employed in the public health system. Tasmania is the only state in Australia that doesn't employ exercise physiologists in their workforce.	That the DoH includes the exercise physiology profession in health workforce planning and policy development. That the DoH provides funding to enable each of Tasmania's four main hospitals to employ at least one full time equivalent AEP.

The health status of Tasmanians

Primary Health Tasmania highlighted through the [Needs Assessment Report 1 July 2019 – 30 June 2022](#) [1] stated that:

*‘Tasmanians experience poorer health outcomes than Australians as a whole.’
‘Chronic conditions contribute to almost half of all potentially preventable hospitalisations in Tasmania.’*

Furthermore, the report notes that:

*‘Tasmanians have the highest prevalence of chronic disease and multi-morbidity in Australia. Four in five Tasmanians (83%) have a chronic condition and 65% have two or more chronic conditions [2].’
‘An estimated 22.7% of Tasmanian adults self-reported having a disability, compared with 18.5% of Australians as a whole [3].’*

In addition to high morbidity and disability, premature mortality rates for Tasmanians are higher than the Australian average for all of the major causes, including cancer, diabetes, ischaemic heart disease, stroke, respiratory diseases, diabetes and suicide [4].

Tasmania has an ageing population, and with older people increasingly developing chronic conditions, the demand for evidence-based treatment health services is expected to increase.

Contributing to the development of chronic conditions are the high rates of lifestyle risk factors in Tasmania, including low levels of physical activity. Seventy percent (70%) of adult Tasmanians report insufficient levels of muscle strengthening activity and 15% report insufficient moderate and vigorous physical activity [5]. In 2017-18, overweight and obesity affected 70.9% of the adult population, an increase of 3.4% from 2014-15 and above the national average of 67% [6].

The active engagement of the exercise and sports science workforce presents a solution for an incoming Government to work towards addressing the health and well-being issues identified in Tasmania. Barriers currently exist on a number of levels which reduce access for Tasmanians to evidence-based interventions delivered by exercise professionals.

References

1. Primary Health Tasmania, *Needs Assessment Report 1 July 2019 - 30 June 2022*. 2019.
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *National Health Survey, 2014-15*. 2016: Canberra.
3. Population Health Department of Health and Human Services, *Health Indicators Tasmania 2013*. 2013.
4. Primary Health Information Development Unit, *Social Health Atlas of Australia: Data by Local Government Area*. 2021, Torrens University Australia.
5. Department of Health and Human Services, *Report on the Tasmanian Population Health Survey 2016*. 2017: Hobart.
6. Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Overweight and obesity*. 2018 [cited 2021 13 April]; Available from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/health-conditions-and-risks/overweight-and-obesity/latest-release>.