

It is widely accepted that there is a health and mental health crisis in Tasmania, and since the 2018 election the evidence continues to mount. Sadly Tasmania has the second highest suicide rate nationally and 20% of the population experiencing mental ill health.

Our public emergency departments and psychiatric units are stretched beyond capacity by heightened rates of demand. There are clear adverse outcomes for mental health patients when they cannot get the help they need in a suitable environment.

Just like physical health and fitness, mental health is important to take care of and improve. This is true for people suffering from mental ill health, but also for those who are at risk and for those who need to maintain good mental health.

The Labor Party believes that the role of government is to provide evidence based, best practice mental health services. A sustainable and effective mental health system must include prevention and early intervention services embedded in communities, not just a focus on acute treatment options.

Since the development of the National Mental Health Strategy in 1992, which has been reaffirmed by Health Ministers a number of times since, the perspectives of those with a lived experience of mental ill health has informed the state, national and international policy direction of mental health services. This lived experience provides a unique viewpoint that must be considered in all decisions shaping the delivery of Tasmania's mental health services.

In acknowledging and accepting the centrality of people with lived experience in their own recovery, mental health services seek to create environments enabling people to direct their own lives and meet the needs they have identified.

We know more needs to be done to support people living with mental ill health and that people, including consumers, carers and service providers, need to be at the centre of mental health reform. Collectively we need to work together to ensure all Tasmanians are afforded their human right to live and lead a life of contribution and value.

Mental health and wellbeing is vital for learning and life. Children who are mentally healthy learn better, benefit from life experiences and have stronger relationships with family members, school staff and peers. Good mental health in childhood also provides a solid foundation for managing the transition to adolescence and adulthood, engaging successfully in education and making a meaningful contribution to society.

Emotional distress affects children and young people and school communities every year.

To support school communities to effectively identify and intervene early with the mental health needs of children and young people, the Tasmanian Labor Party will invest in providing Mental Health workers in all state primary and secondary schools.

**The initiative aims to:**

1. enhance access to mental health support of students in Government schools
2. increase support for, and improve response to, mild to moderate mental health concerns through early intervention strategies; and
3. build the capacity and capability of Government school workforces to support students with mental health issues.

**The initiative delivers mental health support by offering:**

- **125 new mental health workers** – working .6 FTE in all Government schools
- **One on one student counselling** sessions for students in Tasmanian government schools. These are designed to increase the availability of mental health support for students, improve mental health outcomes and assist students in finding the right support as appropriate.
- **Psychological support sessions** for Student Support Services (SSS) staff to promote their own health and wellbeing.

Tasmanian Labor has also acknowledged the vital support of carers. We recognise their selfless commitment and the impact this can have on their lives and those around them. People who provide care and support to loved ones face unique challenges and we need to do all we can to support these valued members of our community.

We don't often hear about the work carers do and the personal sacrifices they make, and that is why the Tasmanian Labor Party would like to work with Carers Tasmania to work towards the introduction of Carer Recognition Legislation.

We believe that a Carers Charter should be developed. The Charter would be designed to encourage the recognition of unpaid family and friend carers and to promote employer awareness of, and positive responses to, carer needs in the workplace.

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