

PRIORITY POLICIES FOR THE 2024 TASMANIAN ELECTION

Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA) is calling on candidates for the 2024 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.

| 1. Create access to evidence-based exercise interventions for people with chronic physical and mental health conditions in the public health sector | |
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| Barriers/Issues | Solution |
| There are no Accredited Exercise Physiologists or Accredited Exercise Scientists employed in the public health system. Tasmania is the only state in Australia that doesn't employ exercise physiologists in their workforce. The inclusion of this health professional group will help to build a well-rounded and sustainable health workforce. | That the Department of Health includes the exercise physiology profession in health workforce planning and policy development. That the Department of Health provides funding to enable each of Tasmania's four main hospitals to employ at least one full time equivalent Accredited Exercise Physiologist. |
| 2. Enhance access to evidence-based exercise interventions to treat the physical health of people with mental illness | |
| Barriers/Issues | Solution |
| Rethink 2022 identifies four new areas for collaboration, of which one is 'improving the physical health of people with mental illness'. The integration of Accredited Exercise Physiologists as part of a mental health multi-disciplinary care team would satisfy delivery of this area of Rethink 2022. The Keeping the Body in Mind services are an example of a program that could be made widely available. | That the Department of Health employ Accredited Exercise Physiologists in all mental health services as a member of the multi-disciplinary team to treat the physical health of people with mental illness. |
| 3. Increase physical activity opportunities for children and adults at risk of chronic diseases including obesity and type 2 diabetes | |
| Barriers/Issues | Solution |
| Underutilisation of exercise professionals to increase physical activity levels to prevent chronic diseases and childhood obesity. Engagement of Accredited exercise professionals would assist in fulfilling Healthy Tasmania Five Year Strategic Plan 2022-2026 to guide prevention. | That the Department of Health and the Tasmanian Health Service assist Tasmanians with, or at risk of, chronic diseases to become more physically active and support sustainable behavioural change by establishing cancer, diabetes, mental health, and obesity clinics that employ university qualified exercise professionals. |
| 4. Remove GST on health services including exercise physiology | |
| Barriers/Issues | Solution |
| The existence of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) creates a barrier to delivering and receiving treatment from an Accredited Exercise Physiologist (AEP). AEPs are one of a handful of health professions, eligible for a Medicare provider number and required to charge GST. 'Every Tasmanian should be able to access proven health treatments free from tax.' | That the Treasurer in the Tasmanian Government via the Council on Federal Financial Relations support a principle based approach to the removal of GST on health services including exercise physiology. |



The health status of Tasmanians

Primary Health Tasmania state in the [Health Needs Assessment 2022-23 to 2024-25](#) that [1]:

- ‘In Tasmania, many deaths occur prematurely and could potentially be avoided through improvement in lifestyle risk factors and better multidisciplinary management of chronic conditions.’
- ‘Around half of all Tasmanian adults report having a chronic condition – the highest proportion of all jurisdictions in Australia’ and ‘1 in 10 Tasmanians has three or more.’
- ‘In Tasmania, approximately 50% of avoidable admissions are for chronic conditions’.
- ‘Many chronic conditions are made worse by mental health problems.’
- ‘Physical health treatment rates for people living with mental illness are reported to be around 50% lower than for people with only a physical illness’.

Additionally, 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.

The report also acknowledges that the rates of chronic conditions is increasing and one way to address this is to reduce the impact of risk factors such as physical inactivity. Additional statements emphasise that [1]:

- ‘Being physically inactive is bad for our health, and contributes to cardiovascular disease, mental health problems, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers. Nearly one-third of Tasmanian adults did not meet physical activity guidelines in 2019, a slight increase since 2016. Two-thirds of people reported insufficient muscle strengthening activity.’
- ‘Implementing health programs to address the health issues of physical inactivity and obesity will directly contribute to lessening the impact of chronic conditions on our health system.’

Furthermore, the adoption of a team-based approach is recognised as critical for the delivery of effective models of chronic disease management [1].

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 several levels which reduce access for Tasmanians to evidence-based interventions delivered by exercise professionals.

1. Primary Health Tasmania, *Primary Health Tasmania Health Needs Assessment 2022-23 to 2024-25*, P.H. Tasmania, Editor. 2022.

