

# Will Hodgman MP

PREMIER OF TASMANIA



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Mr Mark Morgan  
Policy & Communications Officer  
Royal Australasian College of Surgeons  
Email: [Mark.Morgan@surgeons.org](mailto:Mark.Morgan@surgeons.org)

Dear Mark

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) - Tas Region seeking responses to your 2018 *Tasmanian Election – Election Issues Questionnaire*.

I am pleased to respond on behalf of all Tasmanian Liberal Members and Candidates.

The Liberal Government has worked constructively with the RACS on many issues over the past four years, and have supported record levels of elective surgery in Tasmania, as well as the opening of 120 additional hospital beds and treatment recliners to meet increasing demand for hospital care.

I want to also point out that the Liberal Government has not only honoured, but exceeded its commitments on health made during the 2014 Election Campaign, including the opening of more hospital beds (we promised to open 40 hospital beds and are opening 120 additional hospital beds and treatment recliners). We have also delivered a new record number of elective surgery procedures with elective surgery waiting lists at the lowest recorded.

As part of our Plan for *Building Your Future*, we have set ambitious targets for our next term, including that 90% of Tasmanians will be treated within clinically-recommended timeframes for their elective surgery by the end of the next four years of a majority Hodgman Liberal Government,



To achieve our targets, over the next six years, a re-elected majority Hodgman Liberal Government will:

- Invest three-quarter of a billion dollars (\$757 million) into health;
- Open an additional 298 hospital beds across the State – an increase of more than 20 per cent;
- Open 25 community mental health beds;
- Open 30 additional community-based drug and alcohol rehabilitation beds;
- Increase the number of health professionals by 1,332 FTE, including:
  - 802 nurses (a 22% increase);
  - 158 doctors (an 18% increase);
  - 128 allied health professionals (a 14% increase);
  - 178 operational and administrative staff to support the frontline (a 12% increase);
  - 62 additional paramedics and call takers (an 18% increase);
  - Invest \$183 million into acute hospital, regional hospital and ambulance infrastructure;
  - Establish a dedicated Health Recruitment, Retention and Workforce Planning Unit, to prepare a 20-year Future Health Workforce Plan; and
  - Establish and staff Tasmania's first integrated medical and search and rescue helicopter service.

Our Health Plan will deliver:

- More than 30,000 Tasmanians being admitted for medical care each year, taking pressure off our Emergency Departments, including more surgery;
- Provide a 50% increase in ICU capacity at the Royal Hobart Hospital; and
- See thousands of children and adolescent Tasmanians admitted to dedicated wards each year for specialist mental health care, for the first time.

More detail about the Liberal's health policy can be found at [www.tas.liberal.org.au/policy](http://www.tas.liberal.org.au/policy)

Please find below specific responses to the RACS Questionnaire. Where questions have common themes an omnibus answer has been provided, addressing the issues raised.

### Teaching, Training and Research and Elective Surgery Waiting Lists

Q1: What is your strategy to maintain and increase training posts within the public hospital system?

Q2: How does your party plan to build the surgical workforce of the future to address Tasmania's ageing population and health needs?

Q3: Will you commit to greater investment in our public hospital system, and in its workforce?

#### Q4: How will your party manage the issues around elective and outpatient waiting lists?

Under our Health Plan, a re-elected majority Hodgman Liberal Government will invest three-quarters of a billion dollars (\$757 million) into health, to open 298 hospital beds across the State – an increase of more than 20 per cent – over the next six years.

These beds are backed with increased staffing in our hospitals, including at additional 802 nurses (a 22 per cent increase), 158 doctors (an 18 per cent increase), 128 allied health professionals (a 14 per cent increase) as well as additional operational and administrative staffing, as well as necessary non-salary costs such as surgical supplies.

At the Royal Hobart Hospital, this will mean opening and staffing 250 new hospital beds, including 10 new Intensive Care Unit beds. The focus on critical care is important, reflecting our older sicker population, which is leading to more and more complex care.

It is also important to note that while Government is allocating the resourcing for these beds, it is clinical experts who will determine the best way to use these resources, and the best mix of services to provide, to get the maximum benefit for Tasmanian patients.

In total, we expect more than 30,000 Tasmanians to be admitted for medical care each and every year, and I fully expect this will maximise the utilisation of our public hospital theatres and deliver thousands more surgeries, including elective surgeries, each year.

The increased clinical workforce recruited as part of our \$757 million package will also allow for more outpatient appointments, allowing us to meet growing demand ensure people and ensure that Tasmanians receive the care they need.

Providing a vibrant teaching environment is important for recruitment and retention, and this will be considered by the new dedicated Health Recruitment, Retention and Workforce Planning Unit we will establish, as part of the development of a 20-year Future Health Workforce Plan.

The plan will be a first for Tasmania, and will look at current and future training and recruitment, re-training and post-graduate training and recruitment processes.

Of course, increased resourcing, with increased volumes of elective surgery and outpatient appointments, will support the maintenance and increase of training posts in the public hospital system in Tasmania.

#### Clinical Engagement and a Culture of Respect

Q5: What is your engagement strategy to foster a culture of mutual respect and ensure that decision making is clinician-led?

Q6: Will your party support the THS entering in to a Memorandum of Understanding with RACS on the Building Respect and Improving Patient Safety initiative, to show a commitment to improved workplace culture?

A re-elected majority Hodgman Liberal Government will deliver stronger local decision making at Tasmanian hospitals, and will ensure that clinical decision-making is, appropriately, led by clinicians.

We will consult with the clinical workforce, and stakeholders to ensure that hospital leaders are empowered to get on with the job and make the decisions necessary to support patient care. This will ensure that day-to-day decision-making autonomy is provided at the individual hospital level.

Trust and confidence in management will come with the successful delivery of this action – the benefits of local management and improved strategic leadership will be felt organisation-wide, with an improved workplace culture.

With regard to the proposed Memorandum of Understanding, a re-elected majority Hodgman Liberal Government will work with your College on measures to building respect and improving patient safety, including consideration of an MOU.

### Tasmanian Audit of Surgical Mortality

Q7: The mortality audit program is part of an effective quality assurance activity aimed at the ongoing improvement of surgical care. The current contract expires at the end of December 2018. RACS seeks a commitment from your party that a further three years funding will be supported.

I recognise the importance of evidence-based, critical analysis of the outcomes of surgical care and the role it plays informing and improving surgical practice.

A re-elected majority Hodgman Liberal Government will support a further three-year continuation of the current arrangement.

### Trauma

Q8: Does your party support a ban on the use of quad bikes by children aged under the age of sixteen?

Q9: What other strategies does your party have to minimise the risks associated with quad bike use?

The Government takes quad bike safety very seriously.

Since 2015, we have worked with farmers to make farm safety a permanent fixture on Tasmanian farms through our Safe Farming Tasmania program.

This is also why we set up the quad bike safety taskforce and are working with industry and user groups to consider safety strategies. We are also participating in the Federal quad bike safety taskforce, being conducted by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, which is looking at these issues.

### Alcohol Related Harm

Q10: What are your party's policies to address alcohol-related harm?

The Hodgman Liberal Government recognises the impact that alcohol can have on local communities, which is why we invest more than \$17 million each year to help around 3,000 Tasmanians to access alcohol and other drugs services.

That includes \$4.8 million over four years we invested in the 2015-16 Budget, to tackle alcohol and drug misuse and abuse, and open 12 new alcohol and drug residential rehabilitation beds.

A re-elected majority Hodgman Liberal Government will continue investing in this important area, providing continuing funding for those beds, as well as 30 new beds, and investing \$6.6 million to establish the Tasmanian Community Health Fund, which will include preventative health measures.

The Hodgman Liberal Government is committed to delivering better health outcomes for all Tasmanians and reducing the damage done by alcohol and drug misuse.

### General

#### Q11. Does your party support the move to co-locate a private hospital with the Launceston General Hospital, and if so are you able to outline what your plans are in this area?

A re-elected majority Hodgman Liberal Government will continue to support, in-principle, the development of a co-located private hospital adjacent to the Launceston General Hospital.

We recognise that, done well, as co-located hospital can deliver significant benefits for public patients, with potentially a wider variety of services through better workforce recruitment and retention in Launceston, and lead to shorter hospital waiting times.

We also acknowledge that this can provide greater opportunities for our medical workforce in Launceston, and have positive flow-on effects for hospital training accreditation. Current co-locations in Burnie and Hobart show the benefits Tasmanians received when the public and private sectors work closely together.

There is currently an unsolicited bids process underway, facilitated by Tasmania's Coordinator-General. We support the continuation of that process, and expect that process to proceed as quickly as is possible whilst ensuring appropriate rigour and due diligence.

To do otherwise would not be fair to the party that submitted the bid, and could put the proposal at serious risk.

We are also focused on growing the Launceston General Hospital and the public hospital services it provides, with a commitment to deliver a \$87.3 million site wide redevelopment, to open eight new beds on the Children's Ward 4K and to build and staff a whole new Ward 3D.

#### Q12. Data available from the Department of Transport, which shows no reduction in deaths or injuries over the past five years on Tasmanian Roads. How does your party plan to reduce road trauma?

In 2017, 36 people died and another 263 were seriously injured on Tasmanian roads.

This is the same number of fatalities and 19 fewer serious injuries than 2016, and compares with the five-year average (2012-2016) of 33.6 fatalities and 302.4 serious injuries.

The Road Safety community, which includes Tasmania Police, Tasmania Fire Service, the SES and Ambulance Tasmania, and all road managers of our state-wide road network as well as the team of dedicated and caring professionals in the Department, regards every one of these statistics as an absolute tragedy and each of them avoidable.

The Hodgman Liberal Government along with its Road Safety Advisory Council in the *Towards Zero Tasmanian Road Safety Strategy 2017-2026*, will continue its implacable focus on a list of road safety strategies to drive this list down to zero - the only appropriate target.

Every road building project now has as its primary focus the aim of zero road deaths.

For example our massive Midland Highway 10 Year Action Plan – a \$500 million partnership with the Federal Government - has been held up nationally as a road safety standard for road projects.

We are also focusing on motorcycle riders who continue to be over-represented in road crashes, with 11 motorcyclists killed and a further 74 seriously injured in 2017, compared with 10 fatalities and 84 serious injuries in 2016.

In 2017, we have introduced a new training and assessment regime for licensing motorcycle riders, to ensure new riders are better prepared to safely negotiate our roads and other road users, and we have continued our campaign aimed at visiting motorcyclists to ride to local road conditions.

This was just one of a number of strong marketing campaigns aimed at modification of driver behaviour across the board.

We are working to reduce road trauma, but will also improve our services to better respond to trauma and improve outcomes. To do to this, a re-elected Hodgman Liberal Government will establish and staff Tasmania's first integrated medical and search and rescue helicopter service, with dedicated flight paramedics and specialist retrieval doctors.

This will include dedicated resources, allowing quicker response times and ensuring patients start to receive high acuity care from the moment the helicopter lands, rather than having to wait until they arrive in hospital, and will reduce median activation time from 52 minutes to 10 minutes.

This will have a positive impact on road trauma outcomes in Tasmania.


Q13. A recent 10 Year Review of childhood injury hospitalisations recommended that as a matter of urgency, the Federal Government re-establish a national injury prevention framework and implementation plan that is based on fact and evidence. Does your party support this position and if so how will you advocate for the Federal Government to implement such a program?

A re-elected majority Hodgman Liberal Government will happily sit down with RACs and discuss how we can best work together, and with the Federal Government, to ensure we do all we can to minimise the number of children ending up in hospital after falls and other accidents.

We will also work to make sure that when serious injuries do happen our children have the best opportunity for survival. I note that our integrated medical helicopter services will include dedicated neonatal and paediatric capacity in the Tasmanian Health Service to better support the treatment, transport and retrieval of critically ill babies and children.

Thank you again for the opportunity to outline your questions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Will Hodgman', written in a cursive style.

Will Hodgman MP  
**Liberal Leader**

