

CONSTITUENT QUESTION

House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Kristie Johnston MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Bridget Archer MP
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

QUESTION:

My question is from my constituent, Anna. She writes: I'm currently recuperating from major surgery to remove malignant tumours from my body and have been advised that due to a massive backlog in pathology services offered by the Tasmanian Health Department, I now have to wait at least six weeks for my category-one pathology results to find out if the cancer has reached my lymph nodes. Please imagine a six-week wait that leaves you with no treatment plan, no referral to an oncologist, no anything up to major and life-changing surgery. It's not news that anyone wants, but it would be nice to know if the cancer has spread or there's anything that could be done now to cut it off at the pass. Without adequately resourced pathology, all I can do is wait, wait, wait and wonder how quickly this disease is going to kill me. How many years will I be around to be a mum to my young daughter? What concrete action are you taking to address delays in the provision of time critical category-one health services in Tasmania?

ANSWER:

While I am unable to comment on individual patients and their treatment, I empathise with Anna's circumstances that have been outlined by the Honourable Member.

I am advised that all patient results are prioritised based on the clinical need, meaning urgent and clinically critical cases are prioritised to ensure timely treatment decisions.

While there are processes in place for all requesting doctors, including GPs, to urgently request results, work is underway to reduce wait times by implementing a range of immediate and longer-term actions, including:

- Additional Government investment to further support recruitment and service delivery.
- Active national and international recruitment campaigns for specialist Anatomical Pathologists.
- Engagement of locum specialists to increase capacity.
- Clinical triage systems to prioritise urgent and high-risk cancer specimens.
- Review of operational workflows and governance processes to improve turnaround times and reduce backlog.

The Tasmanian Government has recently funded an additional \$1.45 million for the recruitment of four new permanent FTE at the Royal Hobart Hospital, including two Anatomical Pathologists, one Medical Scientist, and one Pathology Technician, with recruitment currently underway.



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