



Tasmanian State Election 2025

Heart Foundation policy proposals
for a healthier Tasmania

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Tasmania's heart health challenge

For over 60 years, the Heart Foundation has been the trusted national organisation fighting heart disease, which is the number one cause of death in Australia.¹ In 2025, we launched our long-term vision, *Health for Every Heart*, which aims to achieve heart health for everyone in Australia by 2050.²

We can achieve this vision of heart health but only if every person in Australia has access to the support they need to prevent, detect and manage heart disease for themselves, their families and their communities.

In Tasmania, we are facing a significant challenge. Cardiovascular disease is 1.6 times more prevalent in Tasmania compared to the Australian national average.³ There are also more Tasmanians at risk of developing heart disease due to high prevalence of key risk factors such as low intake of healthy food, obesity and regular smoking.³

The Heart Foundation proposes three evidence-based, cost-effective initiatives that will, with assistance from the Tasmanian Government, ensure that everyone in the state can have the support they need to prevent, treat and manage their heart health.

These initiatives are aligned with the approach to deliver change for Tasmania set out in the 2024 *Tasmanian Cardiac Strategy* and will help reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease for Tasmania's people, health system and economy.⁴

The Heart Foundation's proposed initiatives will:

- 1 prevent more people from having a heart attack or stroke by helping them understand their risks and encouraging them to make healthy behaviour changes.
- 2 provide access to state-of-the-art, specialised cardiac care where it is needed, in north and north-west regional areas of Tasmania through the Northern Heart Centre.
- 3 support more people to effectively manage heart disease and prevent further cardiac events through patient support.

Three proposals to improve Tasmania's heart health

The Heart Foundation is calling for a commitment from parties and candidates to invest in three evidence-based initiatives that will reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease in Tasmania and improve Tasmania's heart health.

PROPOSAL 1: PREVENT

Prevent heart disease by encouraging people who are most at-risk to visit their general practitioner for a Heart Health Check.

\$500,000 over 2 years

for a Heart Foundation public awareness campaign specifically for Tasmanians, to be delivered across social, digital and print media and at major state-wide events like AgFest.

- ✓ Heart disease can be prevented when people know and understand their individual risks.
- ✓ A Heart Health Check is a check-up with your general practitioner that will identify those risks and how to manage them.⁵
- ✓ Promoting awareness about the Heart Health Check will mean more Tasmanians can take action to lower their risk of heart disease.
- ✓ There were about 35,000 Heart Health Checks conducted Australia-wide following the Heart Foundation's international award-winning awareness campaign during Heart Week in 2024.⁶
- ✓ Heart Health Checks are subsidised by Medicare.

Aligned with the Tasmanian Cardiac Strategy:

- Priority 1: Prevention and early detection - Action 1.2
- Enabler 4: Delivering change - A collaborative approach with the Heart Foundation on community awareness

PROPOSAL 2: TREAT

Provide access to advanced cardiac care services for people in north and north-west Tasmania.

Commit to supporting the delivery and operation of the planned Northern Heart Centre at the Launceston General Hospital.

- ✓ In Tasmania, complex interventional cardiology services, including cardiothoracic surgery, are currently available only in southern Tasmania at the Royal Hobart Hospital.⁴
- ✓ The new Northern Heart Centre will provide access to these cardiac services to meet current and future demands for people in the north and north-west of Tasmania.
- ✓ Tasmanian Government support is essential for delivery and operation of this planned new centre.
- ✓ The Tasmanian Government has previously committed to support for the Northern Heart Centre, with a co-funding commitment from the Australian Government.^{7,8}

Aligned with the Tasmanian Cardiac Strategy:

- Enabler 1: Hospital Infrastructure - Establishing the Northern Heart Centre
- Priority 2: Diagnosis and Treatment - Actions 2.3, 2.5 and 2.6

PROPOSAL 3: MANAGE

Improve health outcomes for Tasmanians living with heart disease by increasing access to the MyHeart MyLife patient support program.

\$1 million over 4 years

to extend and promote the MyHeart MyLife digital program to support heart-healthy living for Tasmanians who have heart disease.

- ✓ Over 30,000 Tasmanians live with the ongoing effects of heart disease or stroke.⁴
- ✓ MyHeart MyLife is the Heart Foundation's free, digital program that supports people living with heart disease to better manage their condition and improve their quality of life, alongside their clinical care.⁹
- ✓ 87% of program participants reported better understanding of their heart condition since joining the program, and 81% reported making changes to heart healthy eating.¹⁰
- ✓ With Tasmanian Government support, MyHeart MyLife can be tailored to the specific health needs of Tasmanians.

Aligned with the Tasmanian Cardiac Strategy:

- Priority 3: Supportive Care - Actions 3.2 and 3.3
- Enabler 4: Delivering change - A collaborative approach with the Heart Foundation on state-wide models of care

Prevent heart disease in Tasmania

The Heart Foundation is seeking \$500,000 over 2 years for a public awareness campaign that will encourage Tasmanians at risk of heart disease to visit their general practitioner for a Heart Health Check.

People in Tasmania are 33% more likely to die from coronary heart disease before the age of 75 than the national average.¹¹ Detecting risk factors early provides a critical opportunity to ensure people remain healthy and prevent complex chronic conditions from developing.

The Medicare Heart Health Check is a 20-minute check-up by a general practitioner to assess a person's risk of having a heart attack or stroke in the next 5 years.¹² During the check-up, people can learn how to manage their individual risk and which health services can provide advice on how to reduce their risk.

Many Tasmanians are unaware of their risks of heart disease and how they can take action to prevent it. The Heart Foundation's public awareness campaigns can effectively motivate people to learn how to reduce their individual risk of heart disease, including going to their doctor for a Medicare Heart Health Check.

Following the Heart Foundation's award-winning digital media campaign during Heart Week in 2024, about **35,000 people** across Australia went to their general practitioner for a Medicare Heart Health Check.

At Tasmania's AgFest2025, **hundreds of people** now better understand their risks of heart disease following on-the-spot cholesterol and blood pressure tests at the Heart Foundation marquee.¹³



PROPOSAL 1: \$500,000 over 2 years

We will deliver a targeted public awareness campaign specifically for Tasmanians across radio and social, digital and print media, and through engagement at major state events like AgFest.

This community campaign will raise public awareness about the risks of heart disease and encourage more people to visit their general practitioner for a Heart Health Check. This will help Tasmanians to manage their risk of heart disease, improving health outcomes and working to reduce hospital admissions in Tasmania.

This targeted campaign aligns with the Tasmanian Cardiac Strategy, which has identified prevention and early detection to help more Tasmanians to effectively manage their risk of a heart attack or stroke in the primary care setting.⁴



Increase access to advanced cardiac care services for north and north-west Tasmania

The Heart Foundation is calling for parties and candidates to re-affirm their commitment to deliver the promised new Northern Heart Centre, a purpose-built facility at Launceston General Hospital. This facility will provide world-class cardiac care to Tasmanians living in the north and north-west of the state.

North-west Tasmania has the highest hospital admissions in the state for acute coronary syndrome.^{14,15} However, there is currently a lack of advanced cardiac care services in Tasmania's north and north-west, which has been highlighted in the Tasmanian Government's Tasmanian Cardiac Strategy released in 2024. Royal Hobart Hospital in southern Tasmania is currently the only place in the state to access these services.

The planned Northern Heart Centre can help address this urgent need, but it will need support from the Tasmanian Government for its construction, delivery and operation.



PROPOSAL 2: Re-affirm commitment to deliver the planned Northern Heart Centre

The Northern Heart Centre at Launceston General Hospital will be able to transform cardiac care for Northern Tasmania.

Tasmanian Government investment in the new Northern Heart Centre combined with the confirmed funding commitment from the Australian Government,⁸ will be able to:

Fully fund construction and fit-out of the Northern Heart Centre at Launceston General Hospital, including a fast-track treatment opportunity, a second cardiac catheterisation lab and recovery bays, 24-bed cardiac inpatient unit and dedicated diagnostic testing and monitoring facilities.

Guarantee operational funding for the Centre's expanded services, including cardiology inpatient care, nurse-led heart failure and arrhythmia clinics, and regional outreach programs.

Invest in prevention and rehabilitation alongside infrastructure including community-led programs, and promoting Heart Health Checks and cardiac rehabilitation services in regional areas.



Improve health outcomes for people living with heart disease in Tasmania

The Heart Foundation is seeking an investment of \$1 million over 4 years to extend the reach of the MyHeart MyLife patient support program. This digital program can help more Tasmanians living with heart disease stay out of hospital and live healthier and happier lives after their diagnosis.

People who have had a heart attack are at high risk of having another event in the years following, with more than one in three heart attacks impacting people with existing heart disease.¹⁶

The Heart Foundation's MyHeart MyLife program is designed to improve heart health outcomes for Tasmanians living with heart disease. Over 12 weeks, participants receive heart health information and expert tips to help them to better manage their condition. Regular communications motivate and inspire participants to make heart-healthy choices, take their medicines as prescribed, and connect with others on a similar journey.

On completing the 12-week program:¹⁰

- 87% of participants reported increased knowledge and understanding of their heart condition.
- 81% of participants reported that they had made changes to improve their diet and follow a heart-healthy eating pattern.
- More than half (57%) had reduced their alcohol intake.

Tasmanians are currently underrepresented among participants in the MyHeart MyLife program.^{17,*} With investment from the Tasmanian Government, the Heart Foundation can increase awareness and expand the program's access.

* At the time of preparing this submission, there were 2% of the total number of participants in the MyHeart MyLife program who were from Tasmania, which is lower than the proportion of Australians with heart, stroke and vascular disease who are Tasmanian (3.4%). Australian data was sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (see ref 17).



PROPOSAL 3: \$1 million over 4 years

The Heart Foundation will expand its free digital patient-support program, MyHeart MyLife, tailoring it to meet the specific needs of Tasmanians living with heart disease.

MyHeart MyLife supports participants to better understand and manage their heart condition and live well with heart disease. This next-generation patient support program is tailored to the individual needs of people living with heart disease, providing the right information at the right time, wherever they might be on their recovery journey.

This project will deliver:

- **Tasmania-specific awareness campaigns**, which will ensure more people living with heart disease in Tasmania are aware of and enrol in the program.
- **Education and clinical tools for Tasmanian health professionals**, which will boost referral rates to the program and support clinicians to upskill their management of heart disease according to the latest clinical guidelines.
- **Tailored resources and local implementation for high-priority communities**, which will provide relevant and accessible resources to meet the specific needs of people living in Tasmania who are at higher risk of cardiovascular complications. This includes videos and other visual resources to support health literacy.
- **A growing peer support community**, where we will help connect Tasmanian residents with others on a similar recovery journey, growing and building the MyHeart MyLife online peer support community.



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Thank you for helping us in our fight to *save* Tasmania's hearts

To arrange a meeting or discuss these priorities, please contact:

Dr. Joce Nettlefold
General Manager Tasmania
6220 2210
joce.nettlefold@heartfoundation.org.au

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