

# Healthy Food, Healthy Patients



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## Tasmanians have the right to expect that the food provided in hospital will promote their health and recovery.

Food is fundamental to patient care. Failure to provide adequate nutrition can see patients stay sicker for longer, increase the risk of complications and extend their time in hospital beds that are in short supply.<sup>1,2</sup>

Food that's available in Tasmania's hospitals is very poor. This is resulting in poor nutrition that's impacting individual patients, patients' families and carers, and blowing out the cost of the health care system.

The sale of junk food in hospital vending machines and canteens, not only undermines the hospitals management of patient nutrition, but sets a poor precedent for tackling Tasmania's obesity epidemic.<sup>3</sup>

Every Tasmanian patient has the right to expect that the food provided in hospital will promote their health and recovery and maintain their good nutritional status.

### THE GREENS WILL

- ▲ Legislate minimum menu and nutrition standards for public hospitals in Tasmania.

### NUTRITION IS CRUCIAL FOR POSITIVE PATIENT OUTCOMES

Hospital patients are often acutely ill or suffering from chronic diseases that place their nutritional status at risk. Poor food consumption in hospital is responsible for daily nutrient requirements not being met.<sup>4</sup>

Patients who are poorly nourished on entering hospital, or who eat poorly for only 3-4 days can have increased recovery time, complication rates and consequently their length of stay can be affected, incurring increased health costs. This is particularly so for older Tasmanians with longer recovery times.<sup>5</sup>

Food consumed in hospital is crucial for the nutrition of patients with a longer length of stay, regardless of their nutritional status on admission.

### MENU AND NUTRITION STANDARDS FOR TASMANIAN HOSPITALS

Since 2009, South Australia has implemented menu and nutritional standards for their public hospitals.<sup>6</sup>

The menu is founded on the principle that all patients have the right to expect that the food provided in hospital will promote health and recovery and maintain good nutritional status.<sup>7</sup>

Tasmanian patients deserve the same right to be recognised and implemented in all public hospitals in Tasmania.

The Greens will introduce legislation to regulate minimum menu and nutritional standards for public hospitals in Tasmania.

These standards will apply to food prepared for patients. It will also apply to food sold in hospital canteens and vending machines. It will not apply to patients requiring therapeutic nutritional intervention.

A working party consisting of Food Service Dietitians, Clinical Dietetics Managers and Food Service Managers from each of Tasmania's public hospitals will be formed to prepare the draft menu and nutritional standards, in consultation with other stakeholders. These standards will be underpinned by nutritional principles, also developed by the working party.

The overall approach of the Standards will be to ensure Tasmanian patients have access to food that meets their nutritional needs and contributes to their sense of well-being. The Standards will take into consideration patient's medical, cultural, and religious circumstances.

Once the Standards are finalised, each public hospital in Tasmania will be required to offer:

- ▲ A menu that meets the Standard.
- ▲ Only food for sale in vending machines and canteens that meet the Standard.
- ▲ Regular monitoring of patients at each hospital to ensure menus continue to meet the nutritional needs of patients and to inform the development of the menu over time.
- ▲ A dietitian will assess the hospital menu and food for sale in vending machines and canteens to ensure they meet the Standards as the menu and food for sale change over time.

## REFERENCES

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2. [Kondrup J, Johansen N, Plum L M, Bak L, Larsen I H, Martinsen A et al. Incidence of nutritional risk and causes of inadequate nutritional care in hospitals \*Clinical Nutrition\* 2002, Vol 21, p47-51](#)
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4. [Above note 1 and 2.](#)
5. [Roberts et al. Control of Food Intake in Older Men. \*JAMA\* 1994, Vol 272\(20\), p.1601-1606.](#)
6. [Allied Scientific Health Office. Menu and nutritional standards for public hospitals in South Australia, created 2009, revised 2014.](#)
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