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Good news for public health in tight Tasmanian Budget

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has welcomed the additional investment in alcohol, tobacco and other drug services; health IT; and dental care in yesterday's Tasmanian Budget. Despite the obvious impact of the global financial crisis, the Tasmanian Budget does contain some good news for public health.

"\$17.1 million will be spent over the next 4 years on improvements to alcohol, tobacco and other drug services. \$12.9 million has been allocated over the next 3 years for better IT systems in hospitals, mental health services and other health service areas. \$3.2 million will also be spent to continue implementation of the Better Dental Care initiative. These initiatives represent a forward-thinking investment in the health of the community over the longer term," said Michael Moore, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the PHAA.

"The Better Dental Care package includes both extra dentists in the public sector and funding for extra general dental treatments in the private sector for public clients. Oral health services are a key preventive health measure as dental health is linked to other health outcomes and overall wellbeing.

"A \$2.7 million program over 4 years will help Tasmanians to quit smoking through a range of measures including extra smoking cessation nurses, an additional Quitline counsellor and the establishment of partnerships with GPs, practice nurses and non-government organisations.

"An additional \$233 million over 4 years for a range of capital works projects around the State will provide a strong foundation for the improvement of health services in Tasmania. The State Budget has actually delivered a record funding allocation of over \$1.2 billion for health services.

"However, the impact of the global financial crisis has been felt in the health budget, with an efficiency dividend of \$39 million set to demand staffing cuts within the Department. While frontline jobs will be protected, up to 185 non service delivery positions in Health will be affected. An additional 35 positions in the central agency and 30 in Human Services will also be impacted by the cuts.

"It is clear that some difficult decisions have been required in this year's Budget but the PHAA is heartened by the expansion of funding in the key areas of alcohol and other drug service delivery, health IT and dental care," said Mr Moore.

For further information/comment:

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