

MEDIA RELEASE

May 15, 2026

COTA Tasmania and Women's Health Tasmania call for urgent action on Breast Screen access for regional women

We are deeply concerned by the ongoing failure to provide equitable access to breast screening services for women in rural and regional Tasmania.

The Breast Screen mobile unit *Luna* has now been out of action since April 2025 - more than 12 months. The replacement unit, which had previously been expected in September 2026, has now reportedly been pushed back to December 2026. At the same time, Tasmania's other mobile screening unit, *Ida*, has also recently been off the road due to technical issues.

This is no longer a short-term disruption. It is a prolonged failure of access.

"Breast screening is a life-saving preventive health service. Delays in screening increase the risk that breast cancer will be diagnosed later, when treatment is more difficult, more invasive and more expensive. The Department of Health has previously acknowledged that reduced screening rates increase the risk of later-stage diagnosis" stated Women's Health Tasmania CEO Kelly Bruce.

COTA Tasmania is particularly concerned that women in rural and regional communities are being asked to bear the consequences of system failure. Travel subsidies and alternative arrangements may assist some people, but they are not an adequate substitute for local access.

For older women, particularly those living outside Hobart, access to mobile screening can be the difference between attending a routine mammogram and missing out altogether.

"Many older Tasmanians face very real barriers to travelling long distances for health care, including cost, limited public transport, mobility issues, caring responsibilities, anxiety about driving, and the practical difficulty of attending unfamiliar services far from home" said Brigid Wilkinson, CEO COTA Tasmania.

The situation is especially concerning given continuing uncertainty about access in the North and North-West. While there is a fixed Breast Screen clinic in Launceston, it is unclear what additional capacity is available there, what current wait times apply, and whether that clinic can realistically absorb displaced demand from regional communities normally serviced by the mobile units. The promised Devonport facility is not expected to open until next month.

"That means for women in the North, North-West, East Coast and other rural areas are being expected to travel to Launceston or Hobart" stated Ms Bruce.

This discriminates against women in rural and regional Tasmania - and that is not equitable.

Together, COTA Tasmania and Women's Health Tasmania are calling on the Tasmanian Government and Department of Health to urgently publish a clear interim access plan, including:

1. how cancelled and postponed appointments will be prioritised;
2. what additional fixed-site screening capacity will be available at fixed screen facilities in Hobart, Rosny, Launceston and Devonport (when it is open);
3. what immediate options are available for women who cannot reasonably travel to existing fixed screen facilities;
4. what practical transport assistance will be provided beyond reimbursement schemes;
5. how affected communities will be directly informed about appointments, cancellations, and alternatives; and
6. what options are being pursued to bring a replacement or interim mobile screening service online before December 2026.

"Older women in regional Tasmania should not have to wait more than 18 months for fair access to a life-saving screening service" Ms Wilkinson said.

The Minister has rightly said that the importance of breast screening cannot be overstated. We agree. That is why this situation now requires urgent, practical and transparent action.

ENDS

Media Queries

Brigid Wilkinson
CEO, COTA Tasmania
0437 031 173

Kelly Bruce
CEO, Women's Health Tasmania
0414 690 443