

Government must build on Medicare Locals

The National Primary Health Care Partnership (NPHCP) is calling on the Australian Government to build on and enhance the Medicare Locals program in response to the impending review announced by Federal Health Minister Peter Dutton this week.

The NPHCP is a coalition of 22 peak national health organisations representing over 100,000 front-line primary health care professionals. Established in 2006, the NPHCP provides a united national voice for promoting the importance of primary health care in Australia.

While welcoming the review that will be headed up by former Chief Medical Officer, Professor John Horvath AO, the NPHCP is urging the Government to treat it as an opportunity to take stock and identify areas for improvement rather than simply looking to cut costs.

NPHCP Chair Damian Mitsch said “The fact that the Government has acknowledged the need for strong, coordinated primary health care as a means to reducing cost pressures, providing value for money and ensuring the sustainability of our system demonstrates that they hold a sound understanding of what direction health reform needs to take in this country.”

“What we also know, based on the findings of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission Inquiry 2009, as well as what we can take from other countries undergoing health reform such as the UK, NZ, Canada and the US, is that meso-level primary health care organisations like Medicare Locals have a critical role to play in creating and maintaining a strong, coordinated primary health care system.”

“You need organisations with the mandate, capacity and capability to partner with local stakeholders to assess population health needs, take responsibility for those needs and develop and coordinate services that will meet them with the greatest efficiency, effectiveness and value for money.”

“There has been too much duplication, inefficiency and waste in our health system to date, to the point where it is too costly and no longer sustainable. Medicare Locals are well placed to get more out of what we have as they identify waste and look to address it through smart service design, partnerships and coordination.”

“There is no doubt that there are parts of the Medicare Locals program that can be improved, but we need to ensure that they are given the opportunity and support to continue building on their successes and delivering on the task that they have been set up to undertake” Mr Mitsch said.

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Members of the National Primary Health Care Partnership

Allied Health Professions Australia	Dietitians Association of Australia
Audiology Australia	Exercise and Sports Science Australia
Australasian Podiatry Council	Australian College of Nursing
Australian Association of Social Workers	Optometrists Association Australia
Australian Diabetes Educators Association	Indigenous Allied Health Australia
Australian Medicare Local Alliance	Pharmaceutical Society of Australia
Australian Physiotherapy Association	Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia
Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association	Speech Pathology Australia
Australian Psychological Society	Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health
Council of Ambulance Authorities	Occupational Therapy Australia
Maternal, Child and Family Health Nurses Australia	The Pharmacy Guild of Australia