

GENERAL PRACTICE NETWORK LEADERSHIP GROUP (GPNLG)

COMMUNIQUE

The Network's Primary Health Care Organisation (PHCO) transition plan, mental health and Indigenous health were key priorities for the General Practice Network Leadership Group (GPNLG) when it met in Melbourne in early February.

GPNLG consists of the elected Chairs and CEOs of the eight state and territory based organisations (SBOs) and the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN).

Network PHCO transition plan

KPMG provided GPNLG with an update on the development of a transition strategy and business case to support the evolution of general practice networks (divisions) into PHCOs. Initial feedback was sought from GPNLG on the draft transition plan including the conceptual framework, organisational design elements, challenges and potential solutions. Further consultation with SBOs (and their members) will be conducted in February and March through state/territory forums to finalise the transition strategy and inform the development of a business case for consideration by the Australian Government. This work has been funded by the voluntary contributions made by most general practice networks and SBOs across Australia.

Carla Cranny updated GPNLG on the progress of the boundary modelling project including the rationale for the approach and modelling criteria. An early outline of potential PHCO numbers and state scenarios was provided for general feedback. GPNLG will further consider the draft boundary modelling in mid-February prior to dissemination to the broader Network. This work has been funded jointly by AGPN and the SBOs.

The group had the opportunity to discuss the role and function of the proposed national organisation to support PHCOs including the identification of key national and state/territory functions that needed to be supported in any structure. GPNLG will continue to scope this in the coming months with the development of a discussion paper on the role, function, funding and structure of the national body.

GPNLG identified upcoming state/territory meetings as an opportunity for Network Members to be kept abreast of the national health reform agenda and the progress of the consultancy work. GPNLG is committed to working through these avenues to continue conversations with general practice networks about the future role of the Network in national health reform. GPNLG encourages Network Member participation in these events.

As part of the AGPN Federal Budget submission a recommendation was made to the Australian Government for the establishment of up to 15 pilot PHCO sites in 2010-2011. Network Members should consider whether they are in a position to put themselves forward as a potential pilot if this recommendation is adopted.

Jurisdictional reports

GPNLG identified key themes from the SBO jurisdictional reports to convey to the AGPN Board including:

- impact of new Fair Work Australia legislation on Network Members
- need for AGPN to facilitate robust discussion with the Minister and Department of Health and Ageing on solutions to the significant increase in costs and workload on Network Members with respect to:
 - increasing, but variable, micro-management and scrutiny of programs
 - delays in funding and roll-over confirmation
 - confirmation of program futures and new program start dates
 - increasing size, complexity and variances in agreements and reporting
- challenges with the implementation, communication and partnerships in relation to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Closing the Gap initiative
- continued advocacy at a national level for future funding of Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) and clarity about future mental health strategies and support arrangements.

Mental health

Chair of the National Advisory Council on Mental Health, John Mendoza, joined GPNLG to discuss mental health policy. He discussed the group's work aimed at reducing fragmentation and inequity to establish a more responsive, consumer focused suite of mental health services. The council has just released its report, *A Mentally Healthy Future for All Australians*: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/mentalhealth/publishing.nsf/Content/whats-new-lp-1>.

GPNLG discussed the future of ATAPS. The Minister of Health and Ageing has indicated ongoing support for the program. Potential program changes will focus on funding targeted services, new models of service delivery for 'hard to reach' groups and an increase in flexibility in the program's guidelines. ATAPS will be a key service delivery platform for the Australian Government in the future.

The group also discussed the future of the DLO and Co-morbidity Networks. SBOs provided input into a paper examining the roles and functions of the National Primary Mental Health Care Network and discussed the possibility of negotiating a new, updated program from July 2010 with the Australian Government.

Indigenous health

GPNLG had the opportunity to review and discuss the draft program guidelines for the Care Coordination and Supplementary Services Program as part of the COAG Closing the Gap initiative. Further input is to be provided by SBOs to AGPN in February.

Cultural safety awareness and training for staff was identified as a priority for the Network moving forward. AGPN is well positioned to progress work in this area in the coming months with the appointment of Traven Lea to the position of Special Network Adviser – Indigenous Health.

Other matters

A range of strategic issues and operational matters put forward by Network Members were also discussed including:

- future funding of key Network-funded programs in the context of the recommendations submitted to the Australian Government as part of the AGPN Federal Budget submission
- progress of the General Practice Data Governance Council in developing a data governance strategy
- potential changes to the Type II Diabetes Prevention Program
- outcomes of the Network Insurance Project.

For further information on the meeting outcomes please contact your SBO.