

Statewide PCPs

Position Statement Statewide Primary Care Partnerships

Over the past 10 years in Victoria, Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs) have been integral to the development and extension of the primary healthcare system. The 31 PCPs represent a constituency of 1200 agencies including: community health services, acute hospital services, General Practice Networks, local government and other government agencies and non-government organisations.

The partnerships have enabled development and implementation in key program areas including service coordination (incorporating e referral and standard referral frameworks), integrated chronic disease management, integrated health promotion and collaborative cross sectoral interventions to enhance the health of our communities.

In response to the federal health reform documents and the recently announced *Australia's First National Primary Health Care Strategy*, the Victorian PCPs offer the following recommendations to the Federal Government to improve the health and well-being of the Victorian community:

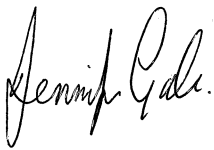
1) Whatever final structure the Federal Government adopts for its Primary Health Care Organisations (PHCOs)/Medicare Locals they should include the following key principles:

- Inclusive, collaborative partnerships that encompass a broad membership. These partnerships should undertake comprehensive planning that directly responds to the social determinants of health of their local communities. This broad partnership base would include primary healthcare, aged care, mental health, local government, alcohol and other drug services, women's health, family support services and other social health services. These are indispensable to improving the health of the most disadvantaged people in the community.
- A well-connected and person-centred health system that promotes equity and access (by all) to services
- Services provided should come from across the care continuum including health promotion, prevention, early intervention, clinical care for the population and chronic disease management
- A coordinated and integrated service delivery system

2) The PHCOs/Medicare Locals should be formed as new entities. The statewide PCPs recently developed a joint letter to the Premier of Victoria with the Victorian Healthcare Association and General Practice Victoria which also recommended the PHCOs/Medicare Locals be formed as new entities. This will consolidate the mature network of existing partnerships in Victoria and create an inclusive foundation on which to build the new governance structures for the primary healthcare system of the future. Such an inclusive approach will also create a sense of common purpose needed to facilitate system change. It will also be important to retain and strengthen community and consumer participation in local priority setting and determining locally appropriate service models and implementation strategies.

3) The PHCOs/Medicare Locals must establish clear and transparent governance and business management protocols to manage the accountability and probity issues associated with the functions of planning, purchasing and/or service provision, across private and public health systems.

Victoria's current primary healthcare structures have facilitated the development of valuable and inclusive partnerships between a broad range of sectors and a very diverse range of services. Victoria's experience over the past decade demonstrates that inclusive, broadly based and cross-sector partnerships can improve the health and wellbeing of targeted communities, via comprehensive and coordinated strategies.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Gale'.

Jennifer Gale
Chair, Statewide Primary Care Partnerships
20 May 2010