

GENERAL PRACTICE NETWORK LEADERSHIP GROUP (GPNLG)

PRINCIPLES SUPPORTING THE GPNLG

Background

The compatibility and parallel nature of the roles of State Based Organisations and AGPN at a State and National level, respectively has provided significant opportunities for collaboration. The MoU between AGPN and the SBOs that took effect on 1 July 2002 formalised the working relationships between the parties and defined some “*parameters for common activity to ensure maximum outcomes from collaboration and avoid duplication of effort*”.

The MoU detailed specific responsibilities of parties with respect to the General Practice Network Leadership Group (GPNLG) business but did not articulate in any detail the protocols and processes that will be used to guide the conduct of these responsibilities.

The *Review of Divisions* released in 2003 stressed the need for greater clarity and differentiation in the respective roles of AGPN and SBOs, particularly in the interests of avoiding duplication, reducing potential tensions and streamlining communication. The work of the *Divisions Network Structure Working Group* in 2003 also highlighted the need for agreed principles and protocols for communication between the members of the network regardless of what structured is ultimately put in place.

This has commenced through the recent development of agreed role statements for AGPN and SBOs (attached). It is considered that the next step should be to more clearly define the relationship between SBOs and AGPN both in terms of the business that they engage in together and in terms of how they interact with their member Divisions and parties external to the network in performing these roles.

The Role Statements for AGPN and SBOs provide a framework for the development of guiding principles and protocols.

PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGPN AND SBOs

It is acknowledged that AGPN and SBOs perform parallel roles. The following overarching principles provide a framework for guiding the relationship between AGPN and SBOs.

Overarching Principles:

- i. *AGPN and SBOs must work together to support Divisions of General Practice to enable them to focus on local matters of priority to their GP constituents.*
- ii. *AGPN and SBOs must not overlap with or duplicate either each other’s activities or the activities of Divisions.*
- iii. *AGPN and SBOs must establish effective ongoing communication and consultation mechanisms with Divisions to ensure they are aware of, and understand, the issues of priority to Divisions and their GP constituents and are therefore able to represent these interests in an informed manner.*
- iv. *AGPN and SBOs must provide regular and timely feedback to Divisions on matters of relevance to Divisional activity and on the manner in which the AGPN/the SBO has represented their interests.*
- v. *AGPN should have in place mechanisms that provide timely advice to SBOs about National level negotiations that may have relevance at a State/Territory level.*
- vi. *SBOs should have in place mechanisms that provide timely advice to AGPN about State level negotiations that may have relevance at a National level.*
- vii. *AGPN and SBOs should inform each other when either party intends communicating with the other party’s constituents or partners.*
- viii. *It is recognised that there is an opportunistic element to both AGPN’s and SBOs roles that may prevent these principles being adhered to at all times. Both AGPN and SBOs should ensure that appropriate communication with Divisions and stakeholders is undertaken at the earliest opportunity should this situation arise.*

In the table below the parallel roles of AGPN and the SBOs have been mapped (Columns 1-3). This exercise provides a useful framework for the development of more detailed principles for managing the relationship between AGPN and SBOs in these areas (Column 4).

Key role	AGPN Role	SBO Role	Principle
Leadership, representation and advocacy	To represent both Divisions and SBOs at the national level	To represent Divisions at the State/Territory level	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>SBOs should not make representations at the National level unless this is with the knowledge and support of AGPN</i> 2. <i>AGPN should not make representations at a State/Territory level unless this is with the knowledge and support of the SBO</i> 3. <i>Neither AGPN or the SBOs should represent Divisional views without prior consultation with Divisions to ensure such representation is informed</i> 4. <i>In the interests of facilitating efficient and timely consultation and information sharing, SBOs should support the work of AGPN at the national level by co-ordinating the dissemination of information to and feedback from divisions where appropriate.</i> 5. <i>It is recognised that principle 4. should not be used to prevent Divisions from communicating directly with AGPN should they wish to do so.</i>

Key role	AGPN Role	SBO Role	Principle
Policy development, strategic planning and program development	To undertake activities at the national level, in association with relevant stakeholders and to facilitate opportunities for Divisional and SBO input	To undertake activities at the State/Territory level, in association with relevant stakeholders and to facilitate opportunities for Divisional input	<p>6. <i>Neither AGPN or the SBOs should engage in new areas of policy or program development without Divisional and stakeholder input and support</i></p> <p>7. <i>Divisional and stakeholder input should be sought by AGPN in consultation with SBOs when matters relate to national policy planning and program development</i></p> <p>8. <i>Divisional and stakeholder input should be sought by SBOs when matters relate to State/Territory or local policy planning and program development</i></p> <p>9. <i>The capacity of SBOs to contribute to national policy and program development and of AGPN to contribute to State/Territory policy and program development should be respected and encouraged provided principles 1-8 are adhered to</i></p>
Negotiation with Government	To negotiate with Commonwealth Government on matters affecting Divisions and SBOs	To negotiate with State/Territory Government on matters affecting Divisions	<p>10. <i>SBOs should not undertake negotiations with the Commonwealth Government at a national level unless this is with the knowledge and support of AGPN</i></p> <p>11. <i>AGPN should not undertake negotiations with State/Territory Governments unless support from AGPN has been requested by the SBO</i></p>
Communication and the sharing of information and resources	<p>To develop networks and relationships with key stakeholders at the national level</p> <p>To facilitate and promote linkages and the flow of information and resources across the Network, and between divisions and other relevant organisations at the national level</p>	<p>To develop networks and relationships with key stakeholders at the state and territory level</p> <p>To facilitate and promote linkages and the flow of information and resources across the Network, and between divisions and other relevant organizations at the state and territory level</p>	<i>Principles 1-5 equally apply</i>

Key role	AGPN Role	SBO Role	Draft Principle
Work to support and build the capacity of the Divisions Network	<p>To support and build the capacity of Divisions and SBOs</p> <p>To provide services to divisions and SBOs consistent with their aims and identified needs</p>	<p>To support and build the capacity of Divisions</p> <p>To provide services to divisions consistent with their aims and identified needs</p>	<p><i>12. It is recognised that Divisional support and capacity building is a significant area of potential overlap and duplication between AGPN and SBOs.</i></p> <p><i>13. Where possible, AGPN should focus on the provision of support and capacity building in relation to aspects of Divisional business that have a national focus or for which AGPN has a national co-ordination role.</i></p> <p><i>14. SBOs should focus on the provision of support and capacity building in relation to aspects of Divisional business that have a State/Territory focus or for which the SBO has a State co-ordination role.</i></p> <p><i>15. Where AGPN and SBOs are both involved in Divisional support and capacity building in a common area, communication mechanisms must be put in place to ensure that AGPN and the SBOs are aware of each others activities and plans, and work together to achieve synergies in services provided, rather than duplication. .</i></p>

**ATTACHMENT: Roles of AGPN and SBOs in the Divisions Network
(as at November 2003)**

The Divisions Network seeks to advance the health of the Australian community through the delivery of high quality general practice services that are well linked with the broader health system. The work of divisions at a local level is supported by state-based organisations (SBO) at the state and territory level, and by Australian Divisions of General Practice (AGPN) at the national level.

Role of AGPN

The role of Australian Divisions of General Practice (AGPN) is to act as the national peak body for the Divisions Network, including

1. leadership, representation and advocacy for the Divisions Network at the national level;
2. policy development, strategic planning and program development at the national level, in association with relevant stakeholders;
3. negotiation with the Commonwealth Government and the Department of Health & Ageing on matters affecting the Divisions Network;
4. manage standards and quality issues for the Divisions Network;
5. promote the communication and the sharing of information and resources within the Divisions Network and with relevant organisations;
6. work with and support divisions and SBOs to build the capacity of the Divisions Network

Role of SBOs

The role of State Based Organisations (SBOs) is to work in partnership with divisions to

1. provide leadership, representation and advocacy for divisions at the State/Territory level by
 - (a) negotiation with State/Territory Government on matters affecting divisions;
 - (b) ensuring divisions' input into policy development, program development and strategic planning at the State/Territory level;
 - (c) developing networks and relationships with key stakeholders at the state and territory level;
2. support and strengthen divisions by
 - (a) targeted work with divisions to build capacity;
 - (b) services to divisions consistent with their aims and identified needs;
 - (c) program planning, development and coordination in partnership with divisions
 - (d) facilitating and promoting linkages and the flow of information and resources across the Network, and between divisions and other relevant organisations;
3. Support the work of AGPN at the national level by
 - (a) co-ordinate information to and feedback from divisions where appropriate
 - (b) contribute to national policy and program development