

GENERAL PRACTICE NETWORK LEADERSHIP GROUP (GPNLG)

COMMUNIQUE

The final meeting of the General Practice Network Leadership Group (GPNLG) for 2008 was held in Canberra on Thursday and Friday, 27-28 November. GPNLG consists of the Chairs and CEOs of the eight state-based organisations (SBOs) and the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN).

Three priority areas for the network were identified by GPNLG - eHealth, Indigenous Health and Workforce. GPNLG committed to progressing each of these priorities commencing with the development of strategic frameworks to provide a clear direction and consistent statements moving forward. A number of projects have already been identified including:

- development of a clear statement of current network activity in Indigenous Health informed by a stocktake of local initiatives across Australia
- exploration of strategic opportunities in Indigenous Health where the network could contribute
- release of the AGPN data governance paper by 31 December 2008
- development of a dynamic map of state and territory activity against the national eHealth agenda.

The current fiscal climate was discussed in length with GPNLG considering the impact this would have on the Federal Budget for 2009-10. It is anticipated that this will be a savings budget with potential implications for the health portfolio. AGPN continues to actively seek early warning from the Department of Health and Ageing on possible implications for the network. To date there is no information on any specific network programs being targeted as the budget process does not start until the new year: however in a savings budget it can be expected that all programs will be subjected to scrutiny. It is therefore imperative that divisions demonstrate their performance, value and effectiveness especially in new program areas such as the Type 2 Diabetes Prevention Program. SBOs and AGPN will continue to support divisions to ensure the ongoing health of the network.

A number of GPNLG projects and priorities to offer value-add services and support to members are nearing completion with the GPNLG website to be updated in the coming weeks to include a number of new resources. These resources include generic network orientation templates for internal and external stakeholders, a brief paper on service coordination and a generic business planning and development checklist for divisions considering the delivery of new services.

GPNLG agreed to continue to drive the implementation of the Network Strategy Plan including its use in future organisational planning across the network. GPNLG will be disseminating a report card to the network early in 2009 outlining what has/has not been achieved against the plan and to inform future work. This report will also provide an opportunity for divisions to suggest other focus areas.

The Improvement Foundation Australia attended on day one seeking advice from GPNLG on the spread and sustainability of the Collaboratives quality improvement methodology through divisions and general practice. GPNLG is considering a number of proposed implementation scenarios to maximise reach and outcomes across the network.

A meeting was held with Ms Sharon Appleyard and Mr Lou Andreatta from the Department of Health and Ageing on day two. An update was provided on the review of the rural health programs, the Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas (RRMA) classification and the new network funding formula.

- The Health Minister's directive is to consolidate and refocus the Commonwealth's current effort in rural health delivery whereby 65 programs will be collapsed into five key themes: 1) service delivery and access; 2) infrastructure; 3) medical education and training, including workforce distribution; 4) research and data collection; and 5) better joint planning and collaboration with the States and Territories. More flexible funding approaches with a focus on outcomes are being considered.
- The Government is working in an environment of budget constraint.
- RRMA classification will no longer be supported post 30 June 2009 with the Department considering classifications recognised across Government: not network specific.
- The new network funding formula will depend on the outcomes of the reviews of the RRMA classification and rural health programs.

- The Department is committed to communicating with the network in advance of any impact to divisions following the reviews.

In discussions on potential funding changes, including the application of a new funding formula for divisions, AGPN continues to strongly advocate to the Minister and the Department that a 'no losers' model needs to be adopted so that no division receives less funding.

For further information please contact your State/Territory Based Organisation.