

MEDIA RELEASE

APRIL 15, 2011



TASMANIAN MEDICARE LOCAL PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

The organisations that support the State's general practices, the General Practice Tasmania Network, have submitted an application to be among the first 15 Medicare Locals established across Australia. The application was submitted in response to the Federal Government's Invitation to Apply (ITA) issued earlier this year.

Tasmania's proposal builds on the track record of the four organisations that make up the existing General Practice Network, General Practice South, General Practice North, General Practice North West and General Practice Tasmania (the statewide body) and extends their scope to engage with and provide services to support the broader primary care sector.

"The proposed Tasmanian Medicare Local Network will have a strong local presence. It comprises four component parts: a small not-for-profit company that will buy core services from three regional Primary Care Organisations (PCOs). The PCOs will evolve from the three existing Divisions of General Practice to ensure business continuity and to retain foundation skills and experience on which we can build," said the CEO of General Practice Tasmania, Sarah Male.

"The application outlines a proposal to extend the roles and breadth of services provided by the organisations, broaden membership, expand responsibilities for clinical and community engagement and more formally link governance arrangements," Ms Male said.

The main role of the company will be as the single point of contact for the Federal Government in terms of funding and contract management. The main roles of the three PCOs will be to work closely with their local community, including consumers, providers, clinicians and other stakeholders, to understand the primary health care system in their area, to find out what the health care needs of their community are, and to work with the local community to come up with ways of addressing gaps in services and problems with the system. Preserving a strong local presence in each of the three regions will also support better integration and coordination with the State Government's Local Hospital Networks.

"The Federal Government's primary health care reforms are about working to make it easier for patients to get the care that they need, where and when they need it and also to assist them to navigate their local health care system. The proposed Tasmanian Medicare Local Network is tailored to the specific needs of Tasmania (geographical dispersion, rurality and poor socio-economic and health status in many areas) and offers an excellent balance between statewide coordination and local responsiveness," Ms Male said.

The General Practice Tasmania Network is a unique statewide infrastructure that supports contemporary general practice in Tasmania by linking GPs with each other, by supporting all members of the general practice team and by employing or supporting allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, dieticians and psychologists to be part of the primary care team. The General Practice Tasmania Network is a proud member of the Australian General Practice Network.



“While the timeframe to prepare the application was quite short, we talked to many stakeholders across the State and have been delighted to receive a number of letters of support for our application.

“If the Federal Government approves our application then we will be very keen to work even more closely with these organisations in planning the details and establishing the new arrangements.

“We have an ideal opportunity now to collaborate to set up a new local system for primary care in Tasmania and to plan services on a statewide basis. At the same time we will be maintaining the regional presence that has been so important to us and that will preserve our local experience, relevance and responsiveness,” Ms Male said.

ENDS ...

CONTACT:

Ms Sarah Male, Chief Executive Officer, General Practice Tasmania

Tel: (03) 6224 1114

REGIONAL CONTACTS:

Ms Dellys Sice, Chief Executive Officer, General Practice South

Tel: (03) 6208 7300

Mr Phil Edmondson, Chief Executive Officer, General Practice North

Tel: (03) 6331 9296

Ms Elvie Hales, Chief Executive Officer, General Practice North West

Tel: (03) 6425 0800

The General Practice Tasmania Network is a unique statewide infrastructure that supports contemporary general practice in Tasmania by linking GPs with each other, by supporting all members of the general practice team and by employing or supporting allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, dieticians and psychologists to be part of the primary care team. The General Practice Tasmania Network is a proud member of the Australian General Practice Network.

