

MEDIA RELEASE

JUNE 6, 2011



EMBARGOED UNTIL 1PM TODAY MONDAY JUNE 6

GPT NETWORK SELECTED AS ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S FIRST MEDICARE LOCALS

The General Practice Tasmania Network is proud to have been chosen as one of the first 19 Medicare Locals in Australia. The announcement was made by the Federal Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon, today.

CEO of General Practice Tasmania, Ms Sarah Male, said this was an historic time for health reform in Australia in which the Federal Government had allocated \$477 million over four years to establish a network of Medicare Locals across the country.

"It was a very competitive process to determine the first 19 Medicare Locals for Australia given 59 applications were lodged for this first round," Ms Male said.

The Tasmanian Medicare Local Network builds on the track record of the four organisations that make up the current General Practice Tasmania Network, namely General Practice South, General Practice North, General Practice North West and General Practice Tasmania (the statewide body) and significantly extends their scope to engage with and provide services to support the broader primary care sector.

"The General Practice Tasmania Network was always well-placed to establish this region's Medicare Local given the partnerships and health services that the Network has been working to deliver across Tasmania for nearly 20 years. "The Medicare Local will extend the roles and breadth of services provided by our organisations, broaden their membership, expand responsibilities for clinical and community engagement and formally link with the State's Local Hospital Networks," Ms Male said.

"The aim of the Medicare Locals over time is to work to make it easier for communities to access the care that they need, when they need it and to assist them in navigating their local health care system. The Tasmanian Medicare Local Network will be tailored to the specific needs of Tasmania (geographical dispersion, rurality and poor socio-economic and health status in many areas) and will also offer 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.



“As Medicare Locals become established, consumers will see greater access to preventative health programs and community health services that are geared to keeping people healthier within their communities and out of hospital. The Federal Government’s first priorities are for Medicare Locals to be active in improving access to care after-hours and to improve the system of care for patients with mental health problems. We look forward to seeing the details of the Government’s proposal,” Ms Male said.

“This is an exciting opportunity to make a difference to the health of Tasmanians and we will be working collaboratively with all levels of government, other primary care providers and local communities to achieve this.”

ENDS ...

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