

National Health Reform

A Background Paper prepared for the
General Practice Tasmania Network

Update Number 2 - *current as at 24 June 2010*

Background

Over the past six months the Federal Labor Government has released a number of reports and strategies with the intent of reforming the Australian health system.

This is the second in a series of updates about recent developments on the national health reform landscape. The first update was provided in April 2010 and made available via Division websites.

Key Announcements to Date

The Australian Government has made a number of announcements relating to the Government's plan to reform Australia's health system. The most recent announcements were made, released or confirmed in the Federal Budget. These include:

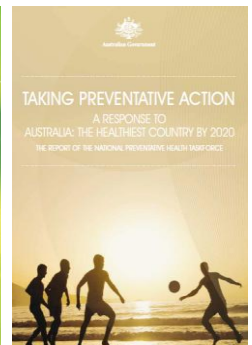
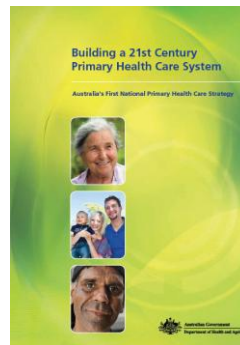
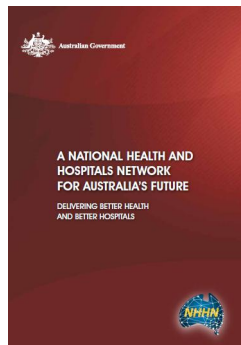
Key Dates	Announcement / Key Activity
28 Jan	National Statement on Social Inclusion
3 March	Establishment of a National Health and Hospitals Network
15 March	Funding for additional GP and specialist training places
31 March	Alternate payments for GPs to improve the health outcomes of voluntarily enrolled diabetes patients
12 April	Increased services in aged care
12 April	The establishment of primary health care organisations (PHCOs)
19 Apr	COAG national health and hospital agreement (excluding WA)
6 May	The National Male Health Policy released
7 May	Boost to Improve Australia's Youth Mental Health – Expansion of Headspace
11 May	Federal Budget – including a range of initiatives outlined below
11 May	Latest National Health and Hospitals Network publication released (Red Book)
11 May	National Primary Care Strategy released
11 May	Taking Preventative Action report released
23 June	20 per cent increase in allowance to GPs who supervise doctors enrolled in general practice training

New initiatives announced in the May Federal Budget included:

- expanded GP and primary care services, especially after hours GP services
- new funding support for nurses particularly practice nurses and aged care nurses
- personally controlled electronic health records
- infrastructure funding to invest in 23 more GP Super Clinic style services as well as expansion of up to 48 existing GP clinics
- new investments in primary mental health care including Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) and Headspace
- continuation and expansion of the Mental Health Support for Drought Affected Communities Initiative
- investment in the development of sub-acute 'step up, step-down' services.

The most significant documents to be released in the past two months, since the first update, are:

- A National Health and Hospitals Network For Australia's Future: Delivering Better Health and Better Hospitals (Red book)
- The final Primary Health Care Strategy: Building a 21st Century Primary Health Care System
- Taking Preventative Action: A Response to Australia: the Healthiest Country by 2020 The Report of the National Preventative Health Taskforce



A brief overview of each of these strategic documents is provided below.

A summary of the other policy documents is provided at Attachment 1.

A National Health and Hospitals Network For Australia's Future: Delivering Better Health and Better Hospitals

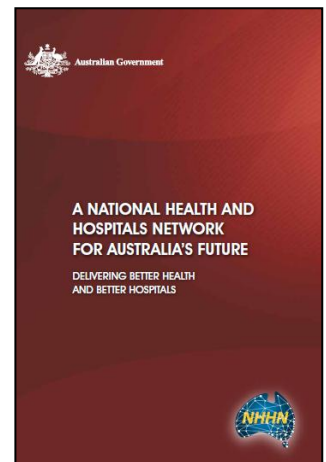
The Government released the latest version of A National Health and Hospitals Network (NHHN) for Australia's Future on the day of Federal Budget.

This (red book) is the latest version of the proposed reforms and replaces the earlier A National Health and Hospitals Network For Australia's Future (blue book) and A National Health and Hospitals Network: Further Investments In Australia's Health (green book) that were outlined in the first Update.

The A National Health and Hospitals Network For Australia's Future: Delivering Better Health and Better Hospitals outlines the development of Local Hospital Networks and primary health care organisations proposed to be named "Medicare Locals" and outlines the various aspects of the health reforms. The Australian Government plans to make additional investment in the following areas:

- Hospitals - to increase the number of public hospital beds, and over time deliver quicker access to emergency department treatment, and shorter elective surgery waiting times in public hospitals
- GP and primary health care - to deliver high quality integrated care in the community, and take pressure off public hospital services
- Workforce - to ensure there are more doctors, nurses and allied health professionals across the country to meet the growing need for health and hospital services
- Aged care - to provide more aged care places and beds for older Australians
- Mental health - to provide a foundation for better mental health care, and help young people get access to mental health services
- E-health - to deliver a personally controlled electronic health record system
- Prevention - tackling the lifestyle related risks that cause chronic disease – targeting smoking in particular

The full report can be found at: [http://www.health.gov.au/internet/yourhealth/publishing.nsf/Content/report-redbook/\\$File/HRT_report3.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/yourhealth/publishing.nsf/Content/report-redbook/$File/HRT_report3.pdf)



National Primary Health Care Strategy

Federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon released a discussion paper, Towards a National Primary Health Care Strategy, on 30 October 2008. This discussion paper was used as a basis for the development of the Draft Strategy, by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, with the assistance of an External Reference Group of primary health care experts chaired by Dr Tony Hobbs (former chair of Australian General Practice Network) as well as informed by discussion with state and territory health departments.

The draft National Primary Health Care Strategy was released by the Primary Minister on 31 August 2009 and the final strategy and supporting report was released with the Federal Budget on 11 May 2010.

The Strategy identifies five building blocks for reform:

1. Regional Integration
2. Information and Technology including e-health
3. Skilled workforce
4. Infrastructure
5. Financing and System Performance.

And four key priority areas:

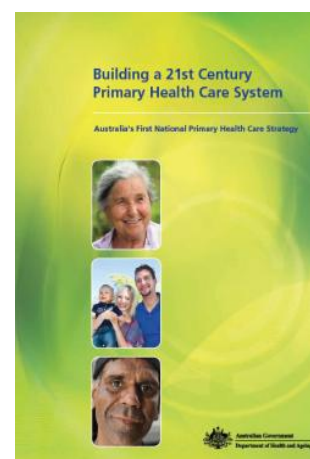
1. Improving Access and Reducing Inequity
2. Better Management of Chronic Conditions
3. Increasing the Focus on Prevention
4. Improving Quality, Safety, Performance and Accountability.

Although the final strategy contains the same building blocks and key priority areas as the draft strategy, the content is reflective of the National Health and Hospital Network and other recent announcements such as the establishment of Medicare Locals, the voluntary registration of patients with diabetes with a general practice practice and the adoption of an individual electronic health record.

There is a focus on targeted funding, improved integration and coordination, improved health literacy, improving access for hard to reach and/or high risk populations and quality and safety which includes systems to support measuring performance against indicators and outcomes.

The full report can be found at:

<http://www.yourhealth.gov.au/internet/yourhealth/publishing.nsf/Content/report-primaryhealth>



Taking Preventative Action: A Response to Australia: The Healthiest Country by 2020

The Report of the National Preventative Health Taskforce

The National Preventative Health Taskforce's final report "Australia: The Healthiest Country by 2020" was released by the Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon Nicola Roxon MP, on 1 September 2009 and the Government's response to the report was released on 11 May 2010.

The report contained 136 recommendations with 35 areas for action and focussed on the fact that obesity, tobacco and alcohol consumption cause 30% of the burden of disease and that there are a small number of modifiable risk factors that are responsible for the greatest share of the burden of disease.

The National Preventative Health Taskforce report sought by 2020 to:

- halve/reverse the rise in levels of overweight and obesity
- reduce smoking rates from 16.6% to 10% or less
- reduce drinking levels causing short term harm from 20% to 14% and proportion of long term harm from 10% to 7%
- close the gap on indigenous health

The response to the report commits the Government to refocusing the health system towards prevention and a range of preventative health approaches.

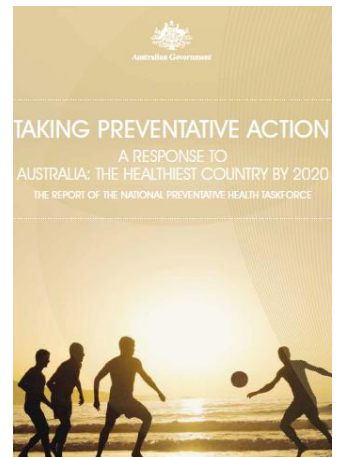
Legislation is currently before Federal Parliament to establish a national agency to guide investment in prevention – the National Preventative Health Agency. It will be considered in the winter 2010 Parliamentary sitting and, subject to this legislation being passed, will be established late 2010.

Announcements contained in the document include:

- a new Australian Health Survey (funded at \$54 million) to provide information on the prevention of chronic disease and lifestyle related risk factors to support the work of the Agency and Medicare locals. The Australian Bureau of Statistics will partner with the Department of Health and Ageing and the National Heart Foundation to deliver the Survey
- a new National Longitudinal study on Men's Health – \$6.9 million over four years, announced 6 May 2010
- \$1.5 million for the development of Australia's first population level obesity guidelines, plus review of clinical guidelines supporting health professionals managing people with obesity
- mandated plain packaging for tobacco products from 1 Jan 2012 to be fully in place by 1 July 2012
- \$50 million over four years (through 2010-2011 budget) to extend National Binge Drinking Strategy and a range of strategies listed under obesity, tobacco and alcohol.

The National Preventative Health Taskforce report and the Government's response is available at:

<http://www.yourhealth.gov.au/internet/yourhealth/publishing.nsf/Content/report-preventativehealthcare>



Response from the Divisions Network

In Tasmania, planning about the establishment of a Tasmanian Primary Health Care Organisation (announced as Medicare Locals in the Federal Budget) has been underway for some time. The members of the General Practice Tasmania Network have determined that the overriding principle in this planning is to preserve the services that Division members value most, preserve the capacity for local level innovation but at the same time to position general practice to be at the centre of any opportunities that may emerge within the context of national reform.

While the Federal Government has not announced how many PHCOs it intends to establish, it has been made clear that fewer PHCOs are planned than there are currently Divisions of General Practice and that there is likely to be only one PHCO in Tasmania.

Provided that the structure of the Tasmanian PHCO preserves the capacity for local innovative and responsive service delivery, the proposition of one PHCO in Tasmania is considered to have the potential to offer efficiencies and greater capacity to influence and improve health outcomes.

The Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) has produced a draft position statement on legal structure, governance and membership for PHCOs, a draft PHCO Transition Strategy and Plan (developed in conjunction with KPMG) and has commissioned Ms Carla Cranny to produce a report on possible boundaries for PHCOs.

Further information about the establishment of a Tasmanian PHCO will be provided when more details are available about the Commonwealth Government's intended roles and relationships with PHCOs.

Questions may be directed to:



Contact Details

Chair: Dr Elizabeth Webber
Chief Executive Officer: Mr Richard McKercher
Telephone: 6208 7300
Email: rmkercher@gpsouth.com.au
Website: www.gpsouth.com.au



Contact Details

Chair: Dr Beth Mulligan
Chief Executive Officer: Mr Phil Edmondson
Telephone: 6331 9296
Email: pedmondson@gpnorth.com.au
Website: www.gpnorth.com.au



Contact Details

Chair: Mr Daryl Guest
Chief Executive Officer: Ms Elvie Hales
Telephone: 6425 0800
Email: ehales@gpnw.com.au
Website: www.gpnw.com.au



Contact Details

Chair: Mr Glenn Appleyard
Chief Executive Officer: Ms Sarah Male
Telephone: 6224 1114
Email: smale@gptasmania.com.au
Website: www.gptasmania.com.au

Attachment 1: A Brief Overview of Key Strategic Documents Released by the Australian Government

The National Male Health Policy - Building on the Strengths of Australian Males

The Male Health Policy was released on 6 May 2010. The Policy provides a framework for improving the health of all males and achieving equal health outcomes for population groups of males at risk of poor health. It provides practical suggestions for action designed to guide directions especially in areas where it is known that a difference can be made in improving the health of Australian males.

The policy has **six priority areas for action**:

1. Optimal health outcomes for males
2. Health equity between population groups of males
3. Health equity between males at different life stages
4. A focus on preventive health for males
5. Building a strong evidence base on male health
6. Access to health care for males

The Policy has nine supporting documents:

- *Social Determinants and Key Actions Supporting Male Health*
- *Healthy Minds*
- *Healthy Routines*
- *Healthy Reproductive Behaviours*
- *Healthy Limits*
- *Healthy Workers*
- *Access to Health Services*
- *Actions Males Can Take Now*
- *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Male*
- *Health Framework, Revised Guiding Principles*

These supporting documents provide in-depth analysis of some of the issues raised in the Policy. It also has some practical suggestions for males about what they can do to improve their own health, and some guiding principles that can be used when developing programs and policies affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males.

The policy and supporting document is available at:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/national+mens+health-1>



National Strategy for Young Australia

The Minister for Youth, Kate Ellis, launched the National Strategy for Young Australians on Wednesday, 14 April 2010.

The Strategy focuses on young people aged between 12 and 24 years. At the heart of the Strategy is a vision for all young people to grow up safe, healthy, happy and resilient.

To achieve the Australian Government's vision the Strategy will focus on eight priorities:

1. Improving the health and wellbeing of all young people
2. Equipping young Australians to shape their own futures through education
3. Supporting young Australians within their families
4. Empowering young Australians to take part and be active in their communities
5. Equipping young Australians with the skills and personal networks they need to gain, and be successful in, employment
6. Enabling young Australians to participate confidently and safely online
7. Strengthening early intervention with young Australians to help prevent any problems getting worse and to help young people get their lives back on track
8. Establishing clear cut legal consequences for behaviours that endanger the safety of others

The Strategy is available at: <http://www.youth.gov.au/nationalstrategy.html>



A Stronger, Fairer Australia

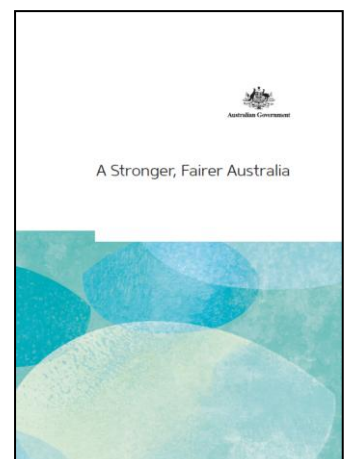
The Minister for Social Inclusion, Julia Gillard, launched the Australian Government's national statement on social inclusion, A Stronger, Fairer Australia on 28 January 2010.

The social inclusion strategy is designed to form partnerships between the government, the not-for-profit sector and businesses that have the greatest experience in addressing disadvantage.

The Australian Government's vision of a socially inclusive society is one in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society. Achieving this vision means that all Australians will have the resources, opportunities and capability to learn, work, engage in the community and have a voice.

The Government identified six early priorities in which to focus upon:

- Supporting children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage by providing health, education and family relationships services
- Helping jobless families with children by helping the unemployed into sustainable employment and their children into a good start in life



- Focusing on the locations of greatest disadvantage by tailoring place-based approaches in partnership with the community
- Assisting in the employment of people with disability or mental illness by creating employment opportunities and building community support
- Addressing the incidence of homelessness by providing more housing and support services
- Closing the gap for Indigenous Australians with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational achievement and employment outcomes.

The strategy is available at: <http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au>