

# A Medicare Local Network for Tasmania: Commencement of Statewide Transition

## Introduction: Involvement of stakeholders

July signals the beginning of the new Tasmanian Medicare Local Network. Initially the focus of the Network is on becoming operational within a three-month timeframe; with implementation commencing when the contract with the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) has been finalised. There is a lot of groundwork for the Network to do in terms of transitioning current business to a Medicare Local before the scope of business is expanded. The transition has begun for General Practice Tasmania, and will commence for the regional organisations shortly.

The Network has been delighted in the positive response and support for the new reform agenda from the stakeholder community. We ask for patience as the four organisations commence a paced transition. In the coming months the Network will focus on establishing and embedding its internal business operations while starting to visit and work more closely with stakeholders. Recognising the Commonwealth's expectations for clinical engagement, community engagement, expanded membership, and a more inclusive approach to primary care, the Network was clear in its application that these types of mechanisms will be designed collaboratively with our stakeholder community, both on a state-wide basis and importantly, at each regional, local level. There will be many opportunities for interested parties to be involved in the development and implementation of the Medicare Local.

As the Network starts to get in touch with and visit stakeholders issues raised that may be of interest to the wider primary health community will be addressed as part of the update series.

## Tasmania Medicare Local Limited: Company objects and membership

General Practice Tasmania held an Extraordinary General Meeting held on 24 June 2011 with the following outcomes:

- General Practice Tasmania Ltd will adopt the name **Tasmania Medicare Local (TML) Limited** once the contract with the Commonwealth has been finalised.
- A new Constitution is now in place with the main changes relating to the Company objects and membership arrangements. The objects are listed below and allow the Company to retain its role in working with general practice while expanding the scope of business to include other primary care providers. In relation to membership, the three existing Divisions of General Practice remain as members and are an integral part of TML, however membership will also be expanded to reflect the broadened focus of the Network to include other primary care organisations.

### Company Objects

For Tasmania Medicare Local (TML) Ltd, six objects have been agreed that reflect both general practice and the primary health care sector to cover the full scope of our current business as well as expanded business. The objects for which the Company is established are to improve the statewide and regional health outcomes of the Tasmanian community by:

- (a) identifying and responding to the Primary Health Care needs of the Tasmanian community;
- (b) supporting and enhancing the role of General Practice and Primary Health Care Providers in delivering services;
- (c) positioning and promoting Tasmanian General Practice and its lead role in Primary Health Care;
- (d) promoting the integration and coordination of Primary Health Care Services across the Tasmanian health care system;
- (e) contributing to and providing informed advice on Tasmanian Primary Health Care policy, service planning, education, training and research; and
- (f) facilitating national and state Primary Health Care initiatives and programs.

## **Membership**

The three Divisions (using current names) will be the core members of TML Ltd as their contribution to the Network will be in both participating in TML management and operational activities as well as delivering core Medicare Local services, such as health needs assessment, primary health service planning, and stakeholder engagement.

As TML Ltd will shortly be inviting new members from the broader primary health care sector and in accordance with the new Constitution, the following membership criteria apply:

- a demonstrated involvement in primary health care
- a demonstrated interest in improving health outcomes of the Tasmania community
- a demonstrated ability to support the objects of Tasmania Medicare Local Limited.

## **Stakeholder roundtable**

Recently, a national stakeholder roundtable was held in Canberra (29 June) with over 100 delegates representing many of the national stakeholder groups and organisations. This event was held to inform national organisations about Medicare Locals in the context of health reform with a focus on identifying the value for national organisations and their members in engaging with Medicare Locals and on identifying opportunities for engagement.

A roundtable for Tasmanian stakeholders with statewide interest is being organised for Friday, **19 August 2011** at Bellerive Oval. The event will be hosted by TML Ltd bringing stakeholders together to:

- learn more about the new Medicare Local Network including objectives, roles and responsibilities and approach to implementation
- explore the opportunities and challenges that exist for key organisations and health professional groups
- discuss communication and engagement strategies during the transition period and into the future.

A formal invitation along with registration details and all relevant background material will be circulated in the coming weeks. We hope it will be of interest to many organisations across the primary health care sector.

## Updates and further information

The current Divisions of General Practice are the mechanism for the Commonwealth Government to communicate, support and work with general practice. Medicare Locals will continue this work but will also be expanding across the primary health care sector to support health professionals to provide more coordinated care.

This is the fifth update in a series prepared to keep organisations and individuals informed about the establishment of the Tasmanian Medicare Local Network. Previous updates are available at [www.gptasmania.com.au](http://www.gptasmania.com.au):

- **Update #1** focussed on the policy context and guidelines within which Medicare Locals will be established across Australia (10 March 2011)
- **Update #2** outlined the model being proposed for the Tasmanian Medicare Local Network (31 March 2011)
- **Update #3** a brief update on the progress of the Networks submission (4 May 2011)
- **Update #4** announcement of Medicare Local organisations and overview of the Federal budget (7 June 2011)

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