

# A Medicare Local Network for Tasmania: Announcement & Federal Budget

## Medicare Local announcement

The General Practice Tasmania (GPT) Network (including General Practice North, General Practice North West, General Practice South and General Practice Tasmania) is pleased to confirm that the Network's application to become a unique and regionally networked Medicare Local has been successful. Minister Roxon announced on 6 June 2011 that the GPT Network is one of 19 early adopter organisations/consortia in Australia. Along with the Tasmanian Network, Medicare Locals that will be established from July 2011 include:

- **New South Wales** – Western Sydney, Hunter Urban, New England, Murrumbidgee
- **Queensland** – Metro North, West Moreton-Oxley, Gold Coast, Metro South, Townsville-Mackay
- **Western Australia** – North West Metro, Country South West
- **South Australia** – Central Adelaide & Hills, Country North
- **Australian Capital Territory**
- **Victoria** – to be advised in the week commencing 13 June.

This is an exciting opportunity for the Network and a credit to the partnerships and collaborations to support general practice and deliver services. The Network now has an important role in shaping the development and implementation of Medicare Local organisations across Australia.

There have been some changes to the original Medicare Local boundaries (previously released in December 2010) following a review of the proposed areas in NSW, Victoria and Western Australia. The total number of Medicare Locals across Australia, will be 62 at this stage, with some final changes yet to be announced in Victoria.

## Federal budget priorities

With the release of the Federal Budget on 10 May there is clarity around the first two priority areas that will come under the umbrella of Medicare Locals – mental health and after hours primary care.

### Mental Health

Funding for mental health was the centrepiece of the health budget, with the key role for Divisions and Medicare Locals highlighted in relation to facilitating linkages, coordinating service integration across sectors and organisations. Implications for Divisions and Medicare Locals are:

- responsibility for managing the expansion of funding for Access to Allied Psychology Services (ATAPS). This will require strong partnerships with community organisations and state funded mental health services to address service gaps
- leading coordinated care measures to be rolled out over 5 years, through Medicare Locals in partnership with non-government organisations

- building capacity within the new Networks to drive a coordinated and integrated regional solution to primary mental health care. This will include the need for investment in workforce development, clinical support, clinical governance and service development.

### After hours primary care

In establishing Medicare Locals, reforms to after hours GP services have been fast tracked with funding expected to be provided to each Medicare Local to plan and arrange for the provision of after hours services in their region. This will include supporting Commonwealth initiatives:

- establishing a new national after hours telephone-based GP medical advice service as an add-on service to the nurse triage, information and advice services currently being provided by the National Health Call Centre Network (NHCCN) trading as healthdirect Australia
- expanding the new national after hours telephone-based GP medical advice service to allow capacity for online triage and basic medical advice via videoconferencing (media release, Nicola Roxon, 2 June 2011).

### Further information

Several organisations have invited representatives from the General Practice Network to attend Board meetings, forums, etc, to present and discuss the Medicare Local concept. The Network is more than happy to work with stakeholders (and their members) in this way so please contact us if this would benefit your organisation.

This is the fourth update in a series prepared to keep organisations and individuals informed about the establishment of a Medicare Local within Tasmania. Previous updates are available:

[www.gptasmania.com.au](http://www.gptasmania.com.au)

For further information or to provide feedback please contact:



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