

# **PRIME MINISTER MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGEING**

## **Medicare Locals to Deliver Home Grown Health Solutions**

Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Health Minister Nicola Roxon today heard how Australia's first Medicare Locals are on their way to better coordinating local doctors, nurses and allied health professionals to provide more responsive and targeted services for patients.

Leaders from 19 Medical Locals have showcased the benefits of the Australian Government initiative at a forum held at Parliament House in Canberra today.

The Prime Minister and Minister Roxon welcomed the representatives from Medicare Locals and encouraged them to share the innovative ways they are responding more effectively to the health care needs of their communities.

Medicare Locals are a key part of the Gillard Labor Government's national health reform measures.

They are primary health care organisations working to make it easier for patients to access the services they need by better linking local GPs, nursing and other health professionals, hospitals and aged care, and maintaining up to date local service directories.

There is no one-size-fits-all for Medicare Locals. What works in Western Sydney won't necessarily work in Bunbury, which is why the locally-run organisations are looking at the health needs of their community and targeting services to meet these needs.

More than four out of five Australians see a GP or other primary health care provider at least once a year.

A key priority of the Government's national health reforms is to shift the centre of gravity from hospitals towards primary health care and Medicare Locals will be front and centre in this process.

Under the reforms, Medicare Locals will deliver home-grown solutions to local health problems and make it easier for Australians to see and contact a health professional, closer to home.

Examples of how Medicare Locals can make a difference include:

- easier access for patients to see an after-hours GP close to home
- better access local programs to combat obesity or diabetes support services

- targeted referrals to specialist services such as a local physio or psychologist.

There are a range of initiatives amongst Medicare Locals that are already making a difference like e-health patient records in Brisbane, Closing the Gap services in Western Sydney or increasing access to mental health services in Geelong.

Medicare Locals have the important role of working with GPs, nurses, allied health professionals, Indigenous health organisations and Local Hospital Networks to ensure that the patient can move seamlessly throughout the health system.

In particular, Medicare Locals will play a key role in helping to improve access to after-hours care, chronic disease prevention and management programs and mental health initiatives.

Today's forum in Parliament is a prime opportunity for the first 19 Medicare Locals to share their experiences and showcase to the Australian community the great work they are now doing.

More information on Medicare Locals can be found at [www.yourhealth.gov.au](http://www.yourhealth.gov.au)

**Canberra  
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**For more information, contact the Minister's Office on (02) 6277 7220**