

HEALTH REFORM FACT SHEETS

A snapshot of National Health Reform Fact Sheet 1

Background

When the Rudd Labor Government took office in late 2007 one of its major policy platforms was to reform the Australian health system. The Australian Government commissioned three major reviews into the Australian health system and, following the completion of these reviews, released three strategic documents in 2009:

- The report of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission: *A Healthier Future for all Australians*
- A draft of Australia's First National Primary Health Care Strategy: *Building a 21st Century Primary Health Care System*
- A National Preventative Health Strategy: *Australia: The Healthiest Country by 2020*

In response to the Rudd Government's focus on reform the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) in consultation with its members developed and released:

- *Care That Puts People First*, a position statement on primary health care that argues for a reformed primary health care system that delivers comprehensive primary health care through general practice led multidisciplinary teams, supported by a regionalised approach to planning, coordination and delivery through Primary Health Care Organisations (PHCOs).
- *Connecting Care: A Blueprint for improving the health and wellbeing of the Australian population – the role and function of Primary Health Care Organisations*, which sets out a vision for PHCOs and provides the details to support their implementation in the Australian health system.

Key announcements to date

The Australian Government must now deliver on over two years of reviews. The Prime Minister has recently made a number of announcements relating to the Government's plan to reform Australia's health system and subsequently a number of reforms have been agreed with the state and territory governments.

DATE	KEY REFORM ACTIVITY/ANNOUNCEMENT
3 March	<p>Establishment of a National Health and Hospitals Network</p> <p>The Prime Minister announced <i>A National Health and Hospitals Network (NHHN) for Australia's Future</i> as the first stage of the Federal Government's National Health Reform Plan. This was the Government's first major policy announcement in response to the three major health reviews it commissioned.</p> <p>Key reform announcements included the Commonwealth's intention to become the dominant funder for public hospitals, to establish a national network of hospitals comprised of Local Hospital Networks, and to assume full funding and policy responsibility for GP and primary health care.</p> <p>The full policy document is available at: http://www.yourhealth.gov.au/internet/yourhealth/publishing.nsf/Content/home</p>
15 March	<p>Funding for additional GP and specialist training places</p> <p>The Prime Minister announced \$632 million to deliver an additional 5,500 new training places for general practitioners and medical specialists over the next ten years and expand the Prevocational General Practice Placement Program:</p> <p>Further details: http://www.pm.gov.au/node/6571 and http://www.pm.gov.au/node/6568</p>
31 March	<p>Payments for GPs to improve the health outcomes of voluntarily enrolled diabetes patients</p> <p>The Prime Minister announced \$436 million to be provided to general practices to flexibly deliver a range of services to meet the needs of diabetic patients. Practices will be responsible for ensuring that voluntarily enrolled patients are able to access services from a wide range of health professionals and will be rewarded if their patients' health improves.</p> <p>The Government will provide payments of around \$1,200 a year on average for every enrolled patient - to cover the costs of day to day GP care and additional services-and payments of around \$10,800 a year for the average general practice, paid in part on the basis of performance in providing better care and improving health outcomes.</p> <p>Further details: http://www.pm.gov.au/node/6610</p>
12 April	<p>Establishment of primary health care organisations (PHCOs) and increased services in aged care</p> <p>The Prime Minister released the second stage of the Government's health reform plan: <i>A National Health and Hospitals Network: further investments in Australia's health</i>. This document outlines the intention of the Australian Government to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ establish PHCOs to be built from the existing General Practice Network, with the first to be established by mid 2011. ▪ Assume full policy and funding responsibility for national aged care services. Assume full responsibility for aged care in Australia ▪ Invest more in increasing services in aged care including the expansion of the Aged Care Access Initiative and increased payments to GPs to provide services to aged care homes. <p>The full policy document is available at: http://www.yourhealth.gov.au/internet/yourhealth/publishing.nsf/Content/home</p>
20 April	<p>Outcomes of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Meeting</p> <p>At the COAG meeting the Prime Minister secured a deal with all states, except Western Australia, to become the dominant funder of Australian hospitals. COAG also agreed, with the exception of Western Australia, that "<i>the Commonwealth will have full funding and policy responsibility for GP and primary health care, as defined in the National Health and Hospitals Network Agreement, including community health centres, primary mental health care, immunisation, and cancer screening programs</i>" and that "<i>the Commonwealth will build on its responsibility for general practice and primary health care with the introduction of primary health care organisations... responsible for improving integration of services and reducing access gaps so that their local community can access care that meets local needs.</i>"</p> <p>The full Communiqué and COAG agreement are available via the following links: http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2010-04-19/docs/Communique_20_April_2010.pdf</p> <p>http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2010-04-19/docs/NHHN_Agreement.pdf</p>
11 May Federal Budget	<p>Further announcements are likely in the 11 May Federal Budget about practice nurses, e-health and practice infrastructure, as well as funding for the transition of general practice networks to primary health care organisations.</p>