



Health Care Consumers' Association Inc
100 Maitland Street, Hackett ACT 2602
Phone: 02 6230 7800
Fax: 02 6230 7833
Email: adminofficer@hcca.org.au
ABN: 59698548902

Australian Government's review of the role of Medicare Locals

Submitted 18 December 2013

Contact: Darlene Cox
Executive Director
darlenecox@hcca.org.au
02 6230 7800



HCCA welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the Australian Government's review of the role of Medicare Locals.

HCCA believes Medicare Locals are moving positively towards a broader primary health care focus. Medicare Locals are demonstrating an understanding that primary health care is more than just general practice and thus have a partnership approach to the development and delivery of services to the community. We believe they are identifying the needs of the community and developing programs to meet these needs.

Medicare Locals provide the opportunity to engage with important stakeholders who have traditionally not had a seat at the table. Nursing, for example, has long played an important role in primary care. The place of nursing in our health care system continues to expand and other health care providers are also strengthening their position within the system. We look forward to a continuing integrated approach to the governance and operation of Medicare Locals, involving a wide range of clinicians from varied disciplines. In addition to the wider inclusion of clinicians, we welcome the involvement of consumers and community in the development and operation of Medicare Locals.

We strongly support the following principles which, we believe, underpin the overarching objectives of Medicare Locals:

- A holistic understanding and recognition of the multiple social determinants of health
- Equity in health care
- Community participation and control over planning and provision of health services, including corporate and clinical governance
- A focus on health promotion and disease prevention
- A balance between health promotion, preventive care and illness treatment
- Reflecting local needs with a basis of evidence and research
- An understanding of health as including wellbeing, not just the absence of disease
- Services which are locally based, affordable, acceptable, well integrated and offer a multi-disciplinary range of care from health promotion to rehabilitation
- Continuity of care for people through all levels of the health care system

The Australian Commission for Quality and Safety in Health Care supports the fact that consumer focussed organisations deliver a higher quality of care and are more efficient. Such organisations also experience higher levels of staff satisfaction and higher rates of retention. We believe the benefits of a consumer focus are shaping the development of the governance and operating models of Medicare Locals.

We believe health care reform must ensure that the needs and interests of the community are driving the primary health care agenda. One way we can be certain of the focus of health care reforms is to maintain strong community engagement in Medicare Locals. The Medicare Local Community Advisory Committee includes community members who are engaged with the needs of their area who have a range of abilities, including an understanding of primary health care. Importantly, the skill of community engagement and the capacity to represent the views of consumers is also included in the mix. It is also imperative to remember the value of lived experience in providing an insightful and meaningful consumer perspective.

We believe membership of the governing bodies of Medicare Locals provides a blend of diverse working abilities and skills, concentrating on the “big picture”, rather than only engaging in the finer operational details.

We support the strong connection between Medicare Locals and the Local Hospital Network to ease the transition between the acute setting and community based care.

We believe Medicare Locals provide a unique opportunity to move towards an integrated primary health care setting. As consumers look forward to new primary health care organisations adopting a population health model which can truly meet the needs of our community and integrate effectively and seamlessly with other human services. It is with this approach that we can finally overcome with inequities which have plagued our system for too long.