

Primary Care Partnerships

National and State Policy Context for Primary Care Partnerships

Information Resource May 2009

1. Introduction

Both in Australia and internationally, strong primary health care systems are increasingly understood as essential to tackling the challenges facing health care.¹ In Victoria, these challenges include:

- The needs of an ageing population.
- The increase of chronic and complex conditions and avoidable hospital admissions.
- The rising costs of technology and the health system.
- The widening health inequalities.
- Meeting consumer expectations for the right care at the right time, close to home.
- The need to achieve improved health outcomes across the life course for all.
- The pressures on health workforce capacity.

2. Victorian Context for Primary Care Partnerships

There are numerous strategic directions, policies and guidelines that guide the development and planning of Primary Care Partnerships in Victoria.

Primary Health Program Guidelines, Priorities and Future Directions 2009-2012

The guidelines which will be available in July 2009 and will outline the vision, priorities and future directions for primary health care in Victoria for the next 3 years. It will articulate the Primary Health Branch priorities areas, future directions and set in place guidelines for programs funded by the Primary Health Branch.

The guidelines are designed to foster transparency in decision making and to improve partnerships with the service delivery sector and the broader community. The document will be essential to the operations management, governance and staff of funded agencies. Information relevant to PCP planning and reporting will be distributed to PCPs prior to their inclusion in the overall Primary Health Program Guidelines document.

Primary Care Partnerships- Planning and Reporting 2009-2012

A new planning and reporting process has been developed which aims to assist PCPs in planning and partnerships building and in strengthening the accountability that PCP member agencies have to each other and to DHS.

Previously PCPs were required to develop a 3 year Community Health Plan (CHP). In order to better reflect the maturity and directions that PCPs are taking in delivering service system reform, the CHP will be replaced with a 3 year Strategic Plan for the period 2009-2012. Responsibilities of PCP partners will be reflected in the PCP Strategic Plan to deliver reforms in service coordination, integrated health promotion and integrated chronic disease management. Conversely, partner agency strategic plans should reflect their roles and responsibilities under the PCP strategic plan.

¹ For example, the recent *World Health Organisation's report, Primary Health Care: Now More Than Ever*, calls for a return to primary health care to help ailing health systems deliver better performance and equity. The report found that when countries at the same level of economic development are compared, those where health care is organized around the tenets of primary health care produce a higher level of health for the same investment. The report details how health systems can ensure health equity by contributing to universal access, as well as social health protection and service delivery reforms to reorganise health around people's needs.

Reporting against the CHP had taken the form of the Community Health Plan Implementation Agreement (CHPIA). This will be replaced with a series of reports that measure performance of PCPs and demonstrate the impact PCPs are having in delivering reform across service coordination, integrated health promotion and integrated chronic disease management. Qualitative data will be obtained through case studies.

Primary Care Partnerships Strategy Strategic Directions (Department of Human Services, 2004)

Victoria's Primary Care Partnership Strategy was launched to improve the health and wellbeing of people using primary health care services and to reduce unnecessary use of hospital, medical and residential services.

The key priorities for Primary Care Partnerships are:

1. Partnership development.
2. Integrated health promotion.
3. Service coordination.
4. Integrated chronic disease management.

Further information is available at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/pcps/about/index.htm#strategy>

2.1 Integrated Health Promotion

Integrated health promotion in Primary Care Partnerships is focused on health promotion activities incorporated into the role of Primary Care Partnerships and its partner agencies. Integrated health promotion means agencies in neighbouring areas are working together to tackle priority health and well-being issues within their own community.

Health Promotion Priority Setting for 2007-2012 (Department of Human Services, 2007 & 2008)

The PCP health promotion work should be focused on one or more of the following seven health promotion priorities:

1. Promoting physical activity and active communities
2. Promoting accessible and nutritious food
3. Promoting mental health and wellbeing
4. Reducing tobacco-related harm
5. Reducing and minimising harm from alcohol and other drugs
6. Safe environments to prevent unintentional injury
7. Sexual and reproductive health

Further information is available at: http://www.health.vic.gov.au/pcps/hp/priority_setting.htm

Municipal Public Health Plans (MPHP)

Under amendments to the Health Act, councils are required to prepare a Municipal Public Health Plan (MPHP) within 12 months of the last council general elections. The Department of Human Services have consulted with the Municipal Association of Victoria on advice to councils, and suggests that as far as practicable councils should prepare their new MPHP or amend their existing plan to ensure consistency with new requirements by 29 November 2009. Plans will cover the period 2009-2013. A fact sheet outlining the additional requirements is available from http://www.health.vic.gov.au/phwa/downloads/municipal_health_plan.pdf.

Environments for Health – Municipal Public Health Planning Framework (Department of Human Services et al, 2001)

Environments for Health provides a framework for planning that considers the impact on health and wellbeing of factors originating across any or all of the built, social, economic, and natural environments. An introduction to Environments for Health for primary and community health agencies is available to provide an overview of its relationship with the Integrated Health Promotion Resource Kit.

Further information is available at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/localgov/mphpfr/index.htm>

2.2 Service Coordination

Service coordination reform aims to place consumers at the centre of service delivery - ensuring that they have access to the services they need, opportunities for early intervention and health promotion and improved health outcomes. The role of Primary Care Partnerships is to facilitate service coordination by encouraging agencies to come together to agree on how they will coordinate their services so that consumers experience a health system that works together.

Better Access to Services: A Policy and Operational Framework (Department of Human Services, 2001)

Better Access to Services provides a guide to achieving better coordination of services as part of the Primary Care Partnership Strategy. The Better Access to Services framework supports agencies to work together so that, from the consumer's perspective, services appear integrated and are easier to access and navigate. It describes the following underpinning principles of service coordination activities:

- A central focus on consumers.
- Partnerships and collaboration.
- The social model of health.
- Competent staff.
- A duty of care.
- Protection of consumer information.
- Engagement of other sectors.

Further information is available at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/pcps/publications/access.htm>

2.3 Integrated Chronic Disease Management

Integrated chronic disease management is the provision of person-centred care in which health services work with each other and with the client (and/or their carer) with a chronic illness to ensure coordination, consistency and continuity of care for clients over time and through the different stages of their condition.

Revised Chronic Disease Management Program Guidelines for Primary Care Partnerships and Community Health Services (Department of Human Services, 2008)

A chronic disease management approach should aim to demonstrate improved health outcomes and quality of life for people with chronic disease. The objectives of integrated chronic disease management are to:

- Slow the rate of disease progression (in the context of the person's clinical condition) while maximising their health and wellbeing within the community.
- Improve access to quality integrated multidisciplinary care across the care continuum.
- Facilitate client and carer empowerment through self-management programs and approaches.
- Promote and encourage protective behaviours (such as healthy eating and physical activity).
- Actively engage GPs as part of a multidisciplinary coordinated approach, including the development of written care plans.
- Reduce inappropriate demands on the acute health care system.
- Demonstrate the contribution primary health care services and PCP strategy can make to the care and management of people with chronic disease.

Further information is available at:

http://www.health.vic.gov.au/communityhealth/downloads/cdm_program_guidelines.pdf

2.4 Other Policies

Victorian Mental Health Reform Strategy 2009-2019 (Department of Human Services)

Because mental health matters, the Victorian Mental Health Reform Strategy 2009-2019 was officially launched in March 2009 by the Hon. Lisa Neville, Minister for Mental Health. This paper outlines a new vision for Victoria's mental health services and proposed a significant reform agenda involving a whole of government approach. Key elements for change include prevention, early intervention, recovery and social inclusion.

Further information is available at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/reformstrategy/index.htm>

Strategic Framework for Paediatric Services in Victoria (Department of Human Services)

A Strategic Framework for Paediatric Services in Victoria is the first phase of the project to establish Paediatric Clinical Networks.

The framework will detail the vision and principles to guide the future development of paediatric health services in Victoria. This framework will guide alignment of paediatric health services with children's services across both state and local government, as well as communities, including schools. The need for increased alignment of paediatric health services with all children's services is important to increase the impact of early intervention for lifelong health.

Further information is available at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/clinicalnetworks/paediatric.htm>

Taking Action on Problem Gambling Strategy (Department of Justice, 2006)

Taking Action on Problem Gambling describes a five year strategy that sets out a broad framework to guide the development and implementation of the Victorian Government's strategy to combat problem gambling in Victoria. This includes specific information about PCPs.

Further information is available at:

<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/DOJ+Internet/Home/Gambling+and+Racing/Problem+Gambling/JUSTICE+-+Taking+Action+on+Problem+Gambling>

Victorian Government Drought Support Initiatives (Department of Primary Industries, 2008)

The Victorian Government announced a number of new drought initiatives on Monday 13 October, 2008. This includes drought health and community support to protect and promote the mental health and wellbeing of rural communities experiencing drought and rural change.

Further information is available at:

<http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/dpi/nrenfa.nsf/LinkView/CA9C76D589B7A3C6CA2573840014BBE6C5C1899E958127624A256B520005C2A1>

Information on the role of Primary Care Partnerships in past 'Tackling Mental Health' drought initiatives is available at: http://www.health.vic.gov.au/pcps/publications/drought_pcp.htm

Vulnerable Youth Framework (Department of Human Services et al, forthcoming)

A Vulnerable Youth Framework is being developed by several Victorian Government Departments to guide and strengthen action across state and local government and communities, including schools, to better respond to the needs of vulnerable young people. This includes:

- ensuring that vulnerable young people and their families get help when and where they need it
- creating a well-planned and coordinated localised youth service system designed to strengthen vulnerable young people, their families and communities
- assisting the education sector to remove barriers so that vulnerable young people can receive an education or actively participate in other training or employment opportunities
- focusing on reducing disadvantage and creating healthy and sustainable communities.

Further information is available at:

<http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/youth-services/vulnerable-youth-framework>

3. The National Reform Agenda

The Commonwealth Government's health reform agenda includes a number of reviews and forthcoming strategies that will impact on PCPs in Victoria.

National Primary Health Care Strategy

The aims of a national primary health care strategy are to better tackle the health challenges of the 21st century and provide a road map for the future direction of primary health care in Australia. The priorities identified for the national strategy include:

- Better rewarding prevention.
- Promoting evidence-based management of chronic disease.
- Supporting patients with chronic disease to manage their condition.
- Supporting the role GPs play in the health care team.
- Addressing the growing need for access to other health professionals, including practice nurses and allied health professionals like physiotherapists and dieticians.
- Encouraging a greater focus on multidisciplinary team-based care.

Further information is available at:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/Primary+Health+Strategy-1>

National Health and Hospital Reform Commission Health Reform Plan

The Commonwealth Government has established a National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission to provide advice on performance benchmarks and practical reforms to the Australian health system which could be implemented in both the short and long term, to address these challenges.

One key task is to provide a long-term health reform plan by June 2009, which will provide sustainable improvements in the performance of the health system. As such, the Commission has invited a range of people to develop short discussion papers on possible reforms, including the primary health care sector.

Further information is available at: <http://www.nhhrc.org.au/internet/nhhrc/publishing.nsf/Content/terms-of-reference>

National Preventative Health Taskforce

The National Preventative Health Taskforce was established to provide evidence-based advice to governments and health providers on preventative health programs and strategies, focusing on obesity, tobacco and the excessive consumption of alcohol.

The deliverables for 2008-2009 are to provide the Commonwealth Government with advice on the framework for Preventative Health Partnerships (between the Commonwealth and the State and Territories) and to develop a National Preventative Health Strategy.

Further information is available at: <http://www.preventativehealth.org.au/>

Review of the Medicare Benefit Schedule Primary Care Items

A review of the Medicare Benefits Schedule primary care items is being undertaken by the Department of Health and Ageing with a focus on reducing red tape for doctors, simplifying the Medicare schedule, and giving more support to prevention.

Further information is available at: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr08-nr-nr096.htm>

Closing the Gap between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians

The Commonwealth Government's budget for 2008-09 included 'Closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians' as a national priority.

Targets have been set for closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational attainment and employment outcomes.

Further information is available at: http://www.budget.gov.au/2008-09/content/ministerial_statements/html/index_indigenous.htm

4. The Victorian Context

4.1 Key Victorian Social Policies

At the highest level of Victorian social policy, Primary Care Partnerships are guided by two major policies.

Growing Victoria Together (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2001 & 2005)

Growing Victoria Together commits the government to a vision for Victoria to 2010 and beyond under five headings: thriving economy, quality health and education, healthy environment, caring communities and vibrant democracy. The specific goal of providing high quality, accessible health and community services will be measured by improvements in the health of Victorians, improvements in the wellbeing of young children, reduced emergency, elective and dental waiting times and increased consumer confidence in health and community services.

Further information is available at: <http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/CA256D8000265E1A/page/Growing+Victoria+Together!OpenDocument&1=30-Growing+Victoria+Together~&2=~&3=~>

A Fairer Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2005, 2006, 2007 & 2008)

A Fairer Victoria, the government's social policy statement, establishes a framework to address disadvantage by developing and implementing innovative approaches to service delivery. The priorities for 2008 include:

- Getting the best start: early years support for children and families most at risk.
- Improving education and helping people into work: reducing educational inequality, supporting young people at risk and reducing barriers to workforce participation.
- Improving health and wellbeing: reducing health inequalities and promoting wellbeing.
- Developing liveable communities: strengthening neighbourhoods and local communities.

Further information is available at:

<http://www.dvc.vic.gov.au/web14/dvc/dvcmain.nsf/printview/RWPBA66A032F874AC59CA2572D00026A891>

Victoria: A Better State of Health (Department of Human Services, 2005)

Victoria: A Better State of Health outlines a high level vision for health care with directions on how governments and citizens need to work together to deliver a sustainable health system. Key themes are evolving service models, increasing patient focus, more multi-disciplinary team-based approaches and the need for services and their workforces to adapt.

Further information is available at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/archive/archive2008/betterstate/better-state-health.pdf>

Next Steps in Australian Health Reform (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2008)

In Next Steps in Australian Health Reform, the Victorian Government proposes an agenda for national health reform based on the following four goals for the health of Australians:

1. Australians are fit and healthy.
2. Australians receive the right care in the Community.
3. Australians receive high quality specialised care.
4. Australians have a sustainable and fair health system.

It argues that health reform is a national issue which needs a national solution and that Australia's federal system (through mechanisms such as the Council of Australian Governments – or COAG) offers the best prospects for moving forward with national health reform in an efficient, productive and responsible way.

Further information is available at:

[http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/CA256D800027B102/Lookup/NextStepsInAustralianHealthReform/\\$file/94708469.pdf](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/CA256D800027B102/Lookup/NextStepsInAustralianHealthReform/$file/94708469.pdf)

Rural Directions for a Better State of Health (Department of Human Services, 2005)

Rural directions for a better state of health is the Victorian Government's plan for sustaining a contemporary health system in rural and regional areas, providing high quality and appropriate health services in the best setting, as close as possible to where people live. The strategy outlines three major directions for the health system:

1. Promote the health & wellbeing of rural Victorians.
2. Foster a contemporary health system and models of care for rural Victoria.
3. Strengthen and sustain rural health services.

Further information is available at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ruralhealth/hservices/directions.htm>

5. Other Relevant Policies

In addition to the national and state government strategic and policy documents described, there are a number of other policies relevant to the future direction of Primary Care Partnerships.

5.1 National Strategies and Policies

Australian Better Health Initiative

Further information is available at:

<http://www.measureup.gov.au/internet/abhi/publishing.nsf/Content/factsheet-abhi>

GP Superclinics National Program Guide (Department of Health and Ageing, 2007/08)

Further information is available at: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/pacd-gpsuperclinics-programguide#intro>

Healthy mouths, healthy lives: Australia's national oral health plan 2004-2013 (National Advisory Committee on Oral Health, 2004)

Further information is available at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/dentistry/publications/oralhealth.htm>

National chronic disease strategy (National Health Priority Action Council, 2005)

Further information is available at: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/pq-ncds-strat>.

5.2 Victorian Strategies and Policies

Aboriginal Health Promotion and Chronic Care (Department of Human Services, 2005)

Further information is available at: http://www.health.vic.gov.au/communityhealth/aboriginal_health.htm

Best Start Guidelines 2005 (Department of Human Services, 2005)

Further information is available at: <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/beststart/index.htm>

Better Skills, Best Care – Workforce Design Strategy (Department of Human Services, 2005)

Further information is available at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/workforce/skills.htm>

Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2008)

Further information is available at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/blueprint2008/thepaper.htm>

Care in Your Community – A Planning Framework for Integrated Ambulatory Health Care (Department of Human Services, 2006)

Further information is available at:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ambulatorycare/careinyourcommunity/index.htm>

Community Health Services – Creating a Healthier Victoria (Department of Human Services, 2004)

Further information is available at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/communityhealth/publications/chs.htm>

Doing It With Us Not For Us: Participation Policy 2006-09 (Department of Human Services, 2006)

Further information is available at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/consumer/pubs/doing.htm>

DHS Clinical Governance Framework (Department of Human Services, 2008)

Further information is available at: available at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/>

DHS Cultural Diversity Guide (Department of Human Services, 2004)

Further information is available at: <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/multicultural/html/cultdivguide.htm>

General Practice Position Statement (Department of Human Services, 2007) and the General Practitioners in Community Health Services Strategy (Department of Human Services, 2004-08)

Further information is available at: http://www.health.vic.gov.au/communityhealth/gps/position_statement.htm

Go For Your Life Strategic Plan 2006-2010 (Department of Human Services, 2006)

Further information is available at:

<http://www.sport.vic.gov.au/web9/dvcsrv.nsf/allDocs/RWP800107D85B101779CA25712000283EC3?OpenDocument>

HealthSmart: Victoria's Whole-of-Health Information and Communication Strategy (Department of Human Services, 2003)

Further information is available at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/healthsmart/index.htm>

Improving Victoria's Oral Health (Department of Human Services, 2007)

Further information is available at:

http://www.health.vic.gov.au/dentistry/publications/improve_oralhealth.htm

Hospital Admission Risk Program – Chronic Disease Management Guidelines (Department of Human Services)

For further information is available at:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/harp-cdm/guidelines.htm>

Integrated Health Promotion: A Better Way to Better Health (Department of Human Services, 2005)
Further information is available at: http://www.health.vic.gov.au/pcps/downloads/publications/ihrprt_jul05.pdf

Integrated Health Promotion Resource Kit (Department of Human Services, 2003 & 2008)
Further information is available at:
http://www.health.vic.gov.au/healthpromotion/resources_links/integrated.htm

Metropolitan Health Strategy (Department of Human Services, 2003)
Further information is available at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/metrohealthstrategy/index.htm>

Neighbourhood Renewal (Department of Human Services, Numerous)
Further information is available at: <http://www.neighbourhoodrenewal.vic.gov.au/home>

Refugee Health and Wellbeing Action Plan (Department of Human Services, 2005)
Further information is available at: http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/multicultural/html/refugee_action.htm

Small Rural Health Services (Department of Human Services, 2003 & 2005)
Further information is available at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ruralhealth/hservices/small.htm>

Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (Department of Justice, 2006)
Further information is available at:
<http://www.equalopportunitycommission.vic.gov.au/human%20rights/the%20victorian%20charter%20of%20human%20rights%20and%20responsibilities/default.asp>

Victorian Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy Stage 2: 2006-10 (Department of Human Services, 2006)
Further information is available at: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/vwhp/wellbeing/index.htm>

6. Primary Health Care Policy and Research Updates

There are a number of useful websites that can provide updates on Australian and international primary health care policy and research. It is possible to subscribe to a regular email bulletin with the following organisations:

Australian Policy Online
Further information is available at: <http://www.apo.org.au>

The Primary Health Care Research and Information Service
Further information is available at: <http://www.phcris.org.au>

The Primary Health Weekly Bulletin
Further information is available at: http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/rrhacs/ph_bulletin/