



National Primary Health Care Partnership position on regional Primary Health Care Organisations¹

- Australia's primary health care system should support access to well integrated quality care focused on enhancing regional population health outcomes through a system that supports national leadership and local responsiveness.
- The Australian Government should assume responsibility for all policy and funding for primary health care (PHC) to ensure greater coordination and accountability, promote efficiency and reduce duplication.
- A network of regional Primary Health Care Organisations (PHCOs) should be responsible for population health planning to best meet the needs of local communities and to ensure the delivery of integrated, comprehensive PHC services within a system that supports prevention, health promotion, the provision of multi-disciplinary care and addressing health inequities.
- PHCOs will provide a fundamental building block in a reformed health system that emphasises the role of primary health care. The establishment of PHCOs should be pursued as an important early development in the implementation of the national health reform agenda.
- There should be no reduction or interruption of primary health care services for communities as a result of the introduction of PHCOs.

Roles and functions

- The key role of PHCOs should be to drive improvements in the health and wellbeing of local populations through planning, coordinating, funding, developing and, potentially, commissioning and/or delivering comprehensive primary health care services.
- PHCOs should be charged with:
 - population health and service planning
 - ensuring access to PHC services that meet community need, including through addressing service gaps
 - identifying and addressing health inequalities in consultation with community and other stakeholders
 - engaging the full spectrum of primary health care professionals and community services for a multidisciplinary approach to care
 - developing and supporting the primary health care workforce, including through appropriate education, training and recruitment initiatives
 - contributing regional service solutions to promote population health and help manage and control overall health care costs
 - facilitating consumers access to care that is coordinated across primary health care providers and between primary and secondary/tertiary care

¹ The National Primary Health Care Partnership is a collaboration of 20 peak health organisations representing over 100,000 frontline health professionals working in the primary health care sector and health consumer. A full list of partnership organisations is provided in *Appendix 1*.

- facilitating the adoption of eHealth solutions across the spectrum of primary health care professions and between primary and secondary/tertiary care providers
- ensuring continuous improvement of service and program quality through effective use of quality data.
- The scope of role for PHCOs should extend over time beyond primary care to embrace a more comprehensive primary health care approach, including a health promotion and prevention focus that considers and addresses key social determinants of health through collaboration with social care services and community development organisations.

Governance, partnerships and engagement

- PHCOs must be supported by governance and engagement structures that:
 - reflect a skills based approach to corporate governance that encompasses critical expertise required to govern entities of this nature
 - recognise an understanding of the primary health care industry as an essential skill that must be adequately represented in the corporate governance structure
 - recognise the central role of the consumer and community
 - incorporate robust clinical governance arrangements that recognise the spectrum of health professionals working in primary health care (including medical, nursing, pharmacy and allied health professionals).
- Effective consultative and engagement strategies should ensure ongoing clinical, consumer, community and other stakeholder input into PHCO strategic direction and decisions about planning and provision of services.
- In delivering against their objectives it will be essential for PHCOs to partner with a range of agencies, including public and private primary health care providers and services, health professional associations, community pharmacy, aged care services, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, and education and training stakeholders.

Size

- PHCO size should balance scale and resources for efficient service delivery with capacity for local community and stakeholder engagement. Factors such as geography, projected population growth and existing health outcomes should be considered alongside existing population size.

Accountability and performance

- PHCOs must be accountable to the Australian Government and the local community for measurable outcomes through a national performance, improvement and business excellence framework. A national agency should be tasked with providing direction and support to PHCOs to meet these pre-determined standards to ensure consistent and high quality performance.
- Consumers must be amongst the key stakeholders engaged in determining the criteria and processes for monitoring and assessing the performance of PHCOs.
- A robust complaints mechanism must form part of each PHCO's accountability framework.
- Review and evaluation of PHCO performance should be community driven and publicly reported.

Appendix 1: National Primary Health Care Partnership Organisations

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| Allied Health Professions Australia | Consumers Health Forum |
| Audiology Australia | Dietitians Association of Australia |
| Australian Association of Social Workers | Optometrists Association Australia |
| Australian Association for Exercise Physiologists | Occupational Therapy Australia |
| Australian Diabetes Educators Association | Pharmaceutical Society of Australia |
| Australian General Practice Network | Royal College of Nursing Australia |
| Australian Podiatry Council | Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia |
| Australian Physiotherapy Association | Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health |
| Australian Psychological Society | Speech Pathology Australia |
| Australian Practice Nurse Association | The Pharmacy Guild of Australia |