

FEDERAL ELECTION 2019

Western Victoria Primary Health Network **KEY MESSAGES:** **All Australians need accessible and affordable health care**

INTRODUCTION

All Australians are entitled to a secure, effective, accessible, equitable and affordable healthcare system focused on quality outcomes.

This is especially critical for those whose needs are currently not well supported, such as First Nations peoples, people living in rural and remote Australia, people on low incomes and people with chronic disease and mental illness.

Western Victoria PHN strongly supports general practice as the cornerstone of primary health care in our communities.

The Commonwealth Government plays a critical role in supporting the healthcare sector and we call on all parties to commit to equity in health services, sustainable funding and to a healthy Australia with a strong and affordable health system that meets the needs of all Australians.

Primary Health Networks are well established local health system leaders whose role is critical to building and integrating our health system - right care, right place, right time.

GENERAL BACKGROUND ON PRIMARY HEALTH NETWORKS

There are 31 Primary Health Networks across Australia. Primary Health Networks:

- provide a nationally consistent infrastructure for health care solutions design and implement support at the local level.
- are well placed to provide leadership and support key partners on shared health priority areas to improve equity, access and health outcomes.
- work closely with general practitioners (GPs), pharmacists and other primary care providers to build health workforce capacity and provide the highest quality standard of care through practice support activities.
- work collaboratively to integrate health services at the local level to create a better experience for patients as they navigate the health system, increasing value, reducing waste and eliminating service duplication.
- provide integrated, co-designed place based solutions.

Ballarat

101 Drummond St Nth
Ballarat 3350
Tel: 03 5331 6303

Geelong

131 Myers St
Geelong 3220
Tel: 03 5222 0800

Horsham

81 Hamilton St
Horsham 3400
Tel: 03 5381 1756

Warrnambool

Bayside City Plaza
24-36 Fairy Street
Warrnambool 3280
Tel: 03 5564 5888

Together with our partners and communities, Western Victoria PHN identifies priority health care needs, improves access through government funding, and co-designs localised solutions to improve health care systems across western Victoria.

www.westvicphn.com.au

KEY MESSAGES

Equitable health care services for everyone

- Dedicated funding should be allocated across all key health care areas to improve provision of **services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people both delivered by community and safely through the mainstream system.**
- Mental ill-health is a large and complex issue. Western Victoria PHN wants to see **increased and ongoing funding for services** across the spectrum for individuals who are suffering severe and enduring mental illness to early intervention and prevention strategies, suicide prevention and support for children, young people and older Australians.

Longer term funding needed

- Western Victoria PHN's role as a **regional commissioner should be strengthened** through long-term joint planning and commissioning in **tripartite agreements** (Australian Government, COAG and PHNs), reducing the use of funding on a project basis.
- Short-term funding contracts undermines the ability of Western Victoria PHN to plan, coordinate and effect long-term change.
- Pooled funding with the state and territories would **reduce fragmentation**, and support patients to **access the right level of care.**
- There is a need to unlock the potential for **comprehensive, coordinated, team-based services**, through funding models that shift away from the current fee-for-service arrangements to pooled funding arrangements that focus on patient health outcomes as the priority.

Technology for the future

- The Commonwealth Government funding model should expand the **use of technology, team-based care, telemedicine and telehealth consultations** for more flexible and responsive care and to ensure hard to reach patients have equity in access

Local workforce in rural and remote areas

- Western Victoria PHN region includes large sections of rural and remote areas and an adequate **health care workforce** to cover these areas can be difficult to achieve.
- The Commonwealth Government must **support initiatives and funding** to help achieve equity with health care, and work together with PHNs, rural and regional service providers and Aboriginal communities to optimise health outcomes and access to primary health care services in rural and remote communities.

Farming communities

- Western Victoria PHN region includes large tracts of farmland and pastoral properties that are the backbone of our country and support our way of life. These farming communities, and the families who operate them, often experience the vagaries of environmental and natural disaster events – from drought, fires and flooding. There are also hardships such as diseased livestock and infestations, human injuries and mental ill-health including suicide and depression.
- The Commonwealth Government funding model needs to recognise the impact of such hardships on farming families and communities and **better fund health care for farming communities.**

Out of pocket health care expenses

- Out of pocket health care expenses are stopping some people to seek health care. Dedicated **funding should be allocated across all key health care areas to help minimise** any out of pocket expenses for individuals who cannot afford to pay.

More emphasis on prevention

- **Prevention** and early intervention are key to containing costs in the health care system and better patient outcomes. The funding of health care needs to be re balanced towards prevention and early intervention.
- **Preventive care should be the foundation** of Commonwealth Government health policy. Greater investment in prevention, rather than tertiary level care is needed.
- Preventive health measures should **take into account the social determinants of health**, and support partnerships and engagement with community and social service providers.

A better system for dental care in Australia

- **Good oral health is important for general health and wellbeing.** The current model of public dental services in Victoria, with its focus on treatment, is demonstrably less cost-effective than a preventive approach to oral health care. There is a need for change to break the cycle of poor oral health among eligible people.
- The Commonwealth Government funding model needs to recognise the impact of timely oral health care and **increase funding for oral health prevention and support and planning for good public dental health.**

Better aged care resourcing and funding

- **There are many gaps in the provision of quality primary care to older people.** This includes better care for people with dementia, for those in residential aged care facilities and individuals on Home Care Packages.
- We urge the Commonwealth Government to **better resource** home care packages, to focus on establishing nurse practitioners within aged care services and to review staff/resident ratios in aged care facilities. We also recommend **better After Hour access to GPs** in residential aged care service facilities.

Palliative care needs growing

- Palliative care needs in Australia continue to increase as our community profile ages. We need to plan today for this increase and put in place person and family-centred, accessible, flexible and responsive palliative care.
- We urge the Commonwealth to **invest in a funding strategy** that will ensure palliative care is recognised as a National Health Priority by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).
- We also call on the Commonwealth to **develop a palliative care workforce strategy** that includes a focus on the important primary health care roles of GPs, nurses, aged care staff, community pharmacy, allied health and other health professionals in palliative care support.