“An effective strategy is as much about an ongoing interactive process as it is the creation of a strategic plan”

Kiel & Nicholson, 2010

Discussion Paper - A Message from the CEO

Thank you for engaging with us as we think about our priorities over the next few years. This paper provides a brief reminder of the role and aims of Primary Heath Networks, and poses questions for your thoughtful consideration.

We appreciate you taking the time to review and consider where you would like us to focus our efforts.

Leanne Beagley 14.8.17

What do Primary Health Networks do?

In 2015 the Australian Government established the new system of Primary Health Networks (PHNs) across Australia (replacing Medicare Locals and before that Divisions of General Practice). The key objectives for PHNs are to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of health services for patients, particularly those at risk of poor health outcomes, and to improve coordination of care to ensure patients receive the right care in the right place at the right time. PHNs do not deliver health care services directly to individuals.

Further to this, the Australian Government set six key national health priorities for targeted work by all PHNs. These are:

1. Mental health
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health
3. Population health
4. Health workforce
5. eHealth
6. Aged care

Primary care engagement teams are responsible for promoting the development and implementation of primary care systems that improve integration and coordination in primary care services. PHN programs that support primary care include, but are not limited to, preparation for accreditation, digital health, HealthPathways and continuing professional development to meet patient and practice needs. PHNs also provide education and networking opportunities for primary care providers that address local needs.

How is the performance of PHNs assessed?

The performance of all PHNs is assessed by the Australian Government through data collection to support the national Headline Performance Indicators. This includes:

- Reduction of potentially preventable hospital admissions;
- Increased childhood immunisation rates;
- Increased mental health treatment rates; and
- Increased cancer screening rates.
Western Victoria Primary Health Network

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.

Western Victoria PHN is a not for profit organisation, governed by a skills-based board. We have four regional centres in Ballarat, Geelong, Horsham and Warrnambool but reaching out across all the communities in western Victoria. Strong rural and regional connections are driven through local offices as well as through local community and clinical councils.

Strategic Plan

The development of an organisational strategy is critical for Western Victoria PHN, as it moves from transition to a consolidation phase. There are significant opportunities for the PHN to actively integrate the service system at a local and delivery level.

Aspex Consulting has been engaged by Western Victoria PHN to support the organisation in the development of its strategic plan. As part of the process, the views of stakeholders will be sought through team discussions, an online survey and workshops at the four regional centres of the Western Victoria PHN catchment as well as a special workshop with our eight advisory councils.

This discussion guide has been prepared to provide the context for consultations. It is intended to stimulate discussion with regards to Western Victoria PHN’s current services, and identify priority areas for the strategic plan.

There may be other matters that are important to different stakeholders that can, and should, be raised in the context of the development of the plan. In addition, written comments can be submitted to:

peter.nagel@aspexconsulting.com.au
Role

In addition to supporting primary care providers as they deliver care within the community, a key function of all PHNs, including the Western Victoria PHN, is understanding the health needs of a local population and then commissioning services and initiatives to shift the focus of human, financial and place-based resources to the identified areas of greatest need.

- What is your own interpretation of Western Victoria PHN’s role?
- How well is Western Victoria PHN currently performing its role?
- Are there aspects of the Western Victoria PHN role that should change? How and Why?

Issues and Challenges

Although Primary Health Networks do not directly deliver services to individuals, they are faced with significant challenges to ensure quality ‘patient-centred care’ is consistently delivered in the most cost-effective and efficient manner.

To address the health needs of the population, PHNs are required to work closely with health service providers, listen to and understand the community’s priorities, plan strategies to improve accessibility, integrate existing services, ensure safety and quality of services, as well as facilitate better health promotion and improve health awareness.

- What are the current and emerging future health, demographic, social and economic issues affecting the catchment population that Western Victoria PHN should address?
- What are the current and emerging future challenges faced by primary health care providers in delivering patient-centred care?
- What are the main ways that the Western Victoria PHN can enable service providers to respond effectively to these challenges?
- Specifically, workforce issues in regional and rural areas continue to be a significant challenge. How can this situation be improved?

Priorities and Strategic Goals and Activities

The strategic plan for Western Victoria PHN must have sufficient breadth of scope to reflect the organisation’s role and purpose. To be realistic, it must also have a defined focus, targeting those areas of highest relevance and priority.

- What should be the key functions that shape the work of Western Victoria PHN? (An example of a key function is commissioning). Is the balance currently right across the key functions?
- Within each of the identified key functions, what are the most important strategic goals and activities for the next three years?
- What factors should Western Victoria PHN consider in setting priorities within these strategic goals and activities?
- How should strategic goals and activities be monitored and success measured?
Critical Success Factors and Enablers

Given the identified issues and challenges, an awareness of critical success factors and enablers is vital to achieving the outcomes sought by Western Victoria PHN’s strategy.

- What are Western Victoria PHN’s strengths? What unique capabilities and resources does it possess? How can these be strengthened or better utilised?
- What are Western Victoria PHN’s main weaknesses and what improvements can be made?
- What are the key enablers for Western Victoria PHN to ensure it can fulfil its role?
- How effectively does Western Victoria PHN engage with the community and stakeholders to fulfil its role? How can this be improved?
- Are Clinical and Community Councils able to constructively engage with the Western Victoria PHN? Are there opportunities for improvement?
- What would success for Western Victoria PHN look like in 3 years?