



THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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Draft Boundaries for Your Medicare Local

The Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) have provided to Government an independent report they have commissioned suggesting potential geographic boundaries for primary health care organisations.

Communities and health professionals now have the opportunity to comment on the boundaries suggested by the independent report commissioned by AGPN for the new primary health care organisations, to be known as Medicare Locals.

Medicare Locals are a key component of the National Health and Hospitals Network, to provide better health services for the Australian community.

Medicare Locals will be independent legal entities with strong links to local communities, health professionals and service providers, enabling them to respond more effectively to local need. Medicare Locals will continue the excellent work of the Division network and support health professionals to provide more co-ordinated care, improve access to services, and drive integration across the primary health care, hospital and aged care sectors.

They will be responsible for improving and co-ordinating GP and primary care services in local communities, as part of the Government's work to deliver health reform to provide better services and more support for Australian families. Their first task will be to improve access to after hours GP services.

The first group of Medicare Locals (around 15 organisations) will commence operation in mid 2011, with the remainder commencing in mid 2012. The first group will be drawn from the Divisions of General Practice network and where possible the remaining Medicare Locals will be drawn from those Divisions of General Practice that have the capacity to take on the roles and functions expected under the new arrangements

The work released today provides a comprehensive geographic analysis, based on local government areas, where GP and primary care services currently exist, and where other key services such as hospitals are located.

While the Australian Government acknowledges the comprehensive work of the independently commissioned report, the report does not represent a government view of the number or boundaries of Medicare Locals.

Consultation on Local Hospital Network (LHN) boundaries will also be undertaken by the States and Territories.

The Government encourages community health professionals, Aboriginal Health Services, Community Health and Members of Parliament to be involved in these discussions.

Following this initial consultation phase the Commonwealth will work with the States and Territories with the aim of producing a combined set of government endorsed LHN and Medicare Local boundaries for further consultation.

While it is likely that LHNs and Medicare Locals will share some boundaries the Government anticipates the final number of LHNs to be significantly greater than Medicare Locals.

The Government looks forward to hearing the views of the community on potential boundaries for LHNs and Medicare Locals.

Submissions on both Medicare local and Local Hospital Network boundaries can be provided via the web at www.yourhealth.gov.au/medicarelocal or in writing to the Assistant Secretary, Primary Care Practice Support Branch, MDP 1051, Department of Health and Ageing, GPO Box 9848, Canberra, ACT, 2601 up to the 30 September 2010.

The Commonwealth and States and Territories have committed to finalising and agreeing the Medicare Local Boundaries and the Local Hospital Network Boundaries by the end of 2010.

Establishing a network of Medicare Locals is part of our plan to provide better health and better hospitals across Australia. In GP and primary care, this includes:

- Doubling the number of places for doctors to train to become GPs, from 600 to 1200 a year;
- Providing support for around 4600 full-time equivalent practice nurses to work in general practice;
- Providing better access to medical care after hours and for those in aged care homes;
- More GP Super Clinics and upgrades to around 425 existing General Practices; and
- Providing more co-ordinated care for people with diabetes.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 7220