

MEDIA RELEASE

27 July 2009



Peak primary health partnership embraces achievable vision offered by the NHHRC

The National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission's recommendations to strengthen primary health care are visionary but achievable and many could prove a major win for consumers, said the National Primary Health Care Partnership (NPHCP) Chair, Claire Hewat.

"The NHHRC has acknowledged the improvements we can make to the health of the community by investing in the primary health care system" said Ms Hewat.

The NPHCP, a unique national body which brings together 19 peak health groups, has long supported investment in primary health care. It represents both consumers and more than 100,000 frontline health professionals.¹

"There is no better way to support the many Australians living with or at risk of chronic disease to manage their conditions and to reduce unnecessary hospital visits, than strengthening the primary health care system," Ms Hewat said.

She welcomed the report's recommendations to establish comprehensive primary health care centres, acknowledging the benefits for patients of being able to access a multi-disciplinary care team. "However this must be supported by IT interconnectivity for primary care providers to ensure the full care team can collaborate and to support access to team care for those living in areas where physical co-location may not be feasible. It will also require investment in building the primary health care workforce, multidisciplinary education, and in physical infrastructure to support practitioners and students" she said.

The NPHCP is in the process of developing recommendations for the Government on how primary health care centres could work in practice to best meet the care needs of Australians.

The partnership has also welcomed recommendations for primary health care funding reform and service delivery.

NPHCP member and consumer representative Mr Russell McGowan argues that single government funding for primary health care is a step toward better coordination across services and less service duplication, which can only mean a smoother journey through the system for patients.

"The regionalised approach to planning health care, recommended by the NHHRC would be another step forward for consumers. Regional planning would let our health system be more responsive to the needs of local people," said Mr McGowan.

The NPHCP encourages the Government to work in collaboration with consumers and primary health care professionals in considering the NHHRC's recommendations to strengthen the primary health system.

"It's time to realise the opportunity the primary health care system offers," Mr McGowan said.

For media interviews with Claire Hewat or Russell McGowan please contact Skye Cappuccio on 02 6228 0812 or 0431 476 259.

¹ For a complete list of members of the NPHCP please visit www.nphcp.com.au