

BETTER, SAFER CARE UPDATE

Delivering a world-leading healthcare system

Introduction

Earlier this year I released *Targeting zero, the review of hospital safety and quality assurance in Victoria*, alongside my colleague and Minister for Mental Health Martin Foley, Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kym Peake and the report's author Dr Stephen Duckett.

The report was frank in its findings of the gaps and failings that had occurred, and set out a blueprint to drive down avoidable harm in our health system.

A goal of zero avoidable harm is an ambitious target, but one we have an obligation to do everything we can to achieve. Significant work is already underway to implement these important reforms and strengthen quality and safety across our health system.

I want to thank you for all of the hard work I know you will put in to help deliver the world-class quality and safety system every Victorian expects and deserves.



Jill Hennessy

Minister for Health

The government's response *Better, Safer Care* outlines Victoria's path towards the goal of zero avoidable harm in our hospitals. This goal is underpinned by the government's commitment to a person-centred healthcare system in which care fits together around people's complex needs - with a focus on outcomes and ensuring people are active partners in their care.

The department is intensifying its efforts and fulfilling its role as system leader and system manager by setting the zero avoidable harm standard, supporting stronger leadership in hospital governance, sharing excellence across the system, and improving data and information to deliver better outcomes.

This can only be achieved by talking to and working with the staff and leadership of Victoria's hospitals and health services. This newsletter aims to keep you up to date with plans and progress and highlight opportunities to contribute.

We know we cannot begin to realise our goal without your help.

Professor Euan Wallace, chief executive, Safer Care Victoria

Dr Diane Watson, interim chief executive, Victorian Agency for Health Information

Terry Symonds, deputy secretary, Health Service Performance and Programs

Overview of *Better, Safer Care* reforms

Enhance system leadership and strengthening clinical engagement

Support Safer Care Victoria (SCV) to lead quality and safety improvement across Victorian health services by providing support via a range of new quality and safety programs and utilising the experiences of frontline clinicians through revitalised clinical networks and establishment of the Victorian Clinical Council (VCC).

Make better use of information and data

Support the Victorian Agency for Health Information (VAHI), and a range of initiatives to provide timely, high quality information that ensures the health sector and community are better informed about health services; and that health services have access to better information about their performance.

Improve sector governance

Lead a range of new governance initiatives to support the work of the Boards Ministerial Advisory Committee (BMAC), to ensure that boards are independent, skilled and effective.

Strengthen departmental oversight

Initiate new programs to enhance the role of the department as system manager in overseeing hospital patient safety and quality performance and seek funding for a range of initiatives to better support smaller rural hospitals.

Introduce a new Quality and Safety Bill into Parliament in 2017 to address a number of *Targeting zero's* recommendations that require a legislative response with a major review of the Health Service Act 1988 to follow.

These reforms will help to ensure:

Patient views and experiences are heard and shared at every point of our health system to drive continuous improvement.

Individual safety and quality success is shared and built into our statewide system.

Health services and their boards get the information and training they need to best serve their communities and provide better, safer care.

Frontline healthcare workers have a real say on how to make the system safer and lead the way on improvement and best practice.

The health service leaders of the future are identified and supported, with a focus on getting the right skills, knowledge and experience.

Data is collected, analysed and shared so the community is better informed about health services and health services receive better information about their performance.

People with mental illness, their families and carers receive access to high quality, integrated services that can provide coordinated treatment and support.

Introduction

The new organisations announced in *Better, Safer Care* will be officially established on 1 January 2017. They are working collaboratively to get up and running and designing the systems and processes to underpin this radical overhaul of quality assurance and improvement.

Information will be added regularly to the new *Better, Safer Care* [webpages](#). This includes organisation structures, which will be updated with names and key contact details as people transfer into or are recruited to these roles.

Safer Care Victoria

Safer Care Victoria, the Office for Safety & Quality Improvement, will work with health services to monitor and improve the quality and safety of care delivered across our health system with the goal of achieving zero avoidable harm. Under the leadership of Chief Executive, Professor Euan Wallace, we will work both at an individual health service and system level and will have a strong focus on listening to patients and to the frontline experiences of our clinicians to bolster our evidence-based responses and advice.

Our key roles and responsibilities

Patient experience and partnerships – responsible for increasing the involvement of patients and community stakeholders – and ensuring they have an equal voice – in safety and quality improvement activities. This team will work to support a person-centred approach to safety and quality improvement activities and develop the capacity for people to participate actively in their care.

Clinician engagement - responsible for support, engagement and coordination with clinicians to enable effective collaboration and leadership on safety and quality improvement. This includes supporting the Victorian Clinical Council and the clinical networks. This team will also work closely with the chief clinical officers within Safer Care Victoria.

Safety and quality support – responsible for monitoring quality and safety so as to support clinicians and health services to continuously improve patient care. Key activities will include sharing best practice and providing clinical governance support and resources, supporting improvement programs and leadership capability development in partnership with *Better Care Victoria*, the secretariat for which will also sit within Safer Care Victoria.

Evidence and Research – responsible for building and disseminating the knowledge base to inform safety and quality improvement in collaboration with researchers, clinicians and health services.

Progress and plans

Our early focus has been on clinical engagement. Associate Professor Christine Jorm has recently completed a scoping paper and we are grateful to the large number of clinicians and managers who contributed their time and ideas. This paper will underpin an overarching framework for improving clinician engagement at both the system level and the health service level and the development of a new policy framework for clinical networks.

Recruitment to new positions is also getting underway and you can find more detail on the [Better Safer Care webpages](#).

How you can contribute

Look out for the clinician engagement scoping paper as well as consultation on a new policy framework for clinical networks- both expected in early 2017. We will also be engaging hospitals and health services – along with patients and clinicians - in the task of strategic planning and prioritisation of our work programme. For more information, please contact director of strategy and implementation, Nicole Brady at Nicole.brady@dhhs.vic.gov.au

The Victorian Clinical Council

The Victorian Clinical Council will put clinicians and consumers front and centre to provide sustained independent leadership and authoritative advice to Government, the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria's health services on how to make the system safer and provide better care to all Victorians.

Its objectives are to:

- provide constructive advice, leadership and debate key issues of clinical significance
- be actively involved in decision-making and recommendations for change
- promote better understanding of the operating context of the Victorian health system
- be recognised for their leadership and trusted as an authoritative source of advice.

Chaired by Associate Professor Jill Sewell, a foundational meeting of the VCC was held on Wednesday 14 December to prepare for its first full meeting in February 2017. The meeting included clinical leaders from across the state and participants representing the interests of consumers. The topics discussed included activities to support the establishment of the Council and the department's approach to clinician engagement. There was enthusiastic discussion about topics the Council may wish to consider in 2017 with suggestions including clinical variability, clinician engagement, service integration, health service culture and patient and family engagement, to mention just a few.

Clinician and consumer representatives can still apply to become a member of the VCC. Go to the Victorian Government's [Get on Board website](#), contact the VCC secretariat at VCC@dhhs.vic.gov.au or call 9096 2159 for more information. Applications for all member categories close on Friday 23 December.

Victorian Agency for Health Information

The Victorian Agency for Health Information will ensure trusted and credible information is available to people in the health and community sectors to make better use of data and evidence in learning, improvement, innovation and service.

The agency will stimulate and inform improvements in care across public and private providers, strengthen local oversight of health and community services and inform Victorians about quality and safety of care in their local areas.

Dr Diane Watson has taken up the role as our interim chief executive.

The agency's responsibilities will flow across measurement of quality and outcomes for three key purposes - public reporting, oversight and service improvement. We will ensure that Victorians can access better information about care and services in their local community, that clinicians and service providers receive the information they need to provide better, safer care, and that colleagues in the department and Safer Care Victoria can focus their quality assurance and improvement activities to best effect.

To achieve this, it will be vital that the agency receives the best quality data from public and private service providers. Accordingly, we will play a crucial role in data management, standards and integrity to ensure trusted and credible information is available for service providers, clinicians and the broader community.

Our key roles and responsibilities

Clinical analytics and outcomes research – responsible for meeting the day to day information needs of Safer Care Victoria and clinical networks, and for increasing the availability of timely, high quality performance information to support improvement. This will include the development and meaningful use of key datasets such as patient reported outcome measures, patient experience and clinical registry data, as well as conducting and supporting research on factors driving quality and safety.

Management reporting and information and systems – responsible for routine performance reporting directly to health and community services. This will include routine reporting to services and clinical leaders on key indicators, including but not limited to those contained in their Statements of Priorities. It will also maintain integrated, automated and reliable information systems to support the data storage, visualisation and routine reporting needs of the agency.

Public and board reporting – responsible for reporting to patients and the public about the performance of their health system, supporting the government's commitment to transparency. It will also produce regular reports for boards to support them in exercising their governance and oversight responsibilities.

Information management and measurement – responsible for managing data held by the agency, including standards and specifications, validation and data quality and privacy and confidentiality. This includes ensuring transparency around methodologies.

Progress and plans

Safety and quality reports for the boards of large metropolitan and regional health services will be provided to chairs and CEOs in January 2017 – with reports for small regional and rural facilities in the public sector to follow soon after. We expect all public sector board members state-wide will have access to reports from February 2017, and we will be working on developing similar reports for private sector boards in the future. Reports will focus on performance agreements, patient experiences and unplanned readmissions to hospital – as well as select mortality measures.

How you can contribute

Chairs and CEOs should look out for and tell us what you think of our first quality and safety reports in early 2017. There will be opportunities to discuss them at existing forums such as the CEO Forum and the Council of Board Chairs, but you can also contact Lynda Ross, manager, public and board reporting at Lynda.ross@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

Recruitment to a number of new posts is also getting underway in the coming month and you can find more detail on the [Better Safer Care webpages](#).

Health Services Performance and Programs Division

To drive the department's renewed focus on system leadership and management, and to respond to the new bodies that have been created, the division will be renamed Health Services Policy and Commissioning in the new year, under the leadership of Terry Symonds as deputy secretary. Our remit has also expanded to include public sector residential aged care.

Our key roles and responsibilities

Policy and planning – responsible for leading and coordinating health system design and planning, policy development and implementation, and funding design. In relation to *Targeting zero*, this will include redesigning the performance assessment framework and the development of a system role delineation and framework which will be underpinned by capability frameworks for each of the clinical streams.

Commissioning, performance and regulation – responsible for commissioning and performance managing health services, supporting health service governance, allocating health service budgets and regulating the private sector. It will also develop policy and strategy for ambulance and patient transport services. This branch will support the new Boards Ministerial Appointments Committee and a strengthened boards appointment process to ensure all boards are skilled, independent and effective in upholding their governance responsibilities.

Mental health – responsible for supporting the development of mental health policy, the planning and performance of the mental health system and implementation of the 10 year mental health plan. It includes the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist and oversees the Mental Health Act (2014).

Cancer, Specialty Programs, Medical Research and International Health – responsible for cancer strategy, genetics and health technology, blood, pharmaceuticals and organ donation. It will support medical research and lead the international health engagement strategy, including promoting the Victorian system to international markets, knowledge transfer, innovation and partnerships.

Your queries - the role of regional officers

The department's restructured regional presence became effective in October 2016. The new organisational structure will:

strengthen the role of the Rural Health unit to provide oversight of health service performance and continue being the primary interface to rural and regional health services for advice, support and issue management

support the Operational Divisions to continue their work strengthening linkages between primary, community and acute health and with community services to achieve health and wellbeing outcomes.

This means that staff that were responsible for performance monitoring rural health services became part of the Rural Health Unit, which is led by Andrew Crow, and now has both centrally-based and rurally-based staff. Rural health teams will continue to be the primary point of contact including engagement and consultation across rural and regional health services. The teams also remain responsible for performance monitoring, providing advice and facilitating issue management of health services. The main change therefore is a change in reporting lines and rural health CEOs should continue to contact these staff to discuss any performance-related issues. They will also facilitate contact with key people in Safer Care Victoria and the Victorian Agency for Health Information.

Progress and Plans

Legislation

As part of a quality and safety bill that will be brought forward in 2017, the Health Services Act will be amended to extend the current board and CEO obligation for safety and quality for public health services to public hospitals. The Act will also be amended to ensure that boards have representation to 'reflect the perspective of health users' and 'experience in clinical governance'. A major review of the Act is set to commence in 2017. We will be convening a working party to help steer this review and consulting widely.

Governance

Work is well underway to appoint members of the new Boards Ministerial Appointments Committee. In preparation, work is progressing on developing and testing with board chairs a board skills matrix in line with the *Targeting zero's* recommendations. The Committee will oversee the appointments process and make recommendations to the Minister for 2017/18 board member appointments.

A well-attended forum on clinical governance was held for board members of hospitals and health services on December 2nd. An updated governance handbook, including a refreshed clinical governance framework, will be available in the new year, supported by a new program of clinical governance training sessions.

Performance management

We are currently revising the department's performance monitoring framework ready for use in 2017/18. Our aim is to create a contemporary oversight framework with a focus on outcomes – that will ensure a more consistent approach across health services and sectors, and trigger action to support improvement where appropriate. It will combine a broader set of quality indicators sourced from existing datasets with an assessment of cultural and governance risk in hospitals. We will start engaging with you to help shape the new approach in early 2017.

Role delineation

The development of a system role delineation framework for Victoria is currently being guided by the Ministerial Advisory Council for the *Statewide design, service and infrastructure plan*. Clearer delineation of roles within the system is an important foundation for statewide planning, and essential to promoting our quality and safety goals. Work is progressing on the development of a statewide approach to capability frameworks and the volume-outcomes relationship for specific treatments or services. This will support adherence to scope of practice and robust clinical governance arrangements, as recommended by *Targeting zero*. We will work closely with Safer Care Victoria to engage with the sector more widely on these issues in 2017.

Regional collaboration

We are working with rural health services to strengthen collaboration, including clinical partnerships with larger services across core clinical areas, supported by formal agreements (as per recommendation 2.8.1). The aim is to strengthen clinical governance for smaller health services and ensure they have access to the right clinical support for the services they deliver. This will ensure that where care cannot be delivered locally there are clear, seamless transitions to higher specialty care. It will also improve access to clinical governance expertise. Guidelines for these partnerships will be released in early 2017.

How you can contribute

We will be engaging with chairs, board members, managers and clinicians on these areas of work, indeed that engagement has started in some cases. Advisory groups will be formed on key pieces of work, such as the new performance assessment framework. We will also work with the Victorian Healthcare Association's Quality and Safety Special Interest Group on issues around regional collaboration in particular.

There are a number of recommendations in the *Targeting zero* report that are amenable to early action by hospitals. These are set out in the table below to assist you in considering how your organisation is best placed to response. For advice or assistance on these:

if you are public hospital or health service, please contact Nicole Tweddle, director of commissioning, performance and regulation at nicole.tweddle@dhhs.vic.gov.au

if you are a private provider, please contact Debra Sudano, assistant director – private hospitals at debra.sudano@dhhs.vic.gov.au

Targeting zero recommendations amenable to action by hospitals

Number	Recommendation
2.8.4	Summary outcomes of the various clinical audits must be reported to governance committees of each hospital on a regular basis.
2.10	That the department sets clear expectations that boards of all hospitals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have safety and quality as a substantial agenda item at every meeting. • Have a statement of ambition for achieving excellence in care, and set clear, measurable goals and timelines for achieving that ambition. • Hold CEOs to account for actions taken to improve care after safety incidents occur, including by ensuring that recommendations from reviews and root cause analyses are implemented.
2.14.2	Public hospital boards, in their next Statement of Priorities, be required to commit to develop and implement plans to educate staff about obligations to report (patient safety concerns).
3.11.2	That the department requires all public hospitals to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate that they have one independent expert on their sentinel event root cause analysis panel • Identify the individual responsible for ensuring the panel's recommendations are implemented • Provide evidence that they have implemented their panel's recommendations
4.5	That larger hospitals consider initiating a program of regular external reviews of clinical units
5.9.4	The department requires all hospitals to have an identified person who is responsible for addressing patient concerns and who is visible and accessible to patients.
5.8.3	Public hospitals must ensure all clinicians are aware of their ability and obligation to request professional interpreter services when required.

Overseeing implementation of Targeting zero recommendations

A steering committee has been established to help monitor progress and keep up the momentum.

Its membership includes: A/Prof Alex Cockram – Chief Executive, Western Health; Sophy Athan – Chair, Health Issues Centre; A/Prof Harvey Newnham - Director of General Medicine, Alfred Health; John Maher – Chair, SouthWest Healthcare; Jodie Geissler – Co-Director, Health, Human Services and NDIS, Department of Premier and Cabinet; Tom Symondson – CEO, Victorian Healthcare Association. It is chaired by Terry Symonds as deputy secretary of Health Services Policy and Commissioning and includes the chief executives of Safer Care Victoria and the Victorian Agency for Health Information.

The committee is meeting regularly and will provide updates as appropriate through this newsletter.

Engaging with you

As well as setting up advisory and working groups on specific aspects of work, we will be keeping you updated through existing forums such as the CEO Forums and the Council of Board Chairs. It is critical that we make effective use of these opportunities to hear your voices and engage you in shaping the new systems for quality assurance and improvement.

We therefore want to hear your thoughts on how we can better communicate with and engage you as health leaders through these forums - or other means - in the significant reforms that are underway.

Please share your views or ask your questions via qualitysafetyreview@dhhs.vic.gov.au or with Paula Wilton, who is leading the *Targeting zero* implementation team, on paula.wilton@dhhs.vic.gov.au

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