

Working with general practice

Department of Human Services position statement and resource guide at a glance



This document provides summary information from the *Working with general practice: Department of Human Services position statement* and *Working with general practice: Department of Human Services resource guide*. Full copies of these can be downloaded on-line at www.dhs.vic.gov.au or by calling the Primary Health Branch of the Department of Human Services on 9096 0000.

The position statement

The purpose

This position statement:

- articulates the vision of the collaborative interface between general practice¹ and the Department of Human Services
- is developed primarily for a departmental audience and, secondarily, to serve as a valuable guide for State-funded agencies and the general practice sector
- provides a framework for a strong, coordinated and consistent approach to underpin collaborative work with the general practice sector into the future
- highlights opportunities to further align State and Commonwealth agendas for health care
- provides a practical resource guide.

The vision

A strengthened collaborative interface between the Department of Human Services, State-funded services and general practice, resulting in more integrated service delivery and better health outcomes for Victorians.

The position statements

- As a key Victorian Government department with State level responsibilities for health and human services, the Department of Human Services recognises the centrality of general practice as the first point of contact for primary medical care in the Australian health system.
- The Department of Human Services, wherever practicable, will seek to bring departmental and general practice developments together to promote and enhance effectiveness and efficiency in the integration of health care in Victoria. General practice and State-funded services cannot provide the most effective health care in isolation.²
- Achieving complementarity between Victorian Government and Commonwealth Government directions in health system development is integral to achieving better health for all Victorians.
- The Department of Human Services recognises that all parties are primarily interested in the coordination of care and are committed to working in a spirit of ongoing consultation, cooperation and partnership to achieve better patient outcomes.

Putting the position statement in practice

There is a commitment to translate the position statement into practice across the department. A number of action statements related to implementing the position statement and some key commitments from branches across the department are included in the position statement.

¹ When reading this document note that 'general practice' refers to the total service/entity including GPs, practice managers, practice nurses, receptionists and other health professionals who may operate within the practice. The acronym GP is used to describe the individual general practitioner.

² Australian Government Department of Health & Ageing *Future Directions (Toolkit for Implementation) Implementing a national quality and performance system for the Divisions of General Practice Network* Commonwealth of Australia 2005

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Key messages

General practice is the primary point of health care for the majority of the community and, as such, is the gateway into the broader health system.

General practice is the provision of primary continuing comprehensive whole-patient medical care to individuals, families and their communities.³

Never has there been a time when the case for integration across the health care sector has been stronger.

Working in partnership is essential to meet the growing demand placed on services as a result of the increasing burden of chronic disease.

The current State and Commonwealth health reform agendas present timely opportunities for collaboration between the two levels of government.

The Department of Human Services and general practice both have an interest in achieving better health outcomes for Victorians.

Consumers want their general practitioners (GPs) to be aware of the range of health and community support services available, and they want their GPs to refer them appropriately to these services.⁴

The State has a particular interest in strengthening access to health care for vulnerable communities.

The Department of Human Services values highly the contribution of general practice and is committed to working in partnership with the sector to achieve better health outcomes.

General practice engagement is the logical function of Divisions of General Practice. Divisions' longstanding relationships and established trust with practices creates a firm foundation for effective engagement.⁵

In any initiative that is going to impact on general practice, ensure that Divisions of General Practice are involved at an early stage to provide input into planning and strategy.

General Practice Victoria (GPV) and individual Divisions of General Practice provide a representative role for general practice for service development at the local level. However, there are other peak organisations that also represent general practice from different perspectives.

The resource guide

An ongoing challenge for the Department of Human Services is to successfully collaborate with general practice. The resources guide is designed to assist and support department staff in developing and maintaining the strong partnerships required for successful collaboration. It brings together:

- the departments position, vision and guiding statements
- practices that support successful partnerships with general practice
- a simple checklist for getting started
- a range of case studies demonstrating how the department, State-funded services sector and general practice have worked together for better client outcomes
- additional background information on general practice and Divisions of General Practice.

Who should use this guide?

This guide is designed to be used in conjunction with the department's position statement: *Working with general practice*.

It was developed for people working within Department of Human Services, programs and regions that currently or potentially work with general practice. It also serves as a valuable resource guide for State-funded agencies and the general practice sector.

New case studies will be added regularly to the Department of Human Services website: www.health.vic.gov.au/pchttopics.

³ www.racgp.org.au/whatisgeneralpractice

⁴ Department of Human Services, *A Guide to General Practice Engagement in Primary Care Partnerships* July 2001

⁵ Bensberg, M., Sutherland, J., & Crosbie, C., 'It takes more than a practice visit—effective general practice engagement', *Australian Journal of Primary Health*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 17–21. 2007

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The resource guide: Getting started checklist

Following is a quick and easy step-by-step guide to support general practice engagement.

Step One—Quick Audit

1. Does the outcome of your work involve any change processes or action in general practice?
 Yes No Unsure
2. Will informing and involving general practice improve the quality and outcomes of your work and that of general practice?
 Yes No Unsure
3. Is there a current Commonwealth initiative or program in Divisions of General Practice that is relevant to your work?
 Yes No Unsure—check the DoHA website:
www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/Health+Priorities-1
If still unsure, then check with:
 - General Practice Partnerships Team in Primary Health Branch
 - Your Department of Human Services Divisional representative on the DHS General Practice Policy Coordination Group (*webpage under development*)Please note, the DHS Senior Medical Advisors may be able to assist you with further information.



If you answer **Yes** to any of these questions proceed to **Step Two**

Step Two—Environment Scan

1. **Check the DHS General Practice Register (accessible only by DHS staff via the DHS intranet)**
http://intranet_2.csv.au/rhacs/gp_register.htm
The register will be made more widely available to external stakeholders on the internet during 2008. Until then, contact GPV for advice www.gpv.org.au
 - Look for similar projects and have a conversation with the relevant contacts
 - Identify any Department of Human Services project partners
 - Are there opportunities for a combined approach?
 2. Look for best practice evidence relevant to your project, including case studies.
 3. Consider Commonwealth initiatives that may complement your work
www.phcris.org.au
 4. Identify the most appropriate general practice organisation to work with—see page 5 of the resource guide for list of organisations
- In most instances, this will be GPV www.gpv.org.au or your local Divisions of General Practice**



Make contact with the most appropriate general practice organisation

Step Three—Implement in partnership with general practice

Use the Practices that Support Collaboration (section 6) to guide your planning
Use the case studies (section 7) as a guide