



Healthy Queenslanders 2009-2012

Together we
can build a
better health
system

*Solutions from
General Practice Queensland*

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Executive Summary

Our Solutions for Improving the Health of Queenslanders

The Australian and Queensland health sectors are currently undergoing significant reform. The basis or need for reform recognises that some of the current and projected health outcomes¹ for the community require rethinking, action and improvement and that the health systems which underpin and determine the type and quality of health care also require action and improvement².

All reform processes identify the critical role of general practice and acknowledge that stronger integration and support for the primary care sector will impact the overall cost effectiveness and health outcomes for the entire community and health systems.

The *Chronic Disease – A Call to Action*³ paper by General Practice Queensland with input from key stakeholders and health providers gives significant structure to the future priorities of our health sector.

A strong partnership between General Practice Queensland and the Queensland Government will promote quality, integrated health provision (across the different health sectors) and better prevent illness and sustain wellness.

Our policy priorities for *Healthy Queenslanders 2009-2012* are based on two strategies:

1. Healthy Futures

2. Healthy Systems

Healthy Futures focuses on prevention and early intervention and delivering better chronic disease management strategies from general practice. Our **SOLUTIONS** are:

- Achieving healthy hearts through general practice
- Starting early, achieving a healthy weight for life
- State Wide Prevention Alliance

Healthy Systems focuses on building a stronger interface between acute care and general practice; delivering better chronic disease management strategies from general practice; supporting integration across the health sectors and multidisciplinary care; and using technology to drive better quality and integrated health systems. Our **SOLUTIONS** are:

- iHealth Care Directory - Queensland's new and comprehensive health service directory
- General Practice Liaison Officer - improving the patients' journey

Healthy Futures and **Healthy Systems** solutions involve general practice, the primary health care sector, the acute sector, consumers and the community.

Our solutions require a sustainable investment across and within all health sectors by the Queensland Government which in turn will assist the Government to deliver on its commitments associated with the Council of Australian Governments and other national health reforms.

Executive Summary

The **OUTCOMES** of our solutions will:

- **Reduce** pressures on the acute care and hospital systems by delivering more care in the community and preventing hospital readmissions
- **Integrate** systems across the primary, secondary and tertiary care settings to provide quality, coordinated care for Queenslanders
- **Deliver** general practice population based health solutions to support state and national health policies and priorities such as health promotion and prevention, chronic disease management and childhood obesity

The outcomes will create a robust Queensland health system underpinned by an enhanced general practice sector. The legacy will be better health outcomes for Queensland individuals, families and communities.

Ann Maree Liddy
Chief Executive Officer

March 2009

Achieving healthy hearts through general practice

CHALLENGES TODAY

Coronary heart disease (CHD) and stroke are major causes of mortality and morbidity in Queensland. Although CHD and stroke mortality rates have fallen over recent years, they remain 11% higher in Queensland than in other Australian states².

Cardiovascular disease absolute risk is the probability of suffering an acute cardiovascular event (eg, heart attack or stroke) in a given time period. CHD is often caused by preventable risk factors such as high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, physical inactivity, overweight and obesity, smoking and poor nutrition. Whilst people who have at least one risk factor for CHD do not necessarily have the disease, of those with CHD, nearly 90% have at least one risk factor².

The need to address cardiovascular prevention is recognised in the *National Service Improvement Framework for Heart, Stroke and Vascular Disease*⁴ which details the need for earlier identification, comprehensive primary and secondary prevention and an increased multidisciplinary approach.

OUR SOLUTIONS

General practice is best placed to identify and prevent cardiovascular disease. Cardiovascular absolute risk assessment health checks and ongoing management for people at risk is critical for early detection and management of CHD.

In addition, general practice nurses can conduct the cardiovascular health checks and manage the patient's treatment through lifestyle interventions and medication monitoring (under the supervision of a general practitioner). This will optimise resource allocation and reduce pressure within general practice.

OUTCOMES

Cardiovascular health checks through general practice will:

- **Improve** early identification and management of people at high risk of developing cardiovascular disease
- **Increase** access to timely and appropriate health services
- Improve overall health status of the population
- **Reduce** or contain health care costs resulting from cardiovascular disease prevention

SUPPORT REQUEST

Support is requested to trial general practice nurse led cardiovascular clinics to demonstrate the impact of an absolute risk approach to cardiovascular risk identification and management. The trial will be implemented in a small number of practices across Queensland divisions and in partnership with the Heart Foundation. The trial will include an extensive evaluation component including patient health outcomes and service model financial analysis.

General Practice Queensland recommends funding of \$2.5 million over 3 years to improve the early identification and prevention of cardiovascular disease in general practice.

Starting early, achieving a healthy weight for life

CHALLENGES TODAY

The prevalence of overweight and obesity has been on the increase over the past 20 years⁵. This is evidenced in the 2004-05 National Health Survey with almost 50% of the Australian adult population self reporting that they were overweight and obese⁵. The rate of overweight and obesity in Queensland is comparable to other states with 63% adult males and 51% females measured as overweight or obese in 2006². Overweight and obesity directly affects and causes the burden of chronic disease with 55% causing diabetes, 20% causing cardiovascular disease and 4% causing cancer in 2003².

There is evidence to suggest that patterns of obesity in childhood are replicated in adulthood. In the 1960s, overweight and obese children accounted for 5% of the population however in 2006 the *Healthy Kids Queensland Survey*² showed approximately 21% of 5 to 17 year olds reported being overweight or obese. In addition, overweight and obese children are prone to become overweight and obese adults, in turn increasing the burden of chronic disease on the health system as these children move towards adulthood.

Given the increase in children living with weight related concerns and the impact it has on their quality of life both now and in the future, the early identification and management of overweight and obese children is imperative.

OUR SOLUTIONS

General practice is well placed to identify overweight and obese children through their ongoing contact with families and the provision of health care, childhood immunisations and the *Healthy Kids Check*.

The *Healthy Families for Healthy Futures* program developed by Osborne GP Network Ltd has been successfully implemented since 2006. Evaluations of

this program show improvements among participating children and families with 72% reporting a positive lifestyle change and 53% reporting a change in eating and physical activity behaviours. The program involves an initial health assessment and referral to the program by the family's general practitioner. Parents and children then attend two workshops facilitated by an Accredited Practising Dietician and a Clinical Psychologist. These workshops include education, skill development and behaviour change strategies that help families achieve healthy lifestyle habits. The program includes a 6 and 12 month follow up review to compare physical activity, eating habits and behavioural changes.

OUTCOMES

A childhood obesity program through general practice will:

- **Identify** children at risk of poor health outcomes related to overweight and obesity
- **Improve** health literacy for overweight and obese children and their families
- **Decrease** prevalence of childhood obesity and associated disease burden

SUPPORT REQUEST

Support is requested to trial a division led, general practice intervention program for families of children with weight concerns based on the successful *Healthy Families for Healthy Futures* program developed by the Osborne GP Network.

General Practice Queensland recommends funding of \$1.0 million over 3 years.

State Wide Prevention Alliance

CHALLENGES TODAY

The Queensland Government has a vision to make Queenslanders Australia's healthiest people by 2020. The burden of preventable chronic disease is forecast to rise by more than 20% over the next decade⁶. Inactive lifestyles and poor food choices are the primary cause of this increasing burden where a large proportion of all 2006 Queensland deaths could have been prevented or avoided.

The prevention of chronic disease requires collaborative interventions by multiple agencies and sectors². Governments, non government organisations, public sector, private sector, industry, business, communities and individuals need to take responsibility for better health outcomes.

The *National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission Interim Report*¹ recommends a rolling series of 10 year goals for health promotion and prevention and an independent national health promotion and prevention agency.

OUR SOLUTIONS

A **State Wide Prevention Alliance** is required to enable effective action in chronic disease prevention. This Alliance will include key leaders from state and local governments, community groups, non government organisations, professional associations, the private sector, the philanthropic sector and academia.

The **State Wide Prevention Alliance** will provide leadership towards the achievement of 'Making Queenslanders Australia's healthiest people'. The Alliance will link and provide advice to the National Prevention Agency and serve as an authoritative source of information on evidence, policy and prevention.

A critical success factor and enabler for the Alliance will be a strong involvement and link with general practice and divisions. Many general practitioners already engage in prevention (such as the national immunisation program) and divisions play a key role in linking general practice with the broader health sector and community.

OUTCOMES

A **State Wide Prevention Alliance** will:

- **Provide** a cross sector, collaborative and leadership approach to achieve better health for Queenslanders
- **Be a leader** in promoting and protecting health
- **Reduce** or contain health care costs resulting from the prevention of chronic disease

SUPPORT REQUEST

Support is requested to establish a State Wide Prevention Alliance to lead Queensland in becoming a healthier state.

General Practice Queensland recommends funding of \$500,000 over two years to establish the State Wide Prevention Alliance.

A commitment to ongoing funding is also requested to support the Alliance beyond the establishment phase.

iHealth Care Directory - Queensland's new and comprehensive health service directory

CHALLENGES TODAY

eHealth solutions (the electronic exchange of health related information) play a critical role in health care reform⁷. These solutions are a significant enabler for improving quality, safety, access and efficiency in health care services⁸. With the burden of disease increasing due to chronic and other complex diseases², the need for a coordinated, multi disciplinary team based approach is vital.

Currently coordination of care relies on manual systems which are incomplete and inefficient⁹. The use of eHealth enables multi disciplinary teams to electronically exchange and share health related information¹⁰ such as, health services, referrals and event summaries, thereby increasing efficiency.

Development of a comprehensive service directory will support the patient journey enabling enhanced coordination and appropriate referral through access to validated, fully maintained health service information.

Connecting services and providers across the health system through a single online directory lays the foundation for the implementation of Individual Electronic Health Records and Unique Patient Identifiers.

OUR SOLUTIONS

The *iHealth Care Directory* is the solution to a single directory for health service information in Queensland.

General Practice Queensland, in partnership with the Queensland divisions of general practice, will populate and maintain the service information housed in the directory. This will complement the existing directory which is limited to health provider information. The enhanced directory will be supported by a

dedicated helpline and support team. Maintenance strategies will be employed to ensure the reliability of the new *iHealth Care Directory* information including an annual validation process in addition to security and disaster recovery.

OUTCOMES

The **iHealth Care Directory** will:

- **Provide** a single trusted source of comprehensive service and health provider information for Queensland
- **Improve** identification and access to local health services for Queensland communities
- **Enhance** care coordination and appropriate referral through access to up to date online information
- **Improve** communication between public and private health sector providers

SUPPORT REQUEST

Support is requested to develop a fully maintained state wide service directory.

General Practice Queensland recommends funding of \$1.9 million over 3 years.

General Practice Liaison Officer - improving the patients' journey

CHALLENGES TODAY

As the health needs of an individual change over time, so does their interaction with the health care sector. The smooth transition of patients as they move between health settings has long been identified as an area of concern. Currently, there are recognised gaps in continuity of care and the movement of patients between the primary, secondary and tertiary care settings with poor transitioning resulting in fragmented care and a high level of dissatisfaction.

OUR SOLUTIONS

The General Practice Liaison Officer (GPLO) role was developed to provide a vital link between the hospital and acute setting and general practice. From a national perspective the success of the role and the benefits associated with it have been clearly identified¹¹. The Victorian model, funded by the Department of Human Services (DHS) includes a state wide coordinator based at General Practice Victoria and a number of funded GPLO roles based in hospitals with formal links to divisions of general practice. Key achievements noted in the DHS evaluation¹¹ included:

- improved information flow, processes of care and communication between health services and general practitioners;
- enhanced skill and capacity of general practitioners to care for patients in the community who might otherwise require management in the acute setting; and
- enhanced skill and capacity of health services personnel to better understand and respond to general practitioners.

Although GPLO's are currently employed in varying levels of capacity in some Queensland divisions of general practice, Victoria has shown that patient care

is improved by undertaking the strategic development of systems and processes including discharge planning, shared care and referral pathways.

Queensland GPLO's roles, supported by a state level coordinator, will be well positioned to facilitate input into state wide and local services planning as well as adapt and respond to the priorities and needs of the local health care environment.

OUTCOMES

The **GPLO** roles will:

- **Streamline** access to primary, hospital and acute health care settings to reduce outpatient waiting list times
- **Strengthen** the interface between local health providers and general practice to reduce the length of stay, avoid hospital admissions and improve services planning
- **Engage** effectively between key stakeholders to increase awareness of services and community needs for better integration of services and programs

SUPPORT REQUEST

Support is requested to establish GPLO roles across Queensland, supported by a state level coordinator based at General Practice Queensland.

General Practice Queensland recommends \$4.7 million over 3 years.

Solutions from General Practice Queensland

Strategies	Healthy Futures		
Solutions	<i>Achieving healthy hearts through general practice</i>	<i>Starting early, achieving a healthy weight for life</i>	<i>State Wide Prevention Alliance</i>
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve early identification and management of people at high risk of developing cardiovascular disease ○ Increase access to timely and appropriate health services ○ Improve overall health status of the population ○ Reduce or contain health care costs resulting from cardiovascular disease prevention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify children at risk of poor health outcomes related to overweight and obesity ○ Improve health literacy for overweight and obese children and their families ○ Decrease prevalence of childhood obesity and associated disease burden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide a cross sector, collaborative and leadership approach to achieve better health for Queenslanders ○ Be a leader in promoting and protecting health ○ Reduce or contain health care costs resulting from the prevention of chronic disease
Investment	\$2.5 million	\$1.0 million	\$500,000+
Time Period	3 years	3 years	2+ years

Healthy Systems		
Solutions	<i>iHealth Care Directory - Queensland's new and comprehensive health service directory</i>	<i>General Practice Liaison Officer – improving the patient's journey</i>
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide a single trusted source of comprehensive service and health provider information for Queensland ○ Improve identification and access to local health services for Queensland communities ○ Enhance care coordination and appropriate referral through access to up to date online information ○ Improve communication between public and private health sector providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊖ Streamline access to primary, hospital and acute health care settings to reduce outpatient waiting list times ○ Strengthen the interface between local health providers and general practice to reduce the length of stay, avoid hospital admissions and improve services planning ○ Engage effectively between key stakeholders to increase awareness of services and community needs for better integration of services and programs
Investment	\$1.9 million	\$4.7 million
Time Period	3 years	3 years

Our Capacity to Deliver Health Solutions

Queensland General Practice Network

The **Queensland General Practice Network** is a unique and well established health service delivery infrastructure that encompasses all Queenslanders, across all locations.

The *Network* is comprised of General Practice Queensland as the state based organisation and 18 member divisions of general practice. The *Network* links approximately 3500 GPs, 1300 General Practices, 1755 Practice Nurses as well as other practice staff and allied health providers.

Ninety percent of all primary health care interactions occur in general practice, making general practice the most significant and frequent point of contact for engaging and responding to consumers, carers and the community in the delivery of primary health care solutions.

Throughout Queensland and Australia, the *Network* has proven to be an effective mechanism to implement and manage new health initiatives.

The *Network* currently implements a number of programs that link state and national funded initiatives for better coordination and local service delivery. This approach facilitates the development of innovative health care solutions that maximise resources through multidisciplinary models of care, brokerage models and leveraging partnerships between community organisations.

The *Network* has developed strong and effective partnerships with Queensland governments over the past 3 years. These partnerships have been built at all levels within Queensland Health and across all districts and regions. Queensland Health acknowledges the capacity of the divisions and general practice to achieve and deliver credible health outcomes for the community as demonstrated in the *Capacity for Local Partnerships Initiative* and the *Connecting Health Care in Communities Initiative*.

The *Network* offers the Queensland Government:

- **CONSUMERS** | general practice is engaged with the Queensland community: newborns, the young, the ageing, people with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons, culturally and linguistically diverse individuals
- **COVERAGE** | general practice encounters and treats all forms of health issues on a daily basis including chronic disease (eg, renal, diabetes, cardiovascular, respiratory ailments), cancer, mental health, substance abuse, obesity and dietary issues and maternity care
- **COMMUNITY** | divisions include all Queensland localities and have an immediate and established capacity to introduce or expand locally appropriate programs in urban, rural and remote settings across Queensland
- **CONSISTENCY** | all Queensland divisions are externally accredited and meet a core set of key performance indicators
- **CAPACITY** | engagement with a wide range of primary health care providers including allied health, community health organisations and most importantly general practices across Queensland
- **CONFIDENCE** | the *Network* provides consistency, coverage and capacity thereby making divisions and general practice the service of choice in relevant areas
- **COLLABORATION** | the *Network* provides an established vehicle through which local, state and national collaboration and joint ventures occur between general practice, other community health providers and government agencies

References

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 - ⁵ Commonwealth of Australia (2008), *Technical Report No. 1 Obesity in Australia: a need for urgent action*, Canberra.
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 - ⁹ Australian Health Ministers' Conference (Dec. 2008), *National E-Health Strategy.*
 - ¹⁰ Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute (Sep. 2006), *Coordination of Care within Primary Health Care and with Other Sectors: A Systematic Review.*
 - ¹¹ Amos Consulting (Aug. 2006), *Department of Human Services Review of the General Practice Liaison Program: Final Report.*