



AHPA News Update

Mid year 2008

HEALTH REFORM IN AUSTRALIA

Allied Health Professions Australia is involved with a number of the national reviews of Australia's health and hospital systems now underway.

The new Government has clearly recognised the message that AHPA has been putting forward for some years – that allied health professionals are central to primary and preventative health care. To quote the Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon Nicola Roxon MP:

“We need to have a primary health care system that enables people to see the right health professional for their needs, in an appropriate place at the right time. That may mean rethinking who the “right health professional” is in certain situations.”¹

- **National Primary Health Care Strategy**

Prof Lyn Littlefield, AHPA's honorary Executive Officer, has been appointed as a member of the National Primary Health Care Strategy External Reference Group, which will support the Government in developing the Strategy. A draft is due by mid-2009.

The AHPA Management Group has identified some of the key issues which it believes should be addressed within the National Primary Health Care Strategy. Major themes include:

- A patient-centred, 'whole of health' approach
- Working cooperatively across medical, nursing and allied health
- Commitment to multidisciplinary teams
- Increased access to allied health services within a continuum of care
- Specific expertise, readily available
- Primary care delivered in a flexible way by all appropriate providers
- High quality services based on best available evidence of effectiveness
- Equity of funding and access.

This discussion on policy priorities will continue in the coming months.

- **National Primary Health Care Partnership**

Lyn Littlefield spoke on behalf of allied health, at the launch on 26 June of the National Primary Health Care Partnership. The NPHCP brings together 19 peak health provider and consumer organisations, with a view to strengthening primary care, particularly through the increased use of multi-disciplinary teams. AHPA has for many years worked closely with the Australian General Practice Network and its predecessor the Australian Divisions of General Practice; and is delighted to see this mutual cooperation blossom into the National Primary Health Care Partnership.

¹ Minister's address at the AGPN Primary Mental health Care Forum, Sydney 11 June 2008

At the launch, Lyn spoke about AHPA's vision for national primary health care. She said that, *'to improve health outcomes throughout the community, Australia's primary health care system must offer an effective, comprehensive and timely response to people's total health needs, through access to expert multi-disciplinary health care. It is most important to provide high quality services based on the best available evidence of effectiveness and utilise the diversity of experience available. This approach needs to be underpinned by new models of care and funding to produce equity and increased in access to services.'*

- **Australian Health Care Reform Alliance**

AHPA is also on the Executive of AHCRA, a coalition of 46 organisations representing consumers and health care providers advocating for a fairer and more effective health care system.

MAJOR NEW PROJECTS

AHPA has been awarded two major new contracts by the Department of Health and Ageing, both of which will help increase access to, and recognition of, allied health. These contracts represent a significant development in AHPA's ability to ensure that Australians have better access to allied health professionals, whether they live in urban or rural areas. In turn, this should reduce the pressure on hospitals and other acute-care facilities to enhance primary care.

- **Shared Care in Chronic Disease Management: improving linkages between General Practice and Allied Health Professions.**

This 2-year project aims to strengthen working partnerships and multi-disciplinary team care, and improve the mutual understanding of the role of GPs and AHPs. This should lead to better engagement of AHPs and improvements in shared care arrangements for patients, particularly in relation to the prevention and management of chronic disease.

- **Indigenous Allied Health Network project**

AHPA will auspice funds to establish an Indigenous Allied Health Network (IAHN) with the objective of the IAHN becoming an incorporated body representing Indigenous Allied Health Professionals and students.

Once established, the Indigenous Allied Health Association will provide representation, advocacy, advice and support for Indigenous allied health professionals and students. The Indigenous Allied Health Association will be the representative body for Indigenous allied health professionals and students.

This project is due for completion mid-2009.

8th National Allied Health Conference 2009

Organisation is well underway for this major biennial conference, which will be held at Canberra's Realm Hotel from 13 to 15 August 2009.

AHPA is auspicings the Conference, and will be calling for Abstracts later this year. With the theme of 'Allied Health Leading Change', the conference will be a crucial opportunity to discuss and develop the role of allied health professionals as leaders of change, within Australia's evolving health systems.

For program details and on-line Registration, keep an eye on AHPA's website – www.ahpa.com.au – more information will be posted over the next few weeks.