

Review Implementation Committee
Divisions of General Practice: Future Directions

COMMUNIQUE ELEVEN – MEETING OF 8 DECEMBER 2005

The Review Implementation Committee (RIC), established to provide advice to the Australian Government on implementing the Government response to the 2003 *Review of the Role of Divisions of General Practice*, held its eleventh meeting on 8 December 2005.

The committee discussed the further development of the new national quality and performance system (NQPS) for the Divisions network. It focussed on:

- the information strategy to support the NQPS;
- the performance and development funding pool;
- the development of the pool of common performance indicators;
- improving structural efficiency; and
- a new resource allocation model for Divisions.

Progress was considered in relation to:

- planning and reporting;
- the evaluation on the impact of the national performance indicators on Divisions' planning (a component of the overall evaluation strategy);
- the Joint Chairs Group;
- quality standards and accreditation; and
- an implementation strategy to support Divisions to implement the Government response.

Information Strategy

A number of tasks are being progressed as part of the development of an information strategy for Divisions.

The Australian Government announced funding up to \$7 million over four years at the Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP) Forum to develop and implement an information management strategy for Divisions.

Progress

Ms Liz McCarthy of LMC Consulting is currently developing a strategic direction framework for the strategy.

Consultation with a cross section of stakeholders is of high importance and is being undertaken as part of the development of the framework.

The department has written to all Divisions network members advising them of the proposed arrangements for the provision and collection of data to and by Divisions to enable them to report against the national performance indicators.

The ADGP's compilation of significant IM&T systems and initiatives within the Divisions network has been updated.

Performance and development pool

The RIC agreed at the 23 September 2005 meeting that funds from the performance and development pool will be used to build the capacity of Divisions in areas related to the NQPS. The RIC also stated that there needed to be a balance between large projects for whole of network improvement and individual Division initiatives.

The ADGP and state based organisation (SBO) Coalition has been involved in considering the components of the funding pool, including the focus and guidelines.

Progress

The RIC agreed that the pool will be used for:

- a leadership training proposal for CEOs and emerging leaders. More information will be provided to the Divisions network in 2006.
- individual Divisions' projects, with the proviso that Divisions which receive funding commit to sharing the outcomes of their projects in some way with the Divisions network. The ADGP and SBO Coalition and the department are now determining the parameters and criteria for this funding. Details will be provided to the Divisions network in the near future.
- National workshops and a communication strategy. The ADGP and SBO Coalition is currently working on a proposal for these.

Development of the pool of common performance indicators

The Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute (APHCRI) was engaged to work on the development of the common pool of performance indicators for Divisions of General Practice.

These indicators will be supplementary to the national performance indicators and their use will be voluntary. The intention is to capture the significant program of work not captured by the national performance indicators.

Progress

The domains have now been finalised and an initial set of draft indicators is available for comment.

The APHCRI consultancy timeframe has been extended by three months to allow sufficient time for consultation with the Divisions network.

A Technical Group will use all feedback to refine the proposed objectives and indicators and it is anticipated that this project will be completed in April 2006.

Improved structural efficiency

As part of the implementation of the government response to the review of the role of Divisions, Divisions are being encouraged to consider their structure, size and boundaries.

Existing boundaries based on Australia Post post codes have many drawbacks. These include the fact that areas with the same post code are not always adjacent to each other and may not even be within the same Division. Therefore, when allocating data there is some difficulty associated with allocating population figures to Divisions that share a

postcode. This issue is particularly important in considering a new resource allocation model for Divisions based on population estimates.

The department engaged GISCA, from the University of Adelaide, to undertake a Divisions Boundary Mapping Project. The aim of the Project was to provide an understanding of the impact of aligning Divisional boundaries with either census collection districts (CDs) or statistical local areas (SLAs) (part of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS') Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC)).

Progress

Mr Errol Bamford, Research Manager of GISCA, gave an interactive presentation on the Divisions Boundary Mapping Project.

The benefits of aligning boundaries with CDs would include:

- ensuring greater clarity;
- enabling the use of standard ABS data; and
- the potential for a community health profile to be developed by the ABS for each Division.

Realignment with CDs would also cause minimal change.

Further information on the outcome of this project will be communicated to the Divisions network in early 2006.

Resource allocation model

The core funding formula model is being reviewed to look at options to better allocate funding across the network.

The intention is to develop a resource allocation model which is realistic, simple and easy to implement and update. It must reflect the work which Divisions actually do. There is no remit to increase overall funding. However, the funding allocation model will recognise that Divisions receive other sources of funding, complementary to core funding.

The Funding Formula Working Group met on 24 November 2005 and discussed four theoretical resource allocation models.

The Funding Formula Working Group considered issues such as

- the difference between a population based model and a health infrastructure model;
- the role of Divisions (the improved health outcomes of communities through the work of general practitioners); and
- the availability of data.

Progress

The Funding Formula Working Group selected the Flexible Weighted Population Model as its preferred option for testing and impact assessment and the RIC agreed that this option should be further explored. This will occur in early 2006.

Broad consultation with the Divisions network will also be undertaken and the Joint Chairs Working Group will assist in identifying issues in relation to the implementation of a new resource allocation model.

Planning and reporting

As part of the review of the national planning and reporting proformas for the Divisions network, surveys seeking feedback on the usability of the proformas were distributed to the Divisions network in October 2005.

The Primary Health Care Research Service (PHCRIS) is currently analysing the results of surveys that were distributed to the network in October 2005. Some improvements are expected to be incorporated into the proformas before the six month reports are due.

PHCRIS is not reviewing the results in relation to the financial templates. This component is being managed by the department.

Evaluation Strategy

Evaluation research is currently being undertaken by the Australian Primary Health Care research Institute (APHCRI) on the impacts of the national performance indicators on Divisions' planning. This evaluation project is one component of stage one of the evaluation strategy which was endorsed by the RIC at its 23 September 2005 meeting.

APHCRI's research is a qualitative study which is assessing the extent to which performance indicators have impacted on the nature and quality of planning and the delivery of local programs.

A reference group comprising key stakeholders from the Divisions network, PHCRIS, the Centre for General Practice Integration and the department, has been established to provide advice on the project, which is expected to be completed by April 2006.

Joint Chairs Group

As agreed at the 23 September RIC meeting, a meeting of the Chairs of the Funding Formula, Structural Efficiency and Performance Working Groups was held on 18 October 2005.

The rationale for the Joint Chairs meeting was to facilitate the integration of the work being undertaken by the three Groups in implementing the RIC agenda.

There was great benefit from the Chairs coming together to discuss issues which individual Groups had been considering independently.

The RIC agreed that the Joint Chairs Group will continue to meet until June 2006 to oversee the integration of the RIC agenda. It will report, and provide advice, to the RIC.

Quality Standards and Accreditation

Accreditation against a set of quality standards is a key component of the NQPS.

The early adopter accreditation incentive scheme designed to encourage Divisions to become accredited or if accredited, to share their knowledge of accreditation with other

Divisions, is now nearly at an end. Ninety eight percent of the Divisions network had accessed the \$5,000 early adopter accreditation incentive as at 28 October 2005.

Divisions will be required to become accredited by June 2008 to sign up for new funding agreements.

Implementation Strategy

The RIC noted the progress of various NQPS implementation support activities, within the Divisions network and the department.

The Divisions Network

The ADGP was resourced by the department to support state based organisations to assist Divisions with the implementation of the NQPS, in a nationally consistent manner.

The state level implementation plans which were produced by state based organisations are now on the ADGP's website.

The ADGP has also produced two issues of *Dynamic Divisions* as well as a structural efficiency report. The latter will be posted on the internet with the aim of encouraging Divisions to consider their structural efficiency options. It includes amalgamation and service sharing options as well as hypothetical scenarios. There will also be links to the structural efficiency checklists which have already been disseminated to Divisions.

The first governance workshop for Divisions' boards has taken place in Queensland and more will be held in other states in 2006.

A framework for recognising and improving performance is currently being developed, with a view to it being completed by June 2006 and implemented on a trial basis in October – November 2006 to allow testing and validation.

The ADGP and SBO Coalition will continue to act in an advisory role to the department on implementation issues. Although the Review Implementation Committee will continue to meet, this will occur less frequently than in the past.

The Department

The department acknowledges that the successful implementation of the NQPS partly depends on the ability of the department to position itself to deal with Divisions in a knowledgeable, transparent and consistent manner.

The department is currently developing Program Guidelines and management procedures for the Divisions of General Practice core funding schedule.

The Training Working Group, established as a principal reference point with state and territory officers (STOs) for the development of management support for the Divisions of General Practice Program, continues to meet.

Review Communication Needs

RIC members have previously agreed on the importance of communicating the past achievements, the current status and the future directions of the implementation of the government response

Progress

The DVD on the NQPS and the revisions to the *Future Directions Toolkit* have now been distributed to the Divisions network.

The *Future Directions. What have we achieved? Where are we heading?* brochure was made available at the ADGP Forum. It has subsequently been posted on the internet and will soon be distributed in hard copy to all Divisions. The web address is <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/health-pcd-programs-divisions-index.htm> .

The ADGP has developed a communication strategy for the new year which will include providing Divisions with assistance in arranging events involving high profile people and getting coverage in local newspapers.

The ADGP also plans to produce a national network annual report and is using a consultant to identify what value Divisions add to the primary health care sector.

Other Business

On behalf of the Australian Government and the RIC, Ms Lisa McGlynn extended her sincere thanks to Dr Rob Walters, outgoing Chair of the ADGP, for filling his position on the RIC since July 2004 with enormous energy and commitment. She also noted his steady focus on the ultimate goal of the RIC process, that is improving the capacity of Divisions to support general practitioners to further improve the health outcomes of their patients.

Dr Jenny Thomson, the current Chair of the ADGP, will assume the role of Divisional representative at the next RIC meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held in Sydney on 31 March 2006.

Further Information and Providing Feedback

Information is available on the department's website at: www.health.gov.au/pcd/programs/divisions/ricinfo.htm.