

Health Services Plan

Key Messages for Peak Bodies

Background

- We've always had a high performing health system here in Victoria, but the reality is, where you live plays a huge part in how you experience our system and the quality of care you receive. That is simply not fair.
- People from all walks of life have different outcomes from the same procedures, unequal access to specialist treatment and some are seen quicker than others.
- The structure of the Victorian health services system has been largely unchanged for decades, despite rapidly-changing population needs and many new innovations in how care is provided.
- We require a better-connected system that is easier for patients to use, delivers better healthcare and supports a strong workforce.
- With this in mind, the Department of Health established a process to develop a draft Health Services Plan to consider the best design and governance of the public health services system - looking at how public health services can better work together to improve care for all Victorians.
- An external Expert Advisory Committee led the development of the Health Services Plan in collaboration with health service leaders, and with the support of the Department of Health. The Committee is independent from government.

Current status

- The EAC has now concluded their assessment process and consultation with the sector.
- A final report outlining the EAC's findings and recommendations has been received by the Department of Health. The Department's advice and the EAC Report is being provided to Government.
- This advice will be considered by the Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas and other appropriate Ministers before it is then presented to Cabinet, and a decision on how to proceed is made.
- It is expected this process will continue over the next few months.

Questions and Answers

How long will Government take to make a decision?

- The report is extensive, and Government will need to take time to consider all the EAC recommendations and any additional advice from the Department of Health.
- It is expected this process will continue over the next few months.

Will the community be consulted about this?

- Health service staff and communities will be consulted on what their priorities are, and what matters to them the most when it comes to health care.

Will this mean the closure of hospitals?

- No hospital will close as a result of the Health Service Plan.
- The Minister has made it clear there will be no hospital or site closures.
- The local hospitals that you have worked so hard to support, in some cases for many generations, will continue to serve their local communities.

Isn't this just a cost saving measure?

- This report is about ensuring the design and governance of our public health services system is fit for purpose so we can improve equity and access for Victorians, ensuring they get the right care, in the right place, at the right time.
- The structure of the Victorian health services system has been largely unchanged for decades, despite rapidly-changing population needs and many new innovations in how care is provided.
- We've always had a high performing health system here in Victoria, but the reality is, where you live plays a huge part in how you experience our system and the quality of care you receive. That is simply not fair.
- We require a better-connected system that is easier for patients to use, delivers better healthcare and supports a strong workforce – and the Health Service Plan will help us achieve that.

Who did the EAC consult with?

- The independent EAC undertook three rounds of consultation to ensure the views and ideas from health service leaders across the state were heard and informed the final report.
- The EAC also took advice from other jurisdictions, national and international health system experts and they briefed industrial partners who represent key workforces.

What was proposed through the EAC consultation?

- Some of the main issues raised with the EAC include inequities in patient experience and difficulties accessing care, workforce attraction and retention, and unnecessary duplication. As well as the importance of local identities and hospital "brand" names which, in some cases, have international recognition.
- Informed by feedback to date, the EAC is proposing to establish Local Health Service Networks – geographic groupings of health service sites with responsibility for improving patient care and supporting workforce in specific geographic regions – with the aim of ensuring most patients' care needs are delivered as close to home as possible.
- The Networks would be established based on a range of factors including natural patient flows, geography and transport networks, and population and community characteristics.
- Two concepts were under consideration to support the establishment of Local Health Service Networks:
 - **Option A: Strengthened partnerships** -This would see formal partnerships established between existing health services, who would be collectively responsible for working together to deliver benefits for their region.
 - **Option B: Health service consolidations** - This is about health services in a region being consolidated into a single entity for each Local Health Service Network. Existing health services would maintain their own visible leadership, Advisory Boards and existing identities and branding.
- The importance of retaining local voices, local hospital identities and local leadership was a key discussion point throughout the process and the EAC has reiterated that this must continue for the Plan to be successful.