

Primary Health Care Congress

Leaders shaping the future of primary health care



Statement

Background

On 30 April 2025, the Primary Health Care Alliance (the 'Alliance') facilitated a second Primary Health Care Congress (the Congress) convened at the Woodward Centre, University of Melbourne. The Congress was attended by over 70 health leaders from medical, nursing, allied health, universities, peak and professional bodies, Primary Health Networks and the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

The Congress was centered around a discussion on effective multidisciplinary service models, with presenters showcasing models from Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, and other, diverse models used in general practice, community health, paediatric primary care and remote primary care.

Through the lens of the Quintuple Aim, panels were convened to discuss the features, policy settings and actions needed to scale and sustain effective multidisciplinary team (MDT) models in Australia. Significant issues raised by panelists included the need for evidence and data to drive and assess models of health care, which are underpinned by needs-based funding. It was acknowledged this would take a change in culture and leadership across the system, with health leaders encouraged to maintain advocacy activities.

The second panel reiterated the need for action, leadership and potentially a reform commission to ensure reforms address the system as a whole. Congress participants were encouraged to build a window of opportunity with governments and departments of health to strategically create change for improved integrated and connected multidisciplinary care.

Reflecting on the robust panel discussions; the consensus priority areas for reform identified in the 2024 Congress: funding, digital health, data and research, and workforce training; and current national health reform reviews, participants workshopped ideas to collaboratively advance policy that supports MDT care in Australia.

The reflections and insights shared here provide a foundation for collaborative discussions and advocacy to drive health system reform.

Key Reflections

Several insights were gained from this year's Congress:

- ✓ There is unanimous support for reform of primary health care (PHC) and how it is funded.
- ✓ More health leaders report that their area of PHC is understood by others – 64% in 2025 compared with 16% in 2024
- ✓ 54% of health leaders are optimistic about PHC reform, with a high level of support (87% fully or mostly) for the recommendations made in the Scope of Practice Review final report.
- ✓ Solutions for addressing the systemic and cultural barriers to implementing effective and sustainable MDT models of care are known and understood.
- ✓ There is a desire to move beyond discussion to action
- ✓ Though there is change fatigue, a sentiment that we must 'not give up' still prevails
- ✓ Top enablers identified for delivering MDT models of care:

1. **Funding** (with a focus on flexible, needs-based models that enable sustainable MDT care)
2. **Workforce** (building a workforce pipeline to improve capacity)
3. **Trust and communication** (across health care professionals and settings)
4. **Consumer and community empowerment** (through greater health literacy and engagement in system design)

Primary Health Care Congress

Leaders shaping the future of primary health care

Acknowledgement and thank you to the following presenters, speakers and representatives at the Congress

MDT service model case presentations:

- Dr Jill Gallagher, CEO, VACCHO
- Dr Walid Jammal, Hills Family Practice
- Dr Paresh Dawda, Director, Prestantia Health, Next Practice
- Nicole Bartholomeusz, CEO, cohealth
- Dr Corin Miller, Rural Generalist, Djing.gii Gudjaagalali Kids Clinic
- Kylie Straube, Nurse Practitioner, Remote Territory Healthcare

Panel 1: How is the system enabling these models?

- Keith Tracey-Patte, CEO, Health Consumers QLD
- Professor Lisa Nissen, Director, Centre for the Business and Economics of Health, University of QLD
- Professor Michael Pervan, CEO, Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority
- Associate Professor Liz Marles, Clinical Director, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care
- Professor Rosemary Calder, Director, Australian Health Policy Collaborative.

Panel 2: Politics and policy – how can we affect change?

- Dr Andrew Podger, AO, former Federal Health Secretary
- Martin Bowles, AO, PSM, former Federal Health Secretary
- The Honorable Jillian Skinner AM, former NSW Health Minister

Representatives from the following organisations were present throughout the Congress

- Adelaide Primary Health Network (PHN)
- Allied Health Professions Australia
- Australasian College of Paramedicine
- Australasian Society of Lifestyle Medicine
- Australian General Practice Accreditation Limited
- Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care
- Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association
- Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association
- Australian Physiotherapy Association
- Australian Podiatry Association
- Brisbane North PHN
- Brisbane South PHN
- Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives
- Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN
- Health Consumers' Council WA
- Health Workforce Queensland
- Healthy North Coast PHN
- Inala Primary Care
- Monash University
- Larter
- Medibank
- National Rural Health Alliance
- Occupational Therapy Australia
- Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner
- OneBridge
- Palliative Care Australia
- Pharmaceutical Society of Australia
- Pfizer
- Queensland University of Technology
- Royal Australian College of General Practice
- Royal Flying Doctors Service
- Rural Doctors Network
- Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health
- South Western Sydney PHN
- The Council of Ambulance Authorities
- University of NSW
- Victoria University
- Victorian Department of Health
- Western Australia Primary Health Alliance
- Western NSW PHN

The PHC Congress was organised by the Primary Health Care Alliance. The Alliance consists of the members whose logos appear in this document, who have a common interest in transforming the primary health care system to a model of multidisciplinary primary health care through collaborative efforts that support system-wide reform.

Correspondence regarding the PHC Alliance and Primary Health Care Congress can be directed to the PHC Alliance Secretariat: advocacy@apna.asn.au Media contact: 0474 229 445