

1 November 2019

Rural Workforce Special Interest Group

Introduction

The Victorian health system is under significant strain; the population is increasing, it is ageing and the prevalence of chronic disease is growing. Hospitals are struggling to manage demand and their budgets are more constrained than ever. People working in health are under more pressure than ever before and there are simply not enough staff to deliver the activity required nor sufficient numbers in the pipeline to deliver the projected activity of the future. There exists the opportunity to influence government approaches to health strategy and policy through the development of shared positions on the ideal future state of the health system and to identify practical opportunities to implement policy changes in the area of workforce. The work will focus on low-cost, high-access models of healthcare.

Purpose

The purpose of the Rural Workforce Special Interest Group is to provide expert guidance, insight and knowledge to the VHA to ensure sector-informed policy outputs. The group will focus on the areas of workforce supply and distribution, capability and the impact of key reforms, culminating in recommendations for future reform in the medium to longer-term. Key draft recommendations will be shared with the broader rural CEO group for input and review, and with the metropolitan and regional workforce reference group to ensure alignment.

Term

The term of the reference group will be 12-months, effective November 2019.

Membership

The reference group will comprise representatives from across sub-regional to multi-purpose services, and from a cross section of identified professions including chief executives, directors of medical/clinical services, nursing and allied health, and people and culture.

Members of the group must be employed by a VHA member organisation.

Appointment of a proxy will be permitted provided they meet the membership requirements.

Roles and responsibilities

A chair and co-chair will be appointed and will work with the VHA on the development of agendas and directions. The VHA will provide secretariat support.

The membership of the reference group will commit to:

- attending scheduled group meetings
- providing input on documents out of session
- acting on behalf of and championing the special interest group in the sector
- declare any conflicts of interest.

Members of the group will expect:

- to be provided with complete, accurate and meaningful information in a timely manner
- open and honest discussions
- ongoing 'health checks' to verify the overall status of the group
- information shared during meetings to be treated confidentially.

Given the tight inter-relationships between the issues being considered as part of this work, the group will be required to consider and closely align its outputs with the work of the VHA and the metropolitan and regional workforce reference group.

Guiding principles

The guiding principles outline the approach to working and making decision to ensure optimal outcomes for the development of solution-focused, thought-leadership positions and include:

- Focus on low-cost, high access solutions: identify solutions that reduce costs to the system, are low cost or cost neutral and improve access to high-quality, safe care for Victorians.
- Drive clear and relevant outcomes: design solutions that will deliver impactful outcomes to the health system.
- State-wide focus: think about ways to integrate and unite efforts across the state.
- Consider intersection and impacts of change in one area of the system on other areas of the system including the impact of the provision of rural health services.
- Think globally: the health system exists as part of a broader social, political, economic, geographic and technological environment which must be considered in directing health system reform.
- Avoid jumping to solutions instead question everything to understand the 'why' and problem-solve.
- Think outside the box and innovate brand new solutions to familiar problems.

Reporting

The group will, through the chair and the VHA and will provide a written and verbal update to each rural CEO meeting.

Meetings

Meetings will be held face-to-face though members may join via teleconference.

Meetings will be held at least bi-monthly and may be held more frequently if required with invitations distributed via email.

Members of the group will not be reimbursed for any costs incurred that are associated with attending meetings (i.e. travel, accommodation).

Meetings will be conducted subject to an agenda that has been endorsed by the chair.

Amendment, modification or variation

The terms of reference will be reviewed, amended, varied or modified in writing after consultation and agreement by the group on an annual basis.

Review date – May 2020