

Inter-state collaboration to enhance remote health care

Mick Reid¹

¹Consultant

Mick Reid has been commissioned by the Health Departments of South Australia, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland to report on ways in which these jurisdictions might collaborate on initiatives to improve both the lot of health professionals in the remoter areas of those jurisdictions and the health of the people who live there.

The main task is to improve health services in more remote areas through a set of achievable initiatives to help attract and retain health professionals, maintain their skills and provide a range of appropriate services. The initiatives are to be quite specific and doable, not an overarching strategy for remote health service provision. The initiatives involve the collaboration of four autonomous jurisdictions and the strong interest of the Commonwealth. The work is based around ten initiatives, grouped under five headings.

- Recruitment and retention
 - through HWA, work to devise a single brand for remote health employment to enable a collaborative approach to recruitment and portability of employment across jurisdictions
 - protect that brand for people who wish to work in remote locations.
- Service planning
 - develop a single service plan for local communities; the footprint of Medicare Locals is unsuited to develop and/or act on this plan
 - in developing the plan, identify common elements that should constitute core services—possibly based on the NT model
 - promote collaboration in development of the plan, including by private and public service providers.
- Education and training—‘how we maintain the skill base’
 - focus *initially* on initiatives relating to prevocational medical education and training—with nursing and allied health later. The aim is to facilitate a much better vocational training experience in rural and remote Australia
 - adapt Queensland Health’s Pathways to Rural and Remote Orientation and Training (PaRROT) as an eLearning program for all health personnel. It is based on early detection and early intervention in chronic disease and there are plans to roll it out as a national program
 - address the complexities relating to Aboriginal health workers whose work varies markedly from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Implement national registration for all Aboriginal health workers (AHWs).
- Telehealth services
 - achieve more interaction across states and territories in provision of telehealth services.
- Better returns from infrastructure investment
 - look at how to provide better accommodation and infrastructure, including for service providers, and look at complexity of infrastructure grants.