A work in progress: the Multipurpose Service model in New South Wales

Jennifer Sheehan¹, Kathy Meleady¹, Cathy Springall¹
¹NSW Ministry of Health

Health care delivery models for rural and remote communities have evolved over the past decades to better respond to the needs of the changing communities. The most successful models have service integration and provider collaboration their focus. These models present a ‘shared vision’ between consumers, providers and the government about how to best provide health care in a community. For NSW the predominant service reconfiguration and capital investment approach in small rural and remote communities has been through the Multipurpose Service (MPS) model.

Evaluations of the MPS model have been undertaken in 2001, and again in 2007. The early evaluation focused on the first MPSs in NSW, involving a small number of services. The 2007 evaluation, based on responses from over 80% of the operational MPSs at that time in NSW, involved a comprehensive review of the intrinsic and extrinsic benefits achieved and value to services providers and community, considered against the level of capital investment. The outcome of these evaluations demonstrated a new MPS improves access across the full range of services appropriate for the community, provides hub of health and other services for the community under one roof, delivers a more appropriate environment for residential aged care, brings a huge improvement in the work environment for the local staff, and introduces the concept of the inclusion of multifunctional space for use by the broader community (such as play groups, health and wellbeing groups and community meetings).

NSW Health has invested more than $400m on the redevelopment of small rural hospitals since 1994, to introduce the MPS model. There are now 55 MPSs operational under the formal Tripartite Funding Agreements with the Department of Health and Ageing; and overall, a total of 60 services have been redeveloped, delivering health services under the integrated care approach of the MPS model in NSW.

This poster depicts how the development of MPSs in NSW, over almost twenty years, demonstrates the benefits of governments and communities working together to ensure small rural communities continue to have access to an
appropriate range of health services in contemporary and flexible environs, ensures residents are treated closer to home, and where they have the support of friends and loved ones. The MPS model has been shown to be a successful and effective service model, with services reflecting local community’s needs achieved through the shared approach to service development.