From urban to rural—Townsville-Mackay Medicare Local

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With the new health reform introduced in 2010, the then Townsville General Practice Network produced a comprehensive application to become Townsville-Mackay Medicare Local (TMML). This was accepted and then the hard work began. One of the most challenging tasks set before TMML was engaging and becoming a useful service provider for our members in rural areas. This was extensive as every area outside of Townsville (where TGPN had previously concentrated) was considered to be rural.

So where to begin, there were so many things to consider, the TMML board structure, communication, program delivery and most of all how to know what our new rural members needed and wanted. Firstly, we had to consider our capacity to deliver, so TMML more than doubled its employee base in 2011/2012. At end of June 2011, there were 64 staff / 38.48 FTE which expanded to 127 staff / 90.15 FTE at 30th June 2012.

The population health unit (PHU) was developed and implemented in late 2011 so TMML could gain and understanding of its population needs. This included gathering data from numerous sources, conducting community, stakeholder, health profession and consumer consultation and collating all the information into a comprehensible document. The PHU now has a “snapshot” of each town/area in TMML giving information about demographics, health needs and outcomes, health services and consultation. Any gaps in services are also recorded in these documents. As TMML program staff and clinical service employees continue to consult with the TMML community these documents are updated and have become a living information source to ensure the needs of the community are met in the best possible way.

TMML develops annual plans for its many programs which are fed by the information gathered from all the above sources. TMML is connecting health to meet local needs including rural areas.

The last 12 months has been a roller coaster ride for the health system with many areas still to be decided and finalised. TMML (previously TGPN) has been working through the minefield to develop the best plans for delivery of its services to its member, particularly rural members who are now a large part of TMMLs “work”.

Original Boundary

New Boundaries