

Primary Health Care Congress

An initiative of the Primary Health Care Alliance



Initial statement

Background

On 26 July 2024, the inaugural Primary Health Care Congress (PHC Congress) was convened at the International Convention Centre, Adelaide. The Congress was attended by approximately 60 health leaders from medical, nursing, allied health and university peak bodies and professional organisations, along with representatives from the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.

Against the backdrop of significant health reform discussions in Australia, the PHC Congress recognised that effective and timely reform of the primary health care system requires clear and visible alignment from multiple stakeholders. However, few opportunities exist to discuss and highlight the areas of consensus.

To understand where consensus exists, a pre-event survey sought input from all participants, showing unanimous agreement on the three following topics:

- that primary health care in Australia needs reform
- that primary health care funding needs reform
- that primary health care funding is not optimised.

For clarity, at the PHC Congress, primary health care was defined as being services provided outside the hospital setting; generally being the first service a person has with the health system, as well as aged care services.

Process

The PHC Congress recognised that consensus between stakeholders has been difficult to achieve. Significantly, the pre-event survey found that only 16% of participants agreed that their area of primary health care is understood by others, and raised the lack of opportunities that enable them to engage in a cross disciplinary manner.

To ensure all participants had an equal voice, the PHC Congress used a workshopping process to identify and prioritise a consensus view on the areas and system-level changes that require government attention as it reforms the health system.

To ensure areas were aligned to a developed and evidence-based framework, they were evaluated against the Quintuple Aim for optimising health system performance as outlined in Australia's Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan 2022-2032.

Consensus achieved

Of the ten areas identified by participants, four achieved consensus support as being priorities for government consideration.

1 Funding: This area comprised the three features of needs-based funding, flexible funding that enables multi-disciplinary care across health systems and increasing the quantum of primary care funding to enable pro-active preventative care.

2 Digital Health: Interconnectivity between primary health care, private and tertiary providers was recognised as essential, as was the need to have a future-fit approach to developing the system.

3 Data and Research: A consistent national data and evaluation framework to inform health policies and interventions, along with a strategic research agenda were deemed essential for achieving greater efficiency, equity and stronger health outcomes.

4 Workforce training: The need for primary health care training to be embedded in the undergraduate curriculum across all professions was deemed essential for growing an interdisciplinary primary health care workforce and delivering stronger health outcomes.

Participants welcomed future PHC Congress meetings, encouraging broader representation and themes, to continue the collaborative discussion on health reform.

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Representatives from the following organisations were present throughout the Congress:

- Adelaide Primary Health Network
- Australasian College of Paramedicine
- Australasian Society of Lifestyle Medicine
- Australian College of Midwives
- Australian College of Nursing
- Australian College of Nurse Practitioners
- Australian Medical Association (SA)
- Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation
- Australian Podiatry Association
- Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association
- Allied Health Professions Australia
- Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care
- Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives
- Consumers Health Forum of Australia
- Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery
- CRANApus
- Edith Cowan University
- Exercise and Sports Science Australia
- Health North Coast Primary Health Network
- Royal Australian College of General Practice
- Royal Flying Doctors Service
- Rural Doctors Network
- Victorian Department of Health
- Pharmaceutical Society of Australia
- Private Healthcare Australia
- Safer Care Victoria
- The Pharmacy Guild of Australia (TAS)
- Western Australia Primary Health Alliance

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

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