

Thursday, 8 April 2010



Victorian Healthcare Association

**Media release**

**Victorian Healthcare Association backs Brumby's health plan**

Victoria's peak public healthcare body has called on the Federal Government to consider Premier John Brumby's proposal for healthcare reform ahead of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting on April 19.

The Victorian Healthcare Association (VHA) wants a truce in national health reform to give the Commonwealth and all States and Territories time to work constructively towards the best possible healthcare system.

Brumby's reform proposal provides more detailed options for fundamental health reform, rather than merely shifting financial accountabilities to a 60:40 Commonwealth Government takeover of the states' hospitals.

"The *Putting Patients First* proposal is a step in the right direction, as it refocuses the health debate towards patients, consumers and the need for a more integrated, comprehensive and responsive healthcare system," the VHA's Acting CEO, Ms Sara Duncan said.

"The document reinforces the VHA's view that hospitals, primary healthcare and prevention must successfully meld as one to create the health system of the future. Brumby's proposal provides options for reorientating the health system, which are, unfortunately, not found in the Commonwealth proposal."

"It focuses on integrating the health system and keeping people healthy and, consequently, out of hospitals. It recognises that transferring the funding of hospitals from states to the Commonwealth will do nothing to achieve this, nor will it end the blame game."

Ms Duncan said the VHA agreed with Premier Brumby that the Federal Government must fix the long-standing issues associated with access to GPs and sustainability of the aged care system before it attempts to take majority control of the healthcare system.

The Brumby plan also identifies some missing links that need rectifying before the state can sign up to the Prime Minister's health plan. These include:

- **Accountability and transparency:** The VHA welcomes greater accountability and transparency measures, regardless of who funds the health system. Premier Brumby's proposed Australian Health Pact will provide transparency and information to consumers about health system performance across the entire health system and hold providers and governments accountable
- **E-Health:** This vital element of healthcare infrastructure must be funded as a matter of national priority to drive productivity improvements in the health system
- **Devolved governance:** The VHA supports the Victorian Government's call for a more flexible approach to local governance. A "one-size fits all approach" does not work in diverse communities and this will be even more critical across the country
- **Workforce:** The VHA welcomes the Victorian Government's call for a redesign of the healthcare workforce to meet future health challenges, such as workforce shortages
- **Primary healthcare:** The VHA agrees that primary healthcare organisations should be new organisations, reflecting the joint position developed by General Practice Victoria and the VHA

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The VHA's longstanding calls for flexible funding models are reflected in many of the Victorian Government's proposals. Examples of this include the cashing out of Medicare for patients with chronic conditions and the creation of a Reform and Innovation Fund.

The VHA believes a collaborative approach that allows clinicians, administrators and governments to be equal participants in reform has the best chance of improving the health of Australian communities.

The Victorian Government has proposed a constructive addition to the Federal reform plan that the VHA hopes will be considered.

The VHA is the major peak body representing the public healthcare sector in Victoria. Our members include public hospitals, rural and regional health services, community health services and aged care facilities. Established since 1938, the VHA promotes improvement of health outcomes for all Victorians from the perspective of its members.

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