



**WA Primary Health Alliance
Needs Assessment for the after-
hours, multicultural access and
homelessness support programs**

Key insights and considerations

12 July 2024

In December 2023, Impact Co., an external consulting firm, was engaged by WA Primary Health Alliance to conduct a Needs Assessment to understand the after-hours, multicultural access and homelessness support needs across WA.

This Needs Assessment report aims to provide recommendations to support service commissioning decision-making, following the 2023-2024 Federal Budget announcement that \$143.9 million would be invested over two years for Australia's 31 Primary Health Networks (PHNs) to continue the PHN after-hours program. This investment also includes funding to improve access to primary care for people from multicultural communities and people at-risk of or experiencing homelessness.

WA Primary Health Alliance supports the delivery of primary health care across its three PHNs – Perth North, Perth South and Country WA. This involves investing in opportunities that address gaps in service provision, which includes supporting general practices, strengthening connections with local services and funding local primary health care services. To do this effectively, it is important that WA Primary Health Alliance can effectively identify, understand and prioritise the needs in each PHN location. This is to support the commissioning of services that effectively meet local needs, and support place-based service design of appropriate and tailored solutions.

This document outlines the key insights and recommendations identified through the collection of quantitative (to determine focus areas based on relative need and supply) and qualitative data (including stakeholder consultation with more than 110 service providers and consumers across the regions). It provides insights and recommendations to support effective service commissioning decisions. These insights and recommendations carefully consider the strategic, operational, functional and policy context in which the PHNs operate (the PHNs' 'sphere of influence').

To support effective implementation, it is important that monitoring and evaluation frameworks are established, as well as robust risk management. This includes ensuring alignment of the commissioned services to a clearly defined program logic, and meaningful co-design with key stakeholders to ensure appropriate service design and delivery.

Emerging key insights – after hours		PHN
1	Operating after-hours is not financially viable for most GP practices.	Statewide
2	The provision of after-hours care is impacted by various workforce challenges, including the attraction and retention of qualified, local staff.	Country WA
3	Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety recommendations increased demand for after-hours GP care for residential aged care homes (RACH).	Statewide
4	Telehealth is promising, but additional supports are needed for it to meet community needs effectively.	Country WA

Key considerations – after hours	
The following two key considerations were identified to support WA Primary Health Alliance in potential service design commissioning processes.	
1	Support local GP collaboratives and GP practices to provide after-hours primary care (Metro Perth, Country WA). To support the provision of after-hours services by GPs, funding of a local GP collaborative or funding to support GP practices to stay open after-hours should be considered.
2	Commission a RACH after hours primary care onsite service and telehealth services to improve access and reduce potentially preventable emergency department presentations and hospitalisations (Metro Perth, Country WA). To reduce potentially preventable emergency department presentations and hospitalisations for RACH residents, establishing a sustainable model of after-hours primary care in RACH settings should be considered.

Emerging key insights - homelessness support		PHN
1	Additional barriers for people at-risk of or experiencing homelessness can mean they are reluctant to visit mainstream GP services.	Statewide
2	Existing homeless health services are mainly found in metro areas and are stretched thin, constrained primarily by funding barriers.	Country WA
3	Rates of homelessness in Country WA are almost double state and national rates, highlighting the high need for support.	Statewide
4	Country WA homelessness support lacks the continuity of care and outreach services that are available in metro, despite a significant need.	Country WA

Key considerations - homelessness support	
The following two key considerations were identified to support WA Primary Health Alliance in potential service design commissioning processes.	
1	<p>Increase the capacity of homeless health care services (for metro Perth) and other services (Country WA) to respond appropriately to the primary care needs of people experiencing homelessness or at-risk through a restricted grant program</p> <p>To increase the capacity of sector and non-sector services to respond to the primary care needs of people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness, a restricted grants program should be considered.</p>
2	<p>Develop a person-centred integrated model to provide primary care access to people experiencing homelessness or at-risk in one Country WA PHN location</p> <p>To improve support to people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness in Country WA, a place-based model of care should be considered.</p>

Emerging key insights - multicultural access		PHN
1	People from multicultural communities face challenges navigating the Australian health care system as well as financial and linguistic barriers to making appointments.	Statewide
2	Service providers require more training to effectively and appropriately communicate with, and support, multicultural patients.	Statewide
3	Limited access to translator/language services is creating significant difficulties for consumers to articulate their health concerns.	Statewide
4	Mental health, vaccines and psychosocial support were the identified key priorities.	Metro Perth

Key considerations - multicultural access	
The following two key considerations were identified to support WA Primary Health Alliance in potential service design commissioning processes.	
1	<p>Improve primary care services access, early intervention, cultural safety and health literacy for multicultural communities through a care navigation service (Metro Perth, Country WA).</p> <p>A care navigation service that effectively and appropriately supports patients from multicultural communities in accessing the care and services they need should be considered.</p>
2	<p>Design and execute a health awareness and education campaign targeted at multicultural community members and community providers (including GPs) (Metro Perth, Country WA).</p> <p>A health awareness and education campaign directed at community members and providers to support improved communication and access to care.</p>