

# NEWS RELEASE



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## New Primary Health Network for region announced

The Federal Government announced today that Wentworth Healthcare Limited, trading as Nepean-Blue Mountains Medicare Local (NBMML), has been selected from an open competitive tender process to operate the region's new Primary Health Network.

Wentworth Healthcare Limited (WHL) submitted a tender in January to become the Primary Health Network (PHN) for the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Lithgow and Penrith following the Government's decision last year to replace Medicare Locals with PHNs.

PHNs are based on the recommendations of the Horvarth review of Medicare Locals. They will increase the efficiency of medical services, particularly for those at risk of poor health outcomes, and improve coordination of care to avoid Emergency Department presentations and hospital admissions. The PHNs will also have a greater focus on commissioning and contracting health services and partnering with local agencies.

NBMML Board Chair, Dr Andrew Knight, welcomes the Federal Government's decision to retain NBMML's expertise and build on the organisation's successful work to date.

"If we want an efficient and effective health system to keep us well and use resources optimally we need to invest in strong primary care. Our local GPs and other primary care providers are the key and our job will be to support them as they serve the people of our region," Dr Knight says. "NBMML is widely recognised as a high-performing Medicare Local. We are focused on continuing that success as we transition to become a PHN".

It has long been recognised that the healthcare system is fragmented and the key to improving health is building a connected "whole" system in which the GPs, other primary healthcare providers and the hospital system work together.

GP's, Allied Health professionals and consumers will be actively involved in the new local Primary Health Network and their feedback will guide the way the organisation meets the health needs of the community.

Some of NBMML's achievements include contributing to the region's top ranking in Australia for providing antenatal care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and second nationally for all women. In the past year more than 125,000 people used the after hours GP services supported or funded by NBMML and more than 8,500 subsidised mental health consultations were provided for local community members.

NBMML's successful work in consumer engagement was showcased in July at the Primary Health Care Research & Information Service Conference (PHCRIS) in Canberra.

The PHNs will commence operation on 1 July 2015.

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