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## AMA submission to the Department of Health and Aged Care – consultation on Ngayubah Gadan Guiding Paper

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The AMA welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Ngayubah Gadan (Coming Together) Guiding Paper (the Paper).

The AMA supports the principles for Rural and Remote Multidisciplinary Health (RRMH) team-based care described in the Paper.

This is consistent with the Strengthening Medical Taskforce Report which recommends utilising multidisciplinary care teams working to their full scope of practice to optimise use of the health workforce and deliver increased access to healthcare in rural, regional and remote areas.<sup>1</sup>

The AMA has the following suggestions to make to enhance the aim and purpose of the Paper.

### Areas of improvement

#### GP led multidisciplinary team

The AMA recognises the high value contribution the rural and remote health workforce makes every day to reduce the health inequities that exist between urban and rural and remote communities.

The AMA supports general practitioner (GP) led multidisciplinary team-based care to provide rural communities with access to high quality and safe healthcare services. Supporting general practices to build multidisciplinary healthcare teams will enable them to meet patient needs and support integrated and well-coordinated care. GP-led teams are best placed to manage and reduce the risk of patient comorbidities and reduce adverse medication events through increased access to a broad range of health expertise.<sup>2</sup>

Not all general practices will be equipped to have a complete multidisciplinary team inhouse and there should be flexibility in the model for team-based care using online, telehealth and/or videoconferencing. Primary Health Networks (PHNs) can also play a critical role in the formation of rural and remote multidisciplinary health teams by commissioning services for general practices as they expand into Patient Centred Medical Home (PCMH).<sup>3</sup> Working together with practices, PHNs can help identify where more work is needed to improve patient outcomes, and assist practices to implement improvements where necessary.

As outlined in the [AMA's Delivering Better Care for Patients: The AMA 10-Year Framework for Primary Care Reform](#), the AMA has called for general practice to be better resourced to support integrated and well-coordinated patient care through GP-led multidisciplinary teams. Healthcare professionals

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Government. December 2022. [Strengthening Medicare Taskforce Report](#).

<sup>2</sup> Australian Medical Association (AMA). 2020. [Delivering Better Care for Patients: The AMA 10-Year Framework for Primary Care Reform](#).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

working collaboratively will prevent siloed healthcare, fragmentation of patient care, and support the delivery of safe, high quality care to patients in rural and remote areas.<sup>4</sup>

It is critical that the patient's nominated GP remains a key partner in any collaborative care arrangements and is actively involved to ensure care is holistic and best practice. Maternity care is one example where there has been a trend of excluding medical practitioners (GPs, GP obstetricians and obstetricians) from care models and undermining best practice care. The AMA's [General Practitioners in Maternity Care position statement](#) emphasises that strengthening and supporting the role GPs across the continuum of maternity care will deliver better outcomes for mothers and babies and ensure equity of access to high quality care.

#### Roadmap for establishment of RRMH teams

The AMA recommends the Paper consider including a clear statement on expected outcomes (what success will look like) and a clear roadmap and practical steps to achieve them.

Stakeholders and communities would also benefit from a simple roadmap that can guide them in transitioning to multidisciplinary healthcare model. A patient roadmap can provide anticipatory guidance with the goal of promoting patient-centred care, educating patients on the multidisciplinary team care.<sup>5</sup>

This should be developed in close and genuine consultation with all stakeholders and will require collaborative governance, commitment, authority, autonomy, and clear accountabilities of all elements involved.

A roadmap could be presented through a simple visualisation of a diagram that encapsulates complexity and required efforts to implement the rural and remote multidisciplinary health teams into practice.<sup>6</sup> The roadmap should include evidence-based actions to sustain and strengthen healthcare providers particularly in providing primary care.<sup>7</sup>

A clear roadmap will allow rural and remote healthcare stakeholders to better understand the health care system in a rural community and understand the steps to establish multidisciplinary healthcare teams, its scope, objectives, and timeline.

#### Health literacy

Coordination of care between different health providers and different parts of the healthcare system is essential to ensure quality of care for rural and remote communities and minimise costly fragmentation, duplication, or gaps in care.

The AMA is supportive of rural and remote communities fully understanding the training and experience of whichever healthcare provider is treating them in all environments. Increasing health literacy leads to improved health outcomes, and a key component of health literacy is knowing how to engage with and navigate the health system.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Australian Medical Association (AMA). 2023. [AMA submission on Increasing access to health and aged care: a strategic plan for the nurse practitioner workforce \(the Plan\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> Scherer, L.D., Matlock, D.D., Allen, L.A., Knoepke, C.E., McIlvennan, C.K., Fitzgerald, M.D., Kini, V., Tate, C.E., Lin, G. and Lum, H.D., 2021. Patient roadmaps for chronic illness: introducing a new approach for fostering patient-centered care. *MDM Policy & Practice*, 6(1).

<sup>6</sup> Levesque, J.F. and Sutherland, K., 2020. Combining patient, clinical and system perspectives in assessing performance in healthcare: an integrated measurement framework. *BMC health services research*, 20(1).

<sup>7</sup> Consumers Health Forum of Australia. 2022. [Primary Health Care: a Roadmap for Reform](#).

<sup>8</sup> Australian Medical Association (AMA). 2021. [Health Literacy Position Statement](#).

### **Conclusion**

The AMA is supportive of the Ngayubah Gadan (Coming Together) Guiding Paper and acknowledges that enabling GP-led rural and remote multidisciplinary health teams is an important part in providing equitable and sustainable health care for these communities. The AMA believes the Paper will be more useful with the addition of roadmaps to guide rural and remote healthcare stakeholders transitioning to a multidisciplinary healthcare team model.

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