

***EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GP SUPER CLINICS  
PROGRAM 2007-08– QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS***

***What do patients think about the GP Super Clinics?***

Patients are overwhelmingly positive about the services at the GP Super Clinics. Patients commonly reported good access to appointments and quality of care at the GP Super Clinics.

More than 75% of patients said they attended their GP Super Clinic because they could see a range of professionals in one place, they were able to see the GP of their choice, the Clinic had convenient opening hours and was conveniently located, and/or because of the bulk billing arrangements.

Most of the patients surveyed considered the GP Super Clinic to be their usual general practice and around a third were attending the Clinics to address chronic disease issues on the day of survey. This is consistent with the emphasis of the GP Super Clinics Program on providing care for people with, or at risk of, chronic illnesses.

***How are communities benefiting from the GP Super Clinic in their local area?***

The Evaluators visited seven (7) GP Super Clinics and found that these Clinics had brought a total of 19 extra GPs to their communities – Clinics were not just transferring clinicians from other local services. The GP Super Clinics are providing multidisciplinary care for patients with chronic conditions. GPs, nurses and allied health professionals are in one location and sharing electronic records to help manage the care for their patients.

Patients commented on the ease of access for appointments at the GP Super Clinics compared with long waiting times at other clinics in the area. This is good news for patients and indicates that the GP Super Clinics are addressing unmet need for primary care services in local communities to complement, rather than competing with, existing general practices.

As at early September 2012, there are 29 GP Super Clinics open and providing services to their local communities.

***What do professionals working at the GP Super Clinics think about their Clinics?***

GPs, nurses and allied health professionals at the GP Super Clinics have a high level of professional satisfaction working in the Clinics.

GPs enjoyed being allowed to focus on their medical work as part of a multidisciplinary team while other members of the team, including nurses, allied health professionals and administrative staff, undertook other aspects of care for patients. GPs expressed a view that the GP Super Clinic model provided a balance between financial viability and the GPs' belief in high quality care.

The experience for the professionals and patients in the Clinics was positive. As one patient commented, *“This is so what this area needed and I am not sure what all the fuss was about.”*

### **Who else is benefiting from GP Super Clinics?**

The Clinics are providing placements for medical, nursing and allied health students and GP Registrars. The GP Super Clinics provide a unique setting for education and training due to their multi-disciplinary nature and a number of Clinics have designed spaces specifically for this purpose. The opportunity to teach was considered by GPs, nurses and allied health professionals to be an attractive part of their work.

### **What about the roll out of the Program?**

The Department's roll out of the GP Super Clinics Program was consistent with government program implementation and regulation requirements. The Department is keen to apply lessons learned to improve the way it implements the Program.

The Department sought additional expertise (eg construction) in managing these projects and consulted with peak medical and health professional bodies in the development of the Program Guidelines. The process to apply for funding for a GP Super Clinic was transparent and sound and included rigorous assessment by the Department.

As part of its 2012-13 Audit Program, the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) has commenced a performance audit of the Department's administration of the GP Super Clinics Program. The Department is working with the ANAO to assist with this process.

### **Why have there been some delays?**

Establishing the GP Super Clinics is complex. The large majority of GP Super Clinics needed to find land on which to build. This is different to other government construction projects where the land is already identified and usually zoned for the intended use. Acquiring land and obtaining development approvals were key contributors to delays in establishing the Clinics – factors that were largely outside of the control of the funding recipients or the Department.

The GP Super Clinics were established during the Global Financial Crisis and the completion rate for constructions was considered to be high in this context. Most of GP Super Clinics were built or refurbished within the expected cost range for a facility of that type.

### **What is next?**

The evaluation provides a wealth of positive findings across all three aspects of the GP Super Clinics Program. The evaluation sets out 32 recommendations, a number of which are already being addressed by the Department. The Department is using the evaluation to identify further opportunities for improving the management of the Program and enhancing integrated and multidisciplinary care for the community. This is of particular value at this point in the maturation of the Program, as more and more GP Super Clinics open to the community.

## **Background**

The Australian Government committed \$280.2 million from 2007-08 to establish 36 GP Super Clinics (in 37 locations) across Australia. 31 GP Super Clinics were announced as part of the 2007 Election commitments and five additional sites were announced between August and October 2009.

In 2010-11, the Australian Government allocated an additional \$370.2 million for 28 new GP Super Clinics and to upgrade existing facilities through Primary Care Infrastructure Grants (PCIGs). The establishment of this second tranche of GP Super Clinics and the PCIGs were not part of the scope of the evaluation.

An independent evaluation of the implementation of the GP Super Clinics Program (2007-08) was undertaken across late 2011 and early 2012. The evaluation examined three aspects of the GP Super Clinics Program:

- Implementation: the administration of the Program by the Department of Health and Ageing (the Department);
- Establishment: the planning and construction of the 36 GP Super Clinics across 37 localities announced in the 2007-2008 tranche (including five sites announced in 2009); and
- Operations: service delivery in seven GP Super Clinics which were operational for a minimum of six months prior to the commencement of the evaluation.

The evaluation involved input (interviews and surveys) from key stakeholders involved in the construction and operation of the Clinics, including clinicians, patients and site operators. It also included a review of documents and interviews with staff from the Department of Health and Ageing. The focus of the evaluation was at the Clinic establishment and operation levels, rather than the policy level.

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