

PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
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National Women's Health Policy 2010 – implementation challenge

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) welcomes the new *National Women's Health Policy 2010* and particularly welcomes the emphasis on the prevention of chronic disease, and sexual and reproductive health. Analysis of the social determinants of health in relation to the priority issues gives the policy a sound foundation for the development of programs and interventions that are better designed to take account of the factors that influence women's health and decision-making.

Professor Helen Keleher, President of the PHAA, now calls on the government to integrate the policy direction and goals into the implementation plans of Medicare Locals. "We have learned from the past, that for women's health policy to be effective, government leadership is critical to ensure that mainstream organisations see the importance of working with women's health services to implement women's health policy," she said.

"Considering the focus and content of this policy, it is absolutely critical that the development of Medicare Locals (the governments new Primary Health Care Organisations) are responsible for ensuring that the ideals and the sensible goals of the policy actually become a reality for women", added Helen Keleher.

"Ensuring gender is understood as a key determinant of health in the planning phases of Medicare Locals is fundamental. Recognition of the importance of the impact of the life stages of women, disadvantage and health literacy is fundamental to an effective primary health care system," added Michael Moore, CEO of the PHAA.

According to Helen Keleher, this policy will also provide an important gender focus for the new Australian National Preventive Health Agency as it develops its work on obesity, tobacco and alcohol.

"The opportunity now exists to make a real difference in women's health through the *Women's Health Policy 2010*", said Helen Keleher, "provided the government integrates this policy platform into its general reform process. While the policy does have stated intentions that the five policy goals (see attached) will be included in the reform process, it is not yet clear how this will be achieved".

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From National Women's Health Policy 2010

The policy is available at this site:

[www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/A3D713CE1DCD64E5CA257457001D4ED0/\\$File/Womens_Health_Policy.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/A3D713CE1DCD64E5CA257457001D4ED0/$File/Womens_Health_Policy.pdf)

Five policy goals

The policy examines longer term strategies for addressing the social determinants of health through the establishment of five policy goals. These are intended to highlight ways that gender inequality and health inequities (between women and men, and between differing groups of women) can be addressed.

The policy goals are to:

1. Highlight the significance of gender as a key determinant of women's health and wellbeing.
2. Acknowledge that women's health needs differ according to their life stage.
3. Prioritise the needs of women with the highest risk of poor health.
4. Ensure the health system is responsive to all women, with a clear focus on illness prevention and health promotion.
5. Support effective and collaborative research, data collection, monitoring, evaluation and knowledge transfer to advance the evidence base on women's health.

There is an opportunity to ensure that these goals are reflected in the health reform process, to develop a health system that is more responsive to the needs of Australian women