

Queensland Country Women's Association

TAMBO BRANCH

## Inquiry into Telehealth Services in Queensland

### Submission

Thank you for giving this organisation the opportunity to comment on the current and past telehealth services delivered in the Central West Queensland Health and Hospital Service District.

**Opening Statement:** Telehealth is of extreme importance for health service delivery in remote areas. As the cost of health service delivery continues to rise, it makes sense to deliver those services suited to this type of delivery in remote locations, thus saving the need for patients and/or providers to travel very long distances.

Telehealth also allows clients living in remote areas access to both medical and allied specialists not always available to them due to the client's geographic isolation and/or the client's lack of financial resources to travel to access these providers.

- Expenditure and budget
- Governance arrangements
- Model of service delivery
- Technology and communication systems capacity and capability
- Patients, clinicians and health staff perceptions and experiences of telehealth
- The outcomes of trials and pilot projects
- Quality of patient care
- Access to health services, particularly in rural and remote locations

The community that this submission is being written about has had access on and off to telehealth through a Queensland Health Primary Health Care Centre. Members within this community have also accessed telehealth services, for Home and Community Care and a medical Specialist through Skype.

From a patient's point of view the convenience of this type of service delivery is wonderful. No travel, the patient is in comfortable, familiar and secure surroundings of their local facility. There has also been experience outside Q. Health, when the patient is too frail to travel and being able to

## 2.

Skype their doctor from their own bedroom. Plus having patients assessed by Home and Community Care and Home Assist Secure Services by a team of Occupational Therapist for access to their services.

This community, as well as a lot of other remote communities serviced by Primary Health Care Centres and/or clinics have a need for an expansion of telehealth services in a number of fields.

The field mostly includes Allied Health Services: Paediatric Occupational Therapy, Occupational therapy, Speech Pathology. This community is very well serviced by a Physiotherapist, an Exercise Physiologist and Podiatrist but many other communities within the Central West Queensland Hospital and Health Service district are not. Particularly if they are reliant on Medicare Local to provide their allied health services with their disorganised and unreliable service delivery model. Less and less nursing staff at PHC have x-ray endorsements so it would be extremely cost effective to have staff being able to take x-rays under supervision.

- Consider the value for money of delivery of telehealth services

To this organisation the value for money is obvious. If telehealth was used more by medical specialists as follow up visits, there would be a reduction in the cost of patient travel. The use of telehealth for allied health services namely, occupational health, speech pathology and speech therapy, exercise physiology and dieticians there would be a cost saving in the amount of money spent by these services on travel and accommodation and the practitioners would be able to see more clients as they would not have to travel so much. Based on the history of retention of staff one of the main reasons for leaving is the amount of travel staff are required to do. There is a cost saving in retaining staff.

- Examine the factors that support successful implementation of telehealth services and identify any barriers to successful implementation

However, Q. Health needs to improve their telehealth system so that visiting Medical Specialists can access the service. Medical Specialists need to be paid for seeing patients this way either by a Medicare payment or have the ability to send their patients a bill and these payments need to be able to be reimbursed through private health funds.

- Consider strategies to address any barriers to successful implementation of telehealth services in Queensland

There needs to be a community education program directed at the generation that are not as comfortable with the use of this type of technology. Also directed at the indigenous community where English is a second language. Maybe the use of an aboriginal health worker to be with the patient if the patient wants them.

## 3.

Queensland Health also needs to keep the cost of their service at reasonable levels if they are going to allow access to visiting Medical Specialists and allied health services access to their telehealth services.

## Telehealth

“ Delivery of health-related services and information via telecommunication technologies, including:

- Live, audio and/or video interactive links for clinical consultations and educational purposes
- Store-and-forward telehealth, including digital images, video, audio and clinical [stored] on a client computer then transmitted securely [forwarded] to a clinic at another location where they are studied by relevant specialists
- Teleradiology for remote reporting and clinical advice for diagnostic images
- Telehealth services and equipment to monitor people in their home.”

For the most part the above dot points are a logical progression in the use of this technology. Privacy is a concern but it is a concern for the whole of this technology. This organisation would on a whole support most of the above dot points. However the last dot point of telehealth services and equipment to monitor people in their home. This has been a practice in a number of districts in the USA for a number of years. I do not feel there is a consensus for this within Central West. If Q. Health is considering this option there would need to be much more discussion and education of the people of Queensland and a lot more details on how this would be implemented before this organisation could support it.

Signature:



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