

Frequently asked questions

What are Medicare Locals?

A national network of Medicare Locals is being established by the Australian Government as part of its national reform of health. (See www.yourhealth.gov.au for information about health reform).

Divisions of General Practice were invited to apply to establish the first Medicare Locals. On 6 June [Health Minister Nicola Roxon announced](#) the first 19 Medicare Locals to be set up, five of which are in Queensland.

The first Medicare Locals, including the Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local, commenced 1 July 2011. Following that, 15 more are to commence by 1 January 2012 and the remainder by 1 July 2012.

While Government funded, Medicare Locals will be independent organisations and not government bodies.

Who is Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local?

The Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local was established by GPpartners Ltd, the division of general practice located on Brisbane's north side.

A separate company was set up to form the Medicare Local and a consultative committee of local health and community service provider organisations convened to provide input into the establishment of the Medicare Local.

On 1 July 2011, GPpartners Ltd transferred its programs, services and staff to the Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local, becoming the first fully functional Medicare Local in Australia.

The Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local will be governed by a skills-based board of directors. The full board will be elected by the company Members and appointed by Directors, as per the Constitution, in August 2011.

What area does the Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local cover?

The Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local will work with health services and support the communities within Brisbane's northern suburbs, the Moreton Bay Regional Council and a small part of the Somerset Regional Council.

This region has an approximate population of 853,378 and is predominantly an urban region but also includes regional and rural areas in the far northern and western areas of the catchment.

The region includes the areas formerly covered by GPpartners Ltd, Moreton Bay General Practice Network and aligns with the [Metro North Local Health and Hospital Network](#).

The Medicare Local operates from two offices located in Lutwyche, in Brisbane's inner northern suburbs, and North Lakes in the more northern region of the catchment.



Map: http://www.yourhealth.gov.au/internet/yourhealth/publishing.nsf/Content/MediLocProfile_MetroNorthQLD

What will the Medicare Local do?

In the first six months of operation, the Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local will work to ensure continuity of service delivery for those general practices and other health providers who have been involved with their division of general practice.

The Medicare Local will work closely with the Metro North Local Health and Hospital Network and begin to build stronger links with allied health and community based organisations.

Engagement structures such as advisory and planning committees will be established over time and will provide opportunity for healthcare professionals and provider organisations to have input into local health service planning and delivery.

A key planning structure will be the "Partnership Planning Council", made up of a wide range of organisations involved in primary health care in the region. The Council will have a key role in identifying service gaps in the community and developing plans to fill those gaps.

The Council's role will be supported by a number of Community Consultative Committees as well as Lead Clinicians' Groups, providing an opportunity for health care consumers and clinicians to have a strong voice in the Medicare Local's planning functions.

The Commonwealth Government has also provided advice on early priorities for the Medicare Local, including:

- population health planning
- mental health (and managing the regions Access to Allied Psychological Services programs)
- e-health (including the Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record project)
- after hours GP services (assessment of and plan to improve access).

Who can be a Member of the Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local?

There is no requirement for any healthcare provider or individual to become a member of, or pay any subscription fee, to access Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local services.

'Membership' in the context of the Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local is part of the company's governance structure and is limited to organisations only.

Organisations with a recognised role in primary health care leadership are eligible to apply for membership of Partners 4 Health Ltd, the company trading as the Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local.

The primary role and 'benefit' of becoming a Member is to elect the Board of Directors, which is responsible for the governance of the Medicare Local.

How can you connect with the Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local?

To ensure healthcare providers and other interested parties stay informed about the development of the Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local and opportunities to contribute, we have started a **Partners Program**.

By registering with our Partners Program, we can place you on our mailing list to send you regular updates and store your professional details in our database and, subsequently, on any referral directories that will be created.

The Partners Program will be the best way local health care professionals and providers can keep up-to-date with what is happening with the Medicare Local but we're also more than happy to field individual enquiries.

What the Metro North Medicare Local is not...

- part of Medicare Australia. The Medicare Local has no involvement in the functions/activities of Medicare Australia.
- a Medicare Australia branch where the public can claim their refunds.
- a Super Clinic or medical facility of any kind.

What is the future for GPpartners Ltd?

The Government intends to cease funding divisions of general practice as soon as a Medicare Local is established in the region, and no later than 30 June 2012. GPpartners however, has continued self-funded and has returned it to its roots as GP membership organisation.

GPpartners now offers networking and educational activities for GPs through Local Area Groups. Membership of GPpartners is open to GPs.

GPpartners is also a founding member of the Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local. For more info see www.gppartners.com.au

How to keep up-to-date

The best way for local health care professionals and providers can keep up-to-date is to register with our Partners Program, however we are more than happy to answer your questions over the phone or meet with you.

📄 www.mnbml.com.au (under construction)

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