



REGIONAL CANCER CENTRES GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Infrastructure funding is available from the Australian Government's Health and Hospitals Fund (HHF) to establish new, or enhance existing, regional cancer centres. The centres will be selected through a national Invitation to Apply process, which commenced on 14 November 2009, open to both the public and private sectors. Joint private and public ventures may also be considered.

Applications closed on 8 January 2010.

All applications for regional cancer centres funding through the HHF will be assessed by the HHF Advisory Board against the established HHF Evaluation Criteria, taking into account the Regional Cancer Centres Guiding Principles.

This initiative will improve access to essential cancer services for as many Australians as possible living in rural, regional and remote areas to help close the gap in cancer outcomes between the city and the country.

The Australian Government will build a national network of high quality treatment centres. It encourages flexible models for regional cancer centres that will provide appropriate support and optimal treatment to benefit the maximum number of cancer patients through every stage of their patient journey.

Not all regional cancer centres will have the same features or be of the same size, given the different population densities, areas of need, geographical configurations and services available across states and territories. The underlying intention of this initiative is to enhance capacity and availability of services in regional areas, linked to specialised metropolitan care, resulting in maximum national coverage of essential cancer services for Australians.

In submitting a proposal to the HHF for funding of a regional cancer centre, applications will need to demonstrate that an appropriate and viable centre could be established and maintained. In particular, applications will need to show how the proposed regional cancer centre will:

- A. Demonstrate need
- B. Align with cancer services
- C. Provide or link to comprehensive cancer care
- D. Provide equitable and affordable access
- E. Address sustainability and workforce issues
- F. Support clinical research networks, and
- G. Demonstrate systems to monitor, evaluate and manage performance and report on outcomes.

The following guiding principles and explanatory statements are intended as a guide for potential applicants.

A proposed regional cancer centre will:

A. Demonstrate need

The intention of the regional cancer centre initiative is to optimise the coverage of essential cancer services to benefit the maximum number of cancer patients through every stage of their patient journey and fill gaps in current service arrangements. While regional cancer centres are likely to be configured differently across Australia, there must be a demonstrated need for the proposed location including a sufficient population catchment to provide optimal cancer outcomes and to support the particular services the centre provides.

A proposed regional cancer centre will need to address current gaps in cancer services at a regional level and meet an area of need. It will have a sufficient regional population base and cancer caseload to make the particular services it provides viable and sustainable. As an example, a fully comprehensive centre that provides radiotherapy for patients will need a significantly larger catchment population than a centre that does not provide this service.

A proposed regional cancer centre will service rural, regional and remote populations in Australian Standard Geographical Classification-Remoteness Areas locations RA 2-5 (Inner Regional to Very Remote).

B. Align with cancer services

Applicants must show how the proposed new or enhanced regional cancer centre will align with State and Territory cancer services plans, be part of a collaborative network of cancer services and have appropriate referral pathways. This will require agreed referral pathways to and from local and regional general practitioners and primary care services, as well as to and from existing metropolitan cancer services for the delivery of treatment for selected, rare or complex cancers and procedures.

Regional cancer centres will either be co-located with or linked strongly to existing or essential cancer services. This may include cross-border models of care.

C. Provide or link to comprehensive cancer care

A proposed regional cancer centre will provide access to the essential elements of cancer diagnosis, treatment and supportive care. This will be available either regionally or by appropriate referral to or from other services, including specialist cancer services, screening services, primary care, or other relevant mainstream clinical or diagnostic services.

Wherever possible, regional cancer centres will provide comprehensive, multidisciplinary care locally to patients. Where appropriate and feasible, outreach services will be provided from the regional cancer centre to surrounding local communities. However, some cancers need specialised treatment and/or expensive equipment that can only be provided in larger population centres. Applications will need to demonstrate how a regional cancer centre will provide access to comprehensive cancer care, where local care and treatment is not possible or will not provide the best outcomes for patients.

Applications will also need to show how patients who will be given cancer care at a proposed regional cancer centre will be provided with optimal multidisciplinary care. The cancer

specialties involved will usually comprise, but may not be limited to, the following: diagnostic services; surgery; radiation oncology; chemotherapy; nursing; allied health services; and palliative care. Effective strategies for multidisciplinary team work, role delineation and coordinated care should therefore be addressed in the application.

D. Provide equitable and affordable access

A proposed regional cancer centre will provide equitable access to and affordable services for patients in rural, regional and remote Australia, and must consider the needs of Indigenous Australians and people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. The services should provide appropriate supportive care to meet the needs of cancer patients and their carers.

When people need cancer treatment away from home, appropriate patient travel support and accommodation facilities become vital. Regional cancer centres will be well sited to minimise avoidable travel, accommodation and related expenses for regional cancer patients and their carers. This will help to ensure that people with cancer can access the right care at the right time, as close as possible to home and family, irrespective of where they live or their social circumstances.

Applications will need to include a detailed business case that demonstrates how equitable and feasible access (including evidence of direct transport links) to the planned regional cancer centre will be provided.

The business case will also need to demonstrate how the regional cancer centre will provide affordable services for patients that are sustainable over time.

E. Address sustainability and workforce issues

A proposed regional cancer centre will be a sustainable and efficient venture and will be adequately staffed. HHF funding is for infrastructure. Applications will need to include a business case that demonstrates there is capacity to support and maintain a regional cancer centre, including addressing workforce needs and recurrent costs.

The business case will also need to provide reasonable evidence that a regional cancer centre is sustainable and that relevant stakeholders have been consulted.

Applications will need to show how a regional cancer centre will attract, fund, train, mentor and support essential regional cancer health professionals. This should include an outline of how regional cancer centre staff will have access to professional support and continuing professional development, with effective team planning, role delineation and multidisciplinary care.

Consideration should also be given to the provision of professional development and support for primary health professionals caring for cancer patients and their families in the region.

F. Support clinical research networks

A proposed regional cancer centre will have links to and support effective clinical research as part of a best practice approach to cancer care. This includes links to appropriate clinical trials for eligible cancer patients.

Applications should outline how optimal and evidence-based patient care will be achieved within a regional cancer centre, with appropriate links to major research units.

There should also be a planned strategy for a regional cancer centre to be a part of or support clinical research. This should include, where appropriate, the provision of regular mentoring, professional development, education and registrar training support.

G. Demonstrate systems to monitor, evaluate and manage performance and report on outcomes

A proposed regional cancer centre will establish systems that support the monitoring, evaluation and management of performance and outcomes, including data collection, analysis and reporting tools. These systems are necessary to support accountability as well as to contribute to significant, sustainable and measurable ongoing improvements in health care and the cancer patient journey.