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## Government's after hours initiatives the breathing space PHCOs need

The Federal Government's decision to extend a general practice incentive payment for after hours services until mid 2013 is a welcome move according to the Australian General Practice Network's (AGPN) Chair, Dr Emil Djakic.

Today the Federal Government announced two after hours initiatives:

- Extending the after hours tier 1 Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) until mid 2013
- Awarding 101 local GP clinics with grants worth up to \$100,000, through the General Practice After Hours Grants Program.

"These targeted measures give the General Practice Network sector the breathing space it needs to develop and enhance comprehensive after hours services and operations during this critical time of transition in which the Network is evolving into Primary Health Care Organisations (PHCOs) or Medicare Locals, between now and July 2012," Dr Djakic said.

"To have the incentive payment for PHCOs for an additional two years, means there will be greater opportunity to continue with existing services and to start new services right up until mid 2013, the point at which PHCOs will be directly responsible for integrated after hours services.

"It also means PHCOs will be able to better assess their after hours needs for their specific populations, including the availability, placement and the links to Local Hospital Networks to meet the needs of their specific community.

"While the after hours services are just a fraction of the health reform processes currently underway the impact these services will have on emergency departments at local hospitals will be significant.

"This is about re-orientating the health system to alleviate the pressure on the hospitals and to bring about the right care, in the right place *at the right time* in the primary health care sector," Dr Djakic said.

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