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## Budget delivers for Australia's health care future

Patients can expect better access to General Practitioners (GPs), improved after hours services and a connected health care system as a result of the cash injection into primary health care announced in tonight's Federal Budget, says Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) Chair Dr Emil Djakic.

"The Budget delivers for patients, it delivers for health care providers and it will deliver a better, more efficient and more effective health system," Dr Djakic said.

"This Budget needed to provide funding for general practice to deliver the health care future outlined by the Australian Government."

AGPN is particularly pleased that big ticket items in its Budget Submission, like infrastructure funding for general practices and support for general practice networks to transition to primary health care organisations (PHCOs), were funded, he said.

"The creation of PHCOs is an important element of health reform. They will provide after hours services, connect health care professionals and help patients navigate the health care system.

"Additional funds to support the development and roll-out of eHealth records, the glue needed to develop a person-centred health system, are also welcomed.

"The investment of \$466 million over two years to implement the eHealth business case will move us in the right direction to achieve a connected health system," he said.

Dr Djakic said workforce problems will be alleviated with incentives to employ Practice Nurses to metropolitan areas.

"We have been calling for changes to this for years. Our studies show those 40 percent of GPs who don't have a Practice Nurse don't have one because they can't afford it – despite the benefits to patients and help to GPs nurses bring.

"As a result of this initiative, AGPN expects nurse numbers to increase by 2000 in two years, with 80 percent of practices employing a nurse," Dr Djakic said.

Funding for primary mental health care, foreshadowed earlier in the year, was also committed in the Budget, along with the continuation of the Mental Health Support for Drought Affected Communities Initiative for another 12 months.

"Continued investment in mental health services delivered in primary health care is essential. Depression and anxiety affects one-in-five Australians and the majority of people seek help in general practice or community settings. That's where the funding is most effective," he said.

**For media interviews please phone Frith Rayner on 02 6228 0819 or 0402 267 190**