

20 June 2010

National Prevention Agency would support reforms towards a healthier health system

The Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) says that priority must be given to the benefits of health promotion and illness prevention when the Senate considers the Bill to establish a National Preventative Health Agency next Tuesday.

“The establishment of this national agency will be a forward step in reducing the country’s chronic disease burden, and an important complement to other key health reform,” said AGPN Chair Dr Emil Djakic.

He said the Bill brings an important opportunity to tackle the causes of common chronic diseases affecting Australians, like Type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Dr Djakic, a Tasmanian General Practitioner (GP), said the Government’s health reform announcements have taken us a step closer to better health care for all Australians and that the establishment of a national prevention agency will further build on this.

“We need a national prevention agency to spearhead a coordinated national approach to preventing chronic disease and to back up the preventive health care already delivered through general practice,” he said.

“Strengthening the primary health care system by establishing regional Primary Health Care Organisations to plan and coordinate the delivery of services to meet the needs of local communities, is a key step towards better patient health outcomes.

“Preventive health care is core business for general practice. This new regional PHCO approach will support GPs and nurses to work most effectively with allied health providers and patients to keep them well and out of hospital by supporting healthy lifestyle choices, identifying and addressing problems early and managing their existing conditions,” said Dr Djakic.

“PHCOs will also be well placed to work with local governments, schools, local workplaces and other local agencies on positive programs that contribute to healthy communities such as healthy public spaces, walking tracks and sport infrastructure”

“A national prevention agency will be a great complement to this. It can drive evidence-based prevention activity nationally to back up the messages and support I am giving my patients locally around healthy lifestyle choices, and local preventative health strategies undertaken by PHCOs.

“Working hand in hand with local Primary Health Care Organisations the national agency will be able to deliver prevention campaigns and drive prevention activities that respond to the needs of local communities. Together they will also be able to monitor how effective these activities are so that we can make sure we are continually improving how we do things to best promote the health of our communities.

“For my patients this would mean better access to support to do things like give up smoking and eating a balanced diet. For the health care system it is another key arm of the reform needed to

ensure that the system is sustainable, more focused on health rather than illness and less reliant on costly hospital care," Dr Djakic said.

For media interviews please phone David Butt, CEO on 0411 474 912