

Friday 29 October 2010

AGPN welcomes discussion paper on Primary Health Care Organisations (Medicare Locals)

The Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) says the release today of the Federal Government's *Medicare Locals-Discussion paper on governance and functions* will generate the much needed broader conversation about Primary Health Care Organisations (PHCOs) as they become a reality by mid next year.

AGPN Chair, Dr Emil Djakic says the Network has already committed to transitioning to PHCOs – or Medicare Locals as described by the Federal Government – and it has the capacity to lead that change for the general practice and health services sector.

"PHCOs will work to integrate and coordinate services around the needs of patients, to make the patient's journey through the health system more seamless, to keep people healthy and reduce our current high rates of hospitalisation," Dr Djakic said.

"The General Practice Network has had the foresight to get much of the ground work underway and is in a position to evolve to at least 15 PHCOs by July 2011 and if need be, possibly more if endorsed by the Federal Government.

"On that basis, while the consultation period provides for a quick turn around, the Network is well organised and ready to respond to the issues pertaining to PHCOs as described in the discussion paper.

"Following a Network Chairs and CEOs meeting in August, the Network stated that:

The establishment of PHCOs as recommended by the National Health and Hospital Reform Commission and the National Primary Health Care Strategy and endorsed by COAG, is a logical next move in the evolution of Australia's health system to enable better planning, coordination and integration of GP and other primary health care services and should be built on the existing footprint of the National General Practice Network.

"Clearly the Federal Government has acknowledged the contribution and effectiveness of the Divisions of General Practice across Australia by endorsing the move to have PHCOs evolve from the current network," he said.

"While PHCOs themselves may not be immediately obvious to the public, the impact of PHCOs' work will be felt through the better coordinated care people will start to receive, and the filling of health service gaps in areas where they have long been wanting," Dr Djakic said.

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