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Final agreement on hospital funding finally delivers comprehensive health reform

The backing of all state and territory governments for the Federal Government's final details of the national health reforms which includes an investment of \$19.8 billion in public hospitals through to 2019-2020 will help to accelerate long overdue changes to the health system, Australian General Practice Network [AGPN] Chair, Dr Emil Djakic said today.

"The hospital sector now has a chance to catch up with its reform agenda compared to the achievements of the primary health care sector in which the establishment of Medicare Locals is well underway, he said.

"Now that the Gillard Government has achieved complete collaboration from the state and territory governments, reforming the health system can be achieved more comprehensively," he said.

"The Commonwealth's investment in the primary health care sector has been designed to alleviate the pressure on the hospital system and to shift the centre of gravity away from the hospitals and more towards prevention and primary health care services," he said.

"Over the coming weeks the Federal Government is expected to announce the second and third tranches for Medicare Locals, bringing the total number of primary health care organisations to 62 across Australia, following the first tranche of 19 announced in July," Dr Djakic said.

"Medicare Locals will increasingly support general practice to better integrate with other primary health care providers such as allied health and the social and aged care sectors to deliver more services to improve community care.

"Prevention programs, treatment plans and better coordinated care for people with complex needs, access to health care, particularly after hours services, are all part of a health system that's shifting away from its reliance upon hospitals.

"People with complex health needs will increasingly receive their treatment plans within their local settings through their general practice and other community-based services.

"With a key objective for primary health care to reduce the proportion of potentially preventable hospital admissions by 2014-15 to 8.5 percent of total hospital admissions, the Australian community will increasingly come to appreciate the accountability to be put in place through these reforms.

"In addition, Healthy Community Reports provided through Medicare Locals will also give the community a greater perspective and understanding about health services and needs for particular localities, which in turn will help both the hospital sector and Medicare Locals work together to plan and deliver for patients to get the right care, at the right place at the right time," Dr Djakic said.

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