



15 August 2010

General practice networks identify core prerequisites for health reform

Australia's General Practice Networks (GPNs) today called for the next Federal Government to commit to an implementation plan with clear timeframes, adequate funding and appropriate structural reforms to develop an effectively integrated primary health care-led health system.

Following a strategic meeting of Network Chairs and CEOs in Melbourne, Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) Chair, Dr Emil Djakic said delegates agreed that, regardless of who is elected to govern on 21 August, there is an urgent and demonstrated need for major reform of the Australian health system.

"The meeting acknowledged the international evidence that national health care systems with strong primary health care systems and structures have healthier populations, fewer health-related disparities, lower overall costs for health care and lead to greater consumer and provider satisfaction," Dr Djakic said.

Dr Djakic said Chairs and CEOs agreed on core prerequisites to develop a strong primary health care system which is affordable, accessible and sustainable:

- The consumer or patient must be the central focus of the way health care is organised, funded and delivered in Australia
- Effective primary health care is dependent on the ongoing relationship between the consumer, their carers and a particular GP, supported by a practice team, with that team then provided with the services and support it needs to care for each patient
- New structures, systems and payment arrangements are required which enhance the effectiveness of general practitioners, nurses, allied health professionals, consumers, carers, community services and others to work together and deliver integrated primary health care
- New models of care should be introduced where there is evidence that these models of care result in better health outcomes and demonstrate cost-effectiveness
- The future primary health care system should be built on the existing national footprint established by the current general practice network: any transitioning of the Network

should not result in any reduction in current services but rather the existing valued services provided by general practice networks need to be maintained and supported

- Accountability for change and performance must be commensurate with capability: the primary health care sector needs to be properly funded to ensure successful transition and increasingly effective operations

Chairs and CEOs reiterated their commitment to lead primary health care reform through the establishment of broader primary health care organisational structures building on what GPNs currently do.

“The Network reaffirmed its view that stronger clinically-led networks can best address the pervasive problems affecting our health system and deliver new evidence-based models of care with high levels of clinical support,” he said.

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