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New national body to link the network of Medicare Locals

The Gillard Government's endorsement of the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) to form the national agency to lead and support Medicare Locals is welcome news for AGPN.

AGPN Chair, Dr Emil Djakic said the *Australian Medicare Local Network* will play an active role in significantly boosting the development of flexible, community-responsive primary health care programs and services across the nation through its Medicare Local membership.

"This new national organisation will support the network of more than 60 Medicare Locals that have been mapped across the nation, to reach their full potential to strengthen, improve and better link Australia's primary health care system," Dr Djakic said.

"The establishment of Medicare Local primary health care organisations brings a shift towards a locally accountable system in which health service experts will assess needs and design local health services for communities within their designated Medicare Local area," he said.

"The days of an ad hoc system and 'catching up' where service gaps emerge will be over. Instead, we'll have the right people analysing, assessing and designing the right health services needed to meet local demands through Medicare Locals in conjunction with local clinicians and communities.

"The work of the *Australian Medicare Local Network* is about supporting these new primary health care organisations to achieve their objectives and ambitions to improve frontline health services.

"The new organisation will build on AGPN's focus on general practice to spearhead an organised system of Medicare Locals. It will have an interest and voice in a wider set of policy issues, work with a wide set of stakeholders including in general practice, health, aged and social care and it will promote improvement and excellence in the Medicare Local sector by translating evidence and innovation into practice," Dr Djakic said.

"Lead by a skills-based board, the *Australian Medicare Local Network* will work with Medicare Locals to:

- deliver better health services with general practice at its core
- ensure service innovations are well promoted and advocated
- provide the national connections to improve links between service delivery across the nation and Government policy
- encompass the broader health sectors, including the social care and aged care sectors, to ensure gaps in services are filled and services are functional locally
- provide accountability in the primary health care system.

"The structural reform of Australia's primary health care system has been a major achievement for AGPN and its membership, the Divisions of General Practice, which have evolved to create this new network of Medicare Locals," Dr Djakic said.

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