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Next phase for Medicare Locals providing clarity for reform

The Australian General Practice Network [AGPN] says today's announcement by the Federal Government on the Invitation to Apply [ITA] for a Medicare Local is the clarity the Network needs to move to the next phase in this health reform process.

AGPN Chair, Dr Emil Djakic says the criteria outlined in the ITA guidelines provides tangible steps for the Network as it transitions from the Divisions of General Practice program to the new system of primary health care organisations – Medicare Locals.

"The Guidelines provide further information on what Medicare Locals are going to do so that over time they achieve a vision of improved access to better integrated primary health care services which are high quality and have an increased focus on prevention," Dr Djakic said.

"They are designed to shift the centre of gravity in health care away from a focus on hospitals to stronger focus on providing care in the community which keeps people healthier, has a special focus on those with chronic illnesses, and reduces avoidable hospitalisations.

"Medicare Locals will be the coordinating bodies for primary health care services – in other words, patients will find negotiating their way through the general practice and broader primary health care sector much easier, with less bureaucracy and greater access.

"Now that the ITA criteria have been released, the divisions of general practice across Australia can work with their partners in the primary health sector to formulate their respective Medicare Local proposals.

"The ITA provides a solid and sound basis upon which the divisions with their partners can reconfigure the delivery of primary health care services which will be federally funded and delivered locally.

"The Network has been operating according to a clear vision – that the Medicare Locals of the future would evolve from the divisions of general practice and on that basis, the Federal Government's primary health care reforms are achievable.

"This is new territory for the primary health care sector and re-configuring health services in this area requires strong partnerships between the divisions and other health professionals and community health services.

"The rate at which the divisions of general practice have evolved and are ready to become Medicare Locals is testament to the achievements they have made in improving the health and wellbeing of their local communities – a strong platform to build for the future," Dr Djakic said.

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