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## **Don't erode GP capacity in mental health care**

Patients need more support for general practice services if they are to receive quality mental health care, Australian General Practice Network Chair, Dr Emil Djakic, said today.

"The budget cut to the rebate for mental health care plans done by GPs weakens a vital incentive that facilitates better access and coordination of care around the needs of people with mental health problems," Dr Djakic said.

"Working with multidisciplinary teams, general practice coordinates and delivers a great deal of community mental health care - now is not the time to erode this capacity.

"We welcome the additional funding for mental health care in the community for services such as Access To Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) and for coordinated care and flexible funding for people with severe and persistent mental illness.

"However AGPN does not support any reduction in support for the vital role of the GP in planning and coordinating care around the needs of patients.

"It is essential for quality patient care that the role of the GP is not devalued and that incentives are maintained at a sufficient level to ensure the central role of GPs in the health system.

"Real reform requires more overall money into general practice and the broader primary health care system, not a shuffling of deck chairs.

"In fact we will need to see significant net increases in funding for general practice and other primary health care if we are to achieve a greater focus on community based care and reductions in avoidable hospital admissions.

"Mental health is rightfully a top policy priority for government and further investment in primary and community based models of care are vital," Dr Djakic said.

**For media interviews please phone Karen Warner on 02 6228 0819 or 0438 179 520**