

**AGPN Chairs/CEO meeting  
August 2010, Melbourne**  
***Communiqué: Prerequisites for an Integrated, Equitable General Practice and  
broader Primary Health Care System***

Australia's General Practice Networks (GPNs) have 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.

At a strategic meeting of Network Chairs and CEOs in Melbourne, 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 infrastructure have healthier populations, fewer health-related disparities and lower overall costs for health care. A general practice and primary health care oriented system delivers better care and outcomes for individuals and communities. If health care systems are to become more effective and more equitable, care must be more focused on patients than on disease.

Continuity of care is related to lower health care costs: the relationship between a patient and their GP is the cornerstone of an effective primary health care system. Australia's future health care system must be built around general practice, working with others to deliver integrated primary health care to the community.

A strong primary health care system requires as core prerequisites the following main pillars:

- 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

**Australian General Practice Network Limited**

25 National Circuit Forrest ACT 2603 | PO Box 4308 Manuka ACT 2603  
T 02 6228 0800 | F 02 6228 0899 | [www.agpn.com.au](http://www.agpn.com.au) | ABN 95 082 812 146


**Delivering local health solutions through general practice**

- 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

The Network affirmed its view that these 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.

The establishment of primary health care organisations, as recommended by the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission and the National Primary Health Care Strategy, and endorsed by COAG, is a logical next move in the evolution of Australia's health system to enable better planning, coordination and integration of GP and other primary health care services and should be built on the existing footprint of the national general practice network. The Network is committed and has the capacity to lead the change, working with other stakeholders to design effective primary health care structures that will improve primary health care for community benefit, influence the socio-economic determinants of health and build community capacity.

The Network undertook to lead a national communication strategy with general practice and other primary health care providers, to strengthen their engagement in the change process. The Network supported a cohesive and unified approach to establishing and positioning primary health care organisations and committed to a marketing strategy that will generate a brand that ensures that network members present in a consistent and easily recognisable way to stakeholders and communities with a brand that reflects and conveys their core business.



In any transitioning of the Network, critical services which currently support quality general practice must be maintained, In addition, partnerships with allied health, nursing, community and consumer organisations must be strengthened and enhanced.

**Ends**

**An effective primary health care system has the following key aspects:**

- a focus on health needs: a place to which people can bring a wide range of health problems and not just focus on illness and cure
- enduring personal relationships: the medical home where patients can be guided through the health system
- comprehensive, continuous and person-centred care: facilitated by the ongoing relationship between a patient, their families/carers and a particular general practitioner (GP), supported by a practice team and other 'wrap around' clinical and non-clinical services
- responsibility for the health of all in the community along the lifecycle, including responsibility for tackling the determinants of ill-health: a focus on disease prevention and health promotion as well as early detection
- connected teams of health professionals: GPs, nurses, allied health, specialists where required and social services
- people as partners in managing their own health and that of their community: a focus on health literacy and self-management
- adequate resources and investment delivering much better value than its alternatives: primary health care should not be treated as the cheap end of the health spectrum.