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## Time to step up the pace on health reform

It is high time the Government delivered on two years of reviews into the health system by investing most where the majority of people receive their health care – in general practice and community-based settings according to the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN).

Responding to speculation published in today's Daily Telegraph, AGPN Chair Dr Emil Djakic said that if the government is serious about a radical health reform agenda, it won't happen without critical investment in primary health care.

"The rumoured new funding for general practice networks to run preventative health and chronic disease management programs is welcome – this will enable our members to do what they are already doing much more comprehensively".

"This funding is a welcome down payment but the reform agenda must be much more than this. We cannot move forward by simply putting more funding into hospitals.

"We must have a system that has primary health care at its centre, and that substantially changes the way primary health care is organized, funded and delivered" said Dr Djakic.

"The community wants one health system they can access and navigate easily. New primary health care organizations (PHCOs) which provide national leadership and locally tailored delivery are the only way to overcome a fragmented and complex health care system" said Dr Djakic.

"PHCOs need to hold substantial funds so they have the capacity to plan, deliver programs, support the health workforce, fund and deliver services to meet gaps and better integrate services in response to the local health needs of their communities.

"The fact that primary care trusts in the UK hold 80 per cent of the overall National Health Service budget<sup>1</sup> is an indication of the sort of funding split the community should expect in Australia.

"AGPN supports the mooted single national health funding body. This agency should also fund PHCOs so that it can independently coordinate and monitor overall health spending and outcomes," said Dr Djakic.

*Connecting Care*, AGPN's blueprint for PHCOs provides the government with a plan that is practical and easy to implement.

"We also need several other primary health care measures such as an investment in general practice infrastructure and practice nurses to support existing practices to deliver comprehensive care and work in teams."

These will enable Australian PHCOs to do the best job they can and our outlined in our Federal Budget Submission".

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<sup>1</sup> see: [http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/articles/winners\\_and\\_losers.html](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/what_we_do/articles/winners_and_losers.html)

To view AGPN's 2010 budget submission and primary health care organization blueprint please visit [www.agpn.com.au](http://www.agpn.com.au).

**For media interviews please phone AGPN CEO David Butt on 0411 474 912**