



1 February, 2011

Fully functioning Medicare Locals require full funding AGPN's Federal Budget submission 2011/12

The capacity of Medicare Locals, Australia's new regional primary health care organisations, to make a difference to the standards of health in local communities, hinges on the financial commitment of the Gillard Government, Australian General Practice Network [AGPN] Chair, Dr Emil Djakic said today.

"AGPN's Federal Budget submission for 2011/12 is realistic in light of the financial constraints before the Government and the impact of the devastating floods that have affected communities across Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria," Dr Djakic said.

"Overall AGPN is seeking \$550m over four years – a budget that will get the Gillard Government's primary health care reforms over the line and *functioning* for the Australian community," he said.

"Just establishing Medicare Local structures is in effect paying lip service to the National Primary Health Care Strategy – *fully funding* Medicare Locals is about delivering that strategy

"A key component of AGPN's \$550m submission is \$188m over four years for community access to mental health," he said.

"The floods have left in their wake traumatised communities whose mental health needs will be paramount for the longer term. Rebuilding these communities is not just about the bricks and mortar but also the rebuilding of the mental health and mental strength needed for communities to survive and the primary health care sector is able to provide the flexible and responsive services needed for these communities.

Other key funding initiatives being sought include:

- \$200m over four years for a Better Chronic Disease Management and Hospital Avoidance program
- \$60m over four years for an eHealth program to implement changes and adoption strategies for Medicare Locals
- \$40m over four years for a network of healthy lifestyle coordinators
- \$20.5m over three years for a general practice Liaison Officer initiative to strengthen relationships between Medicare Locals and Local Hospital Networks [LHNs]
- \$12m over three years for a National Primary Health Care Nursing Initiative
- \$2m over two years to establish an Australian Primary Palliative Care Framework.

"By July 2011 the first 15 Medicare Locals will be functioning but *funding for success* is paramount if the community is to better understand the impact of Medicare Locals.

"AGPN's Budget submission is targeting the initiatives and programs that will deliver high performing Medicare Locals and Divisions of General Practice which are progressively transitioning to Medicare Locals over the coming 12 to 18 months," Dr Djakic said.

AGPN's Federal Budget: <http://www.agpn.com.au/policy/federal-budget>

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