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## Indigenous health investment a no-brainer for Budget

While cuts are expected in health spending in this Budget, the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) has warned that a failure to invest in improving Indigenous health will have serious implications for the Labor Government's commitment to 'close the gap'.

In its Budget submission AGPN identified Indigenous health as vital for continued health investment, said CEO Mr David Butt.

AGPN has called for the development of service coordinator roles attached to the Divisions Network across the country to help Indigenous people access culturally appropriate health care.

Evidence indicates that about half of the Indigenous population access health services through mainstream providers. Service coordinators would work to ensure Indigenous patients are identified, can access indigenous-specific item numbers and get appropriate care.

"Indigenous people continue to be the most disadvantaged in access to health care and in health outcomes. Often that is because they don't know where or how to access services in their community, especially where there are no Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services," he said.

Mr Butt said AGPN, which represents 111 local divisions of general practice and eight state based organisations, was also continuing to push for infrastructure support in health care.

"Without the bricks and mortar, without adequate eHealth equipment, health care in Australia can not be supported and will certainly not be prepared for the challenges of the future."

He said the government's commitment to reforming health care would not be possible without significant investment in health infrastructure.

Infrastructure development would enable practices to build multidisciplinary teams and the capacity for training across those teams ensuring better health outcomes for patients.

The recent pertussis (whooping cough) outbreaks had shown the value of immunisation programs and Mr Butt was confident the Government would see the importance of continuing to support these.

"This Budget needs to support the vulnerable in our community, the drought affected rural community, Indigenous people and those most at risk from immunisable disease," he said.

**For media interviews please phone AGPN Communications Manager Frith Rayner on 02 6228 0819 or 0402 267 190**