

11 May 2010

## Primary health care organisations – transforming Australia’s health care future

The Australian health system will be transformed to provide better, more responsive care in the community with the introduction of Primary Health Care Organisations (PHCOs), says Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) Chair, Dr Emil Djakic.

“PHCOs, which will evolve from our Network, will improve access to services, support General Practitioners (GPs) to provide high quality care to their patients and deliver integrated health care,” Dr Djakic said.

“They will reorient the Australian health system away from the obsession with hospitals and towards more general practice and other primary health care services.”

He said health system reform should cut the demand for hospital services, reduce Australia’s high hospitalisation rates, prevent illness and promote wellness and PHCOs will begin that journey.

“Funding for the first wave of primary health care organisations (PHCOs) announced in tonight’s Budget will transform existing general practice networks into up to 15 PHCOs by July 2011, with the rest in place by July 2012,” Dr Djakic said.

PHCOs, announced last month by Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, were mooted as part of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission final report – *A Healthier Future for All Australians*.

“PHCOs, depending on the health needs of their population, will help patients like those at risk of type 2 diabetes by converting population health data into health care services that will make a difference,” Dr Djakic said.

He also welcomed news that additional funding for the Access to Allied Health Professionals (ATAPs) program would be funded through PHCOs – creating a direct link to general practice.

Dr Djakic said PHCOs would enhance after hours services with the announcement of \$126 million to improve access to health care when it’s needed.

“Right now patients need access to GPs out of normal business hours, and far too often they end up in emergency departments - there is nowhere else to go. PHCOs could offer patients an alternative through a coordination or roster system for practices, perhaps in conjunction with the local hospital.

“This is a very real patient need – we hear this regularly from patients – through a PHCO we can ensure patients can see a GP when they need one,” he said.

Dr Djakic said PHCOs would make a significant difference to care of the chronically ill, those who make up about 70 percent of practice appointments.

“PHCOs will ensure patients see the right provider, at the right time, at the right location and at the right cost – their role is to facilitate patient access to care, support GPs and ensure Australians have a health system that delivers high quality health outcomes for all,” he said.

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