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EHealth initiatives essential to health reform agenda

The National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission's (NHHRC) move to highlight the importance of eHealth to improving Australia's health system has been applauded by the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) CEO Mr David Butt.

"AGPN has been campaigning for eHealth to be a Government priority for many years. We are pleased to have this very strong endorsement of our stand on this issue from the Commissioners," Mr Butt said.

AGPN made eHealth a key plank in its Budget submission to the Federal Government, as well as including it in reports to the NHHRC and Primary Health Care Position Statement.

Mr Butt said extensive research into the value of eHealth in the system had already been presented to government.

"At the end of last year Deloitte's outlined a national eHealth strategy to the Australian Health Ministers Conference. This recognises that better use of information technology would be critical to health care reform, and also called for more patient involvement in the care process – like access to their health record."

Divisions of general practice are actively involved in developing and supporting innovative eHealth solutions for general practice like safe electronic health records, ePrescribing and health provider registers.

Mr Butt said divisions have a role to play in the future of eHealth in Australia.

"The Network has the national infrastructure, experience and capacity to support information management and the data governance needs outlined in the eHealth strategy. The network can bring coordination, standardisation and integration to a national strategy rollout, while allowing for the local flexibility and adaptation essential to its success."

Better eHealth means better health outcomes for Australians, Mr Butt said.

"As the NHHRC paper explains, timely and accurate communication of patient information enhances the quality, safety and continuity of health care."

"This is a vital step for the Australian health system to take to build a health system for the future and divisions are well placed to assist in the role-out of a Patient Controlled Electronic Health Record," he said.

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