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## **Major redesign needed now for Australia's creaking health system**

Australians will continue to be hospitalised unnecessarily and die prematurely unless the Rudd Government acts quickly on health system reform focused on patient and community best interests, says Australian General Practice Network Chair Dr Emil Djakic.

Dr Djakic, a General Practitioner said the current system takes the 'ambulance at the bottom of the cliff' approach to health care.

"This country is fixated with hospitals, so we keep pouring more money into fixing people after they get sick, instead of caring for people so they don't get sick. The Prime Minister identified prevention as a key element of addressing excess spending in his Sydney Morning Herald essay yesterday – prevention happens in general practice, not in hospitals," Dr Djakic said.

International evidence shows organised, patient centred integrated primary health care provides the best health outcomes and best value for money. That should be the first plank, the foundation for redesigning our ailing health system, he said.

Dr Djakic said the release of the suite of inquiries into Australia's health system – the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, National Primary Health Care Strategy and National Preventative Health Taskforce Report – provides a rare and unique opportunity for major redesign of the Australian health system.

"And major redesign – not simply another patchwork job on hospitals – is what we desperately need," Dr Djakic said.

He said to tackle the increasing burden of chronic disease Australia must follow other developed nations which have invested in primary health care, built on general practice.

"The benefits and value of general practice, and the work done by the general practice network, are well recognised: government reforms need to support and strengthen the primary health care sector to enhance teamwork and the provision of accessible, responsive and integrated services."

Dr Djakic said Australians have suffered years of baby steps in health reform, in which time chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease have taken hold, the health of the Indigenous population remained a national shame and health spending had gone through the roof. Australia needs real changes in health, now.

"The simplest action Government can take to improve health outcomes in Australia is to empower primary health care and fund it appropriately to get on and do the job – to build on the quality care patients receive in general practice," Dr Djakic said.

**For more media interviews please phone AGPN Communications Manager Frith Rayner on 0402 267 190**