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We can lead the world on diabetes care

Australia has the opportunity to lead the world on providing the best possible care for people with diabetes by maximising the benefits available through the Federal Government's proposed diabetes plan, Australian General Practice Network Chair, Dr Emil Djakic, said today.

"This additional investment of \$450 million in general practice – almost half a billion for general practice to improve care for people with diabetes – will help take Australia to a more sophisticated level of care," Dr Djakic said at the start of Diabetes Awareness Week.

"There are a million people in Australia with diabetes, the incidence of the disease is growing rapidly, and there is no doubt that a large number of people are not currently receiving the best possible care and support that they need.

"It would be remiss of the medical profession to reject what the government has on the table. What we need to do is work with government and consumers to design a workable system that will ensure its investment achieves the outcomes it desires. There is no doubt we can improve the way general practice cares for people with diabetes. We need to work together with consumers and government to ensure the program provides maximum benefit.

"The scheme is not due to come into practice until 2012 so we have the time to design a system which works for patients and for the profession. But we need to start now – it is time for the government to put in place the working party and the consultation mechanisms which it promised would be used to ensure the effectiveness of the new system.

"If we do that, if we work together – with patients and the professions – then we can design a system for people with diabetes which will be the envy of the rest of the world."

Dr Djakic said AGPN supported proposals for voluntary enrolment of people with diabetes, as well as different payment systems which free up clinicians to provide the best possible care. However these are new arrangements and they need to be done in a way that is supported by both patients and professionals – perverse incentives which put off both patients and doctors must be avoided.

"AGPN has long supported voluntary enrolment of patients and flexible funding models to ensure patients can see the right provider, at the right time and at the right cost – and stay healthy.

"Without voluntary enrolment and flexible funding options diabetes patients end up with serious consequences of their disease and in hospital – which contributes to Australia's astoundingly high hospitalisation rates. The local and international research to support changing the way we care for diabetes patients is overwhelming," he said.

**For media interviews please phone:
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