



**Tuesday 25 January 2011**

## **More of the same in Victoria will be a drag on primary health care reform**

The Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) says the Victorian Healthcare Association's (VHA) determination to slow down much needed primary health care reform is not in the best interests of Victorian patients.

AGPN CEO David Butt says the VHA is keen to provide more of the same when it comes to health service delivery in Victoria, but is that enough when the rest of the country will gain a lot more?

"Does the new Victorian Government seriously buy VHA's claim that the system run by the previous government cannot be improved – that we can't achieve better access and quality care for patients through integrated primary health care?"

"Each year 30 million visits are made to general practitioners in Victoria at a cost of approximately one \$1 billion," Mr Butt said.

"Yet the current disjointed system cannot address areas of unmet service need nor address the population health needs of local communities," he said.

"It's absurd for the VHA to suggest existing community services are being usurped in this process to develop Medicare Locals, when in fact they're a fundamental component of the primary health care sector and vision for Medicare Locals.

"An analysis of the progress made towards achieving the primary health care reforms to date show that the majority of VHA's members will be central to the models of care being proposed for Medicare Locals.

"Establishing Medicare Locals is about building upon the already strong partnerships and stakeholder links already available through the Divisions of General Practice, many of which are from members of the VHA," he said.

"Developing Medicare Locals is about maintaining the successful health service delivery components already available, identifying gaps in services and service duplication, filling those gaps and eliminating that duplication," he said.

"AGPN and the VHA are on the same page when it comes to the goal of primary health care reform – to improve patient outcomes, improve health system effectiveness and to reduce process duplication. However VHA's position that no Medicare Local is to undertake clinical service delivery within Victoria is untenable.

"This position flies in the face of national and international evidence on how to reduce duplication of services and improving patient access to services – the fundamentals behind reforming the primary health care system," Mr Butt said.

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