

2 March 2010

## **Back to basics health care means family doctors, not hospitals**

The Prime Minister has ignored a vital part of the health care system in his attempts to get back to basics - general practice, says Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) Chair Dr Emil Djakic.

Dr Djakic's comments come after the Prime Minister today outlined the government's first installment health reform changes which largely focused on hospital based care, the creation of new regional hospital bodies and a national health commission.

"What the Prime Minister has got right is his commitment to one health system and one health funder. This is the only real way to end the blame game.

"What the Prime Minister has missed by focusing solely on reform to the acute sector is a huge opportunity to create better health outcomes for all Australians.

"Kevin Rudd talks about wanting to get back to basics - if we want to get back to basics in health care we must invest in the first place people go when they are feeling unwell, general practice.

"Strengthened primary health care based around integrated general practice holds the key to delivering community based health solutions which all Australians can access and afford," said Dr Djakic.

He also said that hospitals and regional hospital bodies were not set up to deliver community based care and preventive health - unlike general practice, which has prevention and a focus on family and community wellbeing at its foundations.

"These bodies will simply reinforce - if not make worse - the inequities between the acute sector and the primary health care sector," Dr Djakic said. "Acute care will continue to draw money away from primary health care when hospital budgets are under pressure.

"We know that countries with strong primary health care systems have better health status. We urge the Government to accelerate its primary health care announcements.

"A reformed primary health care system must have general practice at its centre and quarantined funding distinctly separate to the acute sector.

"Only separate primary health care organisations with a direct funding link with the proposed national health commission will give us a sustainable health system."

**For media interviews please phone AGPN Communications Officer Ben Graham on 02 6228 0828 or 0430 586 022.**