

28 January 2010

## **EHealth and infrastructure funding key to reform: AGPN budget submission**

Investing in eHealth and general practice infrastructure are key elements to successful implementation of the Australian Government's health reform agenda, according to the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) Budget submission, released today.

The submission calls for 'critical down payments' on bricks and mortar of general practice, boosting the General Practitioner (GP) and nursing workforce and training along with investing in effective eHealth systems said AGPN Chair Dr Emil Djakic.

"The government is considering a radical health reform agenda, but it won't happen without critical investment in general practice," said Dr Djakic.

The Budget submission continues the AGPN call for better eHealth support and development throughout the health system.

"Having a national eHealth system up and running is crucial to the health reform agenda progressing. The system will improve communication between GPs and specialists and enable patients to better manage their health care," said Dr Djakic.

Fragmented funding, failure to set up a nationally consistent approach to eHealth and variable levels of eHealth literacy have been barriers to take up across the sector.

"General practice is highly computerised, but other parts of the sector lag behind. The eHealth agenda set by government will require accurate and quality data which general practice and their health colleagues will need support to deliver.

"The National eHealth Strategy calls for a 'change and adoption' model – AGPN is well positioned to provide that support to primary health care," Dr Djakic said.

The AGPN Budget Submission 2010-2011 also calls for further investment in general practice workforce – Practice Nursing, access to Medicare for International Medical Graduates (IMGs) and team training and clinical placements development.

"There are a number of anomalies in our system. We rely on IMGs in the bush, but we don't give them access to Medicare for their own health care needs. We promote benefits of Practice Nurses in patient care and positive health outcomes, but we don't support GPs to employ them.

"A small investment by government would ensure a fairer and more equitable system across the board. It's time we started investing properly in primary health care if we are serious about making it the cornerstone of our health system," said Dr Djakic.

To view AGPN's 2010 budget submission please visit [www.agpn.com.au](http://www.agpn.com.au).

**For media interviews please phone AGPN Communications Manager Frith Rayner on 02 6228 0819 or 0402 267 190**