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National Preventive Health Agency set to change health care in Australia

Combating the burden of chronic disease in Australia is about to be overhauled now that a National Preventive Health Agency can be established following the passage of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2010 through the parliament today.

Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) Chair, Dr Emil Djakic said the Agency combined with the development of Primary Health Care Organisations (PHCOs) or 'Medicare Locals', will create a fundamental shift in the way health care is managed in the future.

"The Agency will enable a greater focus on evidence-based programs and prevention strategies and it will provide a much needed systematic approach to coordinating and disseminating information, data, statistics and public health campaigns on a national scale," Dr Djakic said.

"This approach is fundamental to the health reforms being rolled out across the country which are working towards a sustainable health system that is more focused on health rather than illness and taking the pressure off the already over-burdened and costly hospital system," he said.

"A national agency focused on preventive health measures, public information, programs and strategies will enhance and reinforce the work already being done within the primary health care sector. As the development of Primary Health Care Organisations (PHCOs) takes hold the links between these locally-based PHCOs and the National Preventive Health Agency will strengthen public health campaigns significantly and produce better targeted programs for specific health needs.

"Preventive health programs for lifestyle diseases like type 2 diabetes, smoking-related diseases and for communicable diseases such as whooping cough, will be put into a national context but also provide a local opportunity via the links with PHCOs," Dr Djakic said.

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