



6 June, 2011

19 Medicare Locals given the green light but Victoria is on amber

Reforming Australia's primary health care system is set to go except in Victoria, following the Federal Government's announcement today that 19 Medicare Locals will be implemented as of 1 July, Australian General Practice Network [AGPN] Chair, Dr Emil Djakic said today.

"The 19 proposals cover more than a third of all General Practice Networks [GPNs] – a ringing endorsement of the great work already done by GPNs in building a strong, integrated general practice and primary health care system," Dr Djakic said.

"Unfortunately for Victoria, its Medicare Local model of care has been set back and will remain in the shadow of health reform for the time being while the Baillieu Government continues to be a thorn in the side of the nation's primary health care reform agenda.

"Fortunately Victoria's position is not holding the rest of the nation to ransom but the state is in danger of being left in the wake of the progressive and coherent primary health care services that will be delivered incrementally through Medicare Locals across every other state and territory as of July," he said.

Dr Djakic called on the Baillieu Government to "get on board with essential primary health care reforms for the sake of the better health and wellbeing of the people of Victoria".

"As the reform process now moves to the next rounds, it is essential that the remaining Medicare Locals be built upon the expertise and corporate knowledge already available within general practice and the remaining Network members," he said.

"Given the tight timeframe of 19 July for applications for the second tranche, ambiguity around the size and number of Medicare Locals is not an option.

"While the Network has been able to deliver on the demanding schedule put before it during the first tranche, it needs certainty about the future as soon as possible in this next stage.

"The implementation of Medicare Locals brings about a reorganisation and restructuring of the nation's primary health care system which will increasingly change the way in which consumers and health professionals negotiate their way through local health services.

"Medicare Locals are designed to reduce bureaucratic processes and provide greater access to a more streamlined system. It's about getting the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

"General practice, nursing, allied health and other primary health care services are set to expand and become more flexible to best meet the needs of patients and their carers.

"After hours services will increase over time and opportunities with eHealth particularly through the personally controlled electronic health record system which is geared for patients and health professionals, will revolutionise the primary health care sector.

.../2

"The work already done by GPNs in ensuring the provision of a range of mental health and suicide prevention services will be strengthened, and there will be an increasing focus on health promotion, illness prevention, and chronic disease management.

"Central to the system will be the strong general practice base of the current networks, working in partnership with other primary health care providers," Dr Djakic said.

The successful candidates for the first round of Medicare Locals cover urban, rural and regional areas throughout Australia. The new Medicare Locals are:

NSW: Western Sydney Hunter Urban New England Murrumbidgee	VIC: [4] yet to be announced	Qld: Metro North Metro South West Moreton/Oxley Townsville/Mackay Gold Coast
SA: Central Adelaide Country North	WA: North Metro Country South West	Tasmania ACT

For media interviews phone Karen Warner on 02 6228 0819 or 0438 179 520