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EHealth investment key to reform success

The Federal Budget commitment to eHealth of \$467 million over two years will bring Australia's health system into the 21st century and begin the creation of a connected health care system, with patients at the centre, according to Australian General Practice Network Chair, Dr Emil Djakic.

"We have made it clear to government that without adequate investment in this essential infrastructure, patients will continue to be lost in the cracks of poor discharge notices and disconnected systems," he said.

Dr Djakic, a Tasmanian General Practitioner (GP) and National eHealth Transition Authority Clinical Lead, said electronic health records would connect GPs with hospitals, allied health professionals and their patients to avoid medication errors and improve general communication.

AGPN hoped the investment would include money to fund eHealth Support Officers in general practice networks around the country to assist GPs with the transition to an eHealth future.

The network called for funding of \$31 million over three years to support 60 eHealth Support Officers working across the country.

"The network is perfectly placed to assist general practice to meet the future demands of Australia's coming eHealth systems. GPs need people who know their environment, work with them already and have a good understanding of their practices," he said.

Patients would be the ultimate winners of investment in eHealth, Dr Djakic said.

"Dr Christine Bennett told us, when she launched the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission final report – *A Healthier Future for All Australians* – that without investment in eHealth almost none of the commissions recommendations could be successful.

"We need eHealth now and we need to support all our medical professionals to understand and work with a system which might at first seem daunting, but has significant potential for patient health outcomes and quality of care," Dr Djakic said.

Dr Djakic said eHealth Support Officers working with primary health care organisations could help create local eHealth solutions not yet thought of.

"With adequate investment in eHealth we are preparing for a health care future we can't yet predict, one where adverse incidents from medication errors are significantly reduced, where GPs and specialists talk regularly and share patient notes and information flows seamlessly, but safely, between health professionals and to patients," he said.

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