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## **EHealth essential to health reform**

EHealth investment is essential if Australia is to achieve health reform that makes a real difference to the health and wellbeing of every Australian and broad investment in eHealth should be a key element of the 2010 Federal Budget, says Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) Chair Dr Emil Djakic.

"Fundamental to the Australian Government's health reform goals will be better connected care and improved communication between health services and health professionals through eHealth, like electronic medical records and hospital discharge notices," Dr Djakic said.

The AGPN Budget Submission 2010-2011 calls for an investment of \$31million to support 60 eHealth officers working through the general practice network to support GPs to make the transition to an eHealth future.

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

He said patients would benefit through early adoption of eHealth models by GPs and a more connected system.

"Expanding the eHealth Support Officer Network (eHSO) will be crucial in implementing the 'change and adoption' components of the National eHealth Strategy. At present we have eHealth Support Officers operating at state and national level. The next step will be to continue this work at the local General Practice Network level," Dr Djakic said.

The National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission final report – *A Healthier Future for All Australians* - recommended a personal electronic health record for every Australian by 2012

"EHealth needs to be part of the broader health care reform agenda, or that agenda may fail. The NHHRC saw eHealth as essential, so do we, and we want to support GPs to make that future a reality for their patients," Dr Djakic said.

AGPN's Budget submission also called for:

- Changes to the Practice Incentive Payment for Practice Nurses so more GPs could access the funding to hire a nurse
- The expansion of successful models for mental health care such as Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) and the youth initiative **headspace**
- Investment in general practice infrastructure

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