



**27 July, 2010**

## **Federal Government has come to the party on mental health**

The Federal Government's commitment to invest of \$276.9m over four years into additional mental health services and its focus on delivering those services through primary health care organisations (PHCOs) indicates the Gillard Government has come to the party on mental health.

"It's about time all political parties started focusing on primary health care and the benefits a strong, integrated system can bring to the community, particularly in areas such as primary mental health care," Dr Emil Djakic said.

"This is a comprehensive package of primary mental health initiatives which builds on the evidence of what we know already works and makes good use of the future Primary Health Care Organisations (PHCOs – called Medicare Locals) which are to evolve from the general practice network."

AGPN has welcomed a number of the funding commitments which meet what AGPN has been calling for on mental health reform for this country, which include:

- the additional \$22.9m for the Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) program, delivered through PHCOs
- a further \$22m for specialist psychiatric services, purchased through PHCOs
- from a funding pool of \$60m PHCOs will be able to expand the Personal Helpers and Mentors Program, one of three non-clinical support services available within this funding arrangement
- the expansion of the mental health program for young people through *Kidsmatter*, to the tune of \$19.6m
- the additional \$24m for children with mental health and development issues, in which PHCOs can purchase psychological services at a community based level for local families

"It's clear the Labor Party has been listening to the mental health advocates of this country and has worked to deliver funding and services that will better match the needs of people suffering a mental illness," Dr Djakic said.

"These policies on offer can deliver a more cost-effective mental health service for our local communities because primary health care has been given the significance it deserves in delivering these programs."

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