



**Australian
General Practice
Network**

*Delivering local health solutions
through general practice*

Australian General Practice Network 2010-11 Federal Budget submission - at a glance

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AGPN represents a network of 110 general practice networks as well as eight state based entities. More than 90 percent of general practitioners (GPs) and an increasing number of Practice Nurses and allied health professionals are members of their local general practice network. The Network is involved in a wide range of activities focused on improving the health of the Australian community including health promotion, early intervention and prevention strategies, health service development, chronic disease management, medical education and workforce support.

AGPN aims to ensure Australians have access to an accessible, high quality health system by delivering local health solutions through general practice.

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AGPN 2010-2011 FEDERAL BUDGET SUBMISSION

Australia is on the cusp of significant health reform. More than 130 recommendations have been developed as a result of recent government health reviews. One message is repeatedly clear: if we are to have a sustainable and effective health system that delivers equitable outcomes, keeps people well and at a price we can afford, then we must invest in primary health care.

Reform is welcome: results of an international 2009 Commonwealth Fund survey show that 71 percent of Australian primary health care providers believe the system needs fundamental change.

In 2009 the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) released two key documents setting out a plan for primary health care led renewal and rejuvenation of the Australian health system. The first was our Primary Health Care Position Statement *Care that Puts People First*, and the second was *Connecting Care* our blueprint for the role and function of primary health care organisations. These are the underpinnings to AGPN's 2010-11 Federal Budget submission.

AGPN recognises the economic climate and the wash up from the global financial crisis will command a prudent approach to new spending measures. However, if we are to drive the health agenda forward and, at the same time, invest in a productive nation and build strong communities, it is essential that the 2010-2011 Federal Budget starts making some pragmatic down payments on this health agenda.

To achieve these essential goals, this submission recommends the following areas of health investment as fundamental to the development of both a sustainable and vibrant health system as well as a strong and robust nation. For a further description of the measures proposed, read the attached full submission.

Building the capacity of general practice through infrastructure

A vibrant general practice sector offering multidisciplinary care and connected to other providers lies at the heart of all good health systems.

Incentives and programs to promote general practice as an attractive career pathway for medical and nursing graduates and to train and mentor the doctors and other primary care providers of the future are essential.

This goal can be achieved through a General Practice Infrastructure Program (GPIP) to support multidisciplinary team care and increased health workforce training places and a scheme for active brokerage of clinical placements in general practice for medical and allied health students.

Introduction of further eHealth capacity will integrate systems, link providers, improve quality and safety and support better coordinated service delivery.

AGPN 2010-2011 Federal Budget Recommendations

- \$830 million over three years for a General Practice Infrastructure Program (GPIP)
- \$31 million over three years to implement the eHealth 'change and adoption' strategy for primary health care
- \$10.2 million over three years to support increased clinical training placements in the general practice setting for medical and allied health students

Supporting and growing our vital health workforce

Australia's health system must be built around general practice working with others to deliver integrated primary health care to the community.

Practice Nurses in particular, are essential to improving access to general practice and are core members of the general practice team, playing a key role in chronic disease management and prevention.

Workforce distribution and supply continues to be a critical issue for many areas in Australia.

Measures such as extending the practice nurse subsidy available under the Practice Incentive Program to all practices and continuing to support general practice networks (GPNs) to support Practice Nurse recruitment, retention and development are key.

Initiatives to support rural general practice and provide essential support to International Medical Graduates (IMGs) are vital ways of nurturing the primary health care workforce and encouraging team based care.

AGPN 2010-2011 Federal Budget Recommendations

- Expand the Practice Nurse Practice Incentive Payment to all practices
- \$18 million over three years for a Nursing in General Practice Program
- \$8.5 million over three years for continuation of the Workforce Support for Rural General Practice Program
- Medicare coverage for IMGs and their families

Delivering community access to comprehensive health care

The burden of chronic disease is increasing, the population is ageing and there are major stages in the lifecycle such as childbirth and when families have young children where a wide range of co-ordinated primary and other health care services are needed.

As recent government reviews show, there is growing community support for the concept of a 'one stop shop' that will enable those who need it to access more of the services they need in one place.

Investment in comprehensive primary health care services should be directed at Australia's 7,000 existing general practices, supporting them to evolve and develop into primary care centres.

The focus should be on integrated and coordinated models of care in: child, maternal and family primary health care services; prevention and early intervention services; youth health; increased choices for aged primary health care and; sub-acute models of step-down care is a solid investment. A particular focus should be on early intervention services of a child's early years to ensure they have the best start to life.

AGPN 2010-2011 Federal Budget Recommendations

- \$22.5 million over three years to build networks to support the development and integration of comprehensive primary health care services
 - 30 service networks would each receive a grant of \$250,000 per year to provide capacity to coordinate and link relevant primary health care services to provide comprehensive care to keep people well
- \$57.3 million over three years for an expansion of the Communities for Children initiative, linked to primary health care services

Local solutions to health care through regional organisations

Australia is a broad and diverse country with many communities of interest and health care needs that vary across population groups and geographical boundaries.

A regionalised approach to health care funding, organisation and delivery in order to allocate resources based on community need is essential if we are to improve health and achieve a responsive and sustainable system.

The global trend towards primary care organisations has been recognised by government reviews and health commentators and recommended for Australia. Australian primary health care organisations (PHCOs) must be built on a strong general practice base.

GPNs with their national footprint, a track record in service delivery and engagement with general practice. Transforming GPNs into PHCOs will enable higher quality, better connected care and improve the health and wellbeing of the community.

AGPN 2010-2011 Federal Budget Recommendations

- \$10 million to establish a Transition Fund to support the evolution of GPNs into regional PHCOs, including the establishment of up to 15 early adopter PHCOs in 2010-11.

Renewing the mental health agenda

Mental health is one of the most significant public health and social policy issues facing Australia. It affects about one in five Australians and disrupts their access to good physical health, a productive career and fulfilling relationships.

Young people are at most risk of mental illness at a cost of over \$10 billion in lost productivity due to lower employment, absenteeism and premature death.

The solution is not more hospital beds: key investments must include an expansion of vital and accessible community-based services such as **headspace**, Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) Program and the introduction of innovative ways to improve access to care and support such as on-line based therapies.

AGPN 2010-2011 Federal Budget Recommendations

- \$69 million over three years for expansion of **headspace** to an additional 30 centres
- \$90 million over three years to expand the ATAPS Program
- \$12 million over three years for a Primary Mental Health Care Quality and Innovation Initiative
- \$1 million over two years to trial and evaluate the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies model
- \$24.75 million over three years to build on the Drought Initiative to implement a community resilience program

Promoting healthy, resilient communities

The Preventative Health Taskforce has put prevention back on the agenda: a response to its report is now well overdue. It is important to accelerate action and spearhead a prevention response by tackling risk factors for chronic disease such as obesity, tobacco use and risky levels of alcohol consumption.

The single most powerful intervention available to government – and one that could yield a budget offset – is taxation (pricing) measures in the form of increased taxes on cigarettes and alcohol and a volumetric tax for alcoholic beverages.

It is also critical that any prevention agenda maintain Australia's immunisation rates and to prevent the damaging effects of infectious disease, such as the recent threat posed to Australia by the influenza (H1N1) 2009 virus. This can be achieved by establishing a Network role in coordinating the general practice response to pandemic influenza and continuing and expanding the general practice immunisation program.

AGPN also urges and address health promotion and illness prevention at key points in the life cycle such as the early years.

AGPN 2010-2011 Federal Budget Recommendations

- An additional \$1.8 million per annum to enable GPNs to support general practice in rolling out childhood vaccination schedules and vaccines targeted at older cohorts
- An investment of \$1.8 million per annum to enable GPNs to support general practice and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services to maintain a high level of 'pandemic preparedness'
- Taxation reform – alcohol and tobacco

For a copy of *Care That Puts People First*, go to:

http://www.agpn.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/16274/20090402_pos_AGPN-PHC-Position-Statement-2009-FINAL---Graphic-Designed.pdf

For a copy of *Connecting Care*, go to

http://www.agpn.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/21451/20091127_pap_Australian-PHCOs-Blueprint-FINAL-Graphic-designed.pdf