

MEDIA RELEASE

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New primary health care organisations will ensure better health care for local communities

Local residents will receive better access to, and a wider range of services from, their general practice under the proposed establishment of primary health care organisations, according to General Practice Tasmania (GPT).

Primary health care organisations, as announced yesterday under the Rudd Government's health reform agenda, will reduce fragmented care by building relationships across the health professions, helping patients negotiate a complex health system and improving access by identifying health needs in their communities and finding or facilitating relevant, local solutions.

"These organisations will make health care a local issue and find local solutions. This is about local people having an organisation that is set up to serve the patient need and support general practice and the broader primary health care system to deliver the best quality care possible," said GPT spokesperson Dr Judith Watson.

Dr Watson also said that one of the key activities of the primary health care organisations will be assisting patients living with complex medical needs like diabetes and heart disease to navigate through the health system more easily when they are sick. "This will help both the patient and general practice" she said.

"These illnesses come with a large administration burden which should not fall to our already overstretched General Practitioners. Primary health care organisations will help ease this burden and ensure that the community can access the additional services it needs, when it needs them," Dr Watson said.

As part of the Prime Minister's announcement the existing national general practice network, of which General Practice Tasmania and its three regional Divisions are members, will become primary health care organisations with the first to be operating by the middle of next year.

"It is logical and appropriate for government to build on years of investment, intellectual capital and well established relationships with general practice and allied health, and create these organisations from what already exists," she said.

Dr Watson commended the Federal Government's move to put primary health care at the centre of the health system saying that the changes would, over time, reduce hospitalisation rates. "Local and international evidence tells us primary health care, that is, general practice care, is the most cost-effective model for delivering the best health to the community.

"We know that we have avoidable hospitalisations in our community and primary health care organisations will contribute to significantly reducing these as patients would be able to access the health care they need out of hospital," Dr Watson said.

(ENDS)

The General Practice Tasmania network is a unique statewide infrastructure that supports contemporary general practice in Tasmania by linking GPs with each other, by supporting all members of the general practice team and, increasingly, by employing or supporting allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, dieticians and psychologists to be part of the primary care team. General Practice Tasmania is also a proud member of the Australian General Practice Network.

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