

MEDIA RELEASE

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CONTRIBUTION OF GPS RECOGNISED BY REFORM COMMISSION

General Practice Tasmania (GPT) has welcomed today's release of draft national recommendations, which call for a wholesale shift in emphasis from acute to primary care, that is, the care that patients get from their GPs and others in the care team.

GPT was commenting on the release of draft recommendations from the Commonwealth Government's National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission.

GPT spokesperson, Dr Judith Watson, said she was particularly pleased to see the Commission acknowledge that the current health system was not able to handle the burden of chronic disease into the future. The Commission had recognised that reform to address this issue had to see a shift from acute to primary health care.

"The reforms outlined in the Commission's report herald significant changes to funding, roles and responsibilities between the State and Commonwealth Governments," Dr Watson said. "While there will undoubtedly be ongoing debate and a long process to follow, we are heartened by the recognition of the current inequities in access to health care. We are also pleased to see recognition of the need to end the blame shifting between governments and invest in illness prevention and primary care to turn the system around. GPs around the country have been calling for this for years," Dr Watson said.

"The recognition of the role of general practice at the frontline of health care is long overdue. This reform offers a rare opportunity to improve health care for all Australians, and that opportunity needs to be seized."

Australian General Practice Network Chairman, Dr Emil Djakic, a Tasmanian GP from Ulverstone, has also supported the Commission's recommendations today saying that for too long primary care had been the 'poor cousin' to the acute sector.

"General practice is where patients get the care they need so they can avoid hospital stays. It makes sense, when the Government wants to focus on disease prevention, to invest in primary health care," he said.

Ends

Contact Details:

General Practice Tasmania spokesperson, Dr Judith Watson, may be contacted on 6224 1114.

Dr Emil Djakic's media statement is also attached.

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.

A proud member of





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General Practice contribution recognised by Reform Commission

GPs around the country would be celebrating the recognition of their role in the release of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission draft recommendations, says Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) chairman Dr Emil Djakic.

Dr Djakic, a Tasmanian GP and leader of the peak national body for the Divisions of General Practice Network, said for too long primary care had been the 'poor cousin' to the acute sector.

"General practice is where patients get the care they need so they can avoid hospital stays. It makes sense, when the Government wants to focus on disease prevention, to invest in primary health care," he said.

While the health system looks in good shape from the outside, Dr Djakic says Australia's long life expectancy and low infant mortality rates mask access issues, inequality of service – especially for Indigenous and rural and remote areas – and poorly connected services. Workforces now and in the future flag a looming crisis in health care.

"I would defy any GP in Australia to suggest that the system we have provides equitable access to health care for all Australians, it simply does not," he said.

"There is a well recognised difference between what we spend on Medicare in urban areas, and the spend in rural – it shows rural people lose out in the current system."

International research and examples make a good case for regionalised care, aimed squarely at the needs of local populations, with GPs being the clinical care leaders, said Dr Djakic.

The WHO World Health Report last year suggested the worlds' burden of disease could be reduced by as much as 70 per cent if better use of preventative measures, which are best delivered in primary care, he said.

"For too long the power in health care has rested with the acute sector. System change from acute to primary care won't happen naturally, it needs the Government and stakeholders to take the lead. The Government has promised a commitment to primary health care, and if they follow through with these recommendations it's a very positive step in the right direction," he said.

For media interviews please phone AGPN Communications Manager Frith Rayner on 0402 267 190