

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Budget focus on primary health care teams is a big win for patients**

A collaboration of 20 peak health organisations has welcomed the Government's 2010-11 Budget as a step toward better health outcomes for Australians.

"The Commonwealth is investing in primary health care teams, in enabling GPs, nurses, pharmacists and allied health professionals to work together to deliver care in the community. Bringing together a team of health professionals with different expertise to work together with the patient is the best way to prevent illness and manage chronic conditions like diabetes. It's the best way to keep people well and out of hospital," said Claire Hewat, Chair of the National Primary Health Care Partnership (NPHCP).<sup>1</sup>

Tonight's Budget announcements included investment in establishing regional Primary Health Care Organisations (announced as Medicare Locals in the Budget), support for more nurses to work in primary health care through the general practice setting, infrastructure funding to expand clinics for GPs, nurses and allied health professionals to work together, and funding to progress the eHealth agenda.

"These are all key steps to support better patient access to care from a group of primary health care professionals working together," Ms Hewat said.

"Primary Health Care Organisations will be new entities responsible for planning to meet the needs of local communities. They will be able to look at local communities, identify where things aren't working and introduce responses that will work for that community. This will mean fewer service gaps and making sure everyone is working together to provide patients with better care.

"These organisations provide an opportunity for the community and local primary health care professionals from a range of disciplines to be involved in planning how to deliver the best sort of care for the community. When these key stakeholders are involved in planning and decision-making we will see the best results," Ms Hewat argued.

The NPHCP has also welcomed the announcement of greater investment in eHealth.

Ms Hewat said, "investing in eHealth is another important step toward comprehensive team care. EHealth technologies like shared individual electronic health records enable health care teams to share information and work together, even if they aren't physically located in the same spot."

"To enable team care, we need all the professionals involved in the health care team to be able to participate and share information using eHealth solutions, and we need to be able to share information across the different health care sectors. Not all health professionals are 'eHealth ready.' We are going to need to offer financial and practical support for some groups to put in place the technologies needed."

Ms Hewat said "the key to getting the best out of these new initiatives is ensuring that we keep the focus on supporting teams to work in partnership to develop the best care for patients. The NPHCP is looking to work with Government to make sure this happens "

**To arrange a media interview with Claire Hewat please contact Skye Cappuccio on 0431 476 259**

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<sup>1</sup> The NPHCP is a collaboration of 20 peak health organisations representing more than 100,000 health professionals and health consumers. A list of NPHCP members is included as an appendix.

## **National Primary Health Care Partnership collaborating organisations**

Allied Health Professions Australia

Audiology Australia

Australasian Podiatry Council

Australian Association for Sports and Exercise Science

Australian Association of Social Workers

Australian Diabetes Educators Association

Australian General Practice Network

Australian Physiotherapy Association

Australian Practice Nurses Association

Australasian Psychology Society

Consumers Health Forum

Dietitians Association of Australia

Occupational Therapy Australia

Optometrists Association of Australia

Pharmacy Guild of Australia

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia

Royal College of Nursing Australia

Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health

Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia

Speech Pathology Australia