

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Peak health collaboration calls on COAG to support nationally-funded, locally implemented system**

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) is being urged to support plans for a nationally-funded, locally-implemented primary health care system when they meet tomorrow to discuss health reform.

"The Commonwealth's proposal has the potential to really enhance how Australians receive health care in the community. If the Government can ensure the implementation of reform is informed by consumers and the broad spectrum of health professionals working in primary health care, then it's a win for the community and the whole health system" said Claire Hewat, Chair of the National Primary Health Care Partnership (NPHCP).

"Strengthening primary health care is the most effective way to promote better health and reduce the demand on our hospital system. Primary health care professionals are in the best position to work with patients to prevent illness, diagnose problems early and effectively manage chronic conditions like diabetes. In the long run this means better health for patients and less demand for hospital beds," she said.

The NPHCP, a unique national body which brings together 19 peak health groups, representing more than 100,000 health professionals, has offered general support for the Commonwealth's proposed primary health care reforms, but seek more detail.

"The Commonwealth's proposal offers a good mix of national coordination and locally-tailored approaches," Ms Hewat said.

"An effective primary health care system requires national leadership. The best way to ensure better coordination of health services, with less duplication and greater accountability, is for one Government to have responsibility for primary health care," Ms Hewat said.

"We also need to focus on the needs of local communities. We need to make sure there is flexibility for local solutions to be developed to meet local needs," she said.

The NPHCP believes the Commonwealth's proposal to establish regional Primary Health Care Organisations can deliver this. They will be responsible for primary health care service planning at the local level and accountable to local communities.

"Primary health care organisations will be able to introduce the sorts of local responses needed to address service gaps and health inequities.

"These organisations will work best if they are informed by the community and local primary health care professionals from a range of disciplines. It's pleasing that the Commonwealth's proposal acknowledges the need for these stakeholders to be involved in planning and decision-making," Ms Hewat argued.

"We hope COAG will recognise that this kind of investment in primary health care is needed to deliver better patient health and a more efficient health system. We urge all Australian Governments to focus on what is best for patients and support these reforms," Ms Hewat said.

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

**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

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