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Primary Health Care Reform now the Main Game

“Primary health care reform is now the main game. The Gillard Government’s announcement on changes to hospital funding arrangements has changed the focus of health reform. We should now focus on the opportunity to achieve better health outcomes across the community,” according to Michael Moore, CEO of the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA).

“It is now time to focus on what Medicare Locals can achieve for a healthier community and to reduce the amount of hospitalisation,” said Mr Moore.

“A key element of the reform package includes population health planning,” he added. “For the first time local areas will have the ability to use solid data to assess the needs of the local community, to audit the health services that are available and to draw up effective plans to deal with the gaps.”

“Good population health planning for the Medicare Locals will mean a ‘fair go’ for the whole of the population. For too long our primary health care services have been weighted to the worried well and those who can afford to consult medical practitioners over the most minor of ailments. This opportunity should allow the gaps to be identified and socio-economic disadvantage be taken into account as part of achieving better health outcomes for all”.

“In our big cities the primary health care provision has been strongly biased in favour of older, wealthier suburbs while people in the outlying newer suburbs struggle to even get listed on a GP’s books. The problems are further exacerbated in rural and regional Australia.

“The Medicare Locals will also be able to play a key part in prevention – linking into the national approach to be taken by the Australian National Preventive Health Agency but focussing action at a local level”.

“While it is disappointing that the Gillard government has not been able to adopt all the measures in its reform process, the most important reforms are still taking place,” concluded Mr Moore.

For further information/comment:

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