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# MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release



## College of GPs welcomes agreement on health reform

The Council of Australian Governments Meeting (CoAG), with the exception of Western Australia, agreed to establish a National Health and Hospital Network at yesterday's CoAG meeting.

The National Health and Hospital Reform Commission has recommended the development of a person-centred, strong, equitable, integrated primary health care system and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) is pleased that CoAG has taken this challenge up.

Dr Chris Mitchell, President of the RACGP, said that the college welcomes CoAG's endorsement of the health and hospital reform plans, confirming the policy from the National Health and Hospital Network's announcements by the Prime Minister earlier this month in the National Health and Hospitals Network report volume 2.

"It is good news that our federal and state governments have finally reached agreement on the establishment of the National Health and Hospital Network – we agree that this is a historic agreement and a positive outcome after two years of community and key stakeholder consultation. It's great to see a real focus on general practice and primary health care in these announcements.

"Of course, we still want to see the details on how this plan will be implemented at a local level, but overall, it is very good news to see that the Prime Minister and our state ministers are committed to making a difference to the health of our nation and committed to investing into general practice and primary care.

"This agreement means health reform on a national level and we are looking forward to working with all levels of government to implement this plan.

"We are pleased to see that there is significant new money going into mental health and sub-acute care and welcome government recognition and support for GP's central role in managing and planning an individual patient's care," said Dr Mitchell.

The evidence of the benefit of general practice care is abundant and unmatched by any other medical specialty or primary health care sector. Increased availability of general practice care is associated with higher patient satisfaction improved health outcomes and reduced health care spending.

The college has previously welcomed the Rudd Government's announcement to establish primary health care organisations (PHCOs) building on the existing networks and divisions of general practice. The college has also supported workforce initiatives to increase the number of GPs and GPs in training (visit [www.racgp.org.au/media2010/36883](http://www.racgp.org.au/media2010/36883)).

Dr Mitchell said that an ongoing relationship between a patient and their GP is at the heart of general practice and leads to better patient health outcomes.

“There is a real need for the government’s reform agenda to now focus on supporting this special relationship. Continuity of care must be supported by a policy framework to ensure we have a health system that keeps people healthy and out of hospital,” said Dr Mitchell.

The CoAG communiqué is available at [www.coag.gov.au](http://www.coag.gov.au).

The ‘A National Health and Hospitals Network: Further Investments in Australia’s Health’ report is available at [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au).

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#### **About the RACGP**

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) sets and maintains the standards for quality clinical practice, education and training, and research in Australian general practice, and represents Australia's urban and rural general practitioners. Visit [www.racgp.org.au](http://www.racgp.org.au).