



General Practice Lobby Kit

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For Political Representatives

The evidence clearly shows that the GP is central to good health outcomes in Australia and that government initiatives, which improve patient access to GPs and increase the amount of time patients can spend with their GP will further improve those outcomes.

The role of general practice as the cornerstone of a good primary care system must be strengthened, not substituted. GPs are under enormous pressure. The Government must:

- **Support patients' right to choose their GP;**
- **Support patients' right to see their GP as often as they need to;**
- **Support the central role of GPs in delivering health care and advice to patients and their families;**
- **Provide support that will enable patients to spend more time with their GP when they need to;**
- **Cut red tape to minimise the paperwork and processes that reduce the time that GPs can spend caring for patients.**

This is achievable through the following measures:

MBS Reform and Simplification and Indexation

The Government must urgently order a comprehensive review of the MBS to modernise the GP consultation items, cut red tape, and ensure that patient rebates for services provided by all medical practitioners reflect the value of the service provided.

Slash Red Tape

The AMA seeks the implementation of the previous recommendations of the Productivity Commission and other reviews to further reduce red tape in areas such as authority prescriptions, practice incentive program requirements, provider number arrangements, chronic disease item numbers, and other Government programs. If red tape can be cut in half, the existing workforce could provide 12.8 million additional consultations per annum.

GP Infrastructure Funding

The current Government has acknowledged this need and announced \$355 million for infrastructure funding in the 2010-11 Federal Budget, only about one-third of which is allocated to infrastructure grants to expand existing practices.

Rather than establish another 23 GP Super Clinics, the AMA believes Government must make these funds available so that more existing GP practices can expand their facilities and deliver benefits to more local communities.

Practice Nurses

Practice nurses have been one of the success stories in improving access to GP services, with more than 8500 now employed in practices across the country. The Government has recently announced new additional funding to increase practice nurse numbers but did not consult and there are significant disincentives for some practices.

The AMA believes Government must rethink the proposed practice nurse arrangements and consult with the profession to ensure effective implementation that does not disadvantage GPs or practices.

Primary Health Care Organisations – Medicare Locals/Divisions of General Practice

The AMA seeks to ensure that any arrangements to support local general practices and provide coordination for primary care services must complement the work of GPs and work effectively with any governance arrangements that are introduced for hospitals.

The AMA does not want bodies that provide coordination for primary care, and assist general practice, becoming ‘managed care’ organisations and does not wish to see an increase in the red tape load on general practice.

To be effective, they must have strong GP leadership, a local focus, and minimal bureaucracy. The services they support must be designed at the local level around the clinical needs of patients and be based on the advice of local GPs and be accountable to them.

GP-Referred MRI

Modelling undertaken for the AMA has demonstrated that GP-referred MRI can save money and improve the timeliness of access to care.

The AMA encourages Government to implement GP-referred MRI, based on best practice clinical protocols to govern its use with appropriate advice from relevant professional bodies.

Point-of-Care Pathology Testing (PoCT) in General Practice

PoCT has been shown to yield significant benefits in the treatment of chronic and complex disease by providing timelier test results that enable GPs to better manage the care of their patients.

The Government should fund PoCT in general practice through the introduction of relevant MBS rebates.

See further material on all these issues and information regarding Federal Members at ama.com.au