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**PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION HIGHLIGHTS EFFICIENCY AND
 VALUE FOR MONEY OF AUSTRALIA’S HARDWORKING GPs**

AMA President, A/Prof Brian Owler, said today that the latest Productivity Commission report highlights yet again that general practice is the most efficient and cost-effective part of the Australian health system.

A/Prof Owler said that the Commission’s *Report on Government Services 2015* illustrates the key role that GPs play in the health system, and the value that the community gets from the Government’s investment in general practice.

“The Productivity Commission has provided further evidence that the Government’s Budget measures for general practice are unwarranted and ill-directed,” A/Prof Owler said.

“General practice remains accessible and affordable for most Australians, and ultimately provides savings for the Government by keeping people out of more expensive hospital care.

“It is bad health policy to create disincentives for people to go to their GP by making health care more expensive for the people less able to afford it.

“The Government has done the right thing by axing its policy to increase the cost of short GP consultations by \$20, but other Budget measures continue to pose a threat to GPs and their patients.

“The AMA is currently engaged in consultations with new Health Minister, Sussan Ley, in an effort to get the Government to reconsider its plans to cut the Medicare patient rebate by \$5, freeze Medicare rebates until 2018, and introduce an unfair GP co-payment model.

“When Australians are sick, injured, or seek quality health advice, they want to see their GP.

“The Government should not be putting obstacles in the way of the vital GP-patient relationship, which is the cornerstone of the Australian health system.

“Our hardworking GPs are doing a great job, and must be supported,” A/Prof Owler said.

The Productivity Commission report shows that Australians have very affordable access to their GP, with only 4.9 per cent of people saying that they had deferred or not visited a GP due to cost in 2013/14.

This is an improvement on 2012/13, when 5.8 per cent said they had deferred or not visited a GP due to cost.

General practice remains a modest cost to the Commonwealth Government, with the age-standardised expenditure on general practice per person just \$299 in 2013-14.

The report shows that there are high levels of satisfaction with GPs, notably:

- 90.6 per cent of patients saying their GP listened carefully to them;
- 93.3 per cent of patients saying their GP showed them respect; and
- 89.3 per cent of patients saying that their GP spent enough time with them.

A/Prof Owler said the Health Minister is currently undertaking welcome extensive consultation on Government policy on general practice.

“As part of that consultation process, we have urged the Minister to look at the overwhelming evidence in support of the efficiency of general practice,” A/Prof Owler said.

“The Productivity Commission has underlined the need for the Government to strengthen and support general practice.

“The Commission’s report recognises the critical role that general practice is playing in meeting future health challenges and the high quality outcomes it is delivering at a very modest cost to the Government.”

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