

Australian Medical Association Limited
ABN 37 008 426 793

42 Macquarie Street, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604
 Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499
 Website : <http://www.ama.com.au/>



PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION REPORT EXPOSES FALLING GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR GPs AND THEIR PATIENTS

The Productivity Commission’s 2020 Report on Government Services (RoGS) has exposed Government neglect of general practice by revealing that per capita Commonwealth funding for general practice and GPs is going backwards.

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today that the RoGS report shows that expenditure per person on general practice was \$391 per person in 2018-19, which is a decrease in real terms from \$395 per person in 2017-18.

“The needs of GPs and their patients are being left behind,” Dr Bartone said.

“Per capita spending on general practice is falling at a time when GPs face a rapidly growing workload due to the ageing population and the increasing complexity of conditions, many of them chronic, that patients are experiencing.

“The Government says it continues to believe in the value of general practice, but this report shows that it is failing to back this up with the necessary investment.

“The funding shortfall has hit GPs and general practice hard because it came on top of an extended period of Government freezing of Medicare rebates, which threatened the viability and livelihoods of many practices.

“The Government must acknowledge the compounding effect of under-investment in general practice over many years and increase funding immediately.”

Dr Bartone said that the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) General Practice and Primary Care Clinical Committee (GPPCCC) last year released its draft report, which called for greater funding for general practice.

“The Government announced some welcome additional funding for general practice in last year’s Budget, but it still falls woefully short of what is needed to support general practice to meet patient needs and demands in the coming years and decades,” Dr Bartone said.

“General practice is the most cost-effective part of the health system. GPs keep people out of hospital.

“But the RoGS report shows that there were about 2.9 million presentations to public hospital emergency departments that could have and should have been handled by GPs. Significant investment is needed to allow general practice to take this pressure off overstretched hospitals.

“The RoGS report highlights the worth and effectiveness of general practice with an extremely high satisfaction rate with GP services. More than 90 per cent of patients reported that their GP listened closely to them, showed them respect, and spent enough time with them.

“The report also found that only 3.4 per cent of the population reported delaying or not visiting a GP in the previous 12 months due to cost, and over 80 per cent of patients felt that they could get a GP appointment within an acceptable timeframe. Almost 75 per cent of patients seeking urgent GP care could get an appointment within 24 hours.”

The AMA outlines its plan to better support general practice in its 2020-21 Pre-Budget Submission, which is available at https://ama.com.au/AMA_Budget_Submission_2020_21.pdf

5 February 2020

CONTACT: John Flannery

02 6270 5477 / 0419 494 761