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**NHS LURE FOR AUSTRALIAN GPs A WAKE-UP CALL FOR
 COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT**

Reports that Britain’s National Health Service (NHS) is targeting Australian-trained GPs should serve as a wake-up call for the Commonwealth Government, which has for many years neglected the need to better support general practice in caring for patients, AMA Council of General Practice Chair, Dr Richard Kidd, said today.

NHS England is reportedly offering incentives worth around \$34,000 as part of a drive to recruit 2000 overseas-trained GPs by 2020/21.

“Australia has its own workforce shortages in general practice, particularly in rural and remote Australia,” Dr Kidd, a GP in Brisbane, said.

“We cannot afford to lose our GPs to other countries like the UK.

“This latest offer will be tempting for many GPs who have grown disillusioned with the policy directions of successive Commonwealth Governments and the lack of investment in this critical part of the health system.

“General practice has been subject to a number of funding cuts, including an extended freeze on Medicare rebates.

“While the current Government has commenced a slow thaw on indexation, it has not undone the damage of several years of freezing Medicare rebates that commenced in the 2013/14 Budget under Labor and was continued until recently by the Coalition.

“The last Productivity Commission *Report on Government Services 2018* showed that Australian Government total expenditure on GP services per person grew by just 80 cents between 2015-16 and 2016-17 - from \$370.60 to \$371.40. This is despite the growing burden of complex and chronic disease in the community, which is placing increasing pressure on hard-working GPs across the country.

“The AMA has been calling for real investment in general practice, recognising that it is the most cost-effective part of the health system, and that a well-resourced general practice sector can help keep patients out of hospital and save the health system money.

“It’s time for the Government to recognise the high-quality care GPs provide and fund general practice properly – otherwise we will be at risk of our local workforce being actively poached by other countries.”

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