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QUALITY INCENTIVE FOR GENERAL PRACTICE NEEDS NEW INVESTMENT, NOT MORE CUTS – AMA

The AMA has written to Health Minister, Greg Hunt, urging the Government to provide targeted new funding to implement a new Quality Improvement (QI) Incentive for general practice, rather than strip and shift funding from the highly successful Practice Incentives Program (PIP).

AMA Vice President, Dr Tony Bartone, a Melbourne GP, said today that there is general support for the QI incentive, but not if it means cutting off valuable PIP payment streams that keep many general practices viable.

“The Government’s proposed PIP reforms, which involve shifting funding to support the QI, would leave practices worse off when many are already struggling to survive,” Dr Bartone said.

“The failure to provide additional new funding means that valuable PIP incentives like the Aged Care Access Incentive will be lost, and patients will be disadvantaged.

“The proposed new funding formula will effectively penalise many practices – even though they commit to implementing quality initiatives in their practice. This is clearly a ludicrous outcome.

“There is a very strong case for additional funding to be allocated to support the PIP, otherwise the QI incentive will not provide practices with a meaningful level of support to engage in quality improvement activities.

“Practices would not be recognised for their quality improvement efforts.

“The PIP has been subject to successive funding cuts in recent years, hitting the viability of many general practices and undermining the Program’s effectiveness in supporting quality improvement and practice accreditation.

“If the Government wants the QI Incentive to properly support practices to undertake continuous quality improvement activities, it must genuinely support practices for their quality improvement efforts.

“The AMA and other medical groups have been very supportive of efforts to drive quality improvement in general practice, but greater genuine support is needed.

“Hardworking and dedicated GPs are committed to ongoing quality improvement. They need new funding, not fund shifting.

“GPs have endured years of a cruel Medicare freeze and lack of appropriate government investment in general practice, which put Australia’s world class primary care outcomes at risk,” Dr Bartone said.

11 October 2017

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