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DRACONIAN PIP REQUIREMENTS ANOTHER HIT TO GENERAL PRACTICE

AMA Vice President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today that tough new changes to the Practice Incentive Program (PIP) Digital Health Incentive requirements could leave many individual general practices more than \$20,000 worse off.

In May this year, the Government introduced a PIP eligibility requirement that practices must upload Shared Health Summaries (SHS) for at least 0.5 per cent of their patients each quarter.

Dr Bartone, a Melbourne GP, said the AMA has made repeated representations since June to Health Minister Sussan Ley about how harmful the PIP changes will be to GPs who are already burdened by the Medicare rebate freeze.

“An AMA survey indicated that up to 40 per cent of eligible general practices would be unable to meet the new requirements,” Dr Bartone said.

“The PIP Digital Health Incentive has now been in place for a full quarter and the AMA has been advised that 1500 general practices have failed to meet their SHS upload target, and a further 69 practices have formally withdrawn from participation in the Incentive.

“This means that close to one-third of previously eligible general practices now face losing significant financial support in an already testing environment of the Medicare rebate freeze and other funding cuts.

“Based on the results of our survey, practices that do not comply now face the very real threat of losing around \$23,400 a year in PIP payments.

“The AMA is urging the Minister to do the right thing by hardworking GPs and introduce a moratorium on the SHS upload target,” Dr Bartone said.

The AMA Council of General Practice (AMACGP) referred its concerns about the PIP changes to the AMA Federal Council, which adopted the following policy resolutions at its August meeting:

- *That Federal Council calls on the Commonwealth Government to agree to a moratorium on the loss of PIP incentives for those practices that fail to meet the new Digital Health Incentive requirements, and to ask the Practice Incentive Program Advisory Group to undertake a review of the reasons why practices were unable to comply and to make recommendations on how these might be addressed.*
- *That Federal Council calls on the Commonwealth Government to ensure that any future changes to the PIP Digital Health Incentive are based on the advice of the Practice Incentive Program Advisory Group.*

Dr Bartone said that the Government decided to implement the new SHS requirement despite the contrary advice of all GP groups on the Department of Health’s Practice Incentive Program Advisory Group.

“It is now time to recognise the concerns that have been consistently raised by the profession and get a better understanding of why so many practices have failed to meet the Government’s SHS benchmarks,” Dr Bartone said.

“With adequate time, education, and support, many of the affected 1500 general practices may well begin to genuinely engage with the MyHealth Record, and eventually champion it.

“But penalising them with draconian eligibility requirements at this critical point will have the opposite effect.

“It will undermine support for e-health initiatives within general practice.

“And it will further erode the goodwill of GPs who have been disadvantaged by Government health policies such as the Medicare freeze, and unfairly targeted and demonised in recent leaks from the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Review.”

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