

THE AMA WINNING FOR GENERAL PRACTICE



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Fellow GPs

Our profession is at the forefront of health care in Australia.

We are in the middle of a national medical workforce shortage, which means the pressure on us is as intense as it has ever been.

The definition of what we do is 'whatever comes through the door'. Community expectations of what and when GPs can deliver are very high indeed. We are expected to be available around the clock seven days a week.

The expectations we place on ourselves are equally as demanding as those of our patients. That is the nature of our profession – to serve. To our patients, we are friend, philosopher and physician.

General practice is a complex mix of business acumen, government bureaucracy, high quality patient care, altruism and dedication. It is also the source of income that allows us to support our families and to enjoy a quality of life that gives us the balance necessary to continue serving our communities for as long as possible.

To survive in general practice, we all need help.

The AMA is the organisation that is best equipped and best placed to support GPs in facing the many conflicts and pressures – clinical, ethical and business – that we encounter every day.

When the AMA speaks, governments listen. We have the power of numbers and the power of strong policies.

The AMA is a catalyst for better health policy, a uniting force for the medical profession, and a champion for improved public health in the Australian community.

Add your voice to the AMA chorus for a better health system. Join the AMA.
Become a member today.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mukesh Haikerwal'.

Dr Mukesh Haikerwal

Federal AMA President
GP, Altona, Victoria

ABOUT THE AMA

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) is the peak health advocacy organisation in Australia. The AMA advances the professional interests of doctors and the health of the community. The AMA represents more than 28,000 doctors and is the public face of Australian medicine.

While we advocate strongly to improve the working conditions, business environment, training and professional development of doctors, this is not our only job.



We are also advocates for our patients and the Australian community to make sure governments provide the Australian people with the highest quality and most equitable health system.

This involves strong advocacy beyond the realms of clinical practice, which means the AMA has strong views and comprehensive position statements on many social and environmental issues, including:

- Indigenous health and living conditions – housing, sanitation, education, water quality
- The health and living conditions of asylum seekers and refugees
- Climate change and global warming
- Banning boxing
- Organ donation
- Nuclear energy and alternative fuels
- Childhood obesity – nutrition and exercise
- Substance abuse
- Gene technology

The AMA speaks out on contemporary political issues and prevailing trends that impact on doctors and their patients, including:

- Medical indemnity
- Work Choices and sick leave certification
- Rural health
- E-health
- IVF
- Safe working hours
- Security for doctors
- Immunisation
- Anti-smoking legislation
- Medical practice service trusts

These are just a few. AMA membership delivers many benefits; some unexpected, but all rewarding. Check out the breadth of AMA advocacy at our website on www.ama.com.au

GETTING RESULTS FOR GENERAL PRACTICE

- The AMA won Government funding for many general practices that employ a practice nurse. We're pushing for the assistance to be available to all general practices.
- We're cutting the red tape – the AMA has had the red tape-intensive enhanced primary care items replaced with simpler chronic disease management items.
- The AMA initiated supervised pre-vocational terms for junior doctors in general practice – giving new doctors valuable experience at a crucial time in their training.
- Doctors recently found they were being denied payment after having bulk-billed a concession card patient in good faith. The AMA met with Government and quickly put a stop to this problem.
- AMA lobbying resulted in 16 new after-hours Medicare items for GPs working after 8pm. Patient rebates for these items are \$10 greater than for in-hours consults. We're working to make Government properly value after hours care.
- Due to the AMA's hard work, preventive care provided by GPs is being valued for the first time with a new item that will allow GPs to detect and prevent chronic disease for people around 45 years of age with one or more health risks.
- The AMA convinced the Government to introduce a Medicare item for GPs to provide comprehensive health assessments for refugees.
- The AMA won a 17 per cent increase in Medicare patient rebates for antenatal checks by GPs.
- We convinced Government to increase the Medicare patient rebate for most services provided by a GP, from 85 per cent to 100 per cent of the Medicare schedule fee.
- Thanks to AMA negotiations, new MBS items have been created to allow GPs to provide more time and specialised care to patients with a chronic disease.
- When GPs are unfairly penalised or pursued by government agencies the AMA has successfully intervened to protect doctors' interests.
- The AMA brokered an agreement that ensures GP registrars receive a fair minimum wage and reasonable working conditions.



ONGOING ADVOCACY FOR GENERAL PRACTICE

- The AMA is pushing for a single Medicare provider number for GPs – the current system creates a significant administrative burden for doctors.
- We're working to have the prescription authorities system removed or, at worst, streamlined.
- The AMA is fighting for an improved electronic claiming system to cut back on red tape for GPs and reduce patients' up front costs.
- We're lobbying to reform the MBS so that GP-led teams can more easily work to provide quality, sustainable patient care.
- The AMA is promoting a restructure of the MBS that rewards quality practice.
- Reform of aged care also is in our sights – we're looking to change the aged care items to recognise the true value of this service and enable GP nurses to participate in patient care.
- The AMA is pursuing appropriate indexation of the MBS to keep pace with the increasing cost of providing services.
- We are protecting the interests of doctors and patients in the development and implementation of e-health initiatives.
- The AMA negotiates to ensure new MBS items reflect the realities of general practice and the real value of services.

What else is the AMA doing for you?

Leadership opportunities

As a member, you'll be invited to attend AMA's annual National Conference, where you will rub shoulders with a number of Australia's leaders in medicine and health politics. And you'll have the chance to become one of those leaders. Our office bearers have gone on to become Federal Ministers, to lead other national health and research organisations and to represent Australian health internationally.

Have your say

As a GP member you have the ear of the AMA. You can influence the AMA's policy

positions by contacting us and providing feedback or through involvement in our committees.

Inform yourself

Through the AMA's premier publications *Australian Medicine* and the *Medical Journal of Australia* and our regular bulletin *GP Network News*, you will be kept abreast of new research, health politics and new ideas in health and medicine.

Training

The AMA believes learning opportunities shouldn't end when you start your career. Members can not only access peer seminars and training but also have a say in how the doctors of tomorrow are taught.

AMA Member Services offers

The AMA Member Services program offers a great range of quality financial and lifestyle products and services. For more information about the various discounts and savings available exclusively to members, please call our member services team on 1300 133 655 or visit www.ama.com.au/memberservices



THE AUSTRALIAN

**AMA Advises doctors
to increase fees**

The Courier Mail

**AMA rejects call for
nurses to play doctor**

The Sydney Morning Herald

**Angry response to AMA
report on Medicare Gold**

MERCURY

**Sickies to
be easier
says AMA**

The Canberra Times

Govt urged to also target adults

**Obesity blitz
for all: AMA**

The West Australian

**AMA: Take hard
line on kids' food**

THE AGE

AMA irate over bid to bypass GPs

Clash likely over department's call

The Advertiser

On Saturday

AMA wants ibuprofen off shelves

THE AMA WINNING FOR GENERAL PRACTICE

THE AMA WILL KEEP WINNING FOR GENERAL PRACTICE

After Hours Items

Improved Veterans' Rebates

New Patient and GP-Friendly
Chronic Disease Items

More Support for GP Practice Nurses

Patient Safety Net

New Preventive Health Check Item

Refugee Health Assessment Item

Increased Rebates for Antenatal Items

100% Medicare Rebates

Stopped Government Penalising
GPs for Bulk Billing Ineligible
Concession Cardholders

Elective, Supervised
Pre-Vocational GP Terms

Make it Easier and More Attractive for
GPs to Provide Aged Care

Reduce Authority Prescribing Red Tape

Lobby for a Single Provider
Number

Pursue an MBS Structure that
Supports GP-Led Team Care and
Rewards Quality

Improve Electronic Claiming for
Patients and GPs

OTHER BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP:

Access to individual advocacy

Access to practice advocacy

Commercial benefits

Input to AMA policy and lobbying

Representation of the interests
of the profession at the highest
levels of government



To join the AMA or for more
information on membership call:

ACT 02 6270 5410

NSW 02 9439 8822

NT 08 8927 7004

QLD 07 3872 2222

SA 08 8267 4355

TAS 03 6223 2047

VIC 03 9280 8722

WA 08 9273 3000