

# Key GP Issues for Federal Election 2019

## > Talking Points:

- General practice is the cornerstone of successful primary health care, which underpins population health outcomes and is key to ensuring we have a high-quality, equitable, and sustainable health system into the future.
- An adequately funded primary care system ensures value for money by providing patients with the right care at the right time, in the community, thereby reducing costly preventable hospital admissions.
- The role of the GP is increasingly important as the population ages and the burden of chronic disease grows, requiring continuing long-term care for patients.
- GPs are managing more problems in each consultation than they did a decade ago as patients, particularly older patients, present with multiple reasons for the encounter. GPs are also spending more time with patients and manage the clear majority of problems presented to them.
- With Australia's growing and ageing population, this trend is set to continue. Yet funding for general practice is not keeping up with this trend. This will have a significant impact on the quality of care that practices are able to provide.
- Despite general practice being the most accessed form of healthcare, non-referred services, including general practice services, represent only about 8% of total government health expenditure.
- In comparison to other parts of the health system, GP services are also relatively inexpensive. A visit to an emergency department, for example, costs the governments around \$400 to \$600, which is much more than a visit to the GP (For example, Medicare rebates for Level B consultation is \$37.60).
- The major parties have consistently stated that general practice is the key to the future of the health system. International research shows that investment in primary care, including its workforce, is the most cost-effective way to population health care.
- Each year, GPs and their practice teams provide care to nearly 90% of all Australians. With proper funding and support, GPs can do more to help keep patients out of hospital and save the health system money.
- Since 2005–06, patient out-of-pocket costs for a GP visit have increased by a massive 140%, yet over the same period the patient rebate (for MBS item 23, the most commonly billed GP item) has increased by only 19%.
- Each year, patients are bearing a greater share of their healthcare costs due to longstanding issues around the lack of adequate funding for GP services.
- This increase in cost is beginning to affect patient health, as over one million Australians report delaying accessing care due to concern about the cost.
- We expect a lot from our hard-working GPs, but successive Governments have clearly failed to deliver the level of investment required to support patients in accessing GP care.
- We need to see further investment in all domains of general practice.
- In this election, there is an opportunity for the major parties to develop policies that improve the way by which general practice is funded, focusing on improved access to care for patients, reward for quality care and quality improvement, system level outcome measurement, and the long-term viability of the sector.