



11 May 2004

MEDIA RELEASE

GP PEAK BODIES DISAPPOINTED IN FEDERAL BUDGET FOR HEALTH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Two peak bodies supporting general practice have said they are disappointed there was no specific funding for the take-up and use of information management technology by general practitioners in today's Federal Budget.

While applauding the Government's commitment to HealthConnect, the General Practice Computing Group (GPCG) and the Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP) said the Government had failed to recognise the crucial role of the Divisions in providing education and support services to general practitioners to improve patient care through better information management.

ADGP Chair Dr Rob Walters said the lack of specific funding to promote effective information management in general practice was a missed opportunity.

"There is a real risk of losing community gains and efficiency outcomes achieved to date. Appropriate resourcing is required to ensure that general practice capacity is increased and improvements in safety and quality of care are harnessed and not hindered," Dr Walters said.

"Not only does Government have higher expectations of the role of the Divisions, but they are expecting it to be done with fewer resources. This places unnecessary strain on Divisions and individual general practitioners," he said.

Chairman of the GPCG, Dr Ron Tomlins, said this was a very short sighted decision.

"Australians are only beginning to reap the benefits of information technology in general practice. We have a great opportunity to improve the way we manage the health information of our patients, resulting in greater safety and better health outcomes for all Australians.

"The Government has invested significantly in putting computers on GPs' desks. Now we need to ensure that taxpayers' investment is protected by ensuring GPs have the skills to maximise the benefits of the technology," Dr Tomlins said.

Both Dr Tomlins and Dr Walters noted in particular that improved health information management would also benefit rural and regional Australians through greater online specialist support and improved access to care.

The GPCG and the ADGP urged the Government to recognise the challenges of 21st century changes in health care delivery in the community and provide certainty of funding to Divisions of General Practice for the next five years to maximise the use of information technology by general practitioners and generate better health outcomes for all Australians.

The GPCG is the peak body for health informatics for general practice in Australia, representing the interests of GPs, the medical software industry and consumers.

ADGP is the peak body of the Divisions of General Practice Network, which links 95 per cent of GPs across Australia in a national structure that supports general practice and improves community access to primary care.

Ends

Please see attached media backgrounders for further information.

To arrange interviews with Dr Ron Tomlins (GPCG) please call Renee Hancock on 03 9289 9555 or 0417 055 299 or Michelle Low on 03 9289 9555 or 0403 003 659.

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