



News Release

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

04/15

11/05/04

Budget misses the boat on health care reform

Australia's peak body representing the Divisions of General Practice says the Government has missed the boat on health reform by failing to provide sufficient investment in the Divisions Program and through general practice in Australia.

Chair of the Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP) Dr Rob Walters said in particular the lack of specific funding in the Federal Budget to promote effective information management through Divisions and reduce red tape in general practice were missed opportunities.

"The Government has failed to recognise the challenges of 21st century changes in health care delivery and the way in which these can be met," said Dr Walters.

"The Divisions of General Practice Network links 95 per cent of GPs across Australia in a national structure that supports general practice and improves community access to primary care. This Network is the key to integrating general practice with other sectors of the health system, both government and non-government, to deliver high quality care to the Australian community," he said.

"A health economist recently suggested that funding for Divisions is about 1/5 of what it should be, if Divisions are to do the job they were set up to do."

Dr Walters said that greater funding for general practice and primary health care through Divisions is an investment in the future that would pay significant health and efficiency dividends, both in the short and long term, including decreased hospitalisations, specialist and pharmaceutical costs.

"Divisions are the only infrastructure in the health system that can deliver better coordination of health policy and funding across Commonwealth/State programs. They are the key to better targeting of health programs to particular groups in the community," said Dr Walters.

"But in order for Divisions to reach their potential, they need to be sufficiently funded."

ADGP's Budget submission had called for more funding for Divisions to improve access to and quality of primary care by:

- Building capacity in information management and technology, in line with the Federal Government's *Health Online* agenda;
- Expanding regional population health programs and allied health services;
- Building on the nursing in general practice program;
- Supporting early childhood primary care;
- Engaging in primary care research; and
- Integrating primary and acute services through GP-hospital liaison programs.

"None of these programs have been delivered in this Budget," Dr Walters said. "What a wasted opportunity".

For comment: Dr Rob Walters, ADGP Chair, 0418 127 123

For further information: Kerry Ungerer, ADGP, 0412 424 309