



Australian Divisions of **General Practice**



AMA



The Royal Australian College of
General Practitioners



**RURAL DOCTORS
ASSOCIATION
OF AUSTRALIA**
Caring for the Country

Thursday 18 November 2004

Communiqué

General Practice Representative Group¹

The General Practice Representative Group (GPRG) held its last meeting for 2004 on 17 & 18 November 2004 in Canberra. It was a highly productive meeting to progress ongoing issues and develop the group's strategic agenda for the next 12 months. The Minister for Health and Ageing, Mr Tony Abbott attended the meeting to discuss matters of importance to the four GP groups.

Implementation of a 7-tier Attendance Item Restructure

GPRG members congratulated the Minister on the recent injection of funds into general practice. However, they expressed disappointment that implementation of the 7-tier restructure of the MBS had not been part of those changes. The four groups believe the MBS should be structured to support the quality care that can be provided through longer consultations. They advised the Minister that this is still a priority for the profession.

The Minister was advised that the GPRG is keen to work with Government on new initiatives that support and improve the quality of general practice care.

Primary Health Care Policy

The GPRG reconfirmed its commitment to co-operatively develop a National Primary Health Care Policy. GPRG has commenced work on the key general practice components of this policy. This work will create a blueprint for the future delivery of quality, accessible and affordable patient care. It will help define what primary health care is, how stakeholders interact and how funding should be structured.

Minister Abbott said he would welcome a proposal from GPRG on this issue that outlines the support and assistance that could be provided by the Department of Health and Ageing to pursue this work.

Health Taskforce

The Minister outlined for GPRG the objectives of the newly announced Health Taskforce to be headed by Mr Andrew Podger. The review will look at the interface between State and Commonwealth health services.

GPRG members pointed out that general practice must be a key player in this review because many interface problems impact on the patients seen in general practice.

¹ The General Practice Representative Group (GPRG) comprises representatives of the Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP), Australian Medical Association (AMA), the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA).

The GPRG received assurance that the creation of the new Department of Human Services will not impact on the interface between HIC and general practice. GPRG will continue to monitor this new arrangement.

Pharmacy Guild/Government Agreement

GPRG was advised that the new agreement would not fund pharmacists to provide services that are traditionally within the domain of general practice.

GPET

GPRG members discussed with the Minister their preference for a fully profession owned model as the future structure of GPET. The Minister supported the GPRG's view that the chair of GPET should be a GP. GPRG recognises that the Government remains an important stakeholder in general practice vocational training.

Other issues

GPRG raised a number of other issues with the Minister. These included GPRG members' concerns that the Department of Health has failed to renew its contract with the Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health (BEACH). GPRG expressed its strong support for BEACH as a valuable source of data on Australian general practice, which supports quality improvement and evidence based policy development.

GPRG reiterated support for the recommendations of the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation. GPRG supports implementation of immunisation through Australian general practice.

For further media enquiries contact:

AMA	Judith Tokley, Media and Public Affairs Manager, 0408 824 306
RDAA	Patrick Daley, Media and Public Affairs Adviser, 0408 004 890
RACGP	Jason Berek-Lewis, Communications Coordinator/Journalist, 0404 055 265
ADGP	Kerry Ungerer, National Communications Manager, 0412 424 309