



Australian  
Divisions of  
General Practice  
Ltd.

# **NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Bulkbilling Decline highlights GP Shortage**

Dr Rob Walters, Chair of the Australian Divisions of General Practice, today said the decline in bulkbilling highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to increasing access and affordability of GP services to the community.

“ADGP is committed to ensuring that all Australians can access high quality primary medical care. Access is about more than just bulkbilling, it is also about addressing the overall GP shortage in Australia,” Dr Walters said.

“Many rural, regional and outer urban areas of Australia simply do not have enough doctors to meet community needs. We cannot talk about increasing access to GP services unless we can get doctors out to these areas in the first place.

“New suburbs currently being developed, such as North Lakes in northern Brisbane, are attracting thousands of young families to an area where there are no practising GPs.

“We need to change the *“if you build it, they will come”* mentality to getting GPs out into outer urban areas if we want to ensure urban fringe communities have access to primary medical care.

“For example, when state and local governments are planning a new suburb, they need to plan for the medical services the community will need, in the same way as the roads, water supply, schools and other services are planned.

“We also need to do more to support GPs already working in areas of workforce need by providing more nurses, counsellors and allied health workers to work in teams with GPs in order to meet the health care needs of their communities.

“Divisions of General Practice in urban fringe areas, such as Logan Division of General Practice in South Brisbane, report that practices can advertise for months or even years for a new GP without success.

“The GP shortage increases pressure on existing GPs in the area and results in reduced access to medical services for the community. Research conducted by the Logan Division has found that 26% of GPs in the area have closed their books and 31% plan to stop bulkbilling.

“Affordability is also an important consideration to ensure equal access to medical care for all Australians.

“In addressing this issue, particular attention needs to be given to groups in the community who may have problems affording medical treatment, such as people on low incomes, pensioners, people with chronic illnesses and working families.

“The research conducted by the ANU at the last election demonstrates that the community places health high on its list of priorities for spending. ADGP is committed to responding to this community need and working with general practice, government and consumers to ensure all Australians can access high quality primary health care,” Dr Walters said.

*For comment:*

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