



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

11 May 2005

Divisions network welcomes budget thrust

Australian Divisions of General Practice has welcomed several key health-care initiatives announced in last night's federal budget.

ADGP Chair Dr Rob Walters said, "Many of the government's health measures build on the strengths of Medicare as well as expand already promising primary-care initiatives in practice nursing, mental health and cancer screening that have been delivered in the community through Divisions of General Practice."

Dr Walters said he was particularly encouraged that the budget included commitments to improving professional development and support for general practitioners in priority areas such as cancer treatment, dementia care and youth mental health.

"A robust, GP-led primary health care system is the lynchpin to delivering better health outcomes to Australians. Measures that boost the role of general practice nurses in chronic disease management and support GPs by giving them access to allied health support in the mental health area are good news for GPs and the community."

However, ADGP was disappointed that the budget did not include an expansion of incentives for practice nurses to urban areas, or introduce a wider suite of MBS item numbers for practice nurses.

ADGP CEO Kate Carnell said budget's focus on high-need groups, such as the aged, indigenous Australians and young people, was welcome.

"In particular, ADGP welcomes the range of indigenous health initiatives. The four-year \$102.4 million *Healthy for Life* program is tackling a major problem at the root by promoting a healthy start in life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Research shows that increasing birth weight and reducing other risk factors is crucial in improving life-long health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples.

"There's always more that can be done, but these measures are positive steps. As a leading organisation in the management and implementation of primary health-care programs, ADGP is well aware of the distinct needs of these high-need groups, and the importance of assisting and supporting the frontline practitioners who treat them – GPs and their practice teams."

Ms Carnell said the Divisions network was well-placed to assist the Government in implementing its primary health-care budget pledges. "The Divisions are crucial cornerstones in Australia's primary health-care infrastructure. The work they do turns budget dollars into life-changing, sometimes life-saving, health care.

"Right across the country, Divisions have a track record in working with GPs and linking them with other providers to deliver quality primary health care."

Ms Carnell said the budget's focus highlighted the importance of preventative and early-intervention strategies. "We are reassured that the Government is thinking wisely about how it spends its health dollar. When it comes to health spending, good returns can come from investing in high-quality, integrated primary health-care services that foster good health rather than just treat illness."

For more information call Jane Castles: 02 6228 0822 or 0412 392 577.