



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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Address from AMA President offers no solutions

The National Press Club speech by AMA President Dr Mukesh Haikerwal identified many of the well-recognised problems within the current health system, but provided little in the way of solutions, Australian Divisions of General Practice Chair Dr Rob Walters said today.

"Dr Haikerwal's address was disappointing. He raised many important issues, but unfortunately his focus was on scare-mongering rather than exploring new and better ways of providing health care.

"Ironically, many of the issues he raised, such as rural and remote access and mental health, are already being tackled by limited regional fundholding programs like *MAHS (More Allied Health Services)* and *Better Outcomes in Mental Health* programs. These are examples of innovative solutions that are working, yet these are the methods that Dr Haikerwal seems strangely averse to," Dr Walters said.

"I suggest that he talks to some AMA members who work out in the bush and ask them whether they think fundholding, in terms of the *MAHS* program, is a bad idea. I suspect he would find that they are delighted with the way this model is helping them better care for their patients.

"Likewise, he should ask GPs around the nation about the *Better Outcomes in Mental Health* program, which is educating and up-skilling GPs to tackle the mental health problems Dr Haikerwal referred to. GPs tell ADGP regularly that they would be lost without these programs and that patients would suffer.

ADGP CEO Kate Carnell said both the *MAHS* and *Better Outcomes* were examples of successful limited fundholding initiatives. "ADGP is always open to looking at new and better ways of delivering health care," Ms Carnell said, "which is why we advocate the expansion of fundholding initiatives. We would encourage the AMA to join with the Divisions Network and push for increased funding for these already successful initiatives."

Dr Walters said, "It really is misleading for Dr Haikerwal to present the fundholding as if it were an either/or model for the health system. This is simply not the case. ADGP is of the firm view that the fee-for-service model remains the basis of the current system, but it can be complemented by limited fund-holding in some circumstances.

"It is a pity that the AMA seems blind to any alternatives that involve change, but that just might improve the provision of primary health care."

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

WHAT IS ADGP?

- ADGP is the peak body representing 119 Divisions of General Practice and eight State-based organisations (SBOs) around Australia. The Divisions Network supports general practice and their practice teams and drives the implementation of innovative health strategies.
- ADGP, through the Divisions Network, works to integrate general practice with other sectors of the health system, both government and non-government, to deliver high quality care to the Australian community.
- ADGP is committed to promoting the health of all Australians by supporting the role of Divisions in the nation's primary health care system.



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