



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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Not a numbers game: new solutions to health workforce crisis needed

Fixing the serious challenges facing the health system is more than just a numbers game and higher rebates. It is time for a serious investment in primary health care policy and systems reform.

The call is one of a range of recommendations made by Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP) in its submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into the Health Workforce.

ADGP CEO Kate Carnell said many areas of the health sector were under strain and any adequate solution to the workforce problem needed to involve "some systematic changes to the way we think about health care and the way we deliver services".

"Most importantly, ensuring a strong primary care and general practice sector is the lynchpin to securing a viable and effective health system for the future," Ms Carnell said.

"How the system is financed, organised and supported can also make a difference. By embedding and putting incentives around different modes of service, we can build a system that delivers better health outcomes and value for the taxpayer dollar.

"We know that systems which rely more on primary health care and general practice than on specialist and hospital care are more efficient, cost effective, and accessible and result in healthier Australians.

"Chronic disease is prime example: it has considerable impact on quality of life, causes lost productivity and significantly increases health service utilisation. There is good evidence that outcomes for patients with chronic diseases are enhanced by well coordinated, multidisciplinary teams in which GPs and other non-doctor personnel work together.

"We need a primary health care system organised and funded in such a way that those best equipped to deliver a service do so. For example using practice nurses for routine screening and preventive care processes can help to "free-up" GPs for more complex and acute diagnostic and management issues."

Ms Carnell said the Productivity Commission's inquiry was a rare opportunity to investigate better ways of training, organising and financing the health workforce," Ms Carnell said.

"Prior to the establishment of new workforce planning regimes, a coherent national Primary Health Care Strategy is needed to focus on delivering better community health outcomes and supporting and sustaining a viable health workforce.

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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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“This will only be achieved through system redesign and a workforce planning framework which promotes efficiency and effectiveness of health service delivery through an investment in primary health care teams.

“The Divisions of General Practice Network is a uniquely placed infrastructure that can help deliver the solutions. ADGP urges more effective use of the Divisions Network to address the workforce crisis.”

“Divisions are connected with their GPs and are well placed in their communities to conduct workforce needs analysis and planning, to locally deliver health workforce support programs. Divisions can hold funds for the delivery of specific programs including the employment of allied health professionals with specific expertise in order to build and support primary health care teams and to overcome one of the most vexing issues in the health sector – dealing with different funding streams from different levels of government.”

ADGP’s full submission can be found at www.adgp.com.au.

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