



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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ADGP welcomes New Medicare Items for ATSI Child Health Check Ups and Refugee Health

The Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP) welcome two new Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) items the Government has released in the May MBS schedule that will provide incentives to general practice to provide specific services to Indigenous children and refugees and other humanitarian entrants to Australia.

Kate Carnell, ADGP CEO said "Child health is an important government and community priority. There can be no better investment than in the health and wellbeing of Australian children."

ADGP Chair Dr Jenny Thomson said the new items "closed a gap" that had existed in the current stock of indigenous health prevention measures. "Now there are comprehensive preventative mechanisms in place for indigenous people of all ages, something that is critically important given the well-documented, tragically poor levels of health of Australia's indigenous population.

Dr Thomson said the new health check item demonstrated that preventive health initiatives – aimed at promoting good health rather than simply treating disease down the track – were "a major priority for the Government, as they should be".

Access to psychological assessment and services should be included in the ATSI Child Health Check item to address the effects of exposure to life stress events such as illness, hospitalisation, death of a close family member, family separation and family financial difficulties. ADGP supports the development of culturally appropriate psychological assessment tools and service provision for Indigenous children.

"It is encouraging that the Government appears to recognise that investing in primary care strategies to promote good health is well worth it. The pay off comes in the form of healthier communities overall and hospitals less burdened by patients needing treatment for preventable diseases."

While applauding the initiative, ADGP CEO Kate Carnell said uptake of the ATSI Child health check and the refugee health assessment – the degree to which indigenous people and refugees actually accessed the service and GPs offered it – would depend largely whether it was supported by GP awareness and education strategies.

"Initiatives like these are, of course, welcome, but on their own they will not be effective. Critical to their successful uptake, and the better health outcomes that they are intended to bring about, is a well-executed information campaign," Ms Carnell said.

For more information please call Kate Carnell, ADGP Chief Executive Officer, on 0415 662 266.

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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