



# **NEWS RELEASE**

**Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.**

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## **Consult with GPs on Medicare Changes - ADGP**

Dr Rob Walters, Chair of the Australian Divisions of General Practice, today called for a more comprehensive approach to increasing community access to GP services.

“ADGP is committed to ensuring that all Australians can access high quality primary medical care,” Dr Walters said.

“Access to health care is about more than just bulkbilling. It is about addressing GP shortages and the inequities in access to primary care between rural, outer urban and urban areas. It is about ensuring that we have a financing system that can deliver a sustainable general practice system for the future.

“There is no doubt that this will require increased funding. For too long now GPs have struggled to meet community demands for health care, while the value of the rebate has declined and practice costs have increased.

“Whilst I am confident that no GP will leave patients untreated because they cannot afford to pay, it is becoming more and more difficult to run a practice which bulk bills a large proportion of patients,” Dr Walters said.

Dr Walters said that there were a range of options for improving the GP financing system so that it can meet the needs of the community. These include: increasing patient contributions, either through a co-payment levied at the point of service or collected via the tax or social security system; increasing the Medicare patient rebate; and providing additional funding support to help meet the rising costs of running a general practice. Dr Walters also stressed the overall need for more GP training places and medical school places to address the GP workforce shortage.

“It is vital that there is comprehensive consultation with the medical profession before any changes are made to Medicare,” Dr Walters said.

“In particular, the needs of particular groups in the community, such as the young and elderly, people with chronic illness and families on low incomes, need to be considered. Some of these groups may not receive pensions or have health care cards but may have difficulties affording medical treatment.

“Consultation with GP groups is also important to ensure that any proposed changes to Medicare will not adversely impact upon the high quality care that GPs already provide to their patients. The Divisions of General Practice Network, and the other GP Groups, represent doctors working in the community who know the realities of day to day practice. We can provide practical advice on how to improve access without compromising quality of care.

“ADGP, through the Divisions Network, is committed to working with Government and the community to develop a comprehensive plan for primary health care to ensure that all Australians can access general practice without geographical, financial or cultural barriers,” Dr Walters said.

*For comment:*

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