



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

03/18

23/3/2003

GPs welcome Incentive Package

Dr Rob Walters, Chair of the Australian Divisions of General Practice, today welcomed a new initiative to encourage doctors to work in outer metropolitan areas.

The *More Doctors for Outer Metropolitan Areas* measure, which will support the Government's Budget initiative, was announced today by Minister for Health and Ageing, Senator Kay Patterson. It will provide relocation grants of up to \$30,000 for GPs to move from inner city to outer metropolitan areas.

"This package is good news for outer urban communities. The incentive payments will go a long way to addressing the shortage of GPs in urban fringe areas," Dr Walters said.

"The shortage of GPs in outer metro areas was identified as one of the most serious issues facing Australia's primary health care system at the National Divisions Forum late last year. I am delighted that the Government has listened to the concerns of Divisions and GPs working in urban fringe communities and has responded with this package.

"GPs working in urban fringe areas who are experiencing high levels of overwork and stress will benefit from this package. Supporting doctors to move into areas of need will take the pressure off existing GPs who are struggling to meet demand for their services with inadequate support.

"Increasing the numbers of doctors in outer urban areas is a vital step in improving access to health care for people living in these communities.

"ADGP also encourages the Government to adopt other measures to ensure there is a sustainable general practice workforce in outer metropolitan areas.

"In the short term, these measures should include increasing support for GPs to work with nurses and allied health workers in 'Practice Teams'. This would increase access to primary health care for consumers and reduce burn-out among GPs, resulting in a more sustainable general practice workforce.

"The Government's Practice Nurse Initiative has given vital support to rural GPs and increased access to primary health care for rural communities. ADGP supports extending this initiative into metropolitan areas of need, to support GPs working in these areas and improve community access to primary care services.

"We also need to support GPs who are already working, and are committed to staying in outer metro areas and look at measures to allow permanent resident overseas-trained doctors to work in these areas.

"Over the long term we need to increase training places at medical schools and increase GP training positions to ensure that we have enough GPs to meet future workforce needs," Dr Walters said.

For comment:

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