



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

16 November 2006

Abbott cuts red tape strangling GPs

Changes to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) announced by Federal Health Minister Tony Abbott have been welcomed by Australia's peak body representing divisions of general practice, the Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP).

ADGP Chair Dr Tony Hobbs said the changes coming into affect in July 2007 will allow GPs to spend more time with patients instead of being 'on hold' getting approval for certain prescriptions.

"For some time ADGP have been calling on the government to review current processes and cut the red tape that requires GPs to phone a government call centre and get approval for some medications.

"In July this year ADGP said the government should cut the draconian intervention, interference and intrusion.

"An Access Economics study found that 439,500 consultation hours each year were wasted on gaining authority for prescriptions. This essentially equals over 1.3 million patient consultations lost each year.

"We welcome the decision to remove 200 of the 450 approval medications. As a result an estimated 70% of approval prescriptions will be removed," Dr Hobbs said.

Statistics in a report released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare today indicate that 15 million Australian's are affected by chronic diseases. Many of the ongoing medications GPs prescribe to deal with these conditions require call centre authorisation.

In 2004-2005 government figures indicate that of the 6.3 million authority scripts only 2.7% were rejected.

Most patients with chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes have an ongoing relationship with their GP. GPs are familiar with the medication and the condition.

"It's a very painful and time wasting experience gaining approval for prescriptions you know are the only option for your patients, particularly when they are repeat prescriptions.

"Osteoporosis can't be cured - only treated. Phoning Medicare for permission to prescribe and re-prescribe Fosamax (Alendronate) for patients is very frustrating. Today's changes are a win for common sense.

"The Government's changes give GPs the power to prescribe without the current big brother scenario.

"The next step will be to review the 250 remaining medications that will still require call centre authorisation," Dr Hobbs said.

ADGP are confident Medicare Australia will undertake timely education programs for GPs.

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.



Telephone 02 6228 0800

Facsimile 02 6228 0899

Email adgpreception@adgp.com.au

25 National Circuit Forrest ACT 2603

PO Box 4308 Manuka ACT 2603

ABN 95 082 812 146

www.adgp.com.au