



# NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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## Summit failed to address GP shortage

Dr Rob Walters, Chair of the Australian Divisions of General Practice, today said the Australian Health Care Summit, held in Canberra, failed to adequately address the critical shortage of GPs in Australia.

*The Summit, which concluded yesterday, brought together State and Territory premiers, medical and health groups and consumers for a three day conference to discuss the future of the health system.*

“The most important problem facing the health system in Australia today is the shortage of GPs. I am very disappointed that in three days of discussions the Health Care Summit barely touched on this issue,” Dr Walters said.

“GPs are being touted by some as the solution to taking the pressure off hospitals, and yet general practice is under far more stress than the hospital system.

“Already many Australians are finding it difficult to access general practice due to GP shortages and high cost pressures on practices, resulting in increases in the cost of GP services. Unless we develop a comprehensive approach to increasing access and affordability of GP services to the community, many Australians will be left without adequate access to primary health care.

“There is no point discussing options such as opening GP clinics in hospitals when there are no GPs available to staff these clinics. Unless we can make general practice an attractive option for medical graduates, and do more to support existing GPs, we cannot talk about expanding the role of our already overworked and underpaid GP workforce.

“Divisions of General Practice are committed to ensuring that all Australians can access high quality primary medical care, but we cannot do this without more GPs and other primary health care workers.

“Many rural, regional and outer urban areas of Australia simply do not have enough doctors to meet community needs.

“Our first priority should be to support GPs by providing more nurses, counsellors and allied health workers to work in teams with GPs in order to meet the health care needs of their communities. The next priority should be to increase the numbers of GPs in Australia so that we have a sustainable GP workforce for the future.

“We can only discuss options for expanding the existing role of GPs once these workforce issues have been addressed.

“I am disappointed that the Summit did not address this basic, critical issue which is so fundamental to our health system and is therefore of such great importance to the Australian community,” Dr Walters said.

*For comment:*

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