



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

03/45

3/10/03

GPs the “hidden casualties” of the Medical Indemnity Crisis

GPs have been the “hidden casualties” of the medical indemnity crisis, according to Dr Rob Walters, Chair of the Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP).

ADGP is the peak national body representing Australia’s 120 Divisions of General Practice. Approximately 94% of GPs belong to a local Division of General Practice.

“The crisis in medical indemnity is having a devastating effect on general practitioners all over Australia,” Dr Walters said.

“Whilst the impact of the crisis on surgeons has received a lot of media attention, the loss of GPs to an already depleted workforce is devastating.

“Part time GPs are resigning, female GPs are deciding not to return to work after having babies, and many other GPs are taking early retirement or seriously considering their futures and the style of practice they undertake.

“GPs are the linchpin of our health system. Unless the crisis in medical indemnity is addressed, the health system will fall apart.

“High insurance premiums have discouraged GPs from performing procedural work, such as delivering babies, resulting in a de-skilled GP workforce.

“Defensive medicine is becoming more commonplace and referral rates to specialists have increased. This has resulted in unnecessary and more expensive specialist visits and increased cost and inconvenience to patients.

“Women in many rural areas are now forced to spend weeks away from their families and communities when their babies are due, because there are no GPs in their local areas who provide obstetric services.

“ADGP is encouraged by Tony Abbott’s commitment to address the medical indemnity issue afresh.

“We look forward to assisting the new Health Minister to fix this urgent problem facing Australia’s health system,” Dr Walters said.

For comment:

Dr Rob Walters, ADGP Chair, 0418 127 123

For further information:

Jennifer Doggett, Communications Manager 02 6228 0822 or 0403 325 980