



Communique

United General Practice Australia

5 September 2019

Peak General Practice bodies agree on pivotal health issues

The leaders of Australia's peak general practice organisations recently met in Canberra and discussed the pivotal issues affecting the provision of General Practice care in Australia.

United General Practice Australia (UGPA) is the broadest representation of general practice in Australia, comprising representatives from the Australian Medical Association (AMA), Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA), Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), General Practice Supervisors Australia (GPSA), and General Practice Registrars Australia (GPRA).

The key areas of discussion were in relation to the unanimous condemnation of attempts by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia to undermine patient safety by having pharmacists able to prescribe some scheduled medications, concerns over the government's Over 70s Chronic Care program, discussions around the future changes to general practice training, the development of Rural Generalism as a recognised specialist discipline, required reporting to Public Health Networks, and the development of the Minister for Health's 2030 Vision Plan.

UGPA Chair and AMA President Dr Tony Bartone, who is a GP in Victoria, said that it was a very productive meeting and that there were many areas of agreement between the group members.

"Our most urgent area of concern remains the proposed pharmacy prescribing model which would compromise patient safety," Dr Bartone said, "and claims that it will improve access problems are simply not true.

"However the other areas we discussed are equally important, and we will be writing to Minister Hunt to outline our combined concerns.

"In the last election, the Government announced \$448 million to remunerate General Practices for current work caring for over 70's with chronic disease. This money will flow from 1 July 2020 with the Implementation Group currently being finalised.

"UGPA supports the concept, but flags that the Department of Health (the Department) must engage with the GPs providing care on the ground to develop and design the program," Dr Bartone said.

There were discussions around the transition of GP training from existing providers to the two GP colleges, ACRRM and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP). UGPA will ask the

Minister to release information on how this is planned to operate, and for the Department to start work on the transition.

Work continues on the lengthy process of gaining specialty recognition for Rural Generalism, as required by the rollout of the National Rural Generalist Pathway. ACRRM and RACGP have been collaborating on this project and UGPA acknowledged and thanked them for their efforts.

There has been recent media attention regarding the release of data from medical practices to Public Health Networks as part of the Practice Incentive Payment (PIP), Quality Improvement (QI) program. UGPA members who also sit on the PIP Advisory Group reported that there is further need for clarity in relation to the role that the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) will play, and that there will be a final gatekeeper when it comes to the release of any de-identified data.

There has been \$1.1 Billion in announcements around primary care in the Mid-year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) and Budget, earmarked as part of the 2030 Vision Plan. This Plan has the potential to significantly improve the delivery of GP care in the future, and UGPA calls for bipartisan support for the concept, and for planning and investment to be catered for beyond an election cycle. UGPA however notes that more work is required on the framework and composition and that it is critical that practising GPs are engaged at all stages of its development.

Dr Bartone said, "It was very positive to have such agreement and synergy between all the organisations involved in UGPA, and to be able to present a united General Practice voice to Government is a powerful tool.

"It is important for us to be able to demonstrate the cohesion within the organisations representing GP doctors and highlight the areas of shared concern."

UGPA was formed more than 10 years ago and has a long-standing committee of members that has evolved to reflect the changing environment of general practice. The group meets as needed to address the common issues affecting all aspects of GP training and patient care.

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