

**Australian Medical Association Limited**

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**GENERAL PRACTICE IN DESPERATE NEED OF SUPPORT  
AMA TELLS SENATE INQUIRY**

The AMA has said just as the COVID-19 pandemic has shone a light on the inadequacies of the public hospital system, it has also highlighted the long-term under-resourcing of general practice.

AMA Vice President Dr Chris Moy and AMA Council of Rural Doctors representative Dr Peter Maguire have told a senate inquiry into the provision of general practitioner (GP) and related primary health services to outer metropolitan, rural and regional Australians today that GPs “desperately need help now” if patient care across Australia is not to suffer.

Dr Moy said general practice was the “humble foundation of a world-leading health care system” providing exceptional care and coordinating access to the rest of the health system.

He said the COVID-19 pandemic had made clear the central role of general practice in the health system but had also “shone a light on the significant challenges faced by GPs” as successive governments had failed to address resourcing.

“Investment has not matched the increase in costs and demands” with rebate freezes and inadequate indexing contributing to the lack of support in providing high quality care.

Dr Moy said greater flexibility was needed in current models with many programs and incentives not likely to have a positive impact for years. He said general practice needed the support and mechanisms to evolve as community needs changed.

“There’s a desperate need to make changes now”, Dr Moy told the inquiry and said remuneration and support for doctors and their families in regional and rural settings was imperative to retaining and attracting GPs.

Dr Moy said while it was not necessary to overhaul existing classification systems which identify regions in need, other support measures which would make rural practice more viable included:

- infrastructure grants
- retention payments
- stronger integration with local hospitals
- innovative networking models for sharing practice infrastructure

Dr Moy said the Medicare fee-for-service model must remain the central funding pillar for general practice, primary prevention and managing more complex chronic conditions would require supplementary funding.

Dr Moy said the AMA had been advocating for more support to general practice with specific incentives for rural general practices outlined in the AMA's [ten-year primary care reform plan](#).

Dr Maguire told the senate inquiry there was a “crisis” in rural Australia, and he said older GPs in regional and rural areas were finding it difficult to retire because of GP shortages.

Dr Maguire said in his small WA (Western Australia) town, where he practiced as a GP, three out of the four GPs were older but there was “a struggle to recruit young doctors.” He said the situation was dire, “with no quick fixes, no single solution”.

The full AMA submission to the senate inquiry is available here:

<https://www.ama.com.au/articles/ama-submission-inquiry-provision-general-practitioner-and-related-primary-health-services>

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