



Media Statement

## General Practice Peak Bodies

13 January 2022

### Government advised of GP COVID concerns

Senior representatives of the five peak general practice organisations, including Presidents and CEOs, met yesterday with Minister for Health Greg Hunt and Minister for Regional Health David Gillespie to discuss the challenges facing general practice and the support needed to ensure GPs can stay open and deliver the essential high quality care Australians need at this time.

The meeting, which was also attended by senior representatives from the Department of Health, aimed at improving coordination for COVID-19 care within the general practice and primary care sector to ensure strong access for patients.

Patient access to general practice is essential for many reasons, including relieving pressure from hospital and ambulance services during this peak wave period when Australia is experiencing an unprecedented number of COVID-19 infections within the community.

It is essential for patient outcomes that general practice is well positioned to meet the needs of the community. Securing the pathways forward for in-community COVID care is key to ongoing pandemic management. General practice has already contributed a significant proportion of the vaccine rollout and will need additional support to take on a greater role in-community COVID care.

The Ministers and the Department were receptive to the series of practical solutions put forward by the peak organisations that are needed for general practice doors to remain open, including:

- Expansion of telehealth services to a scope similar to earlier in the pandemic to improve access to health care for Australians during the current, and possibly future, waves. This would include primary care and specialist items which play an essential role in health care.
- An adequate supply of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to general practices.
- The urgent need for rapid antigen tests (RATs) to general practices to enable them to provide a safe environment for both staff and patients.
- Prioritisation and urgent distribution of RATs into rural and remote areas to secure patient and practitioner access in areas where not accessible to the state-run hubs currently tasked with distributing RATs.
- Support and resources for general practices to coordinate the care of COVID-19-positive patients in the community.

- A public health communication strategy on self-care pathways to alleviate the load on hospitals, GPs and their staff. Suggested resources included the National Coronavirus Helpline (1800 020 080), [RACGP Home Care Guidelines](#) and [healthdirect Monitoring COVID-19 symptoms](#).

The group resolved to monitor the outcomes from yesterday's discussion and is looking forward to the Government's responses to these requests and welcomed the Department's commitment to meet again within two weeks.

The Presidents of the peak organisations remain focused on working together to progress these matters and appreciate the Government's willingness to meet and work with the sector to ensure equitable access to general practice care.

<Ends>

**Peak bodies attending the meeting:**

Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM)

Australian Medical Association (AMA)

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)

Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA)

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (NACCHO)

**Contacts:**

RDAA: Ineke Kuiper, 0408 669 638

ACRRM: Petrina Smith, 0414 820 847

AMA: AMA Media on 02 6270 5478 or 0427 209 753

RACGP: John Ronan, 0428 122 357

NACCHO: Karen Zaveri, 0438 192 609