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**PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION REPORT BACKS AMA CALL FOR
 IMPROVED GENERAL PRACTICE INVESTMENT**

The latest Productivity Commission Report, showing that GPs are providing high-quality, cost-effective care for their patients, backs up the AMA’s Pre-Budget Submission call for more investment into general practice.

The Commission’s Report on Government Services, released this week, found that, in 2017-18, almost 37,000 GPs provided around 160.3 million Medicare services to patients around Australia.

It also found an extremely high satisfaction rate with GP services, with more than 90 per cent of patients reporting that their GP listened closely to them, showed them respect, and spent enough time with them, AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today.

“These figures have increased steadily over the previous five years, demonstrating that GPs are responding to the growing demand in the community, with an ageing population and rising rates of chronic diseases and complex conditions,” Dr Bartone said.

“The Productivity Commission report found that only 4 per cent of the population reported delaying or not visiting a GP in the previous 12 months due to cost, and around three-quarters of patients could get a GP appointment within 24 hours.

“GPs are working harder but are feeling the squeeze from underinvestment in Medicare rebates for patients and general practice across the board.

“With over a third of GPs aged over 55, we need to do more to resource and encourage a career in general practice so the community can continue to access the high quality care they need and deserve.

“Government spending on GP services is currently about 8 per cent of total Government spending on health. The AMA is calling for this to be lifted over time to about 10 per cent of total Government health spending.

“This will lead to long-term savings to the health system, and improved health outcomes by keeping patients out of hospital.

“The report shows that there were about 2.9 million presentations to public hospital emergency departments that could have been handled by GPs.

“The cost of an emergency department visit is, on average, more than \$500, which is much more than the cost of attending a GP.

“With the Federal Budget planned for April and an Election due soon after, it’s time for all parties to unveil a long-term vision for the Australian health system, with general practice front and centre.”

The AMA Pre-Budget Submission is at https://ama.com.au/sites/default/files/budget-submission/AMA_Budget_Submission_2019_20.pdf

Key findings of the Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2019:

- In 2017-18, Australia had 36,938 GPs working full-time and part-time, equating to 25,149 on a Full Service Equivalent (FSE) basis;
 - Rates of service used per annum remained steady at 6.5 per annum per head of population;
 - 4 per cent of the population reported that they delayed or did not visit a GP in the previous 12 months due to cost, down from 4.1 per cent in 2016-17;
 - 7 per cent reported that they had delayed or did not purchase prescribed medicines in the previous 12 months due to cost;
 - Around 73 per cent of patients could get a GP appointment within 24 hours;
 - 91.8 per cent said the GP always or often listened to them;
 - 94.1 per cent said that the GP always or often showed them respect;
 - 90.7 per cent said the GP always spent enough time with them.
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