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AMA

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE DISCUSSION PAPER – GOOD IDEAS MUST BE SUPPORTED BY STRONG NEW INVESTMENT AND GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT

In welcoming the Primary Health Care Advisory Group's Discussion Paper, *Better Outcomes for People with Chronic and Complex Health Conditions through Primary Health Care*, the AMA warns that important reforms cannot succeed without significant new investment in general practice and genuine Government support for Australia's hardworking GPs.

AMA President, Professor Brian Owler, said today that the AMA, the medical profession, and patients are looking to this Review to make a real difference to the level of support that is provided to primary care, particularly general practice.

"The discussion paper highlights a number of challenges facing the health system, and recognises that a strong primary health care system is the key to the future sustainability of the health system," Professor Owler said.

"There have been several primary care reviews in recent years that have recognised the critical role of general practice, but there has not been sufficient commitment to deliver genuine and lasting reform to build general practice.

"We now have a chance to make a real difference.

"The discussion paper outlines a range of areas for potential reform, some of which the AMA has long supported, including GP-led team-based care, the improved use of technology, care coordinators, and a greater role for private health insurers.

"The discussion paper also challenges the profession to consider new payment models, and this is something that will require ongoing discussion.

"What is missing from the discussion paper is an explicit statement that we need to better fund and resource general practice if we are to meet the health challenges of the future.

"The final outcome from this Review must be more than simply re-allocating existing funding.

"The reality that the Review must take into account is that general practice has been under attack, and a more positive Government attitude to general practice, and primary care and prevention more broadly, is urgently needed.

"General practice has been the target of regular Budget cuts that undermine the viability of practices, and threaten the long term sustainability and quality of GP services.

"The freeze on Medicare patient rebates is the prize example. It is causing great harm to GPs, their practices, and their patients.

"If the Government is genuine about improving how we care for patients with chronic and complex disease in primary care, greater investment and genuine commitment to positive reform is needed," Professor Owler said.

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4 August 2015

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