



**AMA Family
Doctor Week 2016**

YOUR FAMILY DOCTOR:
INVALUABLE TO YOUR HEALTH



RURAL GP GRANTS MUST BE RESHAPED

AMA FAMILY DOCTOR WEEK, 24-30 July 2016

Your Family Doctor: Invaluable to your health

As part of Family Doctor Week, the AMA is today calling on the Government to work with profession as it reshapes Rural and Regional Teaching Infrastructure Grants to allow more rural family doctors to invest in the future of their practices.

The grants of up to \$300,000 each, which were announced in the 2014 Federal Budget, were supposed to assist rural general practitioners to provide additional consultation rooms, and space for teaching medical students and supervising GP registrars.

But AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, said the restrictive requirements limited GPs to expanding their existing premises, potentially ruling out more affordable options such as refitting a building that had previously been used for another purpose.

“Our hard-working rural and regional GPs are the epitome of the family doctor, providing care in many cases for the entire family in one practice,” Dr Gannon said.

“In addition to providing high quality primary care services, they also – in many cases – provide procedural and emergency services at local hospitals, as well as doing their bit to train the next generation of GPs.

“There is much that the Government can do to support these family doctors to meet the complex health needs of people in rural and remote communities.

“In particular, if rural practices are properly funded to improve their available infrastructure, they can expand the services they provide to patients, and enhance their capacity to take on medical students, trainees, and registrars.

“The last round of infrastructure grants has been acknowledged as a failure and in the last Budget the Government committed to redesigning the program.

“Not only were there problems in the program design and implementation, but ongoing uncertainty over funding for general practice services including the Governments Medicare rebate freeze clearly discouraged practices from participating.

“Previously, GP infrastructure grants have helped to deliver real results for rural communities, with local practices taking up the opportunity to improve patient access, and to enhance their teaching capacity.

“The implementation of changes to the program must do more than tinker at the edges.

“The Federal Election result shows that people are genuinely concerned about the ongoing affordability of their health care, and the Government must show that it has listened to those concerns.

“The Government needs to invest in rural health by providing a further 425 grants of up to \$500,000, and by scrapping the requirement of matching funding.

“It also needs to reverse the Medicare patient rebate freeze and lift future indexation of patient rebates to levels that cover the true cost of providing high quality health services.”

AMA Family Doctor Week is a celebration of the central role played by local GPs in delivering high quality primary health care across Australia.

The theme of Family Doctor Week, 24-30 July 2016, is ‘**Your Family Doctor: Invaluable to your health**’.

As part of Family Doctor Week, the AMA has released a video showcasing the important relationship family doctors have with their patients. To view the video, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVsy1lbplNA&feature=youtu.be>

Follow all the action on Twitter: #amafdw16, #nomedicarefreeze

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