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PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION CONFIRMS HIGH PRODUCTIVITY OF AUSTRALIA’S GPs

AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, said today that the Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2018 provides further confirmation that general practice is the most efficient and cost effective part of the Australian health system.

Dr Gannon said the quality and productivity of Australia’s GPs is up with the best in the world.

“The Productivity Commission Report is compelling evidence that the Government must provide greater investment and support for general practice,” Dr Gannon said.

“The number of GP services in 2016-17 was 6.5 per annum per head of population, which is up from 5.9 services per head of population in 2011-12.

“This reflects growing demand for GP services in the community due to the impact of complex and chronic disease, as well as an increase in GP numbers.

“There were 105.9 full service equivalent (FSE) GPs per 100,000 population in 2016-17, compared to 82.9 per 100,000 population in 2011-12.

“Around 75 per cent of patients could get a GP appointment within 24 hours in 2016-17, which is consistent with previous years.

“Significantly, cost does not appear to be a significant barrier for patients who need to see a GP, with only 4.1 per cent of patients saying that they deferred accessing GP services due to cost.”

The Productivity Commission also found that patients were highly satisfied with their GPs on a number of measures, including:

- 91.6 per cent said the GP always or often listened carefully to them;
- 94.1 per cent said the GP always or often showed respect; and
- 90.6 per cent said the GP always or often spent enough time with them.

Dr Gannon said that GPs are normally the first point of call in the health system for patients, and they provide all the care needed for 90 per cent of the problems they encounter.

“GPs are providing more services for patients as the population gets older and, despite this pressure, satisfaction with these services remains high.

“The Report also shows that Australian Government total expenditure on GPs services per person only grew by 80 cents between 2015-16 and 2016-17 - from \$370.60 to \$371.40.

“This highlights the funding pressure that general practice continues to operate under, and the pressing need for the Government to deliver new real investment in general practice in this year’s Budget.

“A well-resourced general practice sector can help keep patients out of hospital and save the health system money.

“The Health Minister, Greg Hunt, has acknowledged this potential, and has a great personal understanding of the important role that GPs perform in the health system – and the stresses they face to meet growing public demand for their quality services.

“The next Budget is a genuine opportunity to recognise and reward quality general practice.”

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