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GPs GET THE BIG THUMBS UP FROM PATIENTS

Australians trust their doctors, particularly GPs. The Australian Medical Association has today welcomed a first-of-its-kind report that shows Australian patients are highly satisfied with the care they receive from their GP.

The research paper in the latest issue of the *Medical Journal of Australia* found that nearly 70 per cent of the 7,130 patients surveyed were happy with their access to a general practice; and 84 per cent were satisfied with the communication between themselves and their GP.

AMA President, Dr Rosanna Capolingua, said the research demonstrated the commitment from GPs to their patients' care and GPs' resolve to provide best practice medicine.

"GPs lead the way to better health and are recognised by patients as the leaders in the primary health care system," she said.

The research states that: "Greater satisfaction with health care is associated with improved compliance, continuity of care, and clinical outcomes".

"General practitioners play a fundamental and vital role in the health of the nation," Dr Capolingua said.

The research confirmed that 80 per cent of Australians visit their GPs at least once a year and Australians are fortunate enough that they are able to spend more time with their GPs than people in comparable countries.

Dr Capolingua said supporting GPs is a priority for the AMA as they are central to patient care.

"Clearly, patients want to see a GP when they are sick," she said.

"To give patients better access to GP services, GP training numbers need to be lifted and support for GP practice nurses must be expanded to general practices across the country."

The Federal Government has announced a review of primary health care delivery in Australia. There has been some talk that reforms could allow other health professionals to be the first point of call for patients.

"This new research clearly shows that patients trust and value their GPs and that general practitioners should remain responsible for the overall management of a patient's care, working collaboratively with other primary health care professionals," Dr Capolingua said

She added that recent comments from the Chair of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, Dr Christine Bennett, have reinforced this view –the number one issue raised in community consultations is access to a GP.

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