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**DRAFT NATIONAL PRIMARY HEALTH CARE STRATEGY:
GP ROLE MUST NOT BE WATERED DOWN**

AMA President, Dr Andrew Pesce, today called for the National Primary Health Care Strategy to strengthen the role of general practitioners to ensure that Australians can have access to better primary care services.

Dr Pesce warned that any moves to water down the key leadership role of general practitioners would be a backward step.

“The Draft Strategy, released today, reinforces that Australia has a good health system, built on a solid general practitioner foundation, that is delivering good outcomes for most patients,” Dr Pesce said.

“So, in planning for the nation's future health care needs, we must build on what works - and that means keeping GPs at the centre of primary care,” Dr Pesce said.

“Unfortunately there are some danger signs in this Draft Strategy and in the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission Report that the Government is planning a lesser role for GPs under the guise of *'health workforce reform'*.”

“The AMA must oppose any diminution of the role of the GP in primary care, and so should the whole community.

“General practice must be supported and strengthened, not taken for granted, or care will become more fragmented and patients will find it even more difficult to navigate their way through the health system.

“With the growing burden of complex and chronic disease, the role of the GP is more important than ever. Many patients now have several conditions and there is significant potential for the treatment of one disease to interact with one of their other conditions.”

Dr Pesce said the Government strategy must be to strengthen the GP-led model of primary care services by:

- Increasing GP training numbers;
- Increasing support for GP practice nurses who already work in collaboration with doctors;
- Allowing existing practices to access funding to support new infrastructure that they can use to deliver a wider range of multidisciplinary services as well as teach and train the next generation of GPs;
- Introducing properly funded and streamlined arrangements that allow GPs to refer patients to allied health professionals as part of a team-based approach to the management of chronic and complex disease;
- Providing better support for GPs to access the right technologies in the care of their patients such as MRI and point of care testing; and
- Recognising the role that GPs play in delivering preventive health care.

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