



Media release from General Practice Owners Association (GenPro)

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Adequate funding will help end GP shortage and improve patient care

The chronic shortage of general practice doctors will only get worse until the government steps in to fix the main problem – a lack of funding for primary healthcare.

“General practice doctors are overworked and underpaid. They are overworked because there are fewer doctors and higher patient demand. And they are underpaid because New Zealand general practices cannot compete with salaries offered by the public sector, other specialties and overseas,” said Dr Angus Chambers, Chair of the General Practice Owners Association (GenPro).

“The key reason for both these problems is the decades-long shortfall in government funding for general practice.”

Commenting on [media reports saying that New Zealand has a GP workforce crisis that is only expected to deepen](#), Dr Chambers said that being a GP was a fantastic job with flexibility, interesting work, and the opportunity to form relationships and get unique insights into people’s lives. But it needed to be worthwhile.

GPs were dealing with more complex patients and expected to do in 15 minutes what specialists were doing in an hour, Chambers said.

“General practice is an incredibly rewarding job. A specialist GP does great things for the health and wellbeing of communities. GPs make long-lasting connections with their patients and work through complex yet rewarding challenges in helping them manage their health. No workday is the same, GPs are always learning on the job, and have workplace flexibility to be owner, partner or locum, rural or urban, full time or part time.

“It’s not about coughs and colds – a GP is a general physician managing complex conditions.

“Despite these upsides, increasing numbers of GPs are facing burnout and leaving the profession. In addition, more than half of all family doctors will retire by 2030, placing increasing pressures on those left to maintain high standards of community healthcare,” Dr Chambers said.

Chambers says it’s hard for general practices in New Zealand to compete with salaries on offer in public hospitals or overseas. New Zealand GPs were routinely offered jobs with better pay and better conditions in Australia.

GenPro is calling for a significant uplift in funding for primary healthcare and a review of the outdated funding model. Progress in both areas would retain and eventually increase the supply of doctors into general practice, Dr Chambers said.

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