

Media Statement: 25 August 2021

New Caucus to lead General Practice contract negotiations

Growing concern around the future financial sustainability of community-based general practice has led to the establishment of a unified Caucus to strengthen national representation and contract negotiation on behalf of more than 1000 general practice providers (Contracted Providers) across New Zealand.

The Contracted Provider Caucus (the Caucus), has been established by, and will work closely with the General Practice Leaders Forum (GPLF), and unifies the key professional organisations representing general practices and includes:

- The General Practice Owners Association (GenPro)
- The GP Council of the New Zealand Medical Association (NZMA)
- The New Zealand Rural General Practice Network (NZRGPN)
- The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners (RNZCGP)



“General Practice provides an essential service for every community across the country. For too long, general practice providers have operated at the mercy of funding agencies, including the Ministry of Health, District Health Boards and Primary Health Organisations, who all have their own priorities and cost pressures which have taken precedence over the business sustainability, funding and service continuity of general practice. Our new Caucus aims to re-strengthen general practice and once again make it a service that local communities can rely on as well as a career-of-choice for our future medical professionals.” said Dr Vanessa Weenink (pictured), who was appointed Chair of the Caucus at its first formal meeting held on 16 August 2021.

The Caucus will have a formal working relationship with GPLF, which is a wider primary care collaborative group that also includes representatives of the funders of general practice (i.e. Primary Health Organisations/PHOs) and general practice employees.

Dr Samantha Murton, President of the New Zealand Royal College of GPs, said “We believe the establishment of this Caucus is critical to general practice sustainability and comes at a time when Government funding is failing to meet rising costs, fewer and fewer doctors are choosing general practice as a career option and, rising demand from an ageing population is creating the perfect storm. We have a significant opportunity through the Government’s current health reform programme to signal the importance of protecting these essential local services”.

At its first meeting, the Caucus also appointed lead negotiators to represent general practice providers at the national PSAAP* contract negotiation forum. The negotiators will be Dr Mark Peterson and Dr Angus Chambers (more details below) and who will be supported by a wider team of general practice owners and advisors including Dr Vanessa Weenink and others yet to be appointed. The Caucus will engage Lawyers to ensure ongoing legal advice and support is provided to the negotiation team which will operate through formal governance and secretariat services led by Philip Grant at GenPro (the General Practice Owners Association).

“This is a significant national contracting process which covers more than \$1billion of contracted services across New Zealand’s general practices – we need to make sure we take that responsibility seriously on behalf of those front-line business owners who have taken on huge personal risk and financial

commitments to serve their communities. I am delighted to have been appointed to directly support that role", said Dr Chambers.

The Caucus looks forward to working with representatives from the Ministry of Health, District Health Boards and PHOs to ensure the financial sustainability of New Zealand's general practices and continuity of the essential healthcare they provide for their communities.

ENDS

Further information can be obtained from:

Philip Grant, Chief Executive of GenPro – E-mail: philip@genpro.org.nz

Information for Editors:

Dr Vanessa Weenink: Is a GP Partner and co-owner of Papanui Medical Centre in Christchurch. She is the Deputy Chair of the New Zealand Medical Association and the current Chair of the NZMA's GP Council.

Dr Mark Peterson: is a GP and part-owner of Taradale Medical Centre in Hawke's Bay. He has extensive experience in advocacy for General Practice and in governance roles having been on the RNZCGP Board and having previously chaired the NZMA's GP Council and then chaired NZMA itself.

Dr Peterson is a current Contracted Provider Representative at the PSAAP table. A role he is appointed to by GPLF and has held for a number of years.

Dr Angus Chambers: Is a GP, part owner of Riccarton Clinic in Christchurch and deputy chair of the General Practice Owners Association (GenPro).

Dr Chambers became involved in PHO affairs in the early 2000s and is currently Chair of Christchurch PHO. He was previously also Chair of the national collaborative organisation, Primary Health Alliance. It is through the latter organisation that Dr Chambers was appointed a PSAAP representative for PHOs and over the last few years in this role became deeply disillusioned with the historic PSAAP representation for General Practice owners - a subject on which he has been well quoted by NZ Doctor magazine and elsewhere.

Dr Chambers studied medicine at Otago University and also has a degree in Law from Canterbury.

The General Practice Leaders Forum (GPLF) is a collaborative group which meets separately to consider and respond to strategic issues impacting upon primary care. It includes the Caucus members listed above together with:

- General Practice New Zealand (GPNZ), representing Primary Health Organisations – the main funding bodies of general practice
- The College of Primary Care Nurses - part of the New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO)
- The Practice Managers Association of Aotearoa New Zealand (PMAANZ)

***PSAAP** is the PHO Services Agreement Amendment Protocol – a national negotiation forum which determines annual service and funding contracts between DHBs and PHOs as well as "Back-to-back" contracts between PHOs and each general practice provider.

A PSAAP briefing for Contracted Providers can be read here: <http://genpro.org.nz/docs/psaapbriefing.pdf>

More general detail about PSAAP is available from the formal PSAAP website here:

<https://tas.health.nz/dhb-programmes-and-contracts/primary-care-integration-programme/primary-health-organisation-service-agreement-amendment-protocol/>