



Media release from the General Practice Owners Association of Aotearoa New Zealand

A year on, general practice still waiting for promised funding review

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A year after the formation of the National-led coalition, general practices are still waiting for a revised funding model that will help fix the crisis in primary healthcare.

“While we congratulate the sixth National government on its first anniversary, GenPro is disappointed there’s been no progress or updates on a new funding model for primary healthcare,” said Dr Angus Chambers, Chair of General Practice Owners Association of Aotearoa New Zealand (GenPro).

Two days after the formation of the coalition, new Health Minister Shane Reti told NZ Doctor that he’ll proceed with implementing the Sapere report on funding. Published in 2022, the Sapere report pointed to significant under investment and issues with the way funding is structured.

“Investment in primary care is a vital to getting our health system back on track. More health funding must be allocated to front-line patient services. Most critically, the family doctor service ‘capitation’ funding model must be updated,” Dr Chambers said.

“The current model is 20 years out of date, and successive reviews have made widely accepted recommendations for its improvement, which have yet to be implemented.

National’s pre-election health policy said “National will work with the sector to explore implementation of (Sapere’s) recommendations in our first year in office”.

New Zealand First said it would “support the review of the core funding model of Primary Care to ensure it’s fit for purpose and identify what systematic changes are required”.

And ACT said it would “increase GP funding by 13%”, a number derived from the Sapere report.

All parties said that New Zealand’s health workforce was in crisis, with a shortage of doctors, nurses and midwives contributing to ballooning waitlists, delays accessing treatment or maternity care, and overcrowded emergency departments.

“Dr Reti certainly has had his hands full, but a year is long enough to produce an implementation plan. On November 27 last year, Dr Reti said he had already spoken to officials about National’s pre-election commitment to implement the Sapere report.”



Dr Chambers said that the situation had grown worse in the past year, and there was no light at the end of the tunnel in the form of a funding review that reflects different health needs, such as age, and makes up for years of under-funding.

“A recent GenPro survey showed general practices are in crisis, squeezed by rising costs, high patient demand and staff shortages. The key reason is that government funding has not kept pace with the cost of running a general practice,” Dr Chambers said.

“We look forward to working with the Minister and Te Whatu Ora to progress the Sapere recommendation in coming months,” Dr Chambers said.

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