



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

General practices welcome fast-track approvals process

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A new fast-track approval process is a good start, but more is needed to fix New Zealand's chronic GP shortage, says the General Practice Owners Association (GenPro)

"General practice owners welcome a speedier process to register graduate general practitioners from certain countries so they can work in New Zealand," said Dr Angus Chambers, Chair of GenPro.

Up to now, all doctors from overseas who applied for specialist registration in New Zealand have needed to have their qualifications, training and experience assessed by the relevant specialist medical college, which the New Zealand Medical Council says could take up to six months.

"The new fast-track process for specialists from the United Kingdom, Ireland and Australia will be completed within 20 working days, which is great news".

A GenPro survey carried out in July found that nearly six out of 10 general practices had GP vacancies. Over-stretched general practices were reducing their hours, stopping new enrolments, and reducing their services, while patients in some areas were waiting weeks to see a doctor.

"While we welcome the fast-track process, the key problem remains. General practices are under-funded by Te Whatu Ora/Health New Zealand and restricted from increasing their patient fees. These long-standing problems and changes in patient health needs have eroded the financial sustainability of general practices, which means GPs are working harder for less money. Fast-tracking is a positive first step, with more work needed to tackle our workforce challenges.

"In addition to fast-tracking graduates, the government should focus on properly funding general practice so we can rebuild our depleted and over-stretched work force.

"GenPro agrees with Health Minister Shane Reti that internationally qualified doctors play an important role in providing quality care to New Zealanders, and we look forward to seeing further work on bringing in more suitably-trained doctors".

GenPro, which represents about half of all general practices in Aotearoa, is ready to work with the Minister of Health and the Health NZ Commissioner to develop the solutions needed.

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