



Pre-Budget Statement 2026

The National Council of Primary Care Doctors is urging the Australian Government to use next week's Federal Budget to strengthen patient access, continuity and quality in general practice to meet rising pressure on patients, practices, emergency departments and the health workforce.

The Council calls for patient access to longer consultations, general practice workforce sustainability, and culturally safe and inclusive care as priorities that will deliver immediate, system-wide benefits for patients while strengthening primary care. Together, these priorities reinforce general practice as the trusted, cornerstone of Australia's health system in delivering accessible, continuous and high-quality care for all Australians.

Support patient access to longer consultations for chronic and complex care

General practice is caring for more patients with chronic and complex conditions, often involving multimorbidity's. Time intensive, relationship-based care improves patient outcomes and is central to a high-functioning primary care health system.

Supporting longer consultations means Australians with the greatest need, such as older people, people with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage, can benefit from a comprehensive, coordinated care path.

Current Medicare settings disincentivise longer consultations - impacting complex care and encouraging fragmentation across the health system. Supporting patients to spend adequate time with their GP improves continuity, strengthens coordination of care across service providers, reduces avoidable hospital use and enhances productivity gains.

The Budget must prioritise patient access to longer consultations as a system-wide reform that enables general practitioners and rural generalists to spend the time needed, rather than relying on alternative models that fragment care, undermine continuity and patient safety.

Retain and sustain the general practice workforce, including rural generalism

A strong primary care system depends on retaining the doctors who already serve their communities, particularly in rural and remote Australia. General practice workforce pressure is being felt by registrars, supervisors and small practices having to balance increasing clinical complexity, training responsibilities and financial strain. Embedding rural generalism as a core part of Australia's health system is also critical to maintaining patient access and continuity of care outside metropolitan areas.

The Council calls for retention strategies that address supervisory workload, practice viability and the social and practical support required for registrars and their families, in education, childcare, housing and community connection. Wrap around support that

enables doctors to stay in practice and training pathways is essential in building long-term workforce sustainability.

Improve support for culturally safe and inclusive care

High-quality primary care depends on understanding the barriers patients and practitioners face in receiving and providing culturally safe and inclusive care. The Council calls for constructive measures to support improvements and accountability in delivering culturally safe and inclusive care, in a way that removes defensiveness or disengagement.

The Budget should fund appropriate tools to measure inclusion and culturally safe practice across primary care settings, enabling targeted education, systems improvement and better health outcomes.

The National Council of Primary Care Doctors (NCPCD) represents the interests of general practice and primary care in Australia, comprising leaders from the Australian Medical Association (AMA), Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA), Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), General Practice Supervisors Australia (GPSA), General Practice Registrars Australia (GPRA) and Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA).

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