



NAMDS

National Association
for Medical Deputising
Services (Australia)

28th May 2014

The Hon Peter Dutton
Minister for Health
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

CC: Ms Erica Kneipp, Assistant Secretary, Primary Health Care Policy Branch, Department of Health

Dear Minister,

The NAMDS met on the 20th of May 2014 to consider the Horvath Report, the Government's 2014/15 budget and its likely impact on the provision of after-hours primary medical care services in Australia. NAMDS congratulates you and the Government on the 2014/15 health budget, appreciates the 13 month reform planning period envisaged and pledges to work with you and your department in refining the various implementation challenges.

We agree with the report presented by Professor Horvath, in particular his view that Medicare Locals have mismanaged after-hours primary medical care service operations and that together with other systemic failures, their abolition was necessary. We understand Medicare Locals are to be replaced by fewer, better focused Primary Health Networks. We agree with the recommendations of Professor Horvath and his proposed solutions and look forward to supporting you and your Department in implementing the policy changes.

NAMDS notes that Professor Horvath has recommended that the future model for the delivery of after-hours services be further reviewed and that a new model be proposed to you for implementation by 01/07/2015. In the intervening period NAMDS would like to thank you and the Government for continuing to fund Medicare Locals for the 2014/2015 Financial Year. This will allow an orderly hand-over of selected functions to Primary Health Networks on 01/07/2015 and to maintain the certainty of existing procurement practices and the quantum of funding provided for existing after-hours services during the 2014/15 financial year.

NAMDS President: Mr Stuart Tait
Stuart.Tait@homedoctor.com.au
Ph: 13 SICK (7425) or Mob: 0414 225 253
www.namds.com

NAMDS notes with alarm that some Medicare Locals seem to be actively opposing various government policy initiatives and we are keen to ensure that Medicare Locals do not adopt a combative view to the reforms approved by Government nor damage existing well-functioning after-hours services operated by NAMDS members. To support this objective we would request your Department write to Medicare Locals requiring that any significant changes to Medicare Local funding of after-hours primary medical care services have advance written ministerial approval.

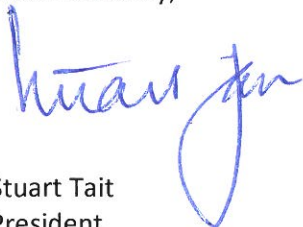
Considering the broad scale damage done by some Medical Locals to existing after-hours services, the increasing schism between in-hours GP practices and after-hours providers (in particular, Medical Deputising Services) and the relatively tight time frame we recommend that you move to appoint a person to review the after-hours sector as soon as practical.

In our view, the person you choose needs to be independent of the Department of Health, ML's, the AMA, RACGP, RDAA and NAMDS. Ideally, the person needs to have a sound understanding of after-hours policy and procedure and an ability to liaise with the various stake-holders to arrive at a cost effective, practical and patient access focussed solution.

NAMDS, the RACGP and the AMA have had a long history of working with Mr Ron Phillips in reviewing the Australian Medical Deputising Services Program. Mr Phillips has been independent, professional and expeditious in his various reports. We would regard him as someone ideally suited to the complicated task at hand, as would be Professor Horvath.

If you wish to discuss any of these matter with me I can be contacted on 0414 225 253.

Yours sincerely,



Stuart Tait
President
NAMDS