

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

## **NAMDS strengthens industry standards for medical deputising services**

*The National Association for Medical Deputising (NAMDS) sets high bar for after hours care*

Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2016, Sydney: The peak body representing medical deputising services has released new guidance to members and accreditation agencies that reinforces high quality standards for the sector.

The National Association for Medical Deputising (NAMDS) has published *Definition of a Medical Deputising Service: Interpretation and Guidance* to provide clarity on the role of Medical Deputising Services (MDS) in after hours primary care and the standards they should meet in supporting continuity of care in General Practice.

The NAMDS Definition of a Medical Deputising Service has long been incorporated into the Approved Medical Deputising Standards (AMDS) Program Guidelines, meaning all MDS must comply with the definition in order to have access to doctors covered by the “ten year rule,” registrars, and other general registrants who are working towards general practice fellowship.

The 10-page *Interpretation and Guidance* publication provides explanatory notes and concrete guidance on the standards, indicators and evidence required to satisfy each of the 15 items in the Definition. The document aims to set clear standards for NAMDS members and provide guidance to accreditation agencies.

Mr Keneally, the President of NAMDS, says the guidance has been developed in response to industry concerns that some of the new medical deputising services were competing with General Practice and operating outside the language and spirit of the Definition.

“This document provides greater clarity regarding the definition to NAMDS members and non-members alike and we will be strongly urging the accreditation agencies to refer to it in their activities,” said Ben Keneally.

The Medical Director of NAMDS, Dr Spiro Doukakis emphasised that “Medical Deputising Services play an essential role in ensuring access to quality care throughout the after hours period, especially for vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly. While increased awareness has led to increased use of such services, we want to reassure the GP community that all NAMDS members are working to high standards in support of continuity of care with General Practice. We also encourage non-members to join NAMDS once they are satisfied that they comply with the Definition”

“We look forward to discussing with RACGP the extent to which these interpretive guidelines can be formally incorporated into accreditation standards,” said Dr Doukakis.

With the aim of raising standards in the sector, NAMDS has already discussed concerns regarding current accreditation processes with the Department of Health and accreditation agencies Australian General Practice Accreditation Limited (AGPAL) and GPA Accreditation Plus.

Mr Keneally explained, “NAMDS has been monitoring the proliferation of new deputising services, many of which appear to have been accredited despite having no operating history and limited engagement with General Practice. We are concerned that many of these groups do not comply with the clear terms of the Definition. This Guidance is designed to get the whole industry on the same page.”

Mr Keneally concluded, "Our aim in developing this guidance is to ensure we protect the benefits of after hours services to patients, emergency departments and the GPs we work to support."

A copy of the *Definition of Medical Deputising Service: Interpretation and Guidance*, is available on the NAMDS website: [www.namds.com](http://www.namds.com)

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