



GP DEPUTISING ASSOCIATION
FOR AND ON BEHALF OF GENERAL PRACTICE

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Media Release: GPDA supports Health Ministers Medicare Integrity Division investigation

The GP Deputising Association welcomes today's announcement by the Health Minister that the Medicare Integrity Division will investigate the after hours sector. The GPDA has had ongoing concerns related to the behavior and work practices of some *highly entrepreneurial* after hours care providers and believes this investigation is an important step in ensuring that quality and safety remain of paramount importance in the delivery of appropriate after hours care to the community.

The GPDA formed in late 2016 when a number of Australia's longest serving Medical Deputising Services split from the National Association for Medical Deputising Services (NAMDS) over some of these very same concerns. The GPDA has advocated strongly with the Health Minister, the Department of Health, the RACGP and the AMA to highlight the critical difference between *highly entrepreneurial after hours services* and genuine Medical Deputising Services. The Association believes the proposed investigation will readily identify the quality, safety and mentorship measures that legitimate Medical Deputising Services have in place to ensure that only appropriately qualified doctors provide care to the community.

GPDA President Dr Nathan Pinski commented:

"Members of the Association are concerned that *highly entrepreneurial after hours services*, who are not acting for and on behalf of General Practice, have developed business models focused on consult volume, rather than the delivery of appropriate after hours care that is complementary to, rather than competing with General Practice. Further to support these volume driven models, it is possible more attention has been paid to the total number of doctors recruited to see patients, rather than truly ensuring these doctors have the required skills and mentorship to practice safely."

The GPDA believes a patient's regular GP is best placed to provide medical care for their patients. If they are not available, this care should be provided by fully qualified GPs or doctors on a pathway to general practice, who are working within the quality and safety framework only available through fully accredited genuine and legitimate Medical Deputising Services.

"Recent media reports echo our continued concerns related to the cost burden and increased risk that *highly entrepreneurial after hours services* bring to the community. Today's press articles on the poor quality of medical care provided to some patients after hours is of great concern, and suggests there is a pressing need to take action. The GPDA is ready to work with the Medicare Integrity Division, the Health Minister and all other stakeholders to restore confidence in our sector through responsible, sustainable and best practice Medical Deputising" Dr. Pinski added.

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