
Senate Hearing – Universal access to reproductive healthcare

Tuesday 28 February 2023 at 10.45-11.45am (AEDT)

Opening statement

“The RACGP is Australia’s largest professional general practice organisation, representing over 43,000 members working in or toward a career in general practice, including four out of five general practitioners (GPs) in rural Australia. (I am joined here today by/I appear to you as) the Chair of General Practice at Monash University and a nationally and internationally recognized leader in women’s health, implementation research and knowledge translation in the general practice setting.

General practitioners (GPs) are the first point of contact for most Australians seeking healthcare. (1) GPs establish continuous and trusting clinical relationships with their patients in all stages of their life. The areas of sexual and reproductive health and pregnancy care constitute a significant proportion of general practice healthcare services. GPs are the core providers of these services and are well placed to reassess the changing needs of people across the reproductive lifespan and discuss alternatives. Furthermore, preventive health advice from GPs has significant individual health benefits and is economically more beneficial for the health system.

Barriers to reproductive healthcare include:

- *significant cost barriers to patients wanting to access the full range of contraceptive options on the PBS,*
- *limited skills-based training opportunities for GPs in LARCs and LARC insertion impacted by inappropriate remuneration, affordability of courses, limited access to peer and expert support and limited referral pathways.*
- *significant access barriers to reproductive healthcare for patients in rural and remote such as those who wish to access termination of pregnancy services.*

This inquiry is an opportunity to identify and discuss areas that will improve universal access to reproductive healthcare services in general practice.

The submission provides comment on the relevant Inquiry terms of reference that impact on general practice and patients seeking reproductive healthcare, highlight the role of general practice in this care, discuss regulatory and cost barriers to patients seeking access, call attention to workforce and training barriers that impact GPs and outline measures that could be implemented to improve access to reproductive healthcare.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you. We look forward to answering your questions.”
