

Local doctors call on Federal Government to help GPs re-establish flood-ravaged practices.

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## Defensive medicine' no excuse, despite GP being sued

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Dr Tony Webber: Practise in the "interests of the patient".

A PATIENT payout of \$290,000 has triggered further debate into the ordering of CT scans, with a leading doctors' group arguing their increasing use may be partly attributed to GPs practising defensive medicine.

Last week the NSW Supreme Court awarded compensation to 59-year-old Sandra Thompson after her GP failed to refer her for a CT scan. After a year of neck pain that radiated down her right arm, Ms Thompson was diagnosed with spinal cord impingement and cervical myelopathy.

The judgement comes just weeks after Professional Services Review director Dr Tony Webber highlighted a worrying upward trend in the number of GPs unnecessarily referring patients for CT scans.

AMA president Dr Andrew Pesce said doctors were often "caught between a rock and a hard place" when it came to over-investigating.

"It is difficult for them each way: they don't want to do too many tests, but then if there is ever any doubt, they always will," he said. "No-one has been sued for doing too many tests."

Dr Webber agreed defensive medicine could be partly driving the trend, but added "medicine should be practised in the interests of the patient, not defensively".

"The evidence I have seen is there are a significant number of CT scans done without adequate clinical justification, and in circumstances where there was no need to use these for defensive medicine," Dr Webber said.

**Tags:** [CT scans](#), [Dr Tony Webber](#), [Dr Andrew Pesce](#), [professional services review](#)

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