



**THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGEING**

The Hon John Murphy MP
Chair
The House Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr ~~Murphy~~

Thank you for your letter of 23 May 2011 regarding the petition recently submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions, which asserted that the petitioners' '...right to choose and have direct access to their own family GP being a medically qualified practitioner must not be changed, modified or removed and further, that the doctor/patient relationship remains sacrosanct and without constraints that may adversely affect health outcomes'.

The Australian Government acknowledges the critical role played by GPs in delivering frontline care to all Australians and commends their dedication to the provision of accessible, high quality, and safe care. The Government supports the right of the Australian people to choose and to have access to their own GP, wherever possible.

GPs' central role in the delivery of primary health care has not and will not change. As part of its Health Reform Agenda, the Government has renewed its focus on the delivery of stronger primary health care to get people the services they need in their local communities, keeping people well and out of hospitals.

The Government will strengthen its primary health care reforms by establishing Medicare Locals – a national network of primary health care organisations – to drive improvements in primary health care and ensure that primary health care services are better tailored to meet the needs of local communities.

Medicare Locals will work collaboratively with GPs and other primary health care service providers in their area towards meeting the primary health care needs of their communities. Medicare Locals will also play a broad coordinating role to ensure seamless transitions of patients between health and aged care service sectors. Under these new arrangements, patients will continue to receive the health care they require from their individual primary health care providers. Medicare Locals will help ensure the range of primary health care services needed by their communities is available and work effectively for patients. As such, Medicare Locals will not manage GPs or instruct them to provide specific services nor will they interfere with the doctor/patient relationship. Fee for service arrangements through Medicare will continue.

The Government has also made a significant investment in general practice training, committing \$344.9 million over four years to increase the annual intake on the Australian General Practice Training (AGPT) program from 700 in 2010 to 900 in 2011 rising to 1,200 each year from 2014 ongoing. As GP registrars on the AGPT program provide services while they train, these additional training places will help to tackle the nationwide GP shortage and provide improved access to health services.

I appreciate you bringing the petition to my attention.

Yours sincerely

NICOLA ROXON

15 JUL 2011