



# National Council of Primary Care Doctors

## Urgent Care Centres Position Statement

October 2024

The National Council of Primary Care Doctors\* (the Council) supports and strongly advocates to increase access to general practice services for all Australians, including during after-hours periods.

The establishment of Urgent Care Centres (UCC), however described, by governments is unfortunately not the solution. This includes those funded by state/territory governments, which are often nothing more than an exercise in rebranding of existing services and have been identified by the midterm review of the National Health Reform Agreement as a model that needs to be addressed.

The Council recognises that the UCC models being utilised have been developed in an effort to manage the growing number of presentations to hospital emergency departments. The Council calls on all governments to work together to deliver additional investment into general practice primary care services, including access to after-hours primary care.

The UCC model is inconsistent with the delivery of comprehensive and integrated primary care models, and reports indicate that clinical handovers from UCCs back to a patients' regular GP practice are of inconsistent quality, if provided at all.

The Council has significant concerns that UCCs are creating competition for an already stretched workforce supply of general practitioners and primary care registered nurses. With continued expansion it will also limit the ability of general practices to train the future medical workforce in the clinical skills often required for urgent care-type presentations, creating permanent fragmentation of care in the system.

The Council understands patients need greater access to affordable GP services, but the solution needs to address fundamental structural issues as opposed to the pursuit of short-term options that contribute to longer term issues in the system including increased costs and more confusion for patients as there are increasing entry points of the health care system, but little to ensure the alignment with evidence-based gold standard primary care models of care.

**The solutions:**

- Invest in additional general practice and rural generalist training to increase access to GP services as part of a comprehensive model of primary care.
- Reform funding for after-hours periods and appropriately invest in facilitating increased access for Australians to their own GP/GP practice, particularly from 6pm – 9pm, when the majority of after-hours GP type presentations occur.
- Reform the funding model for primary care to facilitate general practice based multidisciplinary care that is integrated, comprehensive and coordinated.

<Ends>

*\*The National Council of Primary Care Doctors (NCPCD) represents the interests of general practice and primary care in Australia, comprising leaders from the Australian Medical Association (AMA), Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA), Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), General Practice Supervisors Australia (GPSA), General Practice Registrars Australia (GPRA) and Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA).*

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