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### **Primary healthcare voice amplified by sector group accord**

The two leading independent advocates for primary healthcare have signed an agreement to work together to tackle problems leaving communities without GPs and unaffordable consultation fees.

The memorandum of understanding between the General Practice Owners Association, and General Practitioners Aotearoa, will allow greater collaboration to amplify the voice of a sector besieged by funding and labour issues.

GenPro acting chair Dr Stephanie Taylor said that general practice is unsustainable under the current model, and government must urgently increase funding to offset the rise in GP labour, operational and compliance costs.

“Our new memorandum of understanding will support collaboration between the only two general practice advocacy groups that are fully independent of government and can therefore strongly promote and advocate for their respective members,” Dr Taylor said.

Dr Buzz Burrell, chair of General Practitioners Aotearoa, said working together would enhance efforts to ensure continuity of high-quality patient care accessible to communities.

“It’s important we collaborate to effectively represent GPs, general practices and their owners, and give voice to issues that impact their work and, most importantly, the patients they serve.”

The high-level agreement comes as GP and practice owners await Te Whatu Ora’s annual statement, which sets the maximum a GP can charge based on funding allocated in the 2024 Budget.

Many GPs are deciding enough is enough and retiring or closing their practices. Meanwhile practices are facing higher costs due to rising prices, compliance, and labour shortages, especially of nurses lured by higher pay in the public sector.

Both associations agree that an effective approach to sustainable care is proper investment in general practice, while retaining and increasing numbers of GPs.

“Huge investment in general practice is needed to address the long-term underfunding of GPs and practices, which are the central pillar of primary healthcare,” Dr Burrell said.

Ends.

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