

www.theage.com.au

moneymanager
.com.au

Money Manager helps you
navigate through the confusing
world of personal loans

GO NOW

[Home](#) » [National](#) » [Breaking News](#) » [Article](#)

Report proposes salaries for GPs

- [Email](#)
- [Print](#)
- [Normal font](#)
- [Large font](#)

February 25, 2008 - 4:35PM

Advertisement

BMW Diesel range
with EfficientDynamics.

United by passion and performance with
the most advanced diesel engines.

BMW 1 Series 120d

REVEAL MORE REQUEST BROCHURE

The advertisement features a side profile of a silver BMW 1 Series 120d car. The text is arranged in a clean, professional layout with a dark background. A small BMW logo is visible in the top right corner of the ad area.

Australia's GP shortage could be eased under a plan to offer doctors UK-style fixed salaries instead of Medicare rebates, a new report says.

Guaranteed salaries would give job security and make the profession more attractive to doctors, particularly women who wanted to take maternity leave and return part-time.

The current Medicare payment system made no provisions for maternity leave, report author Jill Thistlethwaite said.

"It's an option that could be considered and might make general practice more attractive to some doctors," Associate Professor Thistlethwaite, from the University of Sydney, told AAP.

The plan comes from an Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute study that canvassed reasons behind the GP shortage and possible solutions.

It found flexible hours were "one of the main attractions" for trainee doctors who were considering becoming GPs instead of other specialities.

The option of salaried positions - to stand alongside owner-operated practices and large privately-owned clinics - would give doctors more flexibility, and may encourage more to enter or return to the profession.

"In the past solo GPs and older doctors have been willing to work long hours and set up a business, but these days young doctors want more opportunity to spend time with their families," Prof Thistlethwaite, herself a GP, said.

Under the plan, doctors could be employed in community clinics or clinical schools and receive a fixed income instead of Medicare payments.

The model would be similar to the UK where there was "an increasing number of salaried GPs" alongside privately practising GPs.

The government could pilot the scheme and measure its success using recruitment and retention data, the report suggests.

Larger practices employing many doctors, such as the government's planned "GP super clinics", could also give GPs the ability to work more flexible hours, Prof Thistlethwaite said.

Prof Thistlethwaite said general practice was one of the specialities hardest hit by the national doctor shortage.

GPs would be in even greater demand as the population aged and chronic disease became more common.

Medical schools also had a role in exposing students to GP practice and positive role models, Prof Thistlethwaite said.

The report found other reasons medical students were put-off becoming GPs included a perception that it lacked prestige or intellectual challenge, they heard mainly negative attitudes, or were just not exposed to it as undergraduates.

Uncertainty, poor pay, workload and paperwork were also factors.

But Prof Thistlethwaite said universities clearly had a role to play in students' attitudes, as the proportion of graduates from different universities who became GPs varied from 12 to 27 per cent.

The federal government could provide incentive payments to universities that encouraged more students into general practice, she said.

The Australian Medical Association's GP spokesman Rod Pearce said the scheme would only work if the commonwealth or states were prepared to directly fund GP clinics and guarantee the funding would continue.

But the state health systems were already in trouble, he said.


And Dr Pearce said his conversations with GPs had revealed most liked to be able to control their hours and therefore salary.

Most doctors in privately owned clinics were already paid a minimum hourly rate under their contracts.

"They actually prefer when they work more they can earn more, like a casual worker does," he said.

And the cost of any maternity leave would have to be built into the system, which meant doctors would have to receive a lower salary while they accrued it.

© 2008 [AAP](#)

Brought to you by  **aap**

When you see news happening: SMS/MMS: 0406 THE AGE (0406 843 243), or [email](#) us. [More](#)

- [Email](#)
- [Print](#)
- [Normal font](#)
- [Large font](#)

[Get the Age home delivered for as little as a \\$1 a day!](#)

SPONSORED LINKS

Related coverage

- [10:48AM Austar posts 63.2% drop in net profit](#)
- [10:44AM Activist climb onto airliner in London](#)
- [10:41AM Fancy footwear for German police dogs](#)

[Home](#) | [National](#) | [World](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Business](#) | [Technology](#) | [Sport](#) | [Entertainment](#)