



# General Practitioners

## **Who's your GP?**

The most commonly accessed health service is a general practitioner, or GP. It's possible that you have your own 'family doctor' or 'family GP' whom you have known for many years. Perhaps you have found your own GP, different from the one you saw when you were a child. Perhaps you prefer to go to a local medical centre and don't mind which doctor you see, so don't really have your 'own' GP. In Australia, young people like everyone else, can choose which GP they want to see, and can see different GPs at different times. (By the way this isn't the case in all countries). The sex of your GP might be important to you – some people prefer female, and some prefer male, GPs. The cultural background of the GP – whether it's the same or different from yours, could also be important. Hopefully you can find a GP who is 'right' for you, and whom you can trust.

## **GPs in rural areas**

One of the problems for young people living in rural areas is that there aren't as many GPs to choose from. In some towns there might only be one GP. If a young person doesn't feel comfortable with that GP it can be difficult to find another one, since the next closest GP could be a long way away.

## **The cost of seeing a GP**

When you go to a GP they can either charge you money for the consultation or they can 'bulk bill' you. Charging you money 'upfront' means that you have to pay and then you can take the receipt with you to a Medicare office and get some of that money back. Bulk billing means that you give the doctor (or their receptionist) your Medicare card (or just your number if you have it written down somewhere) and they get you to sign a Medicare form. That means that the doctor can get payment for seeing you directly from the government instead of from you.

You can ask the GP (or their receptionist) when you make an appointment whether they bulk bill. Many GPs will bulk bill young people, as well as health care card owners and pensioners.