

GPs looking for safer workplace

By Adrienne Agg

THE stabbing death of Noble Park doctor Khulod Maarouf-Hassan has prompted the establishment of a national taskforce to improve safety in general practice.

Last week, The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners resolved to investigate ways to improve the safety of GPs.

This will include practical measures such as informing staff of security measures used in the practice, education and training, the tracking of patients who have perpetrated violence in general practices, connections with police and the judiciary and research into the causes of violence in general practices.

At a meeting of 13 health organisations, the RACGP said urgent and coordinated action was needed to improve safety in general practices.

RACGP spokesman Jason Berek-Lewis said: "An Australian study has shown that over 40 per cent of general practitioners were subject to at least

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Nick Demediuk

one incident of verbal abuse and almost 3 per cent had been assaulted at least once in the previous year."

The Dandenong District Division of General Practice's own study in partnership with Victoria Police, revealed that half the GPs surveyed had experienced aggressive, sexually inappropriate or drug-seeking behaviour in patients.

Despite this, 29.6 per cent of respondents said they would have to feel "extremely threatened" before alerting police, and only 24.5 per cent said they

would be likely to report such behaviour.

The study also showed that 32 of the surveyed practices did not have a plan to deal with inappropriate patient behaviour.

DDDGP president Nick Demediuk said it was the division's study that had prompted the meeting of health organisations across Australia.

He said violence in general practices was under-reported.

"People come to us because they are sick, either mentally or physically, and it's the natural thing for us to care for them rather than call police."

Dr Demediuk said the division was meeting WorkCover this week to put together a safety kit for GPs in Greater Dandenong.

He said GPs in the municipality had unique challenges.

"It's a lower socio-economic area, with a lot more migrants, something like 146 different languages.

"All those things can put added stress on people."

■ Dr Maarouf-Hassan, 51, was killed on June 16 last year in her Noble Park consulting room.



Fresh as ...

The ribbon was cut, the doors opened and the bargain hunters arrived at the revamped Safeway store at Parkmore on Thursday morning. Performing the opening honours was Chandler Primary School principal Peter Paul, accompanied by school captains Cameron, left, and Kunthea. The youngsters got the best bargain when Safeway's Leigh Simons presented them with a cheque for \$1000 for the school.

Berwick man charged over alleged drug trafficking

POLICE have caught a Berwick man, 21, for allegedly trafficking drugs in a Hallam industrial precinct.

During a routine patrol of the area, police intercepted the man and allegedly found him in

possession of a large amount of cannabis, and a smaller amount of amphetamines.

He has been bailed to appear in the Dandenong Magistrates Court on November 8.



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For more information

For further information on railway crossing safety visit www.doi.vic.gov.au/transport

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