



Australian Government

Department of Health

**Professor Brendan Murphy
Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer**

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**Pathology providers guarantee to continue to provide Pap Tests for
Australian women**

The Federal Department of Health has reached agreement with representatives of the Australian Pathology providers which will ensure that women will be able to continue to access the current Pap Test to screen for cervical cancer until a new testing program begins on December 1 2017.

Last week I announced that, due to the complexity of assimilating and migrating data from eight state and territory cancer registers into one register, the start date for Australia's first National Cancer Screening Register has been delayed. This meant also that the introduction of the new cervical cancer screening test would also be delayed as the new testing regime was contingent on the establishment of the new national register.

Following this announcement there was some speculation that pathology providers would not have the workforce or capacity to continue to offer the current Pap Test as they had restructured their businesses to provide the new test.

To ensure that Australian women could be guaranteed to continue to have the existing Pap Test, I have held constructive discussions with pathology providers and we have reached agreement which includes:

- a proposed Medicare fee of \$28 for the Pap Smear Test to reflect the costs of maintaining this test and,
- a new Medicare item for a more automated form of the Pap Test, a liquid based cytology test, at a Medicare fee of \$36 per test.

The new Medicare benefit for pathologists when they use the liquid based cytology test will help reduce workforce pressures on the sector associated with the delay of introducing the new test and is a positive move towards partial implementation of the new technology. It is good news for women also who currently pay when this liquid cytology test is used.

These changes will help the pathology sector to continue to provide cervical screening for this transitional period.

The Department of Health fully acknowledges the impost and disruption on the pathology sector caused by the delay to the new Cancer Screening Register and I thank the pathology sector for working with the Department to achieve an acceptable interim solution.

Media contact: Kay McNiece 0412 132 585