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MEDIA RELEASE

15 February 2008

NR08/18

Medicare bulk-billing flat-lining

In the December 2007 quarter, 73.4 per cent of all Medicare services were bulk-billed, an increase of 0.9 of a percentage point on the September 2007 quarter and equal to that in the June 2007 quarter.

The minor variations in bulk-billing rates for non-referred (GP) attendances in some states and territories, and at the national level, in recent quarters, suggests that rates have hit a plateau for the moment.

This highlights how much needs to be done to rebuild health services after the last decade of neglect – in the entire decade of the previous Government, GP bulk-billing rates never reached the high levels they reached under the previous Labor Government.

The Australian Government will continue to deliver practical measures to deliver better health care to working families.

The December quarter increase was particularly influenced by higher rates of bulk-billing for non-referred (GP) attendances (up 0.2 of a percentage point to 78.2 per cent) and pathology (up 1.5 percentage points to 86.6 per cent).

In the December 2007 quarter, 78.2 per cent of non-referred (GP) attendances were bulk-billed, an increase of 0.2 of a percentage point on the September 2007 quarter and in line with that for the June 2007 quarter.

Bulk-billing rates for GP attendances in the December quarter on the June quarter show:

- New South Wales up 0.2 of a percentage point to 84.0 per cent
- Victoria up 0.2 of a percentage point to 76.1 per cent
- Queensland down 0.3 of a percentage point to 75.7 per cent
- South Australia up 0.7 of a percentage point to 78.1 per cent
- Western Australia down 0.4 of a percentage point to 72.3 per cent
- Tasmania up 0.7 of a percentage point to 73.0 per cent
- Northern Territory up 0.6 of a percentage point to 63.1 per cent
- Australian Capital Territory down 0.6 of a percentage point to 51.3 per cent.

In the six months ending December 2007, Medicare Australia processed claims for 138.7 million services involving benefits of \$6.5 billion. This represented approximately 6.6 services and \$306.93 in benefits for every Australian.

Full details of the statistics may be found at www.health.gov.au/medicarestats.

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