



MEDIA RELEASE

Minister for Health and Ageing

Tony Abbott MHR

1 May 2006

ABB050/06

New Medicare items for Indigenous health, refugees and palliative care

Medicare funded health checks for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and for refugee and other humanitarian entrants will be listed on the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) from May 1.

A new item recognising the role of specialists in pain and palliative medicine, and items covering immunisation and wound-management by registered Aboriginal Health Workers in the Northern Territory on behalf of a GP will also be listed on the MBS.

The child health check will help ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children receive optimum health care by encouraging early detection, diagnosis and treatment of common and treatable conditions. It will also help to reduce or prevent serious illnesses.

The rebates for immunisation and wound management by Aboriginal Health Workers recognises the important role that Aboriginal Health Workers play in providing clinical care in the Northern Territory.

The health assessment for refugees and other humanitarian entrants will be available to refugees and people who come to Australia under the humanitarian program, many of whom have been exposed to war, famine, repression, torture or extreme poverty.

The health assessment will also introduce new refugees and humanitarian entrants to the Australian health care system, including preventative healthcare programs like immunisation, maternal and child health care, and breast and cervical screening.

The Commonwealth Government will also introduce new Medicare items for specialists in pain and palliative medicine. This follows the decision last December to recognise pain and palliative medicine as new medical specialties, on advice from the Australian Medical Council.

New Medicare items will provide higher Medicare rebates for attendance by all pain and palliative specialists in recognition of the complex work they undertake.

New items are also being introduced to provide appropriate rebates for these specialists to attend and coordinate case conferences with other health professionals. Case conferences between these professionals can result in better health care and also make it easier for patients and their families to obtain and understand the treatment they need.

For more information call Mr Abbott's office on ph 02 6277 7220.