



MEDIA RELEASE

Minister for Health and Ageing

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GP bulk-billing highs for children, aged and rural people

Record bulk-billing rates for GP attendances were achieved for children, people aged over 65 years and for rural and remote area people in the March quarter of 2007.

Statistics for the quarter show GP bulk-billing has increased to 77.4 per cent, an increase for the 13th consecutive quarter.

The GP bulk-billing rates for children increased to a record 84.9 per cent. For people aged over 65 years, the rate increased to a record 87.3 per cent. The rate in rural and remote areas increased to a record 72.6 per cent.

Bulk-billing rates in the March quarter 2007, compared with the December 2003 quarter (the last complete quarter before the *Strengthening Medicare* initiatives), show:

- NSW up 7.3 percentage points to 83 per cent;
- South Australia up 15.9 points to 76.5 per cent;
- Victoria up 11.8 points to 75.4 per cent;
- Queensland up 13.4 points to 75.1 per cent;
- Western Australia up 9.2 points to 71.7 per cent;
- Tasmania up 23.3 points to 71.7 per cent;
- Northern Territory up 1.8 points to 62.0 per cent;
- ACT up 16.1 points to 51.0 per cent.

Minor variations occurred in rates of bulk-billing for GP attendances from state to state in the March quarter 2007, compared with the December quarter 2006, ranging from an increase of 0.9 of a percentage point in the ACT to a fall of 0.7 of a percentage point in the Northern Territory.

Bulk-billing rates for pathology (86.9 per cent) and optometry (96.9 per cent) also reached record levels. The overall bulk-billing rate (for GPs and specialists) reached 73.2 per cent, an all time high.

The GP attendance bulk-billing rate has increased 10.9 percentage points since the Australian Government introduced its \$4 billion *Strengthening Medicare* reforms in 2004. The most significant increases have occurred where the Government has targeted incentives for children and older Australians.

All bulk-billing data is available at www.health.gov.au/medicarestats or www.medicareaustralia.gov.au

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