MODERNISING ANAESTHESIA SERVICES

The Liberal National Government is making changes to Medicare-funded anaesthesia services to support high-value care, reflect current medical practice and help ensure patients are receiving procedures in line with current best practice. These changes follow recommendations from the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Review Taskforce.

What are the changes?
From 1 November 2019, changes to time tiered items under two hours, the anaesthesia age modifying item, epidural injections of anaesthesia substances, specific items under the therapeutic and diagnostic and basic items, and the creation of a new item for an assisting anaesthetist in the administration of an epidural blood patch will simplify the MBS, more accurately reflect contemporary anaesthesia and improve quality of care.

Why are these changes being made?
The MBS Review Taskforce found that some anaesthesia items were overly complex, did not reflect current clinical practice and some items needed to be clarified.

The changes to anaesthesia services will promote best practice and high-value care for patients.

The changes are the outcome of recommendations from the Taskforce and extensive consultation and discussion with key stakeholders. These discussions identified the key priorities needed to modernise the anaesthetics component of the MBS.

The Taskforce is conducting a clinician-led review, and makes recommendations to the Government on how the MBS can be modernised to improve patient safety, support equity of access and reduce waste.

What does this mean for patients?
Patients will benefit by only having the anaesthesia services they need and that are aligned with clinical best practice.

The changes also make the MBS items easier for patients to understand and will help ensure that patients are consistently billed.

What does this mean for practitioners?
Practitioners will benefit from a clear schedule of MBS items that are aligned with current medical practice and support high value care.

Practitioners affected by these changes will receive further information closer to the implementation date.

How will this be implemented?
The Department of Health will be working with key stakeholders to establish an Anaesthesia Liaison Group early in 2019 to assist with implementation of these changes and further review of the anaesthesia schedule.

The group will also assist to make sure the changes are effectively communicated to the profession and patients.

Further detail will be available on www.mbsonline.gov.au