

A Shared Vision for Australia's health system: Principles agreed to by the Government and the Australian Medical Association (AMA)

Purpose

A commitment by the Government and the AMA to principles that support a stronger health system in 2017-18 and beyond, that recognise the value and role of Medicare, the importance of sustainably funded public hospitals, the contribution made by preventive health, and acknowledge a shared interest in ensuring the strengthening and sustainability of the health system.

The commitment is underpinned by the shared principles of:

- **Stewardship** of the health system and a shared responsibility for its ongoing sustainability;
- **Patient access** to affordable health care;
- **Recognition** that both the public and private health systems support universal health care;
- **Support** for investment in evidence-based mental health services;
- **Support** for improvements in the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to close the gap in health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians;
- **Transparency** of decision-making, of data and information transfer, including to patients;
- **Accountability** for structural reform out to 2020-21, providing the platform for more ambitious change over the next 10 years; and
- Commitment to the **integrity** of Australia's world class health system, including patient safety and high-value clinical care.

Statement of Intent for the Government

The Government recognises the significant pressures on the health system, including an increase in and growing burden of chronic disease, an ageing population (including the health workforce), and growing demand for high-cost, high-tech services and breakthrough medicines.

It also recognises the pivotal role of general practitioners and other specialists in a system which touches every Australian.

The Government is committed to rebuilding trust with medical practitioners, and balancing targeted investment decisions in the health system, with patient safety at the forefront, and a focus on high-value clinical care.

MBS indexation

In this context, consideration is being given to the early resumption of MBS indexation, in a phased way from 2017, commencing with bulk-billing incentives. This overall investment is in the order of more than \$910 million over the forward estimates.

Reversal of removal of bulk billing incentives for pathology and diagnostic imaging.

Statement of intent, AMA

The AMA recognises the stewardship required to assist the Government to ensure the long term sustainability of the health system and to allow for reinvestment into high value medical services, public hospitals, and preventive health.

Support and engagement on the MBS Review process

The AMA will continue to support in principle the ongoing operation of the MBS Review Taskforce, including a transparent, consultative clinician-led approach to high-value care and future-proofing the system. Over the next four years, the AMA will work with Health to deliver on agreed recommendations arising from the MBS Review in conjunction with the relevant sectors. The AMA will continue to identify areas to improve the review process and recommendations.

Support for tightening of access to high value after hours MBS items in line with the MBS Review recommendation

The AMA will support the Government's actions informed by the MBS Review taskforce working group on after hours to tighten the current MBS after-hours items to ensure that the system can deliver support for improving patient care by high quality after-hours care in a sustainable manner and that items are appropriately used. This includes working with relevant GP and specialist groups to better target the existing investment in after hours care and to support care that is connected to an individual's usual GP.

Commitment to encouraging further uptake and usage of my health record

The AMA will continue to encourage members to use the My Health Record, with a shared focus on data quality, clinical utility, and building use of the system into daily practice. This recognises the crucial role a well maintained patient record can play in ensuring care outcomes are optimised and information required to facilitate patient care is easily available.

Support for health care homes concept and trial

The AMA supports the vision of the Health Care Homes trial and additional exploration of other incentives focused on patient outcomes, but with full freedom to suggest improvements or variations.

Support for any revised arrangement with pathology including rental reform

The AMA will continue to work constructively with Government to support and implement improved compliance arrangements consistent with the prohibited practices provisions in the Health Insurance Act, while noting that the Government does not propose to control rents.

Compliance processes to ensure MBS overpayments are detected and recovered

In terms of accountability, changes to compliance arrangements which provide the ability to investigate billing by organisations, and to compulsorily offset a portion of future MBS payments against MBS debt, are also supported.

In stating these agreed principles, the Government acknowledges the role of the AMA to continue to advocate to Government improvements in health policies for the benefit of both medical practitioners and their patients.