



MBS Review Advisory Committee

Communique – November 2023

The Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Review Advisory Committee (MRAC) is an independent, clinician and consumer-led, non-statutory committee established to advise government on publicly funded services listed on the MBS. The committee supports the MBS Continuous Review to ensure the MBS is contemporary, sustainable, evidence based, and supports universal access to high value care for all Australians.

Current MRAC Membership

The MRAC is comprised of practising clinicians, academics, health system experts and consumers. Details of its current membership and Terms of Reference are available on the Department of Health and Aged Care [MRAC webpage](#).

In September 2023, Ms Jan Donovan was appointed to the committee as a consumer representative.

Jan is a passionate advocate for addressing health equity and the social determinants of health with a focus on people with chronic illness and disability. She has a strong interest in access to primary health care, the national medicines policy, health literacy, mental health, aged care, and indigenous health.



MRAC Reviews

Through its review processes, the MRAC considers the appropriateness of existing MBS services, in addition to wider health reform solutions which may include alternate funding models or means of service provision, and the addition of new services where a health technology assessment (HTA) is not appropriate.

The process and timeline for each MRAC review is determined following careful consideration of a number of factors including advice from the department on:

- any identified issues of patient safety, risk, or restricted access
- stakeholder feedback
- the anticipated complexity of the review
- the number of MBS items within scope for consideration and/or otherwise potentially impacted by the review
- priorities of government.

The committee may elect to undertake a review via full committee discussion over a series of meetings. Alternatively, the committee may establish a working group to gather additional information and report back on its findings.

MRAC working groups typically consist of a subset of MRAC members and may include external members where the committee identifies a need for additional subject matter expertise.

The committee may also be asked to provide advice to inform review processes led by the department under the MBS Continuous Review.

Meeting Outcomes

The committee meets quarterly, and most recently held its ninth meeting on the land of the Ngannawal and Ngambri peoples on 14 November 2023.

The committee was briefed on the progress of current reviews being led by working groups.

Post-implementation review of changes to electrocardiogram (ECG) items

The ECG Working Group was established to conduct a post-implementation review of 1 August 2020 changes to ECG items. These changes were recommended by the MBS Review Taskforce and intended to promote high value care and address inadvertent misuse of MBS items.

The ECG Working Group has met twice and is currently developing an initial report for the committee's consideration, which will then undergo a process of targeted consultation in early 2024. Feedback received through this process will be considered by the committee to help inform the development of a draft final report which is expected to be published for an open consultation process via the [Department of Health and Aged Care Consultation Hub](#) later in 2024.

Review of Vascular Interventional Radiology items

The Vascular Interventional Radiology (VIR) Working Group was established to conduct a review of vascular interventional radiology items. The Department of Health and Aged Care referred this review to the committee following the MBS Review Taskforce's review of vascular items, and further consultation with the sector.

The VIR Working Group has held three meetings and is developing a series of proposed item changes intended to align the MBS with established, current, and evidence-based clinical use of interventional radiology and interventional neuroradiology.

A draft report outlining these proposed changes will be presented to the committee for consideration prior to undergoing a targeted consultation process in 2024. Feedback received through this process will be considered by the committee to help inform the development of a draft final report, which will then be published for an open consultation process via the Department of Health and Aged Care Consultation Hub.

Post-implementation review of changes to colonoscopy items

The Colonoscopy Working Group was established to conduct a post-implementation review of the introduction of a new schedule of colonoscopy items in November 2019. These changes were recommended by the MBS Review Taskforce and intended to better define clinical indications and surveillance intervals for colonoscopy, and to align the MBS with National Health and Medical Research Council Clinical Practice Guidelines for Surveillance Colonoscopy.

A report outlining initial review findings and draft recommendations was published on the Department of Health and Aged Care Consultation Hub for a six-week open consultation process which closed on Friday 29 September 2023.

The Colonoscopy Working Group held its fifth meeting in October 2023 to discuss the feedback received during the open consultation period and to consider whether any changes should be made to its findings and recommendations.

A draft final report is currently being developed and will be considered by the committee in 2024. Once endorsed by the committee, the final report will be provided to government for consideration.

The committee progressed its post-implementation review of MBS telehealth services including consideration of public consultation feedback.

The committee commenced a post-implementation review of MBS funded telehealth services at its meeting on 1 March 2023 following a formal request from the Hon Mark Butler, Minister for Health and Aged Care. Some key components of this review include:

- reviewing and updating, if necessary, the MBS Review Taskforce Telehealth Principles to provide a framework for future consideration of MBS funded telehealth services;
- reviewing the appropriateness of current settings for video and telephone consultations to ensure the right balance between access, quality, and safety; and
- current patient eligibility settings and related exemptions.

A report outlining the committee's draft recommendations was published on the Department of Health and Aged Care Consultation Hub for a six-week open consultation period which closed on 8 November 2023. Over 450 submissions were received through this process.

Due to the volume of submissions received and to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the consultation feedback the post-implementation review of telehealth MBS items has been extended.

The committee is currently developing interim advice to be provided to government by the end of 2023 for consideration. A final Telehealth Post-implementation Review Report will be provided to government before 31 March 2024.

The committee commenced a review of sport and exercise medicine MBS items.

The Department of Health and Aged Care referred this review to the committee following consideration of a review proposal from the Australasian College of Sport and Exercise Physicians seeking access to consultant physician equivalent consultation MBS items.

The committee will progress this review at its next meeting in March 2024 and a report outlining its findings and recommendations is expected to be consulted on later in 2024.

Next Meeting

The committee is scheduled to meet next on 6 March 2024.

A message from the Chair

As the end of the year draws near, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many stakeholders who have contributed to the work of the MRAC in 2023.

The expertise, perspectives and lived experiences of stakeholders, including consumers and practitioners, are vital to ensuring all relevant issues have been considered and understood by the committee in undertaking its reviews. The feedback received from stakeholders through participation in reviews and consultation processes thus far has helped shape recommendations aimed at improving the provision of equitable and affordable access to universal health care.

On behalf of my fellow committee members, I wish you all a safe and happy holiday period and look forward to the upcoming opportunities to engage with you in 2024.

Conjoint Professor Anne Duggan
MRAC Chair

