



# MBS Review Advisory Committee

## Communique – March 2024

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 January 2024, Professor Rosalie Viney and Dr Clare Skinner were appointed to the committee. Rosalie joins the MRAC as a health economist and Director of the Centre for Health Economics Research and Evaluation at the University of Sydney. Rosalie has extensive experience in health economics, health services and health policy research. Her research interests include health technology assessment and priority setting, measurement, and valuation of quality of life and health outcomes, consumer preferences for health and health care, evaluation of health policy, and the impact of funding arrangements on utilisation and outcomes of health care.



Professor Rosalie Viney

Clare joins the committee as a specialist emergency physician with interests in health system reform, clinical redesign, leadership, advocacy, and workplace culture and safety. Clare served as President of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine from Nov 2021-2023 and currently holds roles as a Senior Staff Specialist in Emergency Medicine at Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital and the Northern Sydney Local Health District. Clare is also a current member of the MRAC Electrocardiogram Working Group.



Dr Clare Skinner

The committee would like to thank outgoing member, Ms Margaret Foulds, for her commitment and valuable contribution to the MRAC since her appointment in November 2021. Ms Foulds has been an active and dedicated member of the MRAC and the Electrocardiogram Working Group and her contributions will be missed. The MRAC wish Margaret all the best in all her future endeavours.

## 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 several 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 program.

## Meeting Outcomes

The committee meets quarterly, and most recently held its tenth meeting virtually on 6 March 2024.

### **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.

A four-week targeted consultation process, which sought stakeholder feedback on a draft report and recommendations developed by the ECG Working Group, closed on 4 March 2024. Following analysis of feedback received through this process, a final report will be developed for consideration by the MRAC later this year.

The final report is expected to be published for an open consultation process via the [Department of Health and Aged Care Consultation Hub](#) in mid-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 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 four meetings to date, with an additional meeting scheduled for March 2024.

A draft report is currently being developed by the VIR Working Group outlining a series of proposed item changes to be considered by the committee, prior to undergoing a public consultation process later this year.

Feedback received through this process will be considered by the committee to inform the final report.

### **Post-implementation review of changes to colonoscopy items**

The Colonoscopy Working Group was established to conduct a post-implementation review of the schedule of new colonoscopy items introduced 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.

The Colonoscopy Working Group presented its final report to the MRAC at its March meeting. The committee endorsed the Colonoscopy Post-implementation Review Final Report, which will now be provided to government for consideration. The final report will also be published on the Department of Health and Aged Care's website.

### **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. 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.

The committee provided interim advice to government at the end of 2023, following consideration of feedback provided during a six-week public consultation period. Additional stakeholder engagement activities were conducted in early 2024 to assist with the finalisation of the review

At its 6 March meeting, the committee finalised its recommendations, with endorsement of the Final Report to occur out-of-session. Final advice will be provided to government shortly and the Final Report will then be published on the Department of Health and Aged Care's website.

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

The committee commenced a review of sport and exercise physicians' access to consultant physician-equivalent MBS item numbers at its 14 November 2023 meeting.

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.

At its 6 March meeting, the MRAC endorsed the commencement of a public consultation process of a review discussion paper.

## **Next Meeting**

The committee will meet next over 28-29 May 2024 in Canberra.