



20 May 2026

Strengthening Medicare Implementation Oversight Committee Meeting 7 Communiqué

The seventh meeting of the Strengthening Medicare Implementation Oversight Committee (the IOC) was held on Wednesday 20 May 2026.

The IOC was co-chaired by Dr Liz Develin, Deputy Secretary of the Primary Care, Community and First Nations Group, and Penny Shakespeare, Deputy Secretary of the Health Resourcing Group, within the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

Organisations represented at the IOC meeting are at [Attachment 1](#).

Following the updates outlined below, the Committee discussed progress on the key Strengthening Medicare reforms.

Updates from 2026-27 Budget

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (the department) provided members with an overview of the 2026–27 Budget Strengthening Medicare measure. The 2026–27 Budget includes \$3.5 billion investment in strengthening Medicare, with a focus on improving access, quality, and system sustainability. Key measures include continued support for Urgent Care Clinics, primary care programs and bulk billing, alongside investments in digital health and system integrity. The 2026–27 Budget also advances mental health, First Nations and children’s health priorities. Additional initiatives support vaccination, dental services and preventive health, while ongoing digital reforms, including expanded data sharing, aim to enable more integrated, multidisciplinary care.

Medicare Urgent Care Clinics

The Committee received an update on the implementation of Medicare Urgent Care Clinics, including confirmation of ongoing funding (\$1.8 billion over five years and \$579.6 million per year ongoing) and near completion of the 50 additional clinics. Early evaluation findings indicate reduced pressure on emergency departments, high patient satisfaction, and overall positive program performance, with some ongoing challenges around workforce and access to diagnostic imaging services. A national patient and staff experience survey will be launched, and feedback was invited on updated priority populations guidance.

1800MEDICARE App

The Committee received an update and demonstration of the 1800MEDICARE app and broader digital health initiatives. This included significant investment in My Health Record and national digital infrastructure, progress on the “sharing by default” agenda, expansion toward a National Medicines Record and child health record and increasing system usage by providers and consumers. The work supports improved data sharing, interoperability, and more connected, consumer-centred care across the health system.

Primary Care Workforce

The Committee received an update on primary care workforce reforms, noting progress in implementing the Kruk Review, development of national nursing, allied health and maternity workforce strategies, and expansion of pathways for internationally qualified practitioners. Strong uptake of GP training, continued investment in nursing and midwifery placements, and growth in the First Nations workforce were highlighted, alongside ongoing work to progress scope of practice reforms and strengthen workforce planning.



Mental Health Reforms (including Commissioning of Mental Health Multidisciplinary Teams)

The Committee received an update on mental health reforms, including recent budget measures to extend the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement, expand support for priority cohorts, and strengthen crisis services. Progress was also noted on the rollout of the Medicare Mental Health Check and PHN-commissioned multidisciplinary services, with implementation from mid-2026 supported by embedded evaluation and data collection.

National Consumer Sentiment Survey Insights

The Committee received a presentation from the Consumers Health Forum of Australia on findings from the 2024 and 2025 National Consumer Sentiment Survey, providing a baseline of consumer experiences prior to recent Medicare reforms. While overall satisfaction remains high, the findings highlighted ongoing challenges in affordability, access, particularly after-hours, and disparities across population groups, reinforcing the importance of consumer insights in monitoring reform impacts and identifying emerging gaps.

Other Updates (Progress of Strengthening Medicare Reforms)

The Committee received a high-level update on progress under Strengthening Medicare, noting strong uptake across key initiatives. This included increased enrolment in MyMedicare and the Bulk Billing Practice Incentive Program, high participation in General Practice in Aged Care Incentives, and continued rollout of Medicare Urgent Care Clinics. Members also noted ongoing PHN commissioning activity, recent budget investments, and confirmation of continued funding for public dental services.

IOC Future Direction

The Committee reviewed feedback from a January 2026 survey of members and stakeholders on its effectiveness in delivering its mandate. Feedback indicated the Committee is providing useful system-wide, long-term visibility of Strengthening Medicare reforms but is constrained by its current format of engagement. Options are being considered for the future of the Committee.

Next meeting

18 November 2026 (TBC).



Attachment 1 – Members / Organisations in attendance

Name
Australian College of Midwives (ACM)
Australian College of Nurse Practitioners (ACNP)
Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM)
Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC), and Medical Benefits Review Advisory Committee (observing)
Australian Medical Association (AMA)
Australian Multicultural Health Collaborative (Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia)
Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF)
Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA)
Australian Primary Healthcare Nurses Association (APNA)
Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM)
Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF)
COTA Australia
Department of Health, Tasmania (on behalf of states and territories)
Health Consumers Queensland
Independent Advisors
LGBTIQ+ Health Australia
Mental Health Australia (MHA)
Mental Health Carers Australia (MHCA)
Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network (on behalf of Primary Health Networks) (observing)
Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner
People with Disability Australia (PWDA)
Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)
Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA)

Member/Organisation Apologies

Organisations
Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA)
Australian Association of Practice Management (AAPM)
Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA)
Brisbane North Primary Health Network (Primary Health Networks Representative)
Department of Health, Victoria (on behalf of states and territories)
Healthdirect Australia
National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)
National Mental Health Consumer Alliance (NMHCA)
Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA)