



Australian Government  
Department of Health

# MBS REVIEW

## JULY 2020 UPDATE

### The MBS Review Taskforce

#### Overview

After five years, over 100 clinical committees and groups and the hard work of more than 700 clinicians, health system experts and consumer advisers, the Taskforce held its last meeting on 30 June 2020 and is now in the final stages of its review of the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS).

Unfortunately, the Taskforce's planned schedule of work was affected by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Many members of the Taskforce are also clinicians supporting front-line work in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and understandably their focus was on the immediate needs of our health system. Also, many staff from the Department of Health (the Department) who support the Taskforce were responsible for the work needed to rapidly add the more than 270 MBS temporary telehealth items to the MBS schedule.

However, since late April, the Department has supported the Taskforce in progressing the work of the MBS Review, despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Further information on the status of each area of the MBS Review is available below.

Thank you for your ongoing support and patience as we navigate through this unique public health emergency.

#### Updates to the MBS

The below changes to the MBS follow the Government's acceptance of recommendations from the MBS Review Taskforce.

##### **The following changes were introduced to the MBS on March 1:**

- emergency medicine attendance items were revised under a new base attendance item structure, including 40 new items to replace existing Items, amendment to three existing items, and consolidation of two items;
- intensive care service Items were restructured – including seven new items, amendment to four existing items, consolidation of two items, and the deletion of one item; and
- six new items were introduced for the provision of extracorporeal life support services.

##### **The following changes were introduced to the MBS on 1 May 2020:**

- two anaesthesia age modifier items (25013 and 25014) were introduced, replacing the anaesthesia age modifier item 25015 and interim item 25012;
- minor changes were made to the descriptors for colonoscopy items 32084, 32087 and 32224; and
- a number of changes relating to MBS items and rules were made for diagnostic imaging services.

For more information on previous and upcoming MBS changes, visit [MBS Online](#).

## A Note on COVID-19

More than 270 temporary telehealth MBS Items are now available as part of the Government's direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These Items are in place until 30 September 2020, pending consideration of any further advice from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee. The temporary telehealth MBS Items are designed to substitute a range of face-to-face consultations already available under the MBS. They are not related to the work of the MBS Review Taskforce.

Details of all temporary telehealth items are available at [MBS Online](#).

## Taskforce Meetings

Weekly Taskforce meetings began in late April 2020 and continued throughout May and June 2020. The Taskforce held its 53rd and final meeting on 30 June 2020.

For outcomes of previous Taskforce meetings, visit the [Department's website](#).

# MBS Review Clinical Committees and Groups

Below are updates from 33 clinical committees and working groups.

### Quick Glossary

ILG = Implementation Liaison Group

MBS = Medicare Benefits Schedule

The Taskforce = MBS Review Taskforce

[Anaesthesia Clinical Committee](#)

[Blood Products Working Group](#)

[Cardiac Services Clinical Committee](#)

[Cleft Dental Services Working Group](#)

[Colorectal Surgery Clinical Committee](#)

[Consumer Panel](#)

[Diagnostic Imaging Clinical Committee](#)

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[Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Clinical Committee](#)

[Primary Care Reference Groups](#)

[Principles and Rules Committee](#)

[Psychiatry Clinical Committee](#)

[Specialist and Consultant Physician Consultation Clinical Committee](#)

[Thoracic Surgery Clinical Committee](#)

[Urology Clinical Committee](#)

[Vascular Clinical Committee](#)

[Wound Management Working Group](#)

### **Anaesthesia Clinical Committee**

On 13 February 2020, the ILG on [Anaesthesia](#) held its fifth meeting to further discuss stakeholder submissions and Taskforce recommendations on anaesthesia MBS items which have not been implemented.

On 1 May 2020, two anaesthesia age modifier items (25013 and 25014) were introduced on the MBS. These new items replace the anaesthesia age modifier item 25015 and interim item 25012. This administrative change also separates the paediatric and adult anaesthesia age modifier items to allow for easier processing of claims. There has been no change to the age ranges that can claim an anaesthesia age modifier.

For more information on these changes, visit [MBS Online](#).

If you have any questions about the work of the Anaesthesia Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Sarah Kennedy).

### **Blood Products Working Group**

Changes to [Blood Products](#) MBS Items have been endorsed by the Government, and are scheduled to come into effect on 1 November 2020. For more information on these changes, visit [MBS Online](#).

If you have any questions about the work of the Blood Products Working Group please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: David O'Neill).

### **Cardiac Services Clinical Committee**

The ILG on [Cardiac Services](#) held four meetings between October 2019 and February 2020. The ILG continued work on the complex Cardiac Services Items, including drafting the new items in a collaborative way to avoid unintended consequences and maximise patient care.

Due to the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, implementation of MBS changes originally planned for 1 July 2020 have been delayed.

Effective from 1 August 2020, the existing cardiac imaging items will be replaced by approximately 30 new items, including items for echocardiogram, electrocardiogram, ambulatory ECG and myocardial perfusion studies. These changes will not include any procedural items.

On 29 June 2020, the Department hosted an information webinar regarding the 1 August 2020 changes to cardiac imaging services. This webinar was designed for clinicians, private health insurers, private hospitals, practice managers and system administrators and provided an opportunity for questions.

The webinar was live, however, a recording will be published on the [Department's website](#) in the coming days.

If you have any questions about the work of the Cardiac Services Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Sarah Kennedy).

### **Cleft Dental Services Working Group**

The [Cleft Dental Services Working Group](#)'s Final Report was endorsed for Government consideration by the Taskforce in early May 2020 and will now be progressed to the Government

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for consideration. The updated report incorporated evidence based feedback received during public consultation from 29 August to 20 December 2019.

If you have any questions about the work of the Cleft Dental Services Working Group, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: David O'Neill).

### **Colorectal Surgery Clinical Committee**

The [Colorectal Surgery Clinical Committee](#)'s Final Report is currently under Government consideration. An ILG will be established in 2020 to support implementation of the recommendations to MBS changes for colorectal surgery Items.

If you have any questions about the work of the Colorectal Surgery Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: David O'Neill).

### **Consumer Panel**

The [Consumer Panel](#) met on 14 January 2020 to consider all feedback received and finalise its Final Report to the Taskforce.

The Taskforce endorsed the Consumer Panel's Final Report in early May 2020 and the recommendations are now being progressed for Government consideration.

If you have any questions about the work of the Consumer Panel, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Steve Dunlop).

### **Diagnostic Imaging Clinical Committee**

The changes arising from the [Diagnostic Imaging Clinical Committee](#) recommendations as announced in the 2019 Budget came into effect on 1 May 2020.

For more information on these changes, visit [MBS Online](#).

Work will now progress on other recommendations in the DICC report that require further investigation and were consequently not included in the 2019 Budget. Many of these recommendations will need to be considered by the Medical Services Advisory Committee.

If you have any questions about the work of the Diagnostic Imaging Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Kim Williams).

### **Diagnostic Medicine Clinical Committee**

The [Diagnostic and Medical Clinical Committee](#) recommendations on vitamin D testing were considered by the Taskforce at its December 2019 meeting. The Taskforce endorsed the recommendations for Government consideration, pending minor amendments to relevant item descriptors. These recommendations complete the Taskforce's recommendations on diagnostic medicine Items, with all now endorsed for consideration by the Government.

If you have any questions about the work of the Diagnostic Medicine Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Sarah Kennedy).

### **Eating Disorders Working Group**

Policy responsibility for [Eating Disorders](#) Items transitioned to Mental Health Division in late December 2019. This transition brings together Eating Disorders Policy and Program activities and provides a single point of contact for stakeholders.

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Item uptake is being seen nationally and the Department continues to monitor and assess item usage over time to inform evaluation processes and work with stakeholders to address unintended consequences.

We thank stakeholders for their input to the MBS Review process and improving services for people with eating disorders.

If you have any questions about the Eating Disorder Items, please contact the new email address: [EatingDisorderMBS@health.gov.au](mailto:EatingDisorderMBS@health.gov.au).

### **Gastroenterology Clinical Committee**

Recommendations from the [Gastroenterology Clinical Committee](#) have been endorsed by the Government.

On 1 May 2020, minor changes to colonoscopy items 32084, 32087 and 32224 were implemented. These changes included amending the descriptor for items 32084 and 32087 to reflect modern clinical practice and an amendment to item 32224 to remove the ambiguity around the current descriptor. The updates to these items builds upon previously implemented colonoscopy changes as well as responding to feedback received on the 1 November 2019 colonoscopy changes.

For more information on these changes, visit [MBS Online](#).

If you have any questions about the work of the Gastroenterology Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Sarah Kennedy).

### **General Practice and Primary Care**

Final Reports from the [General Practice and Primary Care Clinical Committee](#), the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Reference Group](#), the [Allied Health Reference Group](#), the [Mental Health Reference Group](#), the [Nurse Practitioners Reference Group](#), and the [Participating Midwives Reference Group](#) were considered by the Taskforce at its August and December 2019 meetings.

Over the first half of 2020, the Taskforce focused on completing additional work to ensure its primary care recommendations are as strong as possible. The reports were then considered again at multiple meetings throughout May and June 2020.

The Taskforce finalised its primary care recommendations in mid-June 2020 and these are now being progressed for Government consideration.

If you have any questions about the work of the General Practice and Primary Care Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Roland Balodis). For any questions about the Primary Care Reference Groups, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Steve Dunlop).

### **General Surgery Clinical Committee**

As part of the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook / Budget 2019-20, the [Government announced](#) from 1 July 2021 it will make changes to Medicare-funded general surgery services to support best practice treatment and improve patient outcomes. These changes follow the Government's acceptance of the Taskforce's recommendations informed by the [General Surgery Clinical Committee](#). The General Surgery ILG was established and met on 29 April and 4 May 2020 to progress draft Items.

If you have any questions about the work of the General Surgery Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Mary Warner).

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## **Gynaecology Clinical Committee**

The [Gynaecology Clinical Committee](#) considered 141 Items and made recommendations to change many of the Items. The Gynaecology Clinical Committee's Final Report was presented at the August 2019 Taskforce before progressing to the Government. A Gynaecology ILG was established, and met for the first time on 2 March 2020.

If you have any questions about the work of the Gynaecology Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Mary Warner).

## **Intensive Care and Emergency Medicine Clinical Committee**

From March 1, the emergency department attendance Items have been restructured into new tiered base Items under Group A21 with new add-on therapeutic and procedure Items under Group T1 to more effectively reflect the level of professional involvement required in emergency medicine services. In addition to amendments to existing intensive care MBS Items to clarify services, six new Items have been introduced for the provision of extracorporeal life support services.

For more information on the [Intensive Care and Emergency Medicine](#) changes, visit [MBS Online](#).

If you have any questions about the work of the Intensive Care and Emergency Medicine Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Mary Warner).

## **Neurosurgery and Neurology Clinical Committee**

Recommendations from the [Neurosurgery and Neurology Clinical Committee](#) have been endorsed by the Government. The second meeting of the Neurosurgery and Neurology ILG was held on 3 December 2019. The ILG continues to provide valuable input and advice on the implementation of the Government endorsed recommendations, with focus now on the development of communication materials to support implementation.

Due to a number of factors, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of neurosurgery and neurology MBS changes has been deferred from 1 July 2020 and is now likely to occur on or after 1 November 2020.

If you have any questions about the work of the Neurosurgery and Neurology Clinical Committee or the ILG, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Sarah Kennedy).

## **Oncology Clinical Committee**

The [Oncology Clinical Committee](#) was made up of two working groups: Medical Oncology and Radiation Oncology. The Taskforce endorsed the OCC report and its recommendations in September 2018.

In the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) 2019-20, the Government announced changes to chemotherapy services listed on the MBS. These changes follow the Government's acceptance of the Taskforce recommendations in this area.

Following the MYEFO announcement, the Government established an ILG to support the 1 November 2020 implementation of changes to chemotherapy Items listed on the MBS. The ILG met on 26 March 2020 to discuss specifics of the changes, including the development of strategies for consumer and provider communication and education in the lead-up to the 1 November 2020 implementation date.

Work has commenced on an impact assessment modelling exercise of the restructured radiation oncology MBS Items, in line with recommendations made in the Oncology Clinical Committee's Final Report. The Department anticipates establishing a radiation oncology ILG towards the

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end of 2020 (or as soon as practicable following delays caused by COVID-19) to consider the findings of the impact assessment modelling exercise.

If you have any questions about the work of the Oncology Clinical Committee or the ILG, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Louise Morgan).

### **Ophthalmology Clinical Committee**

The stakeholder consultation period for the [Ophthalmology Clinical Committee's](#) Draft Report closed on 20 December 2019. The Ophthalmology Clinical Committee considered all feedback received in response to the report, before presenting its Final Report to the Taskforce.

The Taskforce undertook work to review and refine the recommendations, before finalising its advice on ophthalmology in early June 2020. The recommendations are now being progressed to the Government for consideration.

If you have any questions about the work of the Ophthalmology Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: David O'Neill).

### **Optometry Clinical Committee**

The [Optometry Clinical Committee's](#) Final Report was presented to the Taskforce in December 2019. Following work by the Taskforce to review and refine the recommendations, the Taskforce finalised its advice on optometry in mid-May 2020. The recommendations will now be progressed to the Government for consideration.

If you have any questions about the work of the Optometry Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Steve Dunlop).

### **Oral and Maxillofacial Services Category 4 Working Group**

The review of changes to MBS Items listed in Category 4: Oral and Maxillofacial Services is currently underway. Access to Category 4 was withdrawn from 1 November 2004. However, dental practitioners approved by the Minister for Health prior to that date continue to have access to Category 4 Items.

If you have any questions about the work of the Oral and Maxillofacial Services Category 4 Working Group, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention David O'Neill).

### **Orthopaedics Clinical Committee**

The Taskforce-endorsed [Orthopaedic Surgery Clinical Committee's](#) Final Report is currently undergoing Government consideration. The Orthopaedic Surgery ILG has been established and members have been asked to provide advice on the development of new and amended MBS Items for future implementation.

If you have any questions about the work of the Orthopaedics Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Mary Warner).

### **Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery Clinical Committee**

The [Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery Clinical Committee](#) met on 6 February 2020 to consider consultation feedback and to finalise its report. The Taskforce finalise its advice on Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery in early May 2020, and the recommendations are now being progressed to the Government for consideration.

If you have any questions about the work of the Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Sarah Kennedy).

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## Paediatric Advisory Group

The stakeholder consultation period for the [Paediatric Advisory Group's](#) Draft Report closed on 20 December 2019. The Paediatric Advisory Group met in February 2020 to consider all feedback received. The Paediatric Advisory Group Final Report was endorsed by the Taskforce in mid-May 2020 and the recommendations are now being progressed to the Government for consideration.

If you have any questions about the Paediatric Advisory Group report, please email [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au), (attention: David O'Neill).

## Pain Management Clinical Committee

The [Pain Management Clinical Committee's](#) Final Report was endorsed for Government consideration by the Taskforce in December 2019 and was progressed to the Government for consideration.

If you have any questions about the work of the Pain Management Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: David O'Neill).

## Pathology Clinical Committee

The Department is presently consulting with patients, requestors, the pathology sector and the Government as part of a project looking at the delivery of pathology services in Australia. Consultation will continue through mid-2020. Government consideration of the [Pathology Clinical Committee's](#) recommendations from the Taskforce will be further informed by the present consultation process.

If you have any questions about the Pathology Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Nathan Hyson).

## Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Clinical Committee

The Taskforce-endorsed [Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Clinical Committee](#) Final Report is currently undergoing Government consideration. A Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery ILG has been established, and met for the first time on 12 March 2020. The ILG has provided valuable input and advice on the development of new and amended MBS Items for future implementation.

If you have any questions about the work of the Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Mary Warner).

## Principles and Rules Committee

The [Principles and Rules Committee](#) continues to support the Taskforce through examination and provision of advice on the legislative and regulatory framework underpinning MBS operations. Intrinsic to all Committee deliberations is a set of guiding principles that includes recognition of the GP as a key component in the delivery of holistic, longitudinal patient-centred care in the community.

If you have any questions about the work of the Principles and Rules Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: David O'Neill).

## Psychiatry Clinical Committee

The [Psychiatry Clinical Committee's](#) Draft Report closed for public consultation on 20 December 2019. The Psychiatry Clinical Committee met in February to consider the stakeholder feedback, before presenting its Final Report to the Taskforce.

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Following work by the Taskforce to review and refine the recommendations, the Taskforce finalised its advice on psychiatry in mid-May 2020. The recommendations are now being progressed to the Government for consideration.

If you have any questions about the work of the Psychiatry Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Steve Dunlop).

### **Specialist and Consultant Physician Consultation Clinical Committee**

The [Specialist and Consultant Physician Consultation Clinical Committee](#)'s Final Report was presented to the Taskforce for consideration in December 2019.

The Taskforce undertook work to review and refine the recommendations on Specialist and Consultant Physician consultation MBS items before finalising them in late June 2020. The recommendations will now be progressed to the Government for consideration.

If you have any questions about the work of the Specialist and Consultant Physician Consultation Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Steve Dunlop).

### **Thoracic Surgery Clinical Committee**

The [Thoracic Surgery Clinical Committee](#)'s Final Report was endorsed for Government consideration by the Taskforce in December 2019 and was progressed to the Government for consideration.

If you have any questions about the work of the Thoracic Surgery Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: David O'Neill).

### **Urology Clinical Committee**

The recommendations from the [Urology Clinical Committee](#) report have been endorsed by the Government for implementation. The ILG has provided feedback to support the effective implementation of these recommended changes to urology services.

If you have any questions about the work of the Urology Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Mary Warner).

### **Vascular Clinical Committee**

The [Vascular Clinical Committee](#)'s Final Report was endorsed by the Taskforce in late May 2020 and the recommendations are now being progressed to the Government for consideration.

Stakeholder consultation will continue to be an integral part of the MBS Review process; the Department is currently undertaking consultation planning around the development and implementation of changes resulting from any vascular related recommendations endorsed by the Government.

If you have any questions about the work of the Vascular Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Sarah Kennedy).

### **Wound Management Working Group**

The [Wound Management Working Group](#)'s Draft Report closed for consultation on 12 February 2020. The WMWG thank all those who have participated in the wound management consultation process to date. The WMWG considered stakeholder feedback and provided its Final Report to the Taskforce in early June 2020.

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The Taskforce finalised its recommendations on wound management in late June 2020, and these are now being progressed to the Government for consideration.

If you have any questions about the work of the Wound Management Clinical Committee, please contact [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au) (attention: Roland Balodis).

This newsletter forms part of regular updates on the progress of the MBS Review. This update has been provided by the Department of Health's Medicare Reviews Unit. Previous newsletter updates are available on the Department's website. To subscribe please email [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au).