



## Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan – Stronger Rural Health Strategy - Improving rural access to magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) diagnostics

The Australian Government is investing \$66 million to deregulate and expand access to Medicare funded magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) services and provide critical diagnostic imaging services to more regional and rural Australians.

This reform will deregulate the current MRI Medicare equipment eligibility requirements, known as licencing, from all MRI machines in regional, rural and remote areas (Modified Monash Model (MMM) 2–7 areas) from 1 November 2022.

Reforming the licencing requirements will mean regional and rural Australians can find the most appropriate quality diagnostic scan in a timely and affordable manner closer to home. Currently, over 50% of rural and remote patients travel significant distances to receive their Medicare funded MRI.

This will also help reduce the pressure on out-of-pocket costs and improve disease detection and management for regional, rural and remote patients.

### Why is this important?

An MRI scan can diagnose a range of conditions that other diagnostic scans cannot. It is particularly useful for soft-tissue scans and is important for the planning and management of cancer treatments.

Improved access to Medicare eligible MRI in these communities is expected to reduce travel time and out-pocket expenses for patients, ensuring that people can access MRIs regardless of where they live across Australia, and making the process easier for both patients and providers.

### Who will benefit?

There will be significant benefit to patients, particularly to some of the most vulnerable patients in rural and regional Australia, including people affected by cancer.

Increased funding will ensure optimal access to MRI services for people who need it most, wherever they live. This includes a wide range of regional and rural patients such as women with endometriosis and infertility issues, and people who require access to breast cancer, cancer diagnosis and staging services, who reside in regional areas.

### How much will this cost?

The Australian Government will invest \$66 million over four years, from 2022–23 to 2025–26.