



Guaranteeing Medicare – improved patient access to diagnostic imaging

The Government will make important diagnostic services more affordable and accessible for millions of Australians. From 1 July 2020, it will increase the Medicare rebate for all diagnostic radiology and ultrasounds (\$198.6 million). From 1 November this year, it will enable breast cancer patients to claim PET and MRI scans under Medicare (\$32.6 million), saving patients up to \$1,500. It has also invested in over 50 more Medicare-eligible MRI units around the country in the past 12 months (\$375 million). These initiatives complement improvements to diagnostic imaging items on the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) to ensure services are safe, high quality, up-to-date and better value for money for patients, following recommendations of the independent, clinician-led MBS Review Taskforce.

Why is this important?

Diagnostic imaging is a critical part of modern medicine. Giving people more affordable access to quality diagnostic imaging services will save lives. The right scans and tests are crucial for both patients and doctors when deciding the best treatment options. This initiative will keep the cost of health care down for individuals and families, and help them in the fight against diseases such as cancer.

Claiming PET scans and MRIs under Medicare will provide access to state-of-the-art technology for patients with breast cancer. PET scans are less invasive and more sensitive than CT or bone scans – and MRIs will help breast cancer diagnosis and pre-surgery planning. More MRI units will allow patients to access Medicare-subsidised lifesaving scans for cancer, as well as stroke, heart and other medical conditions. In the past 12 months, the Government has provided over 50 more units.

Who will benefit?

More than nine million Australian patients use diagnostic imaging services each year. Indexation of diagnostic radiology and x-ray brings indexation of diagnostic imaging to around 92 per cent of all diagnostic imaging services. This investment will support patients needing these important diagnostic services and encourage diagnostic imaging providers to maintain or increase their level of bulk billing.

Patients will have affordable access to bulk billed diagnostic imaging services, and reduced out of pocket costs. Medicare eligibility for MRI and PET scans will benefit around 14,000 and 10,000 breast cancer patients respectively each year.

How much will this cost?

This is a total investment of \$606.1 million.