



Guaranteeing Medicare – improving transparency of out of pocket costs

The Government will fund a new national strategy to tackle excessive out of pocket costs charged by medical specialists. This will be the first stage of the Government's response to the Ministerial Advisory Committee's report on out of pocket costs – all of whose recommendations we strongly support. The strategy will focus on making the fees that medical specialists charge their patients publicly available and more transparent. It includes a new website that will publish de-identified data showing the range of fees and resulting out of pocket costs charged by specialists for treatments funded under Medicare. People will also be able to identify the typical specialist costs for common treatment experiences where more than one service is needed, such as for breast cancer.

In addition, the development of a nationally searchable website for individual specialist fees will initially focus on cancer, gynaecology and obstetrics – higher use areas where major concerns have been raised about out of pocket costs.

A complementary education initiative will also be funded.

Why is this important?

This strategy will help reduce the burden of 'bill shock' and provide patients – and their referring doctors – with the information they need to make informed choices about their care.

While the vast majority of doctors do the right thing, a minority can charge very large or unexpected out of pocket costs. This can cause distress and financial hardship for patients.

We need to ensure more transparency around these costs, so that people can be more informed when choosing a specialist.

Increasing transparency and awareness will also help highlight that higher fees do not always mean higher quality care.

Who will benefit?

Patients and referring GPs will benefit from having more information about medical specialists' costs and from being better informed when discussing which specialist to choose.

How much will this cost?

This will cost \$7.2 million from 2019–20 to 2020–21.