



Press Release

6th September 2016

Minister's commitment to the Review of the Medicare Benefits Schedule means Australia's world-class health system will be around to benefit our children

Private Healthcare Australia Chief Executive Officer, Dr Rachel David, says the Government's MBS Taskforce's interim report is a major step towards ensuring Medicare funding is directed to interventions that are known to benefit health consumers, rather than low-value, futile or non-clinically relevant care.

"Health funds are committed to ensuring members are able to access quality clinical care when and where they need it. However, increasing pressure is being placed on the system by having to fund what may no longer be appropriate or necessary and potentially diverting resources from areas of need," said Dr David.

"The MBS is a key part of the Medicare system which reimburses patients for visits to private doctors and private medical treatments. As such it triggers hospital admissions and gap payments to medical specialists covered by health funds. Every dollar wasted on low value care puts upward pressure on premiums for health fund members, as well as costing the taxpayer.

"The Federal Government has made significant progress towards delivering an improved health system through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Review and the associated *Choosing Wisely* medical and community education initiative.

"PHA is particularly supportive of the level of clinician involvement and engagement in the taskforce, and recognises the considerable challenges in gathering clinical evidence in surgery and procedural medicine, where the option of clinical trials may not be practical. Health funds do however urge the Government to ensure the MBS, as an uncapped program, is subject to a continual process of evaluation and review to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose for our evolving health system.

"This will ensure Medicare remains sustainable so future generations can benefit. The Review is on the right track. There is no doubt that health outcomes are better and the care provided is safer when patients are not referred for an endless merry-go-round of unnecessary tests and procedures.

"As a related measure, the Government's Health Care Homes package will go a long way towards reducing duplication and waste in the system. Health outcomes will be improved by incentivising a strong GP workforce to better manage the integrated health needs of chronically ill patients.

"Health funds are committed to working with the Federal Government and industry stakeholders to ensure a sustainable and affordable health system for the benefit of all Australians," Dr David said.

Media contact: Jen Eddy 0439240755