



**Media Release**  
**Friday, 3 June 2016**

## **Medicare freeze hurts the most disadvantaged**

AMA Tasmania has urged the Federal Government to more strongly consider the implications of their actions in continuing to freeze Medicare rebates. Low income earners cannot afford increased consultation costs and it is not sustainable to place the financial burden on general practitioners.

AMA Tasmania Vice President Dr Stuart Day said the poorest, the sickest and the most vulnerable will be the hardest hit.

“2016-17 Health Budget continues the Government’s stranglehold on Australia’s Medicare system by taking \$1 billion out of the pockets of Australian patients and household budgets by extending the Medicare rebate freeze,” Dr Day said.

“This is not about putting money in the doctor’s pockets but keeping the money in the pockets of the people who need it most.

“A vast majority of doctors are expressing grave concern for the wellbeing and financial state of the patients who will suffer if the rebate system remains frozen.

“There are doctors who are currently absorbing increasing operating costs to ensure that low-income families are not forced to be out of pocket when visiting a GP.

“We’ve reached the tipping point. There is a lot of evidence to say when you put financial barriers in place for people having tests or treatments, there are many people that can’t afford it and are forced to go without, particularly low income earners.

“What we then end up with are people who are sicker and more likely to need emergency services.”



If the rebate remains frozen, approximately 60 per cent of Australian general practitioners will be forced to end bulk billing and introduce a fee of around \$15 per visit.

**ENDS**

**For more information: Ned Worledge, Font PR, 0418 602 037**