



**Media Release**

**Wednesday, 19 October 2016**

## **The ongoing Medicare rebate freeze means higher out of pocket costs for patients**

AMA Tasmania has warned patients will pay more to see their General Practitioner because of the Medicare freeze.

AMA Tasmania President Dr Stuart Day said it is inevitable that many GPs will need to review their decision to bulk-bill, or not to bulk-bill their patients.

“Every year the AMA reviews *The AMA List of Medical Services and Fees*. It is a guide for our members that takes into account the costs of running a high quality medical practice,” said Dr Day.

“The new AMA fee for a standard Level B GP consultation is \$78, up from \$76 in 2015.

“The recommended increase for GP visits is essential to ensure Doctors are able to provide the highest quality health care.

“It is not predetermined that a visit to the GP will cost \$78, it is up to individual doctors to set their own prices and to decide whether or not they bulk-bill patients.

“The fact is, Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) patient rebates continue to lag behind the real cost of providing quality patient care, but this year patient out-of-pocket costs will be higher because of the compounding effect of the ongoing freeze on MBS indexation.

“Since the last indexation in July 2014, The Medicare freeze has become an enormous burden on hardworking GPs. Practices cannot continue absorbing the increasing costs of providing quality care year after year.

“The difference between patients’ medical fees and Medicare rebates will be greater because of the Medicare freeze but, despite the widening gap, doctors have kept medical fee increases to a minimum.”

Practice costs – such as wages for practice staff, nurses, rent, electricity, computers, continuing professional development, accreditation, and professional insurance – must all be met from the single fee charged by the doctor.

For those patients currently paying a gap for their GP care, this gap is increasing at a rate of 6.5 per cent each year. This year, AMA fees have been indexed, on average, by 2.35 per cent.

The MBS freeze is set to continue until at least 2020 under existing Government policy.

**ENDS**

**Media contact: Ned Worledge, Font PR, 0418 602 037**