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Government confirms no evidence for Medicare fraud claims

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) has welcomed today's announcement that a departmental review found no evidence to support media reports that 30 per cent of the Medicare budget is being defrauded by doctors and other health professionals.

Federal Health Minister Mark Butler has confirmed that a departmental review found there was nothing to support claims made in some media reports that 30 per cent of the Medicare budget was being "rorted" by doctors and other health professionals and stressed that the overwhelming bulk of Australia's doctors and health professionals are honest, hardworking and comply with Medicare rules.

AMA President Professor Stephen Robson said the announcement was a welcome one for doctors across the country who had reported mental distress following the media reports.

"The AMA analysed the documentation these media reports relied on and like the department found nothing — not a skerrick of evidence — to support the claims made in headlines splashed across some news organisations," Professor Robson said.

"We have relied on reputable sources, and we've seen multiple experts, including former head of the MBS Review, Professor Bruce Robinson; immediate former head of the Professional Services Review, Professor Julie Quinlivan; and highly-respected health economist and former health department secretary Professor Stephen Duckett question these claims, stating publicly there was no evidence for them.

"The AMA has acknowledged consistently that while some fraud does occur, the vast majority of doctors are doing the right thing. And we have seen the mental toll these reports have taken on Australia's doctors.

"We have seen and heard from general practitioners and non-GP specialists who have told us how upsetting these stories are. They have told us about being confronted by angry patients. This is a direct result of inaccurate and misleading media reports.

"Compliance is something the AMA takes very seriously, and we will work with the Medicare Integrity review that has also been announced today. The profession has nothing to hide and has a strong record of working to ensure that Medicare funding is directed to support patients, including on two recent legislative packages to improve the integrity of the Medicare system."

Professor Robson said the complexity of the Medicare system is something the new independent review announced by the government must address as it is a major cause of confusion when it comes to correctly billing Medicare. The Medicare Benefits Schedule runs to hundreds of pages and the advice provided by the Department of Health is often confusing and inconsistent.

It will be important that the Independent Review focuses on supporting health professionals to navigate the complex Medicare system and does not simply result in more red tape and bureaucracy that takes away from the time doctors need to spend with their patients.

"The minister has again highlighted the impact of years of cuts and neglect of Medicare and, while this latest review may identify potential savings that could be made, what Medicare really needs is genuine reform and an injection of new funds. This is what we what we have been proposing through our [Modernise Medicare](#) campaign.

“We will continue to fight for a fit-for-purpose and modern Medicare, one that supports patients to access the care they need and ensures the continued viability of private medical practice in Australia, particularly general practice.”

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