

2015

FEDERAL AMA EMAIL TO NON-GP MEMBERS RE GOVT CHANGES

I am writing to let you know that we have seen a great win for common sense today, with the Government announcing that it will not proceed with the planned introduction of a ten minute time threshold for Level B MBS consultation items.

This change was due to commence on 19 January and would have seen the loss of \$1.3b in MBS funding for GP services.

As a result of the Government's change of heart, the existing Level A and B MBS consultation item structure will remain in place.

The AMA had placed the Government under significant public pressure over its plan. I have raised our concerns with politicians across the political spectrum, including the new Health Minister and Prime Minister.

I have been in contact today with the Health Minister and she has given me a firm commitment to take a more collaborative approach to the development of GP policy, in the context of the future sustainability of Medicare. This is a welcome change in the Government's approach.

While the AMA is very pleased with this decision, which is a big win for GPs and patients, our concerns with other planned cuts to funding for MBS services remain. The Government has not yet backed away from its proposal for a \$5 rebate cut for most GP services from July 1 or its planned freeze on MBS indexation until 2018.

With this in mind, the AMA will still proceed with previously announced GP forums in Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, the ACT, Queensland and Western Australia. These forums remain a critical part of our campaign to support General Practice and an important opportunity for you to join with other GPs to inform our feedback to the Government's consultation process.

Details of these forums are at www.ama.com.au/gprally

I appreciate the significant feedback that GPs have given me over recent weeks in response to the Government's plans. I have been able to put many of these concerns directly to the public and politicians, and they have clearly been heard loud and clear.

The AMA remains committed to working collaboratively with Government to develop sustainable GP financing policy and I am confident that today's announcement by the new Health Minister signals a new and refreshing approach.

For information about joining the AMA and being part of the most influential health advocacy body in the country, visit www.ama.com.au/membership.

Yours sincerely A/Prof Brian Owler President