

2015

SCRAPPING OF MBS CUTS FOR GP SERVICES

After many months of intense lobbying and public advocacy by the AMA – including direct negotiations with Health Minister Sussan Ley over the weekend - the Government today scrapped its flawed GP co-payment model and reversed the majority of planned MBS funding cuts for GP services.

This follows the decision in January to dump the 10-minute time threshold for Level B MBS consultations – again following a concerted campaign by the AMA.

Today's decision reflects a new, more consultative approach to health policy by the Government, and the AMA is at the centre of this consultation. Minister Ley has listened to the concerns that I have raised with her during our many discussions – both face to face and over the phone.

The key elements of the Government's latest policy announcement are:

- The Government has scrapped its co-payment model;
- Planned cuts to MBS rebates for GP consultations will not proceed;
- For concessional patients and children under 16, existing bulk billing incentives will be retained.

I have argued strongly that there should be no freeze on MBS indexation, which does not need Senate approval. The AMA will continue to work hard to have the freeze reversed and will meet with the Prime Minister shortly to discuss this.

Since last year's Budget, many GPs have written to me to tell me your views, and I have been able to share these views directly with the Minister. You have been contributing directly to the policy process.

These changes are hard won, particularly given the Government's deteriorating Budget bottom line. They are the result of effective unrelenting advocacy – both in public and in private.

While I have welcomed the Government's change of heart, I know GPs remain concerned with the ongoing freeze on MBS indexation. We also know that the 2014/15 Budget contained a number of other changes that have significant ramifications for general practice, including GP training reforms and the loss of the Prevocational GP Placements Program.

The Minister has promised further consultation about general practice funding and policy. Rest assured I will continue to ensure your concerns are heard and that general practice is put on a more sustainable financial footing.