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**ONGOING MEDICARE PATIENT REBATE FREEZE MEANS HIGHER
 OUT-OF-POCKET COSTS FOR PATIENTS**

AMA List of Medical Services and Fees 2016

The AMA has finalised the *AMA List of Medical Services and Fees 2016*, which provides guidance to AMA members in setting their fees based on their own practice cost experience.

AMA Vice President, Dr Tony Bartone, a Melbourne GP, said today that 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. The freeze will continue until at least 2020 under existing Government policy.

As a result of the freeze, the MBS patient rebate for a standard Level B GP consultation will remain at the current level of \$37.05, last indexed on 1 July 2014.

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

Dr Bartone said there is a long history of MBS indexation lagging well behind the contemporary costs of providing medical care, which has caused a significant difference between the AMA fees and MBS fees today.

“The MBS simply has not kept pace with the complexity or cost of providing high quality medical services,” Dr Bartone said.

“The freeze is an enormous burden on hardworking GPs. Practices cannot continue absorbing the increasing costs of providing quality care year after year.

“Many patients will pay more to see their doctor because of the Medicare freeze. It is inevitable that many GPs will need to review their decision to bulk bill some of their patients.

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

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.

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

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