

Media Release

RACP welcomes government commitment to lifting rebate freeze

Tuesday, 9 May 2017

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) has welcomed the Government's commitment to begin lifting the Medicare rebate freeze, arguing it will help ensure patients can access the care they need.

Under the Budget plan announced in Canberra tonight, Medicare rebates for bulk-billed GP visits will be lifted from July this year, with the staged changes to be extended to specialist appointments in 2018.

"It is pleasing that the Government has begun the process of lifting the freeze on rebates," explained RACP President Dr Yelland. "The change will mean that MBS rebates will again keep pace with inflation and the costs of running a quality medical practice.

"Tonight's announcement is a good outcome for the Australian health system as it will better support patients in accessing the care they need."

Dr Yelland also welcomed the Government's continued commitment to the Health Care Homes initiative.

"It is pleasing that the Government continues to support the Health Care Homes trial. This initiative is a genuine opportunity to trial an innovative model of care and funding that could potentially deliver important benefits to patients with chronic conditions.

"We also welcome the continued focus on ensuring patients have access to the medicines they need, by lowering the cost of essential medications to support new treatments being made available.

"We are however concerned about a number of punitive measures which may limit welfare access to people suffering alcohol and substance abuse issues.

"The RACP has consistently called for increases to currently underfunded drug and alcohol services, with Australians with alcohol and substance abuse issues needing support for their recovery.

"Another area of concern is the potential impact on the future medical and health workforce resulting from announced changes to supported university places for Australian permanent residents and New Zealanders," she added.

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About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP): The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 15,000 physicians and 7,500 trainee physicians across Australia and New Zealand.

The College represents a broad range of medical specialties including general medicine, paediatrics and child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology, public health medicine, occupational and environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine, geriatric medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients.

The College offers 60 training pathways. These lead to the award of one of seven qualifications that align with 45 specialist titles recognised by the Medical Board of Australia or allow for registration in nine vocational scopes with the Medical Council of New Zealand.