

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ADIA welcomes the Coalition's commitment on access to diagnostic imaging services

MELBOURNE: The Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association (ADIA) has welcomed the Coalition's commitment to work with the diagnostic imaging sector on structural reforms to provide patients with certainty on affordable access to services.

Minister for Health Sussan Ley today announced a re-elected Coalition Government would immediately commission an independent evaluation, in consultation with the sector, of the commercial pressures of providing diagnostic imaging services.

The announcement is in response to concerns expressed by ADIA that a lack of indexation of patient rebates for diagnostic imaging services for 18 years has meant that patients are facing significant out of pocket costs.

"Underfunding for the diagnostic imaging sector was becoming a looming issue for patients that we and other stakeholders were very concerned about" said ADIA CEO Pattie Beerens.

The Coalition has announced its plan for access to affordable diagnostic imaging that involves:

- Immediately commissioning an independent evaluation, in consultation with the sector, into the broader commercial environment, including cost pressures, of comprehensive diagnostic imaging practices to ensure that additional investment is targeted where it will have most benefit for patients. The Coalition acknowledges there is a need to align the MBS fees on some items which may not adequately reflect the actual cost of delivering the service and will consider how best to ensure that the DI schedule fees keep pace with costs into the future.
- The bulk billing incentive will be maintained for concession card holders and children under 16 as per the Government's original proposal.
- The measure to remove bulk billing incentives for non-concession card holders and those over 16 will commence on 1 January 2017 to ensure the independent evaluation can be completed and the outcome implemented.
- Not changing the Diagnostic Imaging Services Table, excluding those from the MBS Taskforce, for the next three years, without consultation and agreement with the sector.
- Introducing a Quality Framework based on the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists recommendations, including for CT imaging, to ensure patients are receiving high quality and safe services.
- Working with the diagnostic imaging sector to deal with broader issues in the sector, including structural reform to address roadblocks to improved efficiency. This is essential to support fiscal sustainability and patient access to quality services in the long-term.
- Ensuring that diagnostic imaging indexation resumes when the current GP rebate indexation freeze concludes
- Ongoing consultation with the sector during the transition and implementation phase of the Coalitions policy.

ADIA is confident these measures will show a path where the Medicare rebates for procedures used in the diagnosis and management of serious illnesses such as cancer adequately covers the actual cost for patients.

Press release



ADIA has briefed all political parties on the serious implications of this issue for patient access if it was not addressed. Ms Beerens said that patients should be encouraged by the Coalition's commitment to ensure Australians have access to sustainable, affordable diagnostic imaging services into the future.

"We had to fight the case for patients and we are really pleased that our advocacy has resulted in the diagnostic imaging sector and the Government working constructively to achieve a positive outcome for patients, providers and taxpayers."

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