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TURNBULL'S MEDICARE FAILURE LEAVES TASMANIANS IN PAIN

The Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association (ADIA) has applauded independent MP Andrew Wilkie for highlighting the cruel realities caused by the underfunding of Medicare and radiology services.

Mr Wilkie, the Federal Member for Dennison in Tasmania, has today called for the Turnbull Government to finally end a 20-year freeze on Medicare rebates for vital services such as x-rays and scans.

"The bleak picture painted by Mr Wilkie is, sadly, quite accurate," said ADIA President **Dr Siavash Es'haghi**.

"As Mr Wilkie pointed out, there are patients in Tasmania who now have to go on payment plans to get the x-rays and scans they need. That is not how Medicare is supposed to work," he said.

"That is why Prime Minister Turnbull must keep the promise he made to end the funding freeze that has been in place for two decades.

"The Federal Budget is being finalised as we speak, so now is the time to act."

The Government's funding freeze is making vital radiology services unaffordable for many Tasmanian patients:

- **200,000 Tasmanians need x-rays and scans every year** and are already paying average gaps of \$61 for an x-ray, \$172 for a CT scan, \$207 for an MRI scan, and almost \$150 for the 18-week pregnancy ultrasound.
- ABS data shows that nearly 10,000 Tasmanians each year decide **not** to get x-rays and scans that their doctor refers them to get **because of the cost**.
- The Medicare freeze means **breast imaging is no longer available** in Devonport and nuclear medicine services are severely limited in Burnie. Patients who need breast imaging have to travel to Launceston or Burnie and patients who need nuclear medicine have to travel to Launceston.
- Diagnostic mammography is **not available bulk billed** for most Tasmanians.

"Mr Wilkie has highlighted the issue in Tasmania, but patients across Australia face similar problems – they can't afford and can't access vital health services," Dr Es'haghi said.

"It's creating a two-tiered health system between the haves and the have-nots – and that's not what Medicare is supposed to be."

ADIA is running a national [television campaign](#), titled “Medicare – ignore it and it will go away”, which highlights the fact that the Coalition has not kept its promise to radiology patients.

Before the 2016 election, the Coalition collaborated with ADIA on a package of structural reforms and signed an agreement to end the 20-year freeze on Medicare rebates for radiology services when the GP rebate freeze ends on July 1 this year.

ADIA represents radiology practices throughout Australia, both in the community and in hospitals. It promotes the ongoing development of quality accreditation standards and appropriate funding settings so that Australians can have affordable access to quality radiology services. This supports radiology’s central role in the diagnosis, treatment and management of a broad range of conditions in every branch of medicine.

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