

## ADIA pledges to work with Government to maintain investment and resolve indexation impasse

The incoming President of the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association (ADIA) has pledged to work with Government to ensure ongoing private sector investment in innovative and life-saving diagnostic imaging services.

"The private sector has traditionally led the way with investment in new technology and imaging techniques ensuring that patients have the best possible opportunity for early intervention and non-surgical treatment," said ADIA's new President Dr Sue Ulreich.

A Perth based radiologist and CEO of SKG Radiology, Dr Sue Ulreich recently replaced long serving President, Dr Ron Shnier.

While offering to partner with Government to ensure a viable and innovative private sector, Dr Ulreich also warned of deteriorating services and practice closures unless action is taken to close the widening gap between Medicare rebates and rising costs.

"We would like to work with the Government on issues affecting the imaging requirements of our patients and to achieve the best possible outcomes, patients require adequate and fair support from Medicare," she said. "Unfortunately, rising costs and the Government's inaction to index rebates leaves patients with an ever widening gap that they cannot afford."

Medicare rebates for diagnostic imaging services have not been indexed for 13 years and are now 20 to 30 per cent below actual private practice costs.

"Via a constructive relationship with government and the Department of Health and Ageing, we have worked to introduce several important policy changes in recent years but rebates remain our single greatest challenge," said Dr Shnier, who served as ADIA President for five years. "Early and accurate diagnosis saves lives."

Without a change of heart in Canberra, Dr Ulreich has predicted that diagnostic imaging practices will offer fewer services with less input from specialist radiologists. She also says that an increasing number of patients unable to pay the gap will be forced into the public hospital system.

"Public hospitals can bulk bill with funding by both the Federal and State Governments but their imaging services are already overloaded and will fail to cope in areas where they are the only provider," she said.

Private imaging practices currently provide more than 80 per cent of Medicare services across the country and they operate 80% of the comprehensive practices in rural and regional Australia.

While passing the Presidency, Dr Shnier will remain a member of the ADIA board. "I have watched ADIA grow from a fledgling group searching for direction into an effective industry organisation able to truly represent the interests of private radiologists and their patients across Australia," Dr Shnier said.

The outgoing President paid special tribute to the work of ADIA's Chief Executive Officer, Pattie Beerens. "Pattie has turned the organisation around and I look forward to working with her and with Dr Ulreich to shape its future," Dr Shnier said.

ADIA represents the interests of diagnostic imaging patients, practices and radiologists engaged in the private sector. Its members are both for-profit and charitable and they operate practices in the community and in public and private hospitals accross Australia. They have a common interest in quality comprehensive private practice and sustainable government funding.

**Media Contact: John Morton or Alex Bolton on 02 8904 7300**