

cancer voices australia



australian diagnostic imaging association



The Royal Australian and
New Zealand College of Radiologists



A.N.Z.A.P.N.M
Australian and New Zealand Association of Physicians in Nuclear Medicine (Inc)



Communiqué from Patients and Health Professionals for Affordable Access to Quality Diagnostic Imaging

To: Federal Government, Independent, Greens and Coalition MPs

This communiqué represents a consensus reached by Australia's leading patient advocacy groups, health associations, health professionals and health service providers. Its aim is to raise concerns, on behalf of patients, about the ability of all Australians to continue to afford and access quality, accurate and urgent diagnostic imaging services.

The signatories call on the Federal Government, Independents, Greens and Coalition MPs to recognise their collective concerns which include, but are not limited to:

- 50,000 patients per day access Medicare funded diagnostic imaging services - to have their condition diagnosed or treated using X-ray, ultrasound, CT, MRI or nuclear medicine. Patient rebates for these diagnostic imaging services have not been indexed for cost increases for over 12 years while patient rebates for other Medicare services have been indexed each year over this same period.
- The prolonged failure to index patient rebates for diagnostic imaging services has resulted in rebates that are now between 20% and 30% below the cost of delivering the services. The effect is an increase in gap payments from the patient's pocket (on average by 15% in 2010) as well as deteriorating patient access to quality, supervised services.

- Practices that continue to strive to provide quality services and services at the rebate level are however struggling to remain viable. 60% of the cost of an average diagnostic imaging service relates to healthcare workforce costs (sonographers, radiographers, nuclear medicine technicians, radiologists and nuclear medicine physicians). As a result practices are unable to maintain current levels of professional input while rebates are not indexed and professional input is declining as patient rebates are being squeezed.
- Patients expect that the right test has been ordered, that the service is being appropriately supervised and reported so that follow up treatment is both appropriate and timely. Australians want to be sure that their health is not being compromised because of a systematic erosion of funding due to lack of indexation of Medicare rebates for diagnostic imaging services.

We maintain that there is no sound reason for not indexing diagnostic imaging rebates, even under the current Budgetary restraints.

What patients need now

What patients require is quality diagnosis, quality treatment and a reduction in out of pocket expenses. This can only be achieved if the Medicare rebates for diagnostic imaging services are indexed annually.

Why patients need quality, affordable, state of the art diagnostic imaging:

With the use of diagnostic imaging, potentially treatable conditions can be diagnosed, the effectiveness of treatment can be monitored and prevented,, and serious diseases, such as cancer, can be treated more effectively. In addition some patients can avoid exploratory surgery and hospitalization through the use of diagnostic imaging.

The use of diagnostic imaging is particularly important for cancer patients where patients are often faced with significant out of pocket expenses for diagnostic imaging services and are often forced, due to these out of pocket expenses, to opt for less effective and regular monitoring.

Conclusion

We appreciate that there are unusual pressures on the Federal Government Budget, however, patients cannot be denied indexation of the rebates for their diagnostic imaging services any longer.

If patient rebates are not indexed to keep pace with inflation and increasing costs, we believe the health outcomes of our patients may be compromised and lives may be put at risk. We also believe that without indexation and improved funding, patient access to quality diagnostic imaging services will continue to decline.

We call on the Australian Government to take immediate action and introduce indexation of diagnostic imaging rebates to ensure that patients can access quality and affordable diagnostic imaging services.

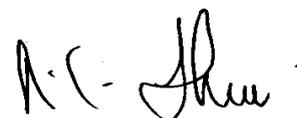
If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact Ms Pattie Beerens, CEO of the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association (ADIA) on (03) 9867-5070, or the Chair of Cancer Voices Australia, Dr Ian Roos, on (03) 9899 7081.

Signatories to this communiqué are as follows:-

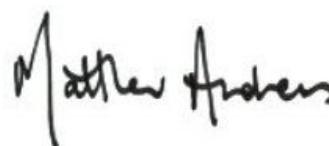
Dr Ian Roos OAM
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Cancer Voices Australia



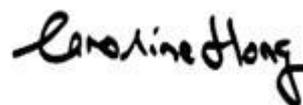
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