

Dr Ron Shnier Discusses the Future Funding of DI Services



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Dr Ron Shnier - President - ADIA

With the current funding agreements (MoUs) with the government due to expire on 30 June 2008, I would like to discuss the future funding of diagnostic imaging services.

2008 Federal Budget

The Federal Budget has confirmed the status quo for rebates in the Diagnostic Imaging Services Table following the end of the MoUs whereas more than \$100M over 5 years has been cut from funding for Pathology services. This means that rebates have been saved from cuts, however the 10 year rebate freeze will continue.

Future Funding

Following the budget, Minister Nicola Roxon met with representatives of ADIA to provide assurance that she is aware of the funding crisis confronting private diagnostic imaging practices and the seriousness of the threat to patient access. The Minister indicated that she is committed to working with the sector to ensure that private practices remain viable and that services are affordable.

ADIA has been advised that there will be no MoUs from 30 June 2008 and that future arrangements are yet to be determined. We are expecting to get further details about how this might be progressed at the upcoming Radiology Management Committee meeting in mid June.

Minister Roxon is on the public record as supporting both a strong public and private health system in Australia and this came through in her meeting with ADIA representatives. She seems to appreciate the urgent need, in the face of increasing private practice closures, to explore how best to responsibly address future funding needs.

Funding Crisis

Over the past year ADIA (with the support of RANZCR) has intensified its efforts to make the government aware of the plight of private radiology practices striving to provide quality, affordable services in the face of rapidly increasing capital and staff costs and diminishing government support. According to Greg Hughes, an independent practice owner and ADIA Member:

"Many small to intermediate radiology providers face the very real prospect of having to reduce services or close practices because of unsustainable economic futures. Many of us have invested heavily in digital imaging solutions to improve our diagnostic abilities, improve operational efficiency and cover radiologist workforce shortages. For this massive financial investment we have received no support or incentives from the Government in the form of improved funding."

I believe we may be on the cusp of achieving what for so long has seemed unachievable, a financially solid future. We need all private radiology providers to join together to voice our concerns as one."

The enormous volume of work undertaken by ADIA's President, Executive and CEO is largely responsible for the position we are now in. The workload of these people cannot continue without the ongoing support of all private radiology practices. ADIA is a real voice for private radiology and is well respected by the Minister and Department of Health & Ageing. I would implore all private radiology providers to consider joining ADIA to actively participate in shaping the future of their industry."

Greg Hughes and other ADIA representatives have personally demonstrated and explained to Minister Roxon and to senior officers in the Department of Health and Ageing, the true economic crisis confronting their practices. Until now many of our efforts have fallen on deaf ears.

It seems now that the current Health Minister truly understands our plight and appears willing to explore new options to ensure the economic future of our sector.

ADIA's Focus

ADIA is committed to maintaining focus on the sustainability of private practices.

As a result of the collective efforts of many people, we may now have our first real opportunity to influence the future diagnostic imaging funding arrangements. To achieve the desired outcome of a strong and viable private sector will, however, require ongoing input and active support from the private radiology industry.

Membership of ADIA

The Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association (ADIA) is a not for profit organisation that represents the interests of diagnostic imaging practices and radiologists engaged in the private sector. Its membership comprises both practice groups and single independent practices that come together with a common interest in quality private practice and sustainable government funding.

I invite private providers wishing to discuss membership of ADIA either to call me during business hours on (02) 9399 1209 or Greg Hughes during business hours on (03) 9329 2961.

ADIA has recently launched its new website <http://www.adia.asn.au> Private providers considering joining ADIA can request membership details and temporary access to the membership section online. ADIA's office number is (03) 9867 5070.