



australian diagnostic imaging association

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Government must balance proposed Medicare co-payment

Critical diagnostic imaging services – such as MRIs, ultrasounds and x-rays – will become less affordable for Australians if the Federal Government introduces the proposed Medicare co-payment without balancing it with an increase in Medicare rebates.

That's according to the **Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association** (ADIA), which represents the private diagnostic imaging sector - responsible for more than 80% of all Medicare-funded diagnostic imaging services nationally.

"Medicare rebates for medical imaging have not been indexed since 1998 unlike other Medicare services. Therefore, the gap patients have to pay has been steadily growing over the past 16 years and is now increasing at almost 10% every year," said ADIA President Dr. Chris Wriedt.

"It's got to the stage where the average gap payment for diagnostic imaging is now \$88 and up to \$157 for an MRI, and it's often the sickest patients with the most complex of needs who are having to pay the most," he said.

"Therefore, it is patently unfair to ask Australians to co-pay for this essential service if the Government won't index Medicare rebates for diagnostic imaging and at least meet patients some of the way."

Dr. Wriedt said the lack of indexation would also impact on the level of services offered to patients.

"Diagnostic imaging is now virtually indispensable in all aspects of medical diagnosis and treatment, from arthritis through to brain surgery – and yet Medicare rebates for diagnostic imaging services are between 20%-50% less today in real terms than they were 16 years ago," he said.

"Government can't expect the market to continue to maintain quality standards and provide affordable services if the patient rebates remain frozen.

"We can understand that co-payments may represent an opportunity to make Medicare more sustainable in the long-term.

"However, if they are implemented in isolation it would be grossly unfair to patients and to practices and will have a direct impact on health outcomes for Australians."

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