



Joint Statement from patients and health professionals

“The Federal Government must lock in indexation for diagnostic imaging for the next Budget”

As Australia’s leading patient cancer groups, specialists, radiology practices and health professionals and providers, we appreciate the Government’s provision of additional funding in the Federal Budget to improve patient access to MRI – especially in such a tight fiscal environment.

This measure is a step towards addressing access and affordability issues relating to quality diagnostic imaging which we have been raising on behalf of patients over the past few months.

Although we are disappointed that the Government was not able to deliver the very important measure of indexation for patient rebates, we hope that it will be able to do so in the 2012-13 Budget when financial constraints are expected to be less pressing.

50,000 patients per day across Australia access Medicare-funded diagnostic imaging services to have their condition diagnosed or treated. These services range from X-ray, ultrasound, and CT to MRI and nuclear medicine.

The impact of the failure to index patient rebates against increasing costs in the provision of these services over the last 12 years is being keenly felt. Despite a funding incentive introduced in November 2009, the costs of radiology services are still far higher than the rebates. Bulk billing is becoming less and less viable, patient gap fees are increasing, and many practices are being forced to cut costs and services with risk to quality. Without indexation, initiatives to improve Medicare rebates for some patients and for particular

services will soon lose their impact as costs continue to rise.

In this Budget, the Minister for Health and Ageing has recognised the importance of diagnostic imaging, but more needs to be done to ensure that patients can access affordable quality diagnostic imaging services regardless of who they are and where they live. It needs to be borne in mind that the sickest patients – those needing regular access to the more complex services requiring high levels of clinical input – continue to bear the brunt of rebate shortfalls.

Commit to Indexation for 2012-13

We call on the Australian Government to commit to introduce indexation of diagnostic imaging rebates in 2012-13. Patients may have to wait until then, but they should not and cannot reasonably be asked to continue to wait. Patients need affordable access to the right test at the right time.

ENDS

Signatories to this media release are:

- *Cancer Voices Australia*
- *Cancer Council Australia*
- *The Warwick Foundation*
- *Private Cancer Physicians of Australia (PCPA)*
- *Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association (ADIA)*
- *The Royal Australasian & New Zealand College of Radiologists (RANZCR)*
- *Australian Sonographers Association (ASA)*
- *Australasian Society for Ultrasound in Medicine (ASUM)*
- *Australian and New Zealand Association of Physicians in Nuclear Medicine (ANZAPNM)*
- *Rural Alliance in Nuclear Scintigraphy (RAINS)*

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

- *Cancer Voices Australia is a national network providing a forum for people in Australia affected by cancer.*
 - *ADIA represents private diagnostic imaging practices in Australia. They diagnose and treat 50,000 patients every day and operate 80% of the comprehensive practices providing services to patients in rural and regional Australia. ADIA members are both for-profit and charitable and operate practices in the community and in public and private hospitals in Australia.*
-