

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Budget goes exactly the wrong way for DI patients

The Federal Government's Budget announcement to further cut Medicare rebates on vital diagnostic imaging services will have a severe impact on both vulnerable patients and imaging practices.

"The government has gone exactly the wrong way on rebates," said Dr Sue Ulreich, Vice President of 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.

"For diagnostic imaging, rebates have been frozen since 1998, and they desperately need to be increased - but instead the government has actually cut them by \$5."

This simply means diagnostic imaging, an essential service for millions of Australians, will be put further out of reach for those who need it most.

ADIA is pleased that the Government will introduce its recommendations to better support investment in quality imaging equipment to the benefit of patient health, but overall considers this budget to be a missed opportunity to address severe needs within the sector.

"Diagnostic imaging is now virtually indispensable in all aspects of medical diagnosis and treatment, from arthritis through to guiding brain surgery. Sadly, this Government does not seem to understand how hard it already is for many patients to access diagnostic imaging services with gaps averaging \$88 - and \$157 for MRI.

"These Budget measures will not protect the disadvantaged or improve their access," Dr Ulreich said. "They are also complex and carry a high administrative cost."

ADIA believes this Budget shows the Government has a false impression of diagnostic imaging - that it is a cost and not the cost-saver it truly is.

"Early diagnosis and better treatment provided through diagnostic imaging saves money because it improves patient treatment - people get better faster," Dr Ulreich said.

MORE INFORMATION

ADIA's 2014-15 Federal Budget Submission -

http://www.adia.asn.au/sites/default/files/ADIA_2014-2015_Federal_Budget%20Summary_web.pdf

Submission to the Senate Inquiry into out-of-pocket costs in Australian healthcare - <http://www.adia.asn.au/sites/default/files/ADIA%20Senate%20Inquiry%20Submission%20Final.pdf>

MEDIA

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