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## Greens Get Behind Patients' Rights to Affordable, Early and Accurate Diagnosis- Radiology Providers

Both major parties should commit to indexation and increased funding of patient Medicare rebates for radiology services so early and accurate diagnosis for potentially deadly or chronic diseases can be available to all Australians not just the wealthy.

Australia's radiology providers today praised the Greens for committing to increases in rebates to compensate for the fall in real terms of rebates for patients accessing diagnostic imaging services. Out of pocket expenses have grown an average of 40% over the past 12 years. The Greens also committed to introducing indexation for the first time in more than a decade.

President of the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association, Dr Ron Shnier, said today that early and accurate diagnosis saves lives - young and old.

"Quality diagnostic imaging has proven to be an effective way of tracking and diagnosing leukemia and other serious conditions such as Multiple Sclerosis, heart disease, osteoporosis, arthritis and virtually all cancers."

"Early and accurate diagnosis returns patients to their families. It saves the taxpayers money and it saves the already overwhelmed public hospital system from being swamped by patients suffering chronic diseases that may have been prevented with early detection and treatment," Dr Shnier said.

"We hope the Government and the Coalition now use these last days of the campaign to confirm that they also will arrest the effects of years of chronic underfunding of radiology services."

Diagnostic imaging was provided with a 10% increase in rebates for bulk billed services by the current Government. Dr Shnier reflected that whilst this was most welcomed and appreciated, the cost of delivering quality radiology services will still significantly outstrip the rebates available. "Our patients are left with increasing out of pocket expenses."

Australians are now paying twice as much for radiology services as they were 12 years ago. Over the past four years alone (between 2005 and 2009), patient gap payments have increased by an average of 40%.

"Our patients' rebates need to be indexed at the very least", Dr Shnier said. "The Greens recognize this and we look forward to continuing to work with any incoming Government on achieving a better health outcome for patients." ENDS

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