



australian diagnostic imaging association

PRESS RELEASE

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Modernising Medicare makes sense

Medicare deserves to be modernised, to deliver greater benefits more efficiently to Australians across the board.

That's the opinion of the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association (ADIA), which has applauded Federal Health Minister Peter Dutton's desire to carefully examine the aging system.

"I think this is an opportunity the health sector needs to seize," said ADIA President Dr Christian Wriedt.

"Medicare is not perfect - there is waste to be cut. But just as importantly the system needs to be adjusted so that Medicare spends its funds to maximise benefits to patients, and the correct settings are in place to provide incentives for innovation and investment," he said.

"The fact is that modern medicine is very expensive so we have to make sure we get maximum return for every dollar we spend."

Medicare is a highly complex system but ADIA, working with key stakeholders, has been developing a Quality Framework to further improve the patient and financial benefits diagnostic imaging brings to the health system, and is happy to work with Minister Dutton to develop effective plans which will help avoid unintended consequences.

Early detection vital

Minister Dutton has made it clear that lifestyle issues, early detection of disease, and the adoption of new and more efficient technologies are central to his plan.

These are all areas where diagnostic imaging can have a substantial impact. In recent years, as technology has become more and more advanced, diagnostic imaging - such as CT scans, MRIs, ultrasound, nuclear medicine and X-rays - has become a cornerstone of modern medicine, driving superior diagnosis, disease management and treatment.

But the current Medicare settings are limiting the positive contribution diagnostic imaging can make.

"Because Medicare rebates for diagnostic imaging haven't been indexed since 1998 - in contrast to rebates for services such as acupuncture, contact lens attendances and allergy testing - we can't provide the services people need and deserve. For example, Australians only have access to about half the number of MRI services as the OECD average," Dr Wriedt said.

"So those benefits of early detection and lower costs are being missed.

"Anyone in business, and medicine, can tell you that if you invest wisely at the front end of the Medicare system - in diagnostic imaging - then you'll get that money back many times over at the other end.

"A huge issue facing Medicare currently is the rapid rise of lifestyle-related problems such as obesity and diabetes," Dr Wriedt said.

"Diagnostic imaging can provide very effective support for people looking to make a healthy lifestyle change - by making sure they are okay to exercise by checking their cardiovascular and skeletal systems."

Medicare can be made better for all of us, and diagnostic imaging is well placed to play a central role.

ADIA

ADIA represents medical imaging practices throughout Australia, both in the community and in hospitals. It promotes the ongoing development of quality accreditation standards and appropriate funding settings so that Australians can have affordable access to quality medical imaging services. This supports medical imaging's central role in the diagnosis, treatment and management of a broad range of conditions in every branch of medicine.

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To speak to Dr Christian Wriedt, President of ADIA, please contact him on (03) 8587 5187.

For other information, please contact Philip Martin/ Jonathan Revitt on (08) 8267 6888.