



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**RANZCR welcomes campaign to end broken and unfair  
Medicare rebate system**

Patients with cancer and other debilitating conditions are still being forced to delay potentially life-saving treatment because of the failure of successive Federal governments to fix the current broken Medicare rebate system.

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists (RANZCR) today welcomes the campaign by the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association (ADIA) to restore indexation for radiology Medicare rebates and also calls on the major parties to commit to increase rebates and allow patients better access to vital diagnostic imaging services such as MRIs, X-rays, CT scans and ultrasounds.

Patient rebates for X-rays and scans have been frozen since 1998 by a succession of Federal governments and the average out-of-pocket costs for X-rays and scans has now hit \$100, forcing Australian patients to decide if they can afford to pay for treatment.

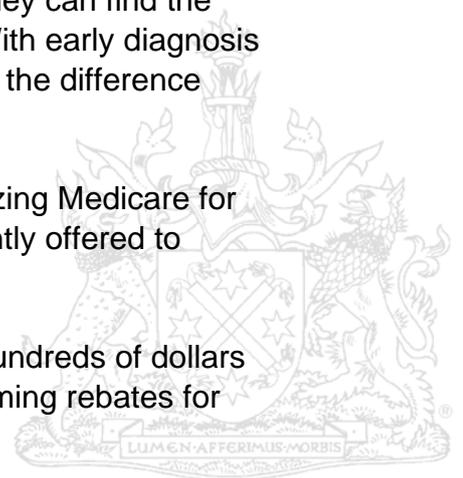
RANZCR President Dr Lance Lawler said the continuing rebate freeze put Australian patients' access to vital treatment services at risk and said the re-introduction of indexation was vital to ending the current unfair system in place.

"Indexation is the only way to ensure all Australians have access to vital diagnostic imaging services," Dr Lawler said. "Such services can make the difference between life and death – it is that simple.

"The current system means patients are forced to decide if they can find the money for these treatments or wait until they can afford it. With early diagnosis often crucial to successful treatment, these delays can mean the difference between an operable and inoperable cancerous tumour.

"RANZCR is calling on the major parties to commit to unfreezing Medicare for diagnostic imaging services and fix the broken service currently offered to Australian patients."

Under the current rebate system, cancer patients may pay hundreds of dollars for potentially crucial diagnostic imaging services before claiming rebates for their treatment.



In 2016 the Coalition Government said it would unfreeze Medicare for MRIs, X-rays, CT scans and ultrasounds – a pledge it has so far failed to deliver.

Data from the 2016-17 Australian Bureau of Statistics' *'Patient Experiences in Australia: Summary of Findings'* publication showed that one in one in fourteen people (7%) who needed to see a medical specialist delayed or did not see a medical specialist due to the cost of treatment involved.

“In an era where wage increases for working Australians aren't matching spiralling living costs, particularly for those living in major population centres, the enduring freeze makes even less sense,” Dr Lawler said.

“Modern radiology and diagnostic imaging services play a hugely important role in the treatment and detection of a wide range of conditions, including life-threatening cancers. While survival rates from cancer are thankfully going up – partly because of early detection, helped by radiology services – recent Cancer Council figures showed the number of Australians living with or beyond a cancer diagnosis will increase by more than 70 per cent by 2040. This statistic underlines the importance of improved early access to treatment for patients.

“Costs should not dictate the treatment Australian patients receive. RANZCR calls for the reinstatement of indexation for radiology services and an end to the elitist system currently in place.”

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists is the leading professional organisation for the promotion of the science and practice of the medical specialties of clinical radiology and radiation oncology in Australia and New Zealand.

For more information, visit [www.ranzcr.com](http://www.ranzcr.com)

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