

TUESDAY 2 APRIL 2019

Budget confirms good news for patients

Tonight's Federal Budget has confirmed the end of the Medicare freeze on most x-rays and scans, benefiting the nine million Australians who access these vital services every year.

From 1 July 2020, rebates for x-ray, ultrasound, mammography, fluoroscopy, interventional radiology and CT scans will be indexed, ending a 20-year freeze that dates back to 1998.

The commitment was announced by Health Minister Greg Hunt last month.

Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association (ADIA) President **Dr Siavash Es'haghi** said tonight's budget announcement had confirmed the good news for patients.

"This commitment by the Government is very significant," he said.

"We are delighted that Mr Hunt listened to the concerns of the sector, understood the issues facing patients and has acted for the good of Medicare.

"Ensuring x-rays and scans are affordable and accessible to Australians is always at the forefront of what ADIA stands for and this is a huge step forward for delivering that well into the future."

"While this is notable progress, there is still some work to do in terms of ending the freeze for all radiology services," Dr Es'haghi said.

"We look forward to the day when all x-rays and scans are indexed."

Another positive inclusion in the budget was the \$32.6 million of funding to subsidise breast cancer scans.

From 1 November 2019, two new Medicare items for MRI of the breast will be available, which will help with the more accurate diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer and will save breast cancer patients \$600 or more per scan.

"This announcement is great news for Australian women. It means that women diagnosed with breast cancer will have access to MRI where recommended by their specialist, irrespective of their capacity to pay \$600 or more in private fees," Dr Es'haghi said.

Dr Es'haghi acknowledged the leading role of Professor Christobel Saunders and the Breast Cancer Network Australia in advocating for MRI for breast cancer to be available on Medicare.

For news further information/ interviews: Phil Martin, Michels Warren PR on 0418 817 871