

AMA LAUNCHES NATIONAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE MEDICARE REBATE FREEZE

15 May 2016

#nomedicarefreeze

The AMA today launched a national campaign against the Government's Medicare patient rebate freeze, with posters and campaign materials being distributed to the AMA's more than 30,000 members – GPs and all other medical specialists – and will be made available to all doctors and practices around the country.

AMA President, Professor Brian Owler, said today that the AMA has been flooded with feedback from doctors and patients since Budget night about the extension of the Medicare freeze until 2020, and people are angry and concerned.

"The Medicare patient rebate freeze extension means that health is going to cost more for all Australians, but particularly the poorest, the sickest, the vulnerable, and the disadvantaged," Professor Owler said.

"The seven-year duration of the freeze until 2020 is a body blow to patients and to medical practices.

"The costs of running a medical practice – rents, staff, technology and equipment, indemnity insurance, accreditation – continue to rise year-on-year, and doctors have no choice now but to pass the costs on to patients.

"Many doctors have absorbed the impact of the freeze until now, but the two-year extension has pushed them over the edge. Their businesses are now struggling to remain viable.

"And it is not just general practice. It affects all medical specialties, including pathology and radiology, which are already reeling from the cuts to bulk billing incentives.

"This means that patients will face higher costs for their health every step of their healthcare journey – every GP visit, every specialist visit, every blood test, every x-ray.

"Patients will pay a new or a higher co-payment every time they need health care for themselves and their family members.

"It will hit working families with kids really hard. It will hit people with chronic illness, and it will hit the elderly.

"The Medicare freeze is not just a co-payment by stealth – it is a sneaky new tax that punishes every Australian family," Professor Owler said.

The AMA will start distributing posters and campaign materials from today.

Doctors and patients across the nation will be provided with contact details for MPs and candidates in every electorate to help them protest against the Medicare freeze.

Professor Owler said the AMA campaign will complement the campaigns of other medical organisations.

"The medical profession is united in its efforts to put an end to the Medicare freeze, and protect patients," Professor Owler said.

The colour version of the AMA campaign poster is available at www.ama.com.au/nomedicarefreeze-colourposter

The black and white version of the AMA campaign poster is available at www.ama.com.au/nomedicarefreeze-bwposter

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