

RACGP Federal Election Statement

It's time to care about ...
the care we all count on

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) is calling on the Federal Government to help GPs and the patients they care for

Did you know?



80% of Australians over the age of 65 have one or more chronic health condition



20% of Australians live with mental health and behaviour conditions



50% of Australians with a chronic condition also report having a disability



Patients who have a post-hospital visit with their GP within seven days have a **significantly lower risk of readmission** within 30 days



98% of telehealth consultations happen over the phone

Investment in general practice care has the potential to modernise the health sector to meet 21st century health needs, create significant savings for the national economy and improve the health of all Australians.

What are the issues?

Rising rates of chronic disease, an ageing population and a looming mental health crisis are putting increasing pressure on our healthcare system.

The health system will not be able to cope with this increased pressure without a strong primary healthcare system. Due to a failure of successive governments to invest in primary healthcare, increases in patient out-of-pocket costs have been triple the rate of inflation since 2013.

What's the solution?

Investment in regular, continuous general practice care will benefit the health of all Australians by increasing prevention, early treatment and ongoing management of all health conditions, including chronic and complex disease.

The RACGP is calling on the Federal Government to help GPs and their patients they care for in the following ways (see overleaf).

The RACGP is calling on the Federal Government to:

1 Establish new service incentive payments (SIPs) to support regular and continuous care to improve the health of the most vulnerable Australians – keeping them healthy for longer

Older people – The SIP would provide additional support for patients receiving a targeted level of care from their regular GP, such as an MBS Health Assessment and/or a General Practice Management Plan and at least one review, as well as a frailty assessment.

- Health gets more complex as people age.
- Addressing common ageing-related health issues, such as frailty, in general practice keeps people healthy in the community for longer.

People with mental health conditions – The SIP would provide additional support for patients receiving a targeted level of care from their regular GP, such as a General

Practice Mental Health Treatment Plan and at least one review, as well as a physical health assessment.

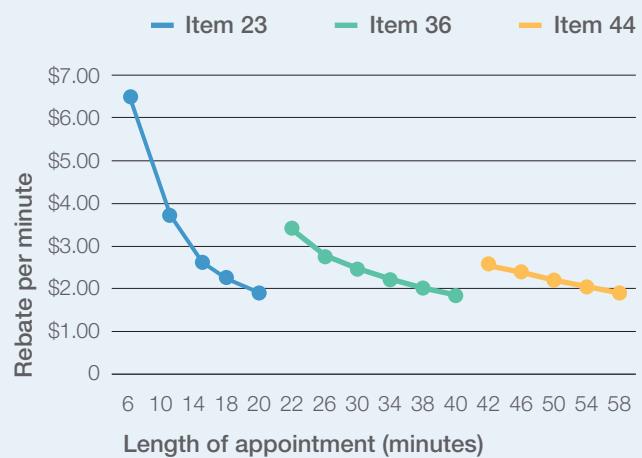
- People with mental health conditions often present to GPs as their first point of care.
- The mental health sector is strained – people with mental health conditions are twice as likely to report having a chronic physical condition.

People with disability – The SIP would provide additional support for patients receiving a targeted level of care from their regular GP, such as a General Practice Management Plan and at least one review, as well as help completing relevant National Disability Insurance Scheme documentation.

- Chronic conditions often coexist with disability.
- People living with disability experience high or very high levels of psychological distress.

2 Increase the value of a patient's Medicare rebate by 10% for GP consultations longer than 20 minutes

- The Medicare rebate per minute decreases significantly the longer a patient spends with their GP.
- People with more complex health conditions (including mental health) need more time with their GP, so the sicker a person gets, the more they may pay to see their GP.



3 Reinstitute Medicare rebates for long phone consultations as part of permanent scheme

- Removing rebates for phone consultations effectively removes telehealth in Australia.
- Infrastructure and accessibility issues make video consultations unsuitable for many patients, including older people and those living in remote areas.

4 Introduce a follow-up appointment with a GP within seven days of an emergency department visit or hospital admission

- Currently, no formal process is in place for patients to see their GP following an unplanned hospital admission or emergency department visit.
- Patients who have a post-hospital visit with their GP within seven days have a significantly lower risk of readmission with 30 days.
- Evidence shows that enhancing follow-ups by GPs will significantly improve patient health outcomes and reduce readmission rates by between 12–14%, saving the Australian economy at least \$69 million a year.

5 Strengthen rural healthcare

The RACGP is calling for investment in rural healthcare by:

- increasing Workforce Incentive Programs with additional payments for those doctors who use additional advanced skills in the rural areas scaled to rurality
- providing access to the relevant speciality MBS items when a GP holds advanced skills in Internal Medicine, Mental Health, Paediatrics, Palliative Care, and/or Emergency, in a rural area.