

# Politicians have your health in their hands

## Have your say this Federal Election

Join your GP in asking your local candidates to put politics aside and support the health of all Australians. This Federal Election, ask the future government to invest in your health so that:

- you and your family can access affordable healthcare in ways that suit your lifestyle
- you and your family are supported to spend enough time discussing your health needs with your GP.

## What are the issues?

### Your patient rebates do not cover the cost of your healthcare

Have you noticed the price to see your GP is increasing? Your GP fees increase to meet the rising costs of providing quality care. Currently, government funded patient rebates are failing to keep pace with the growing costs of care.

Each year, the government is contributing a smaller proportion of the cost of you seeing your GP – which means that you contribute more. As a result it is costing you more than ever to see your GP.

### Medicare has not kept pace with modern technology

In today's modern world, everyone is busy. Medicare has not kept pace with innovations in technology, and patient rebates do not support non face-to-face care. GPs want to make it easier for you to contact them, via phone, email or video conference.

To make sure you can access healthcare in a way that meets your needs, and fits with your lifestyle, the government needs to change the Medicare rules regarding non-face to face care.

The average amount  
Australians pay  
(of their own money)  
to see their GP is

**\$36.50**

Since last  
year this has  
increased by

**\$1.54**

Meanwhile,  
the rebate you  
receive when you  
see your GP only  
increased by

**\$0.55**

Between 2014  
and 2017, the  
cost for you to see  
your GP increased  
by more than

**\$5.00**

Yet, your  
Medicare  
rebate did not  
increase at all

**\$0.00**

## What are the issues? continued

### There is no support for you to spend enough time with your GP discussing complex issues or mental health.

The need to discuss complex health issues and mental health is becoming increasingly important for Australians – with one in four Australians having two or more chronic conditions, and one in five experiencing mental illness every year.

Discussing these issues with your GP takes time – and the current system does not recognise the importance of spending this time with your GP.

The value of your Medicare rebate decreases with each minute you spend with your GP – meaning spending longer discussing your health costs both you and your GP more, and the government less.

There is also no support for you to spend more than 40 minutes discussing your mental health with your GP.

To make sure you can spend the time you need with your GP, the next government needs to make changes to the way patient rebates are calculated for GP consults.

## What can you do?

Ask your local candidate what they are doing to prioritise the health of you and your family.

### Support your GP and ask your local candidate to:

**Modernise Medicine** by removing MBS rules that say GP consults must be provided face to face

**Address rising out of pocket costs** by introducing automatic price increases for your patient rebate that fully reflects the rising costs of medical care

**Support mental health services** by creating a patient rebate that would support you to talk to your GP about mental health for 40+ minutes

**Support complex care** by increasing the rebate for longer consultations, to ensure you have time to discuss complex health issues with your GP.

## Write to your local candidate

The RACGP has developed template letters you can use to write to your local candidate. You can download these from the [RACGP website](#).

The RACGP will publish a list of candidates in each electorate as they become available – you can access this list from the [RACGP Election Campaign page](#)

[www.racgp.org.au/advocacy/2019-federal-election](http://www.racgp.org.au/advocacy/2019-federal-election)

## A quick guide to how Medicare works

### Medicare is a public health insurance scheme.

It provides rebates (support payments) to you when you access eligible health services, such as visiting your GP. These payments are yours, not your GP's. In most cases, the rebate you receive does not cover the total cost of the health service provided.

If you are 'bulk billed', your GP accepts the Medicare rebate as full payment for the service and your signature allows Medicare to directly pay your rebate to your GP.

If you are 'privately' billed, you pay the GP's fee in full. You then receive the standard patient Medicare rebate, reimbursing you for part of the fee.