

22 February 2016

Mr David O'Neill
Director
MSAC Reform

Via email: MSAC.Reform@health.gov.au

Dear Mr O'Neill,

RE: RACGP submission to MSAC on proposed application processes

Thank you for providing The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) with the opportunity to provide input to the review of the Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) application process. MSAC plays an integral role in ensuring public funding is directed toward the safest and most appropriate clinical services and technologies to improve the health of all Australians. The RACGP has provided general comments regarding the application process, which we trust will contribute to the MSAC review.

Whilst the RACGP is fully supportive of rigorous processes to assess the merits of applications, GPs who have been involved in the MSAC application processes have reported that it is unnecessarily time consuming and onerous. It is unclear from the consultation documents whether the new processes proposed (discussed in more detail below) will lengthen or accelerate the application process. We believe that the timelines for MSAC application must be reduced as a priority, and should be a key consideration when reviewing changes to the process.

To ensure the best use of MSAC resources, it is essential that only appropriate applications progress to MSAC for review and consideration. Given this, the RACGP welcomes the processes set out in the consultation documents for ensuring that applications are fully vetted and that the research and evidence supporting applications is sufficient to assist MSAC deliberations. Similarly, the strategies for quickly processing certain applications that do not require exhaustive consideration are also welcome.

We also note that stakeholders have been asked to consider the option of the Department undertaking targeted consultation with relevant bodies or organisations using application forms. The RACGP strongly supports early and targeted stakeholder involvement in the MSAC process.

The RACGP notes that clearer information regarding the current review would assist stakeholders in understanding what the review entails in terms of scope, and what the next steps are.

For example, the RACGP is unable to determine from the currently available documentation whether the review is considering the composition and administrative processes of MSAC itself.

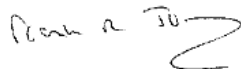
We believe that consideration regarding MSAC processes in relation to the committee should be included as part of the review, including:

- the composition of MSAC, and ensuring that the majority of committee members are in current clinical practice (including private practice)
- meeting frequency, as currently applications can be delayed by up to three months (depending on when they are submitted to MSAC) because MSAC only meets quarterly.

More broadly, with the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Review also taking place, it would be reassuring to understand if there is an intention to regularly review the functions and outcomes of the MSAC process to ensure that the strategies in place for adding MBS items remain current, efficient and appropriate.

I hope this feedback is of assistance. If you require more information, please contact me or Mr Roald Versteeg, Manager, Advocacy and Policy, on roald.versteeg@racgp.org.au or on (03) 8699 0408.

Yours sincerely



Dr Frank R Jones
President