

17 December 2019

Department of Health  
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By email: [MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au)

To whom it may concern

**Report from the Cleft Dental Services Working Group of the Medical Benefits Schedule Review Taskforce**

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) thanks the Department of Health for the opportunity to comment on the report from the Cleft Dental Services Working Group (the Working Group) of the Medical Benefits Schedule (MBS) Review Taskforce.

The RACGP supports the Working Group's recommendation that general practitioners (GPs) and registered dentists be able to refer patients for all oral and maxillofacial items (Group C2) within the MBS. As noted in the report, this recommendation will simplify the treatment pathway and ensure patients have access to appropriate clinical procedures.

As the first point of entry into the healthcare system, specialist general practitioners are responsible for assessing and managing the health needs of their patients, and facilitating their patients' access to other health professionals for assessment and care. This can often take the form of a referral to a non-GP medical specialist or consultant physician.<sup>1</sup>

The RACGP agrees with the Working Group's assertion that there are no clinical concerns associated with changing the referral pathways. Australians access general practice more than any other part of the health system.<sup>2</sup> Presently, patients must obtain a referral from an eligible orthodontist to access oral and maxillofacial services. However, the report notes that patients may not always need to see an orthodontist in the course of treatment covered by these items. Expanding referral options for oral and maxillofacial services will therefore improve patient access to appropriate care.

The RACGP looks forward to contributing to further discussions around changes to referrals for oral and maxillofacial services. Should you have any questions or comments regarding the RACGP's submission, please contact either myself or Ms Michelle Gonsalvez, National Manager, Policy and Advocacy, on (03) 8699 0490 or at [michelle.gonsalvez@racgp.org.au](mailto:michelle.gonsalvez@racgp.org.au)

Yours sincerely



**Dr Harry Nespolon**  
President

## References

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<sup>1</sup> The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. Referring to other medical specialists: A guide for ensuring good referral outcomes for your patients. East Melbourne, Vic: RACGP, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. General Practice: Health of the Nation 2019. East Melbourne, Vic: RACGP, 2019.