

21 January 2022

Professor Andrew Wilson  
Chair, Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee  
Department of Health, Canberra, ACT 2601

Via email: [CommentsPBAC@health.gov.au](mailto:CommentsPBAC@health.gov.au)

Dear Professor Wilson,

**Re: Public consultation on items to be considered by the PBAC (March 2022) – Semaglutide – Wegovy®: Obesity**

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the public consultation on items to be considered by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC). We offer the following comments regarding semaglutide for the treatment of obesity, which is being considered by PBAC at the March 2022 meeting.

The RACGP supports the inclusion of anti-obesity medications on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

Twenty-five percent of the Australian population are living with obesity<sup>1</sup>. Obesity is one of the main drivers of disease and disability in Australia, and there is widespread recognition more needs to be done to reduce this burden. Obesity related complications may include medical, psychological and social sequelae, and as a result, affect a person's ability to be employed and increase their personal healthcare costs, driving further disadvantage.

There are currently no anti-obesity medications available on the PBS, creating a significant financial and accessibility barrier to medical treatment for a quarter of the Australian population. To address removal of these barriers, it is important that any approved pharmaceutical treatment for obesity is affordable and accessible through a patient's general practitioner (GP).

The prevalence of serious obesity tends to be higher in areas where there is less access to specialist support, for geographic and financial reasons. Rates of serious obesity are higher in lower socioeconomic areas, along with regional and rural Australia (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities)<sup>1,2</sup>. Visiting their GP is the most accessible and affordable option for many of these patients.

General practice is the foundation of management of chronic diseases in the Australian community, and GPs need to be better supported to assist patients with obesity<sup>1</sup>. The inclusion of anti-obesity medications on the PBS, with access to prescribe, will provide the opportunity for GPs to do so.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide a submission. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Mr. Stephan Groombridge, National Manager, e-Health and Quality Care at [stephan.groombridge@racgp.org.au](mailto:stephan.groombridge@racgp.org.au) or 03 8399 0544.

Yours sincerely



Dr Karen Price  
President

## **References**

1. The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. Obesity prevention and management – position statement. East Melbourne, Vic: RACGP, 2019. Available at: <https://www.racgp.org.au/advocacy/position-statements/view-all-position-statements/clinical-and-practice-management/obesity-prevention-and-management> [Accessed 12 January 2022].
2. Australian Health and Welfare. Overweight and obesity: an interactive insight. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2020. Available from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/overweight-obesity/overweight-and-obesity-an-interactive-insight/contents/differences-between-groups> [accessed 12 January 2022].