



the peak body and leading voice  
for sonographers

## Media release

Wednesday 10 December 2014

### Diagnostic imaging services exempt from Medicare rebate cuts

The Australasian Sonographers Association (ASA) welcomes yesterday's announcement by the Prime Minister that his Government has decided to exclude diagnostic imaging services and pathology, and vulnerable patients accessing GP services from the new proposed Medicare rebate cuts.

Having dumped its original \$7 co-payment plan and announcing three new changes to Medicare, the Government's latest proposal reduces the Medicare rebate by \$5 for common GP consultations for adults who are non-concessional patients from 1 July 2015. Under the new Medicare co-payment plan, concession card holders, children under 16, pensioners, veterans and people in aged care and nursing homes would be exempt. Notably, there would be no changes to Medicare rebates and bulk billing incentives for diagnostic imaging and pathology.

In response to yesterday's announcement, the ASA CEO, Dr Stephen Duns, said, "the reduced financial burden on pregnant women and people requiring multiple episodes of care, such as cancer sufferers, is most welcome".

The ASA have always been strongly opposed to the Government's \$7 Medicare co-payment proposal, as it was developed without public or health professional consultation and would have had wide-ranging damaging consequences if implemented, especially on the poor, the elderly, the chronically ill and Indigenous Australians.

The ASA welcomes this news for diagnostic services, however we remain concerned about the impact of these changes on those Australians in lower income brackets who are ineligible for concessional status. It also appears the Government is seeking to make cuts to our medical system without due community and industry consultation.

Committed to ensuring all Australians have access to quality ultrasound services, and as the peak body for sonographers who provide quality diagnostic imaging services to the community, the ASA are always available to the Government for consultation, particularly regarding health policy. We strongly encourage the Government to consult with us and other healthcare professional bodies, such as the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists and the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association, when considering more egalitarian, innovative and proactive ways to save money within the health budget that directly impacts on the health profession and the broader community.

For more information, or to arrange an interview with Dr Stephen Duns, CEO, please contact Stuart Giles, Head of Marketing & Business Development, on 03 9552 0011.

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#### About the ASA

The ASA is the peak body and leading voice for sonographers with over 4,100 members. The ASA guides the advancement of our profession to ensure the community has access to quality sonographic services.