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AMA submission to the Department of Health on the MBS Heart Health Assessment Items

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Responses to survey questions:

The AMA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Department's review of the MBS Heart Health Assessment Items.

In preparing this response the AMA has sought feedback from members of the AMA Council of General Practice (AMACGP). There was significant feedback from these members, with no-one who responded having used these items in the care of their patients. They utilise general GP MBS attendance items or other Health Assessment items.

This suggests that the Heart Health Assessment items are poorly designed and of little practical use in the care of patients.

While the AMA welcomed the additional funding investment in general practice at the time that the commitment to these items was announced, it had not been previously consulted on this initiative. Had the AMA been asked, the Association would not have recommended the introduction of disease specific items to improve care for patients with cardiovascular disease (CVD). Instead, the AMA would have encouraged greater support for longer consultations.

Items for disease specific assessments do not align with the provision of comprehensive GP care. GPs consider the whole person and GP MBS attendance items should encourage this by supporting GPs to spend more time with patients, including for those with CVD. Taking a family history, identifying relevant investigations, assessing lifestyle risk factors, and discussing these with patients takes time, whereas the current structure of GP MBS attendance items is weighted towards shorter consultations. The introduction of these health assessment items has not addressed this fundamental weakness in the current structure of GP attendance items.

It is important that we continue to improve care for patients with CVD, recognising that for many of these patients it is likely that they will suffer from other chronic diseases as well. This requires a holistic approach for which disease specific items are not well suited. The AMA believes that it would be preferable for the funding that has been set aside for MBS Heart Health Assessments to be redirected to a longer consultation item(s) such as the extended level B item that has been

previously proposed by the AMA. Critically, the funding set aside for these items must be retained to support patients to access GP care, including access to preventive health care.

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