

Wednesday, 31 May 2023

Senate inquiry supports AMA calls on reproductive health care

The Australian Medical Association today welcomed recommendations from a senate inquiry for an increase to MBS rebates for reproductive health care and improved access to a wider range of contraception.

AMA President Professor Steve Robson said the limited MBS items available were rarely appropriate to cover the cost of providing services, resulting in reduced access or out of pocket costs for providing reproductive care.

“New and more appropriate MBS items will greatly improve access to reproductive healthcare for women across Australia,” Professor Robson said.

The AMA’s submission also called for improved access to a wider range of safe and affordable methods of contraception, working through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and the Therapeutic Goods Administration processes, something the inquiry included in its recommendations.

“At the moment only selected basic oral contraceptives are available through the PBS. We know that GPs regularly see patients who are better suited to a non-PBS subsidised option, however this can be quite expensive, which means some people can’t afford them.”

While the AMA supports recommendations to make contraception health care services more affordable, including by having adequate funding through Medicare, Professor Robson warned that efforts to expand prescribing rights must not undermine patient safety or fragment care.

Professor Robson said the AMA also strongly believed that women and other pregnant people should not have to travel long distances to receive maternity care or abortions.

“As such, we welcome the committee’s recommendation that all Australian governments should ensure these services are available and accessible for all who need them, especially in non-metropolitan public hospitals.

“We know there are issues with access to services, particularly in regional areas. It’s incumbent on governments to ensure women across the country can access the services they need.”

Professor Robson said while there was much to welcome in the report, the AMA was disappointed there were no recommendations on making pregnancy cover more accessible through private health insurance policies.

“At the moment, pregnancy care remains at the top level of cover, making private maternity care unaffordable and inaccessible for many Australian women and other pregnant people.”

[Read the inquiry report: Ending the postcode lottery: addressing barriers to sexual, maternity and reproductive healthcare in Australia](#)

[Read the AMA’s submission to the inquiry](#)

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