



OFFICE OF THE HON MATT KEOGH MP
MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS
MINISTER FOR DEFENCE PERSONNEL

MC23-002712

Dr Maria Boulton, President
Dr Brett Dale, Chief Executive Officer
Australian Medical Association Queensland
88 L'Estrange Terrace
KELVIN GROVE QLD 4059

Dear Dr Boulton and Dr Dale

Thank you for your correspondence of 19 June 2023 to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Matt Keogh MP, regarding the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Fee Schedules for Medical Services. The Minister has asked me to reply on his behalf.

I would firstly like to acknowledge the contribution of the many medical practitioners across Queensland and around Australia who deliver treatment to the veteran community.

As you may be aware, DVA fee schedule arrangements are designed to facilitate funding of health care services, including general practitioner (GP) and medical specialist services, through a nationally consistent framework to meet the needs of DVA clients across the country. DVA arrangements operate as a full fee-for-service model under which providers who choose to treat DVA clients cannot charge an out-of-pocket cost.

I am pleased to advise that as part of the 2023-24 Budget, the Australian Government is investing \$33.3 million over four years to triple the Veterans' Access Payment from 1 November 2023. This investment seeks to encourage more GPs to treat the more than 276,000 veterans and eligible dependents who hold Veteran White or Gold Cards. The tripled Veterans' Access Payment will apply to general face-to-face and telehealth GP consultations, including home visits for people who are homebound, and consultations in residential aged care facilities.

On today's rates, this will see the total payment for a GP consultation of up to 20 minutes (Level B) plus the Veterans' Access Payment, go from \$55.45 to \$71.55 in metropolitan areas and from \$62.85 to \$93.75 in the most remote areas of Australia.

As part of the 2023-24 Budget changes have also been made to indexation framework for various programs, including DVA health programs, to better align with wages and prices movements. On 1 July 2023, DVA fees for medical practitioners were indexed by 3.6 per cent with another one-off fee indexation of 0.5 per cent due on 1 November 2023.

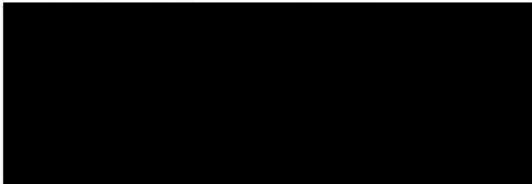
DVA monitors access to services and how this might be impacted by a range of factors, including the level of fees. I am reassured by the fact that more than 35,000 GPs and almost 40,000 medical specialists have provided treatment to over 170,000 DVA clients across Australia over the last financial year.

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that DVA health care cardholders continue to have access to clinically required health care services now and in the future. While the Government may consider changes to DVA funding arrangements for general practice and medical specialist services in the future, any changes to these arrangements require consideration through the Budget process in the context of the Government's broader fiscal priorities.

Further, the Australian Government is also committed to improving primary health care for all Australians. The Strengthening Medicare Taskforce report was released in February 2023. The Australian Government has committed \$750 million to deliver the highest priority investments in primary care, in line with the recommendations of the Strengthening Medicare Taskforce. The benefit of these investments will also impact veterans and families.

Thank you for taking the time to write to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs. I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



Catherine Bergin
Chief of Staff

3 October 2023