



Australian Government
Department of Health

MBS Review

Update, December 2019

Happy Holidays from the Medicare Reviews Unit

This week's [Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook \(MYEFO\) 2019-20](#) continued a busy year for the MBS Review Taskforce.

As part of MYEFO, the Government announced changes to blood products, general surgery and chemotherapy MBS items. These changes follow the Government's acceptance of the MBS Review Taskforce's recommendations in these areas. More information on the upcoming changes can be found on the [Department's website](#).

Consultation on six draft reports closes today, Friday, 20th of December. Submissions for Paediatric Surgery, Cleft Dental, Otolaryngology, Consumer Panel, Ophthalmology and Psychiatry can be emailed to MBSReviews@health.gov.au.

Consultation on the draft Wound Management report closes on 12 February 2020, and submissions can also be emailed to MBSReviews@health.gov.au.

Implementation work has progressed, and will continue into 2020. As some areas have already experienced, implementation is a complex and resource intensive process, involving numerous stakeholders including patient representatives, providers, private health insurers, and private hospitals.

To assist in this work, we expect at least one Implementation Liaison Group (ILG) will be created for each Clinical Committee's Government endorsed recommendations. ILGs will usually be established after Government acceptance of recommendations. There are already a number of ILGs in place, including for Anaesthesia and Cardiac Services.

ILG's:

- support the effective implementation of changes to Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) items
- provide specific input to the drafting of item descriptors to support these recommendations
- assist in the development of communication and education material
- provide advice on potential unintended consequences
- do not have the authority to reconsider decisions and recommendations made by the Government or the Taskforce.

The workload of ILGs will vary according to the scope and complexity of the changes in particular clinical areas. They will generally be conducted via teleconference, though some face-to-face meetings may be required.

The Department of Health shutdown period commences 3 pm 24 December, 2019, with staff returning Thursday 2 January, 2020.

Message from the Chair

I would like to thank all who have contributed to the work of the Taskforce since commencement of the Review, and particularly over the last year.

Over the course of the year, the work of the MBS Review has achieved some significant milestones and contributed to quality patient care and access:

- In May 2019, the Taskforce concluded our “first-pass” review of the more than 5,700 items across the MBS. This has been a mammoth undertaking, and more than 700 clinicians, consumers and health system experts have contributed to this achievement. This has been important work to modernise the MBS, and has already begun to deliver improvements in patient care.
- A number of key draft reports were released for consultation across a range of areas. This has included specialist and consultant physician services, optometry and pain management as well as a range of reports across primary care. In late 2019, the Taskforce released a number of further reports for consultation, including psychiatry, the consumer panel report, cleft dental and wound management. Seven reports are currently open for consultation.
- In November, a number of significant changes to the MBS were implemented following the work of the Taskforce. Notably this includes the introduction of 64 new items to support Australians with complex eating disorders, as well as improvements in areas including colonoscopy and anaesthetics.

In 2020, there remains some significant work to finalise, including:

- The six draft reports relating to primary care. These reports have led to a number of robust discussions amongst the Taskforce, including our most recent meeting on December 11 and 12. While I understand many are eagerly awaiting the outcomes, it is important that we provide the strongest, evidence-based advice to Government – and for this reason, we will finalise our advice across all 89 recommendations in the new year.
- In addition to the above reports, I would expect we will also finalise our recommendations on Wound Management once the consultation period has closed and we have considered the feedback from this process. Wound care is a significant issue in this country, and the Taskforce has an opportunity to propose solutions and ways to better support integrated care that improves outcomes for patients and the system.
- The Taskforce remains on track to finalise all of its reports to Government by the middle of 2020.

Earlier this month, I travelled to Tasmania for a series of small group discussions with general practitioners, consultant physicians, specialists and allied health professionals. I provided an update on the MBS Review and recent changes to the MBS. Attendees raised a range of local issues, which I conveyed to the MBS Review Taskforce at last week's meeting.

This meeting follows similar successful meetings in Western Australia earlier in the year, organised by the AMA WA. I believe these opportunities to present and communicate the work of the Taskforce is valuable, and I am keen to continue to support our communication work into 2020.

I hope you all enjoy the break and wish you well for 2020.



Kellie Brett (Departmental Officer),
Professor Bruce Robinson (Taskforce Chair),
Lara Giddings (CEO AMA Tasmania)
Taken at AMA House



Professor Robinson presenting at the GP
Breakfast in Hobart, December 2019

The Medicare Reviews Unit has provided this newsletter to keep stakeholders informed of the progress of the MBS Review. It is distributed every two months.

Please share with any colleagues who may be interested in the progress of the MBS Review. To subscribe please email MBSReviews@health.gov.au.

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