



The Hon. Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health

MEDIA RELEASE

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National strategy to tackle specialist out of pocket costs

The Liberal National Government will launch a national strategy to tackle excessive out of pocket costs charged by medical specialists including by developing a website to provide Australians with transparency and an education campaign to inform patient about the costs of specialist services.

The vast majority of doctors do the right thing and disclose the costs of treatment and charges appropriately to their patients.

However, the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Out of Pocket Costs report, released today, has found a minority of medical specialists charge very large or unexpected out of pocket costs.

This practice can cause enormous distress and financial hardship for patients and their families. It also undermines Australia's private health insurance system.

Our Government will fund the development of a national searchable website to provide the public with greater access to information about the costs of specialist services.

Specialists will initially be expected to show their fees as agreed with the medical profession on the website to enable patients and GPs to consider costs when determining their choice of specialists.

In many cases, patients may feel committed to a particular specialist after the first consultations. I am confident this website will improve transparency and choice for patients and families.

It will reduce the burden of 'bill shock' and allow patients to make informed choices.

The Government has the support of leaders in the medical profession to deliver this website.

We will collaborate with clinicians and consumers to get the fee website right, with an initial focus on fees for gynaecology, obstetrics and cancer services. Major concerns have been raised about out of pocket costs in these areas.

Our Government will also make available existing de-identified data showing the range of fees and related out of pocket costs charged by specialists for the same treatments. The data will be aggregated to show the range of the costs charged within a geographic area.

We will also fund an education initiative to increase the understanding of medical out of pocket costs among consumers, their families and GPs.

Authorised by Greg Hunt MP, Liberal Party of Australia, Somerville, Victoria.

The education initiative will also focus on specialists, including outlining the impact of egregious charging and the current material differences in charging practices.

It will also highlight that higher fees do not always mean a higher quality of care.

These important measures will support patients and their families to make more informed decisions about their health care.

I want to thank the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Out of Pocket Costs for its report.

The committee was chaired by the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer, Professor Brendan Murphy, and made up of representatives from the AMA, medical colleges, insurers, hospitals and consumers.

The full report by the committee is available at: www.health.gov.au/out-of-pockets-report

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