



**THE HON TONY ABBOTT MP**  
**MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGEING**  
**Leader of the House of Representatives**

Dear Doctor,

I am pleased to inform you that during the recent election campaign the Australian Government made a number of commitments under *Strengthening Medicare* that are likely to benefit your medical practice.

They come into effect on 1 January 2005 and include:

- **100% Medicare rebate for GP services.**
- **Round-the-Clock Medicare: higher Medicare rebates for after-hours GP services.**
- **New Medicare item for Pap smears provided by practice nurses on behalf of medical practitioners in rural areas – Item 10998.**
- **Access to the higher (\$7.65) bulk billing incentive for medical practitioners providing after-hours services in eligible areas - Item 10992.**

Fact sheets explaining these measures are enclosed.

Further information on Medicare claiming and payment related to these initiatives is available from the Health Insurance Commission (HIC) on 132 150, or go to [www.hic.gov.au/medicareinitiatives](http://www.hic.gov.au/medicareinitiatives).

For general policy information, please contact the Department of Health and Ageing on 1800 011 163 or go to [www.health.gov.au/medicare](http://www.health.gov.au/medicare).

### **Other Initiatives**

#### **After Hours Other Medical Practitioners (OMPs) Program**

An additional initiative under Round-the-Clock Medicare affecting non-vocationally recognised medical practitioners will begin on 1 January 2005. The new **After Hours Other Medical Practitioners (OMPs) Program** provides access to the higher A1 Medicare rebate for after-hours general practice services provided through accredited general practices and accredited Medical Deputising Services (MDS) by non-vocationally recognised medical practitioners.

An application form and program guidelines may be found at the HIC website at [www.hic.gov.au/medicareinitiatives](http://www.hic.gov.au/medicareinitiatives)

For further information about this program, please contact the GP Helpline on 1800 667 677.

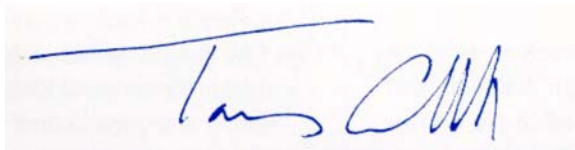
**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Adult Health Check (Medicare Item 710)**

A new Medicare item was made available earlier this year to enable GPs to undertake a health check every two years for adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The aim of the health check service is to ensure diagnosis and early intervention for treatable conditions to improve the overall health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

While the adult health check was introduced prior to the election campaign, it is an important initiative for Indigenous health. Information about the service is provided in the enclosed fact sheet.

For more information about the adult health check, go to [www.health.gov.au/epc/atsiinfo.htm](http://www.health.gov.au/epc/atsiinfo.htm).

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tony Abbott', is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

TONY ABBOTT