



Incentive payments to GPs who bulk bill concessional patients and children aged under 16 years

Overview

The Australian Government is providing additional incentive payments through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) for medical practitioners to bulk bill Commonwealth concession card holders and children aged under 16 years.

The bulk billing incentive payments are targeted at general practitioners (GPs).

All GPs, including vocationally and non-vocationally registered GPs, are eligible to claim the incentive payments. GPs working in Aboriginal Medical Services are also eligible to claim the incentive payments where the Service is eligible to receive Medicare benefits.

Medical practitioners such as consultant physicians and specialists who provide services to referred patients are not eligible to claim the incentive payments in respect of those services.

There are two levels of incentive payment, depending on the location of the practice:

- \$7.85 – applies to bulk billed services provided from a practice location in a regional, rural or remote area, Tasmania, or an eligible metropolitan area (see below).
- \$5.15 – applies to bulk billed services provided from a practice location elsewhere in Australia.

The incentive payments were \$7.50 and \$5.00 respectively when they were introduced in 2004. These amounts have increased following annual indexation of MBS fees.

For the purposes of the \$7.85 incentive payment, “regional, rural or remote area” means an area classified as RRMA 3-7 under the Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas classification system.

“Eligible metropolitan area” means a qualifying Statistical Sub-Division (SSD) or the Statistical Local Area (SLA) covering Palm Island Queensland. There is a list of eligible metropolitan areas over the page.

More detailed information about which metropolitan areas are eligible for the \$7.85 incentive payment is available from the Department of Health and Ageing website www.health.gov.au/medicare/index.htm or by calling Medicare Australia on 132 150.

MBS bulk billing incentive items

Where a medical practitioner provides a bulk billed service to an eligible patient, the medical practitioner needs to claim a separate MBS item (a bulk billing incentive item) in addition to the relevant MBS item for the professional service provided to the patient.

There are seven bulk billing incentive items – see table below. However, for the majority of services, medical practitioners will only need to use item 10990 or item 10991 to claim the additional incentive payment.

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MBS item	Incentive	To be claimed in conjunction with services	
10990	\$5.15	Medical services (eg attendance items, after-hours attendances items, practice nurse items)	Unreferred services in the General Medical Services Table of the MBS *
64990	\$5.15	Diagnostic imaging services	Unreferred services in the Diagnostic Imaging Services Table of the MBS *
74990	\$5.15	Pathology services	Unreferred services in the Pathology Services Table of the MBS *
10991	\$7.85	Medical services (eg attendance items, after-hours attendances items, practice nurse items)	Unreferred services in the General Medical Services Table of the MBS *
64991	\$7.85	Diagnostic imaging services	Unreferred services in the Diagnostic Imaging Services Table of the MBS *
74991	\$7.85	Pathology services	Unreferred services in the Pathology Services Table of the MBS *
10992	\$7.85	Out-of-surgery after-hours attendance items	1, 97, 601, 697, 5003, 5007, 5010, 5023, 5026, 5028, 5043, 5046, 5049, 5063, 5064, 5067, 5220, 5223, 5227, 5228, 5240, 5243, 5247, 5248, 5260, 5263, 5265, 5267

* Except where the patient has been admitted to a hospital or day-hospital facility

Conditions for claiming the bulk billing incentives

The conditions for claiming a bulk billing incentive are summarised below. **Medical practitioners should refer to the item descriptions and explanatory notes in the November 2005 Medicare Benefits Schedule Book for more detailed information about how these items operate – see below.**

\$5.15 bulk billing incentive items (10990, 64990 and 74990)

MBS items 10990, 64900 or 74990 can only be claimed where all of the following conditions have been met:

- The service is an unreferred service (ie not referred by another practitioner);
- The service is provided to a Commonwealth concession card holder or child under 16 years of age;

- The service is not provided to a person who is an admitted patient of a hospital or day-hospital facility; AND
- Both the service and the additional bulk billing incentive item are bulk billed.

\$7.85 bulk billing incentive items (10991, 64991 and 74991)

MBS items 10991, 64991 and 74991 can only be claimed where:

- All of the above conditions applying to items 10990, 64990 and 74990 are met; AND
- The service is provided from a practice location in a regional, rural or remote area (ie an area classified as RRMA 3-7), Tasmania, or in an **eligible metropolitan area**.

Eligible Metropolitan Areas

From 1 September 2004, eligibility for the \$7.50 (now \$7.85) incentive was extended to eligible metropolitan areas where there were shortages of GPs and where bulk billing rates were below the national average.

There are 29 eligible metropolitan areas comprising 28 qualifying Statistical Sub-Divisions (SSDs) and the Statistical Local Area (SLA) covering Palm Island in Queensland.

SSDs and SLAs are standard geographical units of classification produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The following SSDs qualify for the \$7.85 bulk billing incentive payment.

- Beaudesert Shire Part A, QLD
- Belconnen, ACT
- Darwin City, NT
- East Metropolitan (Perth), WA
- Eastern Outer Melbourne, VIC
- Frankston City, VIC
- Gosford-Wyong, NSW
- Greater Geelong City Part A, VIC
- Gungahlin-Hall, ACT
- Ipswich City, QLD (Part in BSD)
- Litchfield Shire, NT
- Melton-Wyndham, VIC
- Mornington Peninsula Shire, VIC
- Newcastle, NSW
- North Canberra, ACT
- Palmerston-East Arm, NT
- Pine Rivers Shire, QLD
- Queanbeyan, NSW
- South Canberra, ACT
- South Eastern Outer Melbourne, VIC
- South West Metropolitan (Perth), WA
- Southern Adelaide, SA
- Thuringowa City Part A, QLD

- Townsville City Part A, QLD
- Tuggeranong, ACT
- Weston Creek-Stromlo, ACT
- Woden Valley, ACT
- Yarra Ranges Shire Part A, VIC

The Palm Island (AC) SLA in Queensland is also a qualifying area for the \$7.85 bulk billing incentive.

\$7.85 bulk billing incentive item (10992)

MBS item 10992 commenced on 1 January 2005. This item is intended to allow medical practitioners providing out-of-surgery after-hours attendances (eg Medical Deputising Services and members of GP after-hours co-operatives) to claim the \$7.85 bulk billing incentive in certain circumstances, even though the medical practitioner's practice location is not based in an area covered by the higher incentive.

Item 10992 operates in a similar manner to item 10991, but the service attracting the bulk billing incentive must be an out-of-surgery attendance in an area eligible for the \$7.85 bulk billing incentive.

There is a separate fact sheet explaining item 10992 on the Department of Health and Ageing website at www.health.gov.au/medicare/index.htm and the Medicare Australia website at www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/medicareinitiatives

Commonwealth concession cards

Commonwealth concession card holder means a person listed on a Pensioner Concession Card, Health Care Card or Commonwealth Seniors Health Card issued by either Centrelink or the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Gold or White Cards issued by the Department of Veterans' Affairs do not attract the Medicare bulk billing incentive payment. However, if a Gold or White Card holder also holds a recognised Commonwealth concession card and chooses to be treated under the Medicare arrangements, the service provided to that patient is eligible to attract a Medicare bulk billing incentive payment.

To claim the additional incentive payment, the medical practitioner (or the practice staff on behalf of the medical practitioner) must be satisfied that the patient is within one of the eligible groups. The medical practitioner or the practice staff may need to ask the patient to show some evidence of their concessional status, eg a concession card.

Medicare Australia undertakes post payment auditing to ensure that the bulk billing incentive payment is being claimed correctly. Centrelink data is used to verify concessional status and Medicare records are used to confirm patient age.

Medicare Australia may contact medical practitioners where there appear to be significant anomalies or problems in the claims being made.

Further information

For information about the bulk billing incentive items, please refer to the Medicare Benefits Schedule Book of 1 November 2005 – available at www.health.gov.au/pubs/mbs/index.htm

If you have questions about claiming the bulk billing incentive items, please call Medicare Australia on **132 150**.