



# Australian Health Care Reform Alliance

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **7 BETTER WAYS TO SPEND THE \$7 BILLION PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE REBATE**

The Australian Healthcare Reform Alliance today called on the Government to re-direct funding from the inefficient and inequitable private health insurance (PHI) rebate to increase access to medical specialists in the public system and to improve fee transparency in the private sector.

AHCRA is a coalition of peak health organisations working together to create a better and fairer health system for Australia's future.

"Medical specialist services are a vital part of health care but currently many Australians experience barriers to accessing specialists due to cost, geography and a lack of understanding of their rights," AHCRA Chair Jennifer Doggett said today.

"Rather than continuing to pour money into the wasteful and poorly targeted private health insurance rebate, AHCRA supports using the funding to increase access to specialists, support informed consumer choice and increase the efficient use of health care resources.

"This proposal has three components:

- 2000 more salaried specialists in the public hospital system in areas of need
- A public database of specialist fees
- A consumer campaign to increase health literacy on medical specialist issues

"Increasing numbers of salaried specialists is vital to increase equity within the system and ensure that currently under-served areas are targeted. Simply putting more money into the private, fee-for-service system will only increase the numbers in the areas already well supplied and will not address the needs of the most disadvantaged Australians.

"AHCRA is proposing that funding for additional specialists be provided to State Governments to target key areas of geographical and specialty shortage.

"AHCRA is also proposing that medical specialists be required to list their fees publicly to ensure patients are able to make more informed choices about their care. The recent research showing the large variation in specialist fees and the lack of any link between cost and quality of care, highlights the need for a more transparent system.

"We are proposing that an independent body, such as a peak consumer organisation, collect and publish the data, as this would have more credibility than a government website. This could be accessed by consumers to help find a specialist that best meet their needs.

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“Finally, we are also calling for a consumer education campaign to publicise the database and ensure consumers are aware of their right to shop around for specialist services and their entitlement to informed financial consent for all treatment.

“These three initiatives could all be funded by re-directing around \$2 billion of the \$7 billion currently being used to fund private health insurance rebates. AHCRA calls on the Government to use the upcoming Budget to increase access to specialist services and support consumers to make informed choices about their care,” Ms Doggett said.

**For further information or comment:**

AHCRA Chair, Jennifer Doggett, 0403 325 980

*This proposal forms part of AHCRA’s ‘7 better ways to spend \$7 billion’ campaign. The aim of this campaign is to highlight the benefits of redirecting funding from the private health insurance rebate to areas of greater need in the health system. #7billionhealthbucks [www.healthreform.org.au](http://www.healthreform.org.au)*