



The Hon Chris Bowen MP
Minister for Human Services
Minister for Financial Services, Superannuation and Corporate Law

C09/3204

Ms Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Irwin *Julia*

Thank you for your letter of 8 May 2009 to Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig regarding a petition received by the Committee requesting a Medicare office be established in Mirrabooka, Western Australia. As the new Minister for Human Services, I am pleased to respond to your query.

Currently, there are five Medicare offices located within 15 kilometres driving distance from Mirrabooka:

- Shop 177, Centro Galleria Shopping Centre, Collier Rd, Morley;
- Shop 152, Karrinyup Shopping Centre, Karrinyup Rd, Karrinyup;
- The Terrace, 81 St Georges Terrace, Perth;
- Shop 1, Subiaco Village, 531 Hay St, Subiaco; and
- Shop 44, Whitfords City Shopping Centre, Whitfords Avenue, Hillarys.

A range of criteria is applied when conducting analysis to establish a new Medicare office. This criteria includes, but is not limited to, claiming patterns or volumes of claims. Other important factors include the population and demographics of the area, the availability of surrounding Medicare offices, the level of bulk billing, establishment costs and the suitability of a site.

Bearing in mind these factors, Medicare Australia has no plans to establish a Medicare office in Mirrabooka at this time.

However the Government is committed to ensuring that all Australians have ready access to Medicare services. Medicare Australia has developed a range of alternative ways of accessing its services with the aim of providing a more convenient service for the public.

Electronic Claiming

Traditionally, Medicare benefits have been limited to either cash or cheque payments. There has been a significant increase in the service delivery options available to the Australian community through electronic business channels since the inception of the Medicare program. As a result, Medicare Australia has introduced electronic Medicare claiming.

Members of the public can now claim their Medicare rebate when they pay their account at the doctor. The claimant submits their claim electronically and the rebate is paid into their nominated bank account. The take-up of electronic Medicare claiming continues to increase. For the month of May 2009, 88.6 per cent of bulk bill and 18.48 per cent of patient claims were transmitted electronically.

Medicare Australia encourages members of the public to consider electronic payment due to the convenience it offers through the choice of claiming options.

Access Points

Medicare Australia Access Points also allow members of the public to pick up a handset and be connected directly to a service operator who will guide them through the claiming process step by step. If paid accounts are lodged at these facilities and the claimant provides the operator with the BSB and account number of their chosen bank account the refund will be deposited into their bank account within two days. Where an account is unpaid, a cheque made payable to the doctor will be forwarded to the claimant.

Medicare Australia Access Points can also assist with enquires about lost Medicare cards, change of addresses and other information on services such as the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, Australian Organ Donor Register and the Medicare Safety Net.

There are two Medicare Australia Access points located in Mirrabooka:

- Savings Plus Chemist, Shop 100 Mirrabooka Square, Yirragan Drive
- Pharmacy Help Mirrabooka, 22 Chesterfield Avenue.

Online Services

Mirrabooka residents can also access Medicare services online. Medicare Australia's Online Services enable individuals to check and update their details; view their Medicare safety net balance and Medicare tax statement; view their Medicare claims history; or request a replacement or duplicate Medicare card. Full details about registering for online services can be found at Medicare Australia's website at www.medicareaustralia.gov.au.

Alternatively, it is also possible to claim the Medicare rebate over the telephone by calling 1300 360 460 for the cost of a local call.

Once again, thank you for writing. I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours ~~sincerely~~

CHRIS BOWEN
12 AUG 2009