

SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON MEDICARE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

On 15 May 2003 the Senate agreed that a Select Committee, to be known as the Select Committee on Medicare, be appointed to inquire into and report by 30 October, 2003 on the following matters:

The access to and affordability of general practice under Medicare, with particular regard to:

- (a) the impact of the current rate of the Medicare Benefits Schedule and Practice Incentive Payments on practitioner incomes and the viability of bulk-billing practices;
- (b) the impact of general practitioner shortages on patients' ability to access appropriate care in a timely manner,
- (c) the likely impact on access, affordability and quality services for individuals, in the short- and longer-term, of the following Government-announced proposals:
 - (i) incentives for free care from general practitioners limited to health care card holders or those beneath an income threshold,
 - (ii) a change to bulk-billing arrangements to allow patient co-payment at point of services co-incident with direct rebate reimbursement,
 - (iii) a new safety net for concession cardholders only and its interaction with existing safety nets, and
 - (iv) private health insurance for out-of-hospital out-of-pocket medical expenses; and
- (d) alternatives in the Australian context that could improve the Medicare principles of access and affordability, within an economically sustainable system of primary care, in particular:
 - (i) whether the extension of federal funding to allied and dental health services could provide a more cost-effective health care system,
 - (ii) the implications of reallocating expenditure from changes to the private health insurance rebate, and
 - (iii) alternative remuneration models that would satisfy medical practitioners but would not compromise the principle of universality which underlies Medicare.

Written submissions are invited and should be addressed to:

**The Secretary
Select Committee on Medicare
Suite S1 30
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600**

Closing date for the receipt of submissions is 18 June 2003.

The Committee prefers to receive submissions electronically as an attached document - email: medicare.sen@aph.gov.au

Submissions become Committee documents and are made public only after a decision by the Committee. Persons making submissions must not release them without the approval of the Committee. Submissions are covered by parliamentary privilege but the unauthorised release of them is not.

Following consideration of submissions, the Committee will hold public hearings. The Committee will consider all submissions and may invite individuals and organisations to give evidence at the public hearings.

Information relating to Senate Committee inquiries, including notes to assist in the preparation of submissions for a Committee, can be located on the internet at http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/wit_sub/index.htm

For further details contact the Committee Secretary, Phone: (02) 6277 3527,
Fax: (02) 6277 3830.
E-mail: medicare.sen@aph.gov.au