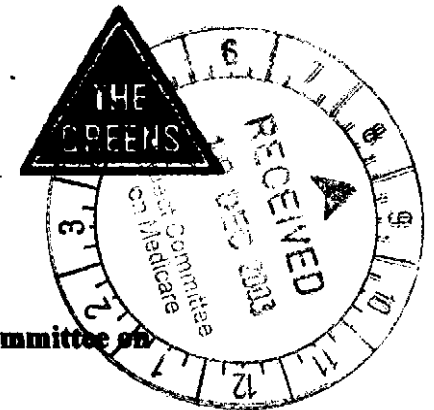


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# MACARTHUR GREENS

7 Rudd St, Narellan 2567



## Submission from the Macarthur Greens to The Senate Select Committee on Medicare

18.12.03

The Macarthur Greens write to register opposition to the Howard Government's proposed changes to Medicare as we believe they threaten the universality of our national health insurance scheme.

All Australians fund Medicare through their income taxes and Medicare Levy. In return, all Australians have a right to quality, affordable health care based on need rather than capacity to pay at the time they require care.

We note that the government is proposing no provision for a financial incentive for GPs to bulk-bill everyone. The \$5 increase in patient rebate per consultation is offered to GPs who bulk-bill only concession card holders and children under 16 years. This is likely to herald a **three-tiered health system for three categories of people:**

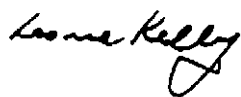
- Those who are **poor and needy**, who will be bulk-billed and who are likely to be granted shorter consultation times and, hence, inferior quality of service;
- The **unacknowledged poor**, who will be forced to avoid/restrict GP consultations until symptoms become acute and/or chronic and thus more expensive to alleviate. These people are also likely to add to the pressure for service on public hospitals as they seek treatment which will not incur a charge;
- Those who **can afford to pay** for health care and who will therefore be most likely to receive high quality care expeditiously. These people can expect to pay a private fee (co-payment) to see a GP, but can take out private insurance against out-of-pocket expenses above \$1 000 per year.

**Private insurance** is already subsidised by \$2.3 billion per year out of public funds and this will increase if the Medicare Plus package is passed. We submit that this money would be more equitably and efficiently spent if it were used to extend Medicare. Hence, we recommend abolition of the Private Health Insurance rebate to provide funding for an increased Medicare rebate for all GP consultations, for incentive payments for doctors who bulk-bill patients and for funding of dental services and additional mental health services to those currently available.

The Macarthur Greens submit that the most equitable health system is one funded through progressive taxation that provides timely, quality care without discriminating between patients at the time of service. Universal bulk-billing is the only system that

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guarantees that no one is prevented, by upfront costs, from consulting her/his doctor at the time of need.



Leonie Kelly  
Convenor