

CONSULTATION RESPONSE



**Allied Health
Professions
Australia**

Response to Nurse Practitioner Reference Group Recommendations

Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) welcomes the release of the Nurse Practitioner (NP) Reference Group Report and particularly its recommendations regarding items which impact on the services provided by allied health professionals as part of the wider Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Review. AHPA recognises the important role of nurse practitioners in providing direct care as well as in facilitating access to other care services. Allied health professionals work closely with their nurse practitioners and the recommendations in this report have the capacity to strengthen that relationship and outcomes for consumers.

The AHPA response provides comment on a number of recommendations relevant to that interaction between allied health professionals and nurse practitioners. Our response also includes comment on recommendations which give weight to similar recommendations in the review of allied health items. While we recognise that the other recommendations are also likely to have merit, AHPA is not in a position to make comment on those recommendations as we consider those outside our area of expertise.

Responses to the individual recommendations

The AHPA response provides detailed feedback on the following recommendations:

1. Recommendation 1 – Enable patients to access MBS rebates for long-term and primary care management provided by NPs
2. Recommendation 5 - Longer NP attendances to support the delivery of complex and comprehensive care
3. Recommendation 7 – Enable patients to access MBS rebates for NP care received outside of a clinic setting
4. Recommendation 14 - Allow telehealth consultations to take place via telephone where clinically appropriate.
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Recommendation 1 – Enable patients to access MBS rebates for long-term and primary care management provided by NPs

AHPA supports the recommendation to enable patients to access MBS rebates for long-term and primary care management delivered by nurse practitioners. Our support acknowledges the direct role of nurse practitioners as well as the opportunity that is created for nurse practitioners to refer directly to allied health professionals under Chronic Disease Management items. This is particularly important in areas where access to a GP is limited as is often the case in more rural and remote locations and goes to the most effective utilization of the available workforce to achieve the best outcomes for patients and reduce delays and costs in the system.

Recommendation 5 - Longer NP attendances to support the delivery of complex and comprehensive care

This recommendation is aligned with *Recommendation 1: Encourage comprehensive initial assessments by allied health professionals* of the Allied Health Reference Group, which supports an evidence-based approach to care requiring more than 20 minutes for effective initial consultations. AHPA supports the same principle for NPs.

Recommendation 7 – Enable patients to access MBS rebates for NP care received outside of a clinic setting

AHPA supports this recommendation as being appropriate for a range of health professionals. In a modern health system in a large country, non-traditional settings for care delivery are becoming more common and the MBS needs to recognize and support this for NPs and allied health professionals.

Recommendation 8 – Remove the mandated requirement for NPs to form collaborative arrangements

AHPA agrees that the present requirement appears to impose artificial barriers to care and may impact on timely access for patients. NP, like allied health professionals, are autonomous professionals who should be permitted to work to their full scope of practice and exercise appropriate clinical judgement on how and where to seek support and make referrals.

Recommendation 14 - Allow telehealth consultations to take place via telephone where clinically appropriate.

AHPA supports this recommendation, noting that a broad range of clinical committees and reference groups have made recommendations related to telehealth access and the guidelines for delivery. AHPA recommends that a schedule-wide approach is considered in terms of access to telehealth and the constraints on delivery to ensure greater consistency for consumers and providers.

About Allied Health Professions Australia

AHPA is the national peak body representing Australia's allied health professions. We have 20 individual member associations, and a further five affiliate members who represent allied health professions or professions closely aligned with the allied health sector. The AHPA membership represents some 120,000 allied health professionals working across a wide range of settings and sectors.

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