

MEDIA RELEASE

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Pathology sector seeks investment to keep pathology bulk billed

- **70 percent of all medical decisions rely on pathology**
- **The sector has faced a 24-year indexation freeze - making it unique in the health care sector**
- **A \$630 million investment is needed over four years to keep pathology bulk billed.**

The Federal Government is being urged to maintain Australia's high rates of bulk billing for pathology by ending an unprecedented 24-year freeze on indexation rates applying to pathology services.

In its Pre-Budget Submission, Australian Pathology - the peak national body representing Australia's private pathology providers - is seeking a \$630 million investment over four years to reinstate indexation for pathology services provided under the Medicare Benefits Schedule.

Australian Pathology's CEO Liesel Wett said:

"Pathology is an essential part of the nation's healthcare system - and 70 percent of all medical decisions rely on pathology. GPs and other healthcare professionals can't do their job without pathology.

"But unlike other parts of the health system, the sector hasn't seen a change to the indexation rate that applies to pathology services for 24 years.

"During this time, CPI inflation has risen by 97.2 percent and an estimated \$13.8 billion in cumulative indexation has been foregone since 1999.

"We need to invest in the Medicare model - which is why we're seeking an investment of funds that will lift that freeze, support the sustainability of the sector and help keep pathology bulk billed.

"At a time when Australians are doing it tough with cost-of-living, we want to protect and enhance Australia's high rate of bulk billing."

Liesel Wett
CEO, Australian Pathology
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Australian Pathology is the peak body representing private pathology in Australia.

The submission outlines that:

- A \$630 million investment is needed over four years - commencing immediately - to reinstate indexation across the whole Pathology Services Table under the MBS
- The funding will provide for indexation of between 1.375 percent and 1.5 percent for each of the next four years
- Pathology is alone in the healthcare system as not being subject to annual indexation changes
- Around 1 million Australians interact with the pathology sector at over 6,000 Pathology Approved Collection Centres (ACCs) each week.

“The costs to patients, hospitals and taxpayers from people putting off pathology tests because they’re too expensive would be enormous,” said Ms Wett.

“It would undermine our ability to diagnose conditions early, and hurt national screening programs for cancer and other illnesses.

“Unfortunately, the number of Medicare Pathology Services is already down by more than 700,000 when you compare June 2021 to June 2023 - showing that cost of living pressures are already having an impact on crucial health care decisions.

“We need to keep pathology bulk billed, as it’s essential to the job GPs and other healthcare professionals do every day in delivering the best outcomes possible for their patients.”

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