



Section 19AA of the Health Insurance Act 1973

What is section 19AA?

Section 19AA of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* (the Act) was introduced to recognise and support general practice as a vocational specialty, as well as to provide a framework for achieving long term improvements in the quality of doctors working in Australia.

Who is affected by section 19AA?

Medical practitioners are subject to the restrictions of Section 19AA of the Act if they:

- Held medical registration with an Australian medical board on or after 1 November 1996; and
- Are Australian permanent residents or Australian citizens; and
- Do not hold Fellowship with a specialist medical college, recognised in Australia (such as the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners or the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine).

Medical practitioners who were registered before 1 November 1996 will also be subject to Section 19AA of the Act if:

- On 1 November 1996 they had not completed intern or supervised training;
- On or after 1 November 1996 they were not permanent residents or Australian citizens within the meaning of the Migration Act 1958;
- They are currently temporary residents of Australia or New Zealand permanent citizens or permanent residents; or
- Do not hold Fellowship with a specialist medical college, recognised in Australia, such as the RACGP or ACRRM.

Overseas trained medical practitioners who complete their commitment to Section 19AB of the Act (also known as the ten-year moratorium) will also be subject to the restrictions under Section 19AA of the Act.

This means that if a doctor completes their ten-year moratorium but has not gained Fellowship of a specialist medical college, they will remain subject to the restrictions under Section 19AA of the Act.

Temporary resident or New Zealand citizen doctors are subject to Section 19AA if they were first registered with a medical board in Australia before 1 November 1996. However, if these doctors hold an exemption under Section 19AB of the Act, they will also be exempt from the requirements of Section 19AA.

What does it mean if medical practitioners do not hold continued specialist recognition as a medical practitioner?

Medical practitioners who do not hold specialist recognition with the RACGP or ACRRM cannot access the higher Medicare rebate – known as the A1 rebates and will be required to bill under the non-specialist A2 rates.

However, non-specialist medical practitioners working in a rural or remote location and working towards Fellowship may be able to access the Rural Other Medical Practitioners Scheme (ROMPS), which allows access to the A1 rates. For more information on this, see the Practice Assist Fact Sheet, ROMPS.

Whilst all care has been taken in preparing this document, this information is a guide only and subject to change without notice.

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Training and workforce programs under Section 3GA

Medical practitioners restricted by Section 19AA are unable to access Medicare benefits unless they are registered to participate in an approved general practice training or workforce program under Section 3GA of the Act.

Placements in approved training and workforce programs satisfy the requirements of Section 19AA of the Act and allow doctors to access the Medicare benefits arrangements while undertaking vocational training to gain Fellowship of a recognised specialist medical college. Alternatively, the doctor can be placed in a workforce program where workforce shortages have occurred.

Approved training and workforce programs under Section 3GA operating in Western Australia include:

- Approved Medical Deputising Service Program
- Approved Private Emergency Department Program
- Australian General Practice Training Program
- Prevocational General Practice Placements Program
- Remote Vocational Training Scheme
- Rural Locum Relief Program
- Specialist Medical Colleges in Australia
- Temporary Resident Other Medical Practitioners Program

More information

For more information please contact:

Medicare Australia

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Australian Government Department of Health

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Rural Other Medical Practitioners Scheme (ROMPS)

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See also

Practice Assist Fact Sheets:

- What is a District of Workforce Shortage?
- Section 19AB of the Health Insurance Act 1973

Practice Assist Template:

- Position Description – General Practitioner

Practice Assist Check List:

- GP Start-up Pack