



Senator The Hon Malarndirri McCarthy
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MEDIA RELEASE

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STRENGTHENING GP CARE FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

Medical clinics have been encouraged to provide better, ongoing care to Indigenous Australians following the revamp of an incentive program designed to achieve better, long-term health outcomes.

The Practice Incentives Program – Indigenous Health Initiative (PIP-IHI) has been updated and improved and will boost quality of care and outcomes for Indigenous people living with chronic health and mental health conditions.

The PIP-IHI pays medical practices to sign up to the program when a patient is registered and when certain patient outcomes are reached.

A 2019 review of the initiative found that while many practices signed on and registered patients, there were low numbers of payments based on outcomes. This showed the program wasn't doing what it was designed for – achieving continuity of care for patients with high needs.

To remedy these shortcomings and ensure efficiency, changes to the PIP-IHI include:

- making some GP Mental Health Care Plan Medicare items eligible for outcome payments
- shifting payment amounts to incentivise follow up care for patients, rather than registration
- making patients under the age of 15 eligible for outcome payments
- giving GP practices a 12-month rolling window to provide the required number of services.

Initial changes began in the new year, with the updated payment structure transitioning in 2023 and 2024 to give practices time to adjust to the changes.

Quotes attributable to Senator Malarndirri McCarthy:

“Ensuring patients get high quality, continuous and comprehensive care with their GP is a proven way we can close the gap.

“We are strengthening Medicare and improving the incentives for general practices, Aboriginal Medical Services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services to work closely with chronically ill patients and achieve better results for them, their families and their communities.

“Chronic disease takes a devastating – and increasing – toll on Indigenous communities in every corner of this country.

“Rates of chronic disease have increased from 40% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 2012-13, to 46% in 2018-19.”

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