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09/214

Mr Andrew McGowan
Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Infrastructure and Communications
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Dear Mr McGowan

Inquiry into the role and potential of the National Broadband Network

The AMA welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Committee on the role and potential of the National Broadband Network (NBN) in achieving health outcomes.

The AMA believes that online consultations via the internet and other telecommunications modalities have an important place in the delivery of health care for patients who have geographical difficulties in accessing medical practitioner services where the medical practitioner considers an in person consultation is not clinically necessary. This type of consultation should not, however, replace care where the medical practitioner considers an in person consultation is necessary in order to provide the best care for the patient.

Similarly, as the technology develops, the internet is likely to support an even greater range of healthcare services that may be clinically appropriate for delivery via the internet, such as the sending of lesion images for review by a remote specialist, or the participation of a remote expert as a consultant during a live surgical procedure. These innovations will offer benefits to all patients in Australia, particularly to those who live in remote and regional locations.

High speed internet supports the delivery of quality healthcare in three ways:

- It facilitates the rapid transfer of large volume files, high resolution images and clear video streaming necessary to ensure that medical practitioners have access to the best available information on which to base their clinical decision making;
- It minimizes slow download times, thereby both enabling medical practitioners to make time-critical treatment decisions, and preventing busy medical practitioners wasting time waiting for data to arrive electronically;
- Patients living in remote and regional locations, or those who are too infirm to travel to their general practitioner or specialist have greater access to medical care and/or the most clinically appropriate medical practitioner regardless of his or her physical location.

