

Written questions from Senator Griff

1. You suggest Medicare could publish for GPs and specialists, bulk billed and OOP costs. How would this be done without breaching the Privacy Act?

I am not a lawyer so I cannot give definitive advice about the Privacy Act. Authorising legislation may or may not be required.

As expectations about public disclosure change, doctors might reasonably expect that information about their billing practices enter the public domain, in the same way fees for consultancies are published.

2. What information about specialist's fees should the government publish? Would this be on a searchable website? How would this comply with the Privacy Act?

Government could publish, on a searchable website, for all doctors, for the five most common items used:

- The median fee and the out-of-pocket for non-bulk billed services, and
- The proportion of services bulk-billed.

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3. What information about specialist's outcomes should the government publish? Who would establish what outcomes should be measured? Will this not discourage specialists from treating complex patients? Would this be similar to MyNHS which publishes outcomes on specialists? How will this comply with the Privacy Act?

For hospital based specialists, the risk-adjusted all-complication rate would be a good starting point, but this measure might be augmented by specific measures for individual MBS items/specialties developed in consultation with consumers and specialty societies. Publication of the relevant outcome measure should include an indication of some measure of whether the rate is different from that of other specialists. With appropriate risk-adjustment, specialists treating a riskier patient profile should not be disadvantaged. The MyNHS website is a good model.

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