



Australian Government

Department of Health
and Aged Care

Executive Minute

Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit Report 505: Inquiry into Policy and Program Design and Implementation

Recommendation 4

The Committee requests that the Department of Health and Aged Care reports back to it on its progress in implementing legislative changes to allow digital assignment of benefit for the Medical Benefits Schedule.

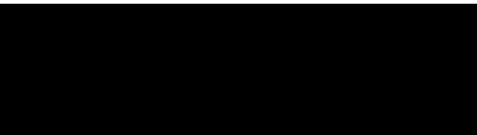
Response: Agreed.

The Department of Health and Aged Care (the department) has made significant progress in relation to legislative and other changes to modernise the assignment of benefit process. The objectives of this work will improve patients' and providers' experience when patients assign their benefits, while better mitigating unlawful payments for bulk billed and simplified billing services.

The [Health Insurance Legislation Amendment \(Assignment of Medicare Benefits\) Act 2024](#) which received Assent on 9 July 2024 provides the basis for this work. Changes enabled by amended legislation will commence in January 2026. Interim solutions to support lawful claiming remain, including September 2023 advice on lawful 'verbal assignment' for telehealth services and the approval of a new digital assignment of benefit form for bulk billing in December 2023.

The department is currently working with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel on forthcoming, supporting amendments to the [Health Insurance Regulations 2018](#). This will provide the requirements for inclusion in patients' agreements to assign their benefits, including digital solutions which may be offered by Services Australia and the medical software sector.

The department continues to engage with stakeholders, building on discussions in 2024 with medical practitioner representative bodies, software providers, private health insurers and billing agents, and States & Territories Health departments. The department is also working closely with Services Australia and other agency partners in preparing advice to Government on digital solutions and materials that support patients' and providers' adoption of new options for assigning Medicare benefits.



Blair Comley

Secretary

Department of Health and Aged Care

8/5/2025



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Recommendation 10

The Committee requests that the Department of Health and Aged Care reports back on improvements to performance and impact measuring related to the telehealth expansion MBS items within 12 months of the date of this report.

Response: Agree

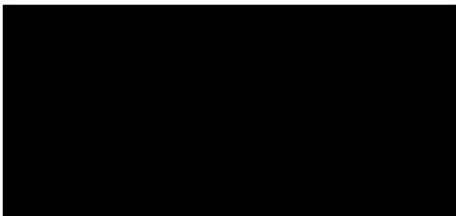
The Department of Health and Aged Care (the department) use population-level access and affordability of care as core measures of performance of the Medical Benefits Schedule (MBS).

The volume and percentage of telehealth services covered by the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) are available in MBS data publications. The department notes that whether services are provided by telehealth or in-person is a clinical determination.

As there is no MBS administrative data on patient outcomes – for telehealth or other MBS services – complementary processes ensure that MBS items align with contemporary clinical evidence and research. The department administers the MBS Continuous Review which involves the ongoing review of Medicare items and services by independent experts. This work is performed by the MBS Review Advisory Committee (MRAC), comprised of practising clinicians, academics, health system experts and consumers. MRAC completed a post implementation review of MBS telehealth services in May 2024, culminating in 10 recommendations alongside principles for policymakers.

MRAC considered the efficacy, performance, and impact of MBS telehealth services informed by independent reviews of published research and both targeted stakeholder and public consultation. The final report broadly affirms current MBS telehealth policies in relation to the balance of access, quality and equity, noting opportunities for improvement. As an interim update for April 2025, of the 10 recommendations made by the MRAC, two are intended as ongoing policy guidance, four have been implemented in full and four have been partially implemented or with commitment made to implement in 2025-26 (refer **Attachment A**).


The department will provide a subsequent update to confirm the implementation of amendments to MBS Telehealth scheduled for 1 November 2025.



Blair Comley

Secretary

Department of Health and Aged Care

 /05/2025