

MEDIA RELEASE

Expert group convenes to review MBS optometry items

16 May 2018, Melbourne: A group of optometrists are supporting Optometry Australia to develop a set of recommendations on how the Optometrical Schedule of Services under the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) should be amended to best meet the eye health needs of the population.

The group's recommendations will be put forward to the Turnbull Government's MBS Review Taskforce. Optometry Australia expects an announcement regarding the review in the coming weeks.

"The work being undertaken by our newly formed MBS Review Advisory Group will mean that Optometry Australia will be well-prepared when the Department of Health provides timelines on the formation of the committee to assist the Taskforce with the review of optometric items," CEO Lyn Brodie said.

The MBS Review Advisory Group represents a wide cross section of members, from private practice, academia, corporate groups, as well as key senior representatives from Optometry Australia.

Ms Brodie said the optometrists on Optometry Australia's group have extensive experience in clinical practice and application of the MBS and are well placed to lead the sector's response to the review.

"Members of our advisory group have different experience from different contexts which we felt important to ensure that we were representing the broader optometry sector. They are tasked with contemporising the MBS so it works for optometrists and their patients," she said.

"The group's first meeting entailed a thorough analysis of the current optometry schedule in its entirety, item by item," Ms Brodie said.

The current schedule includes 32 optometry items.

"The group is looking at how the items work to meet patients' needs and what needs to be done to contemporise the schedule. It will then be reviewed by a broader group.

"We're taking into consideration the needs of our members. We'll be prepared for the MBS Review Taskforce when our time comes," Ms Brodie said.

The most recent addition to the Optometrical Schedule of Services included items enabling optometrist reimbursement for telehealth services and removal of embedded corneal foreign body. Those items were introduced on 1 September 2015.

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Caption: MBS Review Advisory Group (L-R): Michelle Waugh, Garry Fitzpatrick, Jason Holland, Mario Basso, William Trinh, Peter Murphy, Christine Nguyen, Stuart Aitchison, Simon Hanna, Isabelle Jalbert and Paula Katalinic. Not pictured: Paul Graveson.

Contact:

Kerry l'Anson, k.ianson@optometry.org.au, 0419 004 920.

Optometry Australia is the peak professional body for optometrists. Representing eight out of every 10 Australian-based optometrists, Optometry Australia's focus is to lead and advance the profession of optometry by putting eye-health front and centre of Australian health care.