



8 November 2009

Federal Health Minister visits Brisbane private hospital on “listening tour”

On 5 November, Federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon visited Greenslopes Hospital in Brisbane as part of her national listening tour, which is being conducted following the release of the Report of the Government’s National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission. In an hour long visit, the Minister met with hospital staff, consultant clinicians, and patients, and spent time in a number of hospital departments. APHA CEO Michael Roff was present at the visit. The Minister was very interested in the private hospital perspective and experience in service delivery, including accident and emergency, and clinical training.

Following the visit, the Minister joined the Prime Minister at a large health consultation meeting in Brisbane, which APHA representatives also attended.

Following the listening tour and consultations on the NHHRC Report, the Federal Government will outline its proposals for health sector reform. This is expected to occur early in 2010.

Changes to cataract surgery rebates

Member hospitals that provide ophthalmology will be aware of the changes to the MBS rebates for cataract surgery items that were introduced from 1 November. APHA is now advised that these changes may affect contracted health fund rebates payable to hospitals, as the result of the reduction in the dollar amount of the rebates for MBS items 42698, 42701 and 42702 has placed these items in a different category of surgical patient. Hospitals are advised to check their contract with funds. The Department of Health and Ageing has provided the following advice to APHA:

“Health Insurance Circular 76/09 outlines the changes to Schedules 1 and 3 of the *Private Health Insurance (Benefit Requirements) Rules 2009 (No.2)* to reflect changes in Medical Benefits Schedule (MBS) items that commenced on 1 November 2009.

Amendments made to the Rules include:

- The specified fee range for *Advanced surgical* services increased to procedures with an MBS fee greater than \$806.13.
- The MBS fee range for *Surgical* procedures increased to \$240.05 to \$806.13.
- MBS item 42701 has been deleted from *surgical patient* category as its fee is not within the specified range of \$240.05 to \$806.13 - this item moves to *Other patients* category.
- MBS item 42702 has moved from *Advanced surgical* to *Surgical patient* category because the fee is now less than \$806.13.
- MBS item number 42718 is new and has been inserted into the *Advanced surgical patient* category.

The Minimum Benefits apply when there is no contract in place between a hospital and an insurer”

PHI Circular 74/2009 may be found at

http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-phicirculars2009-74_09.htm

National Procedure Banding Schedule

There has been a slight delay to the issue of the next edition of the Procedure Banding Schedule. At this stage it is anticipated that it will be issued in approximately three weeks.