

Health Insurance (General Medical Services Table) Amendment Regulations 2002 (No. 2) 2002 No. 254

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

STATUTORY RULES 2002 No. 254

Issued by the Authority of the Minister for Health and Ageing

Health Insurance Act 1973

Health Insurance (General Medical Services Table) Amendment Regulations 2002 (No. 2)

Section 133 of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* (the Act) provides that the Governor-General may make regulations prescribing matters for the purposes of the Act.

Section 10 of the Act provides for payments of Medicare benefits in respect of professional services rendered to eligible persons.

Section 9 of the Act provides that Medicare benefits shall be calculated by reference to the fees for medical services set out in prescribed Tables.

Subsection 4(1) of the Act provides that the regulations may prescribe a table of medical services, that sets out items of medical services, the amount of fees applicable in respect of each item and rules for interpretation of the table. The *Health Insurance (General Medical Services Table) Regulations 2002* prescribe such a table.

Section 3F of the Act provides for the registration of certain medical practitioners as vocationally registered general practitioners.

The purpose of the Regulations is to amend the rules for the interpretation of the General Medical Services Table by expanding the definition of eligible non-vocationally recognised medical practitioner. The definition now includes medical practitioners participating in the Outer Metropolitan (Other Medical Practitioners) Relocation Incentive Program (the Program).

The Program is a budget initiative designed to address the shortage of general practitioners in the outer metropolitan areas of the six State capital cities. It achieves this objective by encouraging non-vocationally recognised general practitioners, who currently work in the inner metropolitan areas of the six State capital cities, to relocate to designated outer metropolitan areas. In relocating and satisfying the conditions of the Program, participating medical practitioners will be able to receive a higher Medicare rebate level.

In order for participants on the Program to receive a higher Medicare rebate level they need to be included in the definition of an eligible non-vocationally recognised medical practitioner. This allows these medical practitioners to be considered as recognised general practitioners, who already access the higher Medicare rebate level.

The Regulations expand the current definition of eligible non-vocationally recognised medical practitioners to include participants in the Program, and also insert a definition of the Program.

The Regulations commence on 4 November 2002.