

Health Insurance (Diagnostic Imaging Services Table) Amendment Regulations 2004 (No. 5) 2004 No. 266

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

STATUTORY RULES 2004 No. 266

Issued by the Authority of the Minister for Health and Ageing

Health Insurance Act 1973

Health Insurance (General Medical Services Table) Amendment Regulations 2004 (No. 7)

Health Insurance (Pathology Services Table) Amendment Regulations 2004 (No. 4)

Health Insurance (Diagnostic Imaging Services Table) Amendment Regulations 2004 (No. 5)

Subsection 133(1) of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* (the Act) provides that the Governor-General may make regulations, not inconsistent with the Act, prescribing all matters required or permitted by the Act to be prescribed, or necessary or convenient to be prescribed for carrying out or giving effect to the Act.

The Act provides, in part, for payment 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 (other than diagnostic imaging services and pathology 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 2003* (the GMST Regulations) currently prescribe such a table.

Subsection 4A(1) of the Act provides that the regulations may prescribe a table of pathology services that sets out items of pathology services, the amount of fees applicable in respect of each item, and rules for interpretation of the table. The *Health Insurance (Pathology Services Table) Regulations 2003* (the PST Regulations) currently prescribe such a table.

Section 4AA of the Act provides that the regulations may prescribe a table of diagnostic imaging services, the amount of fees applicable in respect of each item and the rules for interpretation of the table. The *Health Insurance (Diagnostic Imaging Services Table) Regulations 2003* (the DIST Regulations) currently prescribe such a table.

The GMST Regulations, the PST Regulations and the DIST Regulations currently provide a \$7.50 incentive for the management of certain bulk-billed services in regional, rural and remote areas and in the whole of Tasmania.

The purpose of the Regulations is to extend the availability of the \$7.50 incentive to include twenty-eight identified urban statistical sub-divisions (SSDs) and Palm Island, Queensland. The identified SSDs are based on the 2002 Australian Standard Geographical Classification system, as produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. East Metropolitan and South West Metropolitan are SSDs in Perth.

The identified areas are those which do not have access to the existing \$7.50 bulk-billing incentive but which have difficulty attracting and retaining doctors, and have lower bulk-billing rates.

The Regulations also insert definitions of Australian Standard Geographical Classification, Statistical Local Area and Statistical Sub-division for the purposes of the GMST Regulations, the PST Regulations and the DIST Regulations.

The Act specifies no conditions that need to be met before the power to make the Regulations may be exercised.

The Regulations commence on 1 September 2004 to enable the benefits to flow-on to patients in these identified areas of need as soon as possible.