

Health Insurance Amendment Regulations 2000 (No. 1) 2000 No. 146

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

STATUTORY RULES 2000 NO. 146

Issued by authority of the Minister for Health and Aged Care

Health Insurance Act 1973

Health Insurance Amendment Regulations 2000 (No. 1)

Section 133 of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* (the Act) provides that the Governor-General may make Regulations 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 purpose of the regulations is to allow Medicare rebates to be paid to patients in respect of services provided by medical practitioners participating in the Rural and Remote Area Placement Program (RRAPP).

The RRAPP is a pilot program that aims to increase the exposure of recent medical graduates, who are undertaking hospital internships, to rural general practice thereby encouraging them to consider a longer term career in rural and remote communities. Participants in the RRAPP will take time out from their hospital work in order to undertake a 10-13 week placement in a rural location. In the longer term, it will provide key information about alternative training models for rural and remote practice that may encourage doctors to consider rural careers. In the shorter term, it will increase rural communities' access to primary care.

Section 19AA of the Act prevents a Medicare rebate from being paid to a patient in respect of a service rendered by a medical practitioner, where the practitioner first became a medical practitioner on or after 1 November 1996, unless: (a) the practitioner is recognised as a specialist, consultant physician or general practitioner; or (b) the practitioner is on the Register of Approved Placements created under section 3GA of the Act.

Section 3GA of the Act provides for the creation of a Register of Approved Placements. An "approved placement" is a place on a course or program specified in the regulations. Persons may be listed on the Register once they are enrolled in an approved placement. This ensures that only persons in properly supervised and recognised training positions are able to provide services for which a Medicare rebate will be payable.

Paragraph 3GA(5)(a) of the Act requires a body to be specified in the regulations for the purpose of administering an approved placement. Subparagraph 3GA(5)(a)(i) provides for the relevant course or training program to be prescribed in the regulations.

Section 6E of the Regulations provides that, for the purposes of section 3GA, bodies, courses and programs are specified in Schedule 5.

The new regulations add a new Item to Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Health Insurance Regulations. Schedule 5 contains a list of programs and administering bodies specified for the purposes of section 3GA approved placements. The new Item adds a new administering body and a new program into Part 2 of Schedule 5. The new body is the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) and the new program is the Rural and Remote Area Placement Program.

In order for patients to receive Medicare payments in respect of the services provided by doctors on the program, the RRAPP and ACRRM have been prescribed in Part 2, Schedule 5 of the Health Insurance Regulations 1975.

Details of the Regulations are set out in the Attachment.

The Regulations commenced on gazettal.

ATTACHMENT

NOTES ON CLAUSES

Regulation 1 provides that the Regulations may be cited as the Health Insurance Amendment Regulations 2000 (No. 1).

Regulation 2 provides that the Regulations will commence on gazettal.

Regulation 3 provides that the Health Insurance Regulations 1975 are amended by Schedule 1.

Item 1 provides for the inclusion of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine as a specified body for the purposes of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* and includes the Rural and Remote Area Placement Program as an approved program under the Act.