

CONSULTATION RESPONSE



**Allied Health
Professions
Australia**

ACCC Interested Party Consultation

PHA - AA1000487 - Submission
May 2020

Response

Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the PHA application for authorisation AA1000487. AHPA commends the granting of the interim order and supports specifically:

broadening private health insurance coverage to include COVID-19 treatments and modes of treatment that substitute for face-to-face interaction or admission to hospital

Since the granting of the interim order AHPA has been working with the PHA and its members to implement interim arrangements for supporting the provision of health services via telehealth practice in response to the limitations imposed by the COVID19 pandemic. Being able to deal with a central agency (PHA) has been of substantial benefit to the health professionals providing services and to their privately insured clients. This has fast tracked the introduction of rebates for telehealth services allowing access to timely and effective management of conditions whilst minimising the risk of infection with COVID19.

Had AHPA and its member professional bodies needed to deal separately with each individual insurer the task would have been overwhelming and its is likely we would still be engaged in extensive and disparate negotiations which would have been to no one's benefit.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that the implementation of telehealth rebates through private insurers and other agencies such as DVA, MBS and compensable schemes has been broadly successful enabling health professionals to keep their businesses running thus supporting continuity of services to patients. It is highly likely this vehicle for service delivery will survive the pandemic as part of broader health system reforms.

29 professions, more than 130,000 collective members and representing one third of the health workforce covering health, disability, veterans, community services and more.

Engagement in such significant reforms is best approached collectively and granting of a final authorisation for at least 6 months would support the ongoing work needed to achieve this in relation to private health insurance. AHPA does not believe this would entrench any anti-competitive behaviours as the introduction of telehealth is a broadly applicable enhancement.

AHPA is not in a position to comment on the other two provisions.

About Allied Health Professions Australia

Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) is a collegiate body consisting of 19 national allied health association members and a further 10 affiliate members with close links to the allied health sector. AHPA's members collectively represent over 130,000 allied health professionals, who provide services within health in all settings, NDIS, DVA, education, justice, community services sectors and more in Australia.



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